

George Tames
Washington Photographer for the *New York Times*

PREFACE

In 1846, an unknown cameraman took the first photograph of the United States Capitol, a view of the East Front. Thereafter the Capitol, from all angles, became the subject of countless amateur and professional photographers. During the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth most photography took place outside the building, due both to its dimly lit interior and to the antipathy many committee chairmen felt about the distractions of flash powder and bulbs. Eventually, photographers moved into the building, shooting everywhere at will, except within the Senate and House chambers. By the 1980s, television cameras penetrated even this haven.

Nearly a century after that first photo, George Tames began photographing the people and events of Capitol Hill, first for *Time-Life* and later for the *New York Times*. During the course of a long career that ranged from the 1940s through the 1980s, Tames developed access to, and captured the likenesses of more significant members of Congress, and had his work reproduced more widely in influential publications than any other photographer in American political history. He developed a style contrary to the "herd instinct" that led other photographers to group together outside a closed door waiting for a standard shot. Instead, his pictures demonstrate an artistic eye, an intense sense of place, and a special intimacy with his subjects.

George Tames was born in the shadow of the Capitol Dome, in a Washington alley house on January 21, 1919, into a Greek-Albanian immigrant family, and "born into the Democratic party" as well. The son of a pushcart peddler, he dropped out of high school during the Depression to help his family, and took a job as an officeboy in the Washington bureau of *Time-Life*. Carrying equipment for the magazines' photographers, Tames became both a self-taught photographer and writer. When World War II drew senior photographers to distant battlefields, it opened opportunities for young Tames in Washington. During the war he took pictures of the Truman committee investigation into the national defense program, and of other major events at the Capitol. At the White House, he had the opportunity to photograph his family's idol, Franklin D. Roosevelt, as he did every president from Roosevelt to Ronald Reagan.

After the war, in 1945, Tames joined the staff of the *New York Times*, where he remained until his retirement in 1985. He defined his own daily assignments, following bits of information and inside tips to decide who and what to photograph. As the *Times'* Washington bureau chief James Reston observed, Tames' camera got him into places closed to other reporters. He observed prominent senators close-hand, engaged them in informal conversation and banter, and overheard their deliberations. He became particularly close to John Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson and Hubert Humphrey, trading jokes and gossip with them as he recorded their activities on film.

George Tames' photos in the *New York Times*, especially those that appeared in its Sunday Magazine, created a visual record of Washington's more celebrated inhabitants, in moments of triumph

and tragedy, and in casual, candid moments of reflection and relaxation. He offered his viewers a chance to see the Senate as he saw it on a regular basis--for he used the congressional press galleries as the center of his operations, ate lunch daily at the press table in the Senate restaurant, and prowled the corridors of the Capitol as purposefully as any lobbyist or staff member. In this oral history he recalls some of the stories behind his more celebrated photographs, and presents another dimension to his perspective of the Senate through the camera's lens.

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Interview #1:
Introduction to the Hill
Wednesday, January 13, 1988

DONALD RITCHIE: Can you tell me about your background?

GEORGE TAMES: All right. My name is George Tames. I was born on January 21, 1919, in Washington, D.C., within the shadow of the Capitol, at the old Episcopal Hospital on North Capitol Street. I was raised in Southwest Washington, again within four city blocks of the Capitol. I remember the building very well. I didn't know what it was, as a young boy, but I remember seeing it. My first visit to the Capitol occurred I guess in the first grade, when our teacher took us on a field trip and we walked up to the Capitol, and got a chance to ride on the old subway cars. That was a big treat for us, and we took a turn from the Capitol to the Senate Office Building and back again, and made our tour of the Capitol Building.

Then in later years I was at the Capitol as part of the mob at the swearing in of /Franklin D./ Roosevelt in '36, for his second term. In '32 I was too young, and I don't recall whether I bothered to go to the Inauguration, but I do remember watching the Inaugural parade, because I can still see in my mind's eye,

Roosevelt and /Herbert/ Hoover going up Pennsylvania Avenue in their top hats, going up to the Capitol and coming back. I probably watched it from the old Post Office Building, because I remember us boys from Southwest scouring the old markets in Southwest and getting discarded onion crates, apple boxes, and anything that could support human weight. I remember going up Twelfth Street carrying about ten of these onion crates. And then we'd sell them for twenty-five cents apiece to the spectators along the route, so they could stand on them and get to see the president when he came by--because there was such a crowd, such a mob scene, that you couldn't see over. We'd sell these crates and then we'd get away in a hurry, because a lot of times they would collapse, and we didn't want to be around when that happened! I did this when Hoover was elected, I was there selling boxes on Pennsylvania Avenue. But in '36 I was old enough to head up to the Hill and watch it from there, and it was quite a scene. It was so exciting.

My next introduction to the Hill was the introduction of a long love affair, that began in 1940--maybe 1939, because by 1940 I was pretty well established. In 1939, when I was a copyboy for Time and Life in Washington, it was my job to be a gopher, and I would go up and pick up bills, and handouts, and releases, and whenever there was an assignment up there for one of the Time and Life photographers to photograph any personality, invariably I

would ask to come along and hold their gear, and write their captions, and so forth. I became fascinated with a camera, and also realized that being the son of a Greek-Albanian immigrants, a first generation American who couldn't speak English when he went to school, that my schooling was minimal. In fact, I dropped out of high school in the tenth grade, I had to go to work, there just wasn't any money. Being the oldest, I was responsible. In the old tradition, my mother and father never let me forget the fact that I was head of the family, and that I was responsible for my younger brothers and sisters. That was a burden I didn't want. That's why I can never remember believing in Santa Claus, because I was the one who was told there wasn't one, but I was to take care of the younger ones. I always thought I was short-changed on that one.

Anyway, I came to the Hill and started in 1940 going with the photographers and eventually photographing individual members. But we didn't cover the Hill the way it's covered today, so intensely. It was a much more leisurely pace, particularly before World War II, and during the war there wasn't that much of a churning up there. I remember covering /Harry/ Truman's War Investigating Committee, but I don't recall that there was that much of a flap over it. But you have to remember also that I worked for a weekly magazine, and didn't have to be on top of everyday affairs. I feel sad every time that I walk up to the

Hill nowadays and realize how much security is around and how many guards are there. I used to feel that that was my Capitol and my Senate--I didn't go around the House that much, I just didn't feel that I could become acquainted with that terrific number. Unless the House members were chairmen or were making noises, I very seldom got to go around them. The Speaker, of course, and the leaders, I knew them. Whereas on the Senate side, I think by 1950 I recognized every member. Of course, we were all about the same age. They were slightly older. I considered them old when they were ten years older than me. We all had children about the same age, so it was a personal relationship. It was a sort of a family atmosphere up there, unlike the frenetic, bugger-your-brother attitude I get sometimes.

I was particularly amused during the /Iranscam/ hearings when one senator would take off after another, or one House member would take off after another, and they still tried to keep it in a polite vein. The one and only real bitter fights that I have ever listened to were the ones involving Civil Rights in the early days, by early days I mean the forties, when blacks were becoming more militant and we were starting to realize that something had to be done. Senator /Theodore/ Bilbo at the time was the big gun on the anti-black side, who used that as a platform for reelection. I recall one time being in the gallery when Bilbo took on the whole Senate on Civil Rights. This was about 1946 I

think. All I remember was that I was impressed by the fact that he took on the whole Senate, and right during the debate, a New York senator took on Bilbo. Bilbo refused to yield to him, and finally he said, "I yield to the nigger-loving senator from the State of New York." Well, needless to say, the whole Senate erupted. The senators were jumping up, demanding the floor and denouncing the language and views of "the distinguished senator from Mississippi." I've never forgotten that! They kept referring to him as the distinguished senator from Mississippi. And this was also about the time that Bilbo was in trouble for some financial shenanigans, and he was being censured by the Senate. Bilbo's personal habits were rather repulsive to me. He chewed tobacco on the floor, and later it came out that he died of cancer of the mouth. But he would dribble tobacco juice down his front, and the stains were there. It kind of repulsed a young, eager, Democratic liberal to see this happening by a person flying the Democratic standard.

I was born into the Democratic party. People ask me, "Why are you a Democrat?" I say, "I was born into the Democratic party, the same way I was born into the Greek-Orthodox Church." When I became old enough to think for myself, I saw no reason to change either. Even to this day, in spite of everything, I think that the broad programs instituted and proposed by the Democratic party are the best for all the people. If there is anyone that

should be a Republican or an ultraconservative, it's me, because I have not only conquered the fact that I had only a tenth grade education, but based on the friendships that I made, and the betting on people, like Mr. /J. Willard/ Marriott, who I used to carhop for. I bet on him, and I invested heavily in Marriott. Today I am financially well off and have nothing to worry about, yet I still feel for the people who don't have it, and have no choice in the matter. Because I know, I've gone through it. So I believe, my own self, that the thrust of the Democratic party is the correct one for this country. I also, in my heart, believe that Roosevelt prevented a terrible bloodbath in the Thirties. People say, "Well, he didn't do much." Yes, he did. He gave people hope. If you don't give them bread, at least give them hope, that they'll know that tomorrow things will be better.

My family was on relief during the Depression, but everybody in those days when they were on relief they tried to hide it. We went to great pains to hide it. We would receive these government surplus oatmeal, flour, butter and can goods. These were all marked; they came in a plain cover that said "Government Surplus," or "Government Issue." So we at home would keep old Quaker Oatmeal boxes, and when these surplus ones would come in, we'd pour the oats into the Quaker Oats box, put the lid on, and stick it up in the cabinet, and throw away the government box, so anyone coming into our house would not see that we were doing that.

Also, every winter we would receive a ton of coal, or a half a ton, I don't remember what. The only heating we had in that old house was a wall furnace behind isinglass. One was in the living room, and one was on the second floor. The rest of the house was heated by the wood stove we had in the kitchen. The federal government truck would come in our alley and dump the coal in the alley, and it was my brother Steve's and my job to go out with buckets and put the coal in the buckets and bring it into the shed and dump it--and count the buckets. Because, by the number of buckets that we had, my father calculated how many winter days there were, and how much coal you could afford to burn. Otherwise you ran out, and then you really were stuck.

Every year we always had a few buckets left when the spring finally arrived, because some of those March days used to fool us and we'd be caught short. It was nothing for us to wake up in the morning in our bedroom and find the ice on the inside just as much as outside. As a result of being that way, and receiving handouts from the federal government, and we were not alone, people had a different feeling about our President Roosevelt. My father would hear the truck and say to me, "Go out and bring the Roosevelt coal in."

My mother's reference to Roosevelt would be "Ieous," which is the Greek word for saintly, Saintly Roosevelt. She would refer to Hoover as "garata," which means someone with horns, like a goat. So that's how I reckoned my own feelings. Then also in every Greek Orthodox family there's a holy corner, usually in the bedroom of the parents, and it faces east. The icons are there, and the candles are lit. It's tradition for the couple who are married, who receive these crowns when they are married, to put these crowns in an icon and keep them there all their lives. Every night my mother would light the candles, these were little wicks that were floating in a little bit of oil. I can remember knowing when it was time to get up because I could hear the sputter of the wicks. They only poured enough oil to last a certain amount of hours, because they had to be very careful of the oil that they poured.

As soon as it started getting dusk, my mother would yell at the nearest child and say, "Go up and light the candles." It was our job to pour a measured amount of oil in, and drop the wick in and light it. We'd pull up a chair in order to do it. Well, one day, when I went up there, in the line-up first was the Virgin Mary and Christ child, then we have the saints, Mark, John, George, and Luke, and one day there was another one: Roosevelt. Roosevelt was in the line-up of the saints, so when I was finally a photographer and was working around Roosevelt, I always had a

different feeling, unlike Truman, whom I met when he was running the War Investigating Committee. I considered Truman a human, whereas I was never able to really throw off this awe of Roosevelt, and the fact that he had been president all of my growing days. I never thought that anyone could ever replace him, and I never wanted anyone to replace him.

So those were my ramblings about my early days in Washington, but then coming up on the Hill, I became very friendly with individual members. I was able to work with them, very early on. I make friends easy, as a result I gained their confidence. Most importantly, they realized that when I was photographing them, whatever I would overhear I would never mention to anyone. As a result I had the confidence of the members. I think Senator /Howard/ Baker once said to a group, "One thing you can say about Tames, anything he ever heard wasn't leaked." That was true. The only times that I ever gave stories to the New York Times was when I had their permission. I had a way of signaling. The moment I'd hear something that perked up my ears, involving something that would be newsworthy, I would look over towards the chairman or the senator who was making the statement, and with a glance they could see the question in my eyes. They would either shake their heads no, or nod, and then I would know that this was something I could repeat. Other times, when I heard things that I thought would make a good story, that it was favorable to the senator, or

favorable to our country, or just a story, but had been told at an executive session, well, I would later go to the chairman or the individual who made the statement and say, "This is what I heard" or "This is what I understand. Is this something that could be used?" He'd say yes or no, and then I would follow through. If he said no, I would never repeat it.

I remember one incident, unlike today at the White House where we have reporters going in with photographers and shouting questions at the president, why we photographers would go in and make a picture and we wouldn't repeat anything that we heard. One time I went in and heard /Dwight/ Eisenhower talking to a foreign visitor. Whatever he was saying, it was very newsworthy and very favorable to the president. I came out and I was just hot for this. I sat down and I typed out about three hundred words on what I had heard. Then I went in with the typed sheet into Jim Hagerty. I said, "Jim, this is what I heard." I handed the sheet to Hagerty, and I said, "Can we use it?" And Hagerty just sat back and read the whole thing, and then right in front of me he just took his hand and just tore it right in half. I said, "Why? It makes the president look good." He said, "Look George, it makes him look good this time, but next time you might hear something that will not." Today it's impossible. There's nothing the president can say--he can't even make an aside into a supposedly dead mike without having somebody pick it up."

I formed a very close relationship with Senator /Arthur/ Vandenburg, one of my first heroes, and I liked Tom Connally because I liked his sense of humor, and his sense of drama, posturing and put-on pompous, like /Everett/ Dirksen. I think Tom Connally and Dirksen were cut from the same cloth. They were competent politicians who masked their real intellect by playing the buffoon, and that's a very clever way of doing it, particularly when you get everything done that you want done. Connally took care of his Texas constituency, and I'm sure Dirksen did also.

Dirksen, for example, never once called me George, he'd always say, "Dear boy." "What can I do for you, dear boy?" I would ask him about certain things, and he'd say yes or no, and so forth. I think of the humor of Dirksen. One day it was the first day of spring, and it was a terrible day. There was snow and ice and the wind blowing, it was miserable for the first day of spring. Dirksen was having his Ev and Charlie press conference, which was a weekly thing. They were trying to drum up some interest and publicity after the Republicans lost control of the House and Senate under Ike, and it was slow going. In those days there wasn't as much news under Eisenhower anyway. We didn't realize how well off we were. I used to bitch about Ike's not doing this, Ike's not doing that, but I look back with nostalgia on how calm things were. Things were going along okay. God was

in his heaven and his representative on earth was at Burning Tree having a golf game. Everything was fine with the world. So Dirksen was meeting the press, and finally during a pause, one of the reporters said, "Well, senator, it's the first day of spring. What do you have to say about that?" Dirksen got up very dramatically, walked to the window, looked out, then came back and said: "It's been my observation that petunias, planted with a pickaxe, never do well."

I've got others on him, but the other one I like so much was when he was on the floor and about forty women came in, an elderly group to lobby for Social Security. They sent word in to him, and he came bouncing out with his hair all aflutter, and shaking his head, that mass of white hair. He looked up and down this group and said: "Ladies, I was on the floor, defending the Republic against the onslaughts of the opposition, when I was informed that forty lovely girls wished to see me. I immediately removed the armor of the warrior and put on the cloak of the poet. What do you girls wish of me?" There was dead silence, and then this little voice piped up from the back and said, "Nothing senator, we just want to hear you talk!"

Then the Ev and Charlie show hit the boondocks. They went to play Gettysburg, at Ike's office there at Gettysburg College. They went up there and held a press conference with the president, just to drum up some more publicity. Dirksen turned to Ike and

said, "Mr. President, this Ev and Charlie show is becoming so popular that it is my understanding that the *Washington Post* is receiving complaints from viewers of television who say the *Post* is not listing the Ev and Charlie show." Ike laughed, and looked over to Dirksen and said, "The *Washington Post*? I don't see why anybody reads the *Washington Post* anyway." He said, "I wouldn't read it, and I wouldn't have it around the Oval Office." He said, "One day, there was nothing to read, so they ripped out the sports page of the *Washington Post* and gave it to me. And I read it, and do you know, that Shirley Povich, for a woman, is not a bad writer." This was right in front of us!

Anyway, I've covered every important hearing in the Caucus Room since Truman's War Investigating committee. I've covered /Joseph/ McCarthy, the terrible hearings on Pearl Harbor, where we just seem to relish beating ourselves over what couldn't be recalled. I mean, we were trying to find fault, like we always do for something that I guess was a general, overall lack of awareness. In spite of all the warnings we received on the Japanese attack, I never heard anyone mention the words Pearl Harbor. I was outside Secretary /Cordell/ Hull's office with all the press, which in those days you had a crowd if you had ten press, including the photographers and reporters. I remember standing out there with three other photographers, we were the only ones in the hall, waiting for the Japanese envoys to come

out. I remember seeing old Cordell Hull sticking his head out and shouting down the hallway for Sumner Wells, who was Undersecretary at the time. He said, "Sumner! Sumner! Where the hell are you Sumner!"

The Pearl Harbor hearings went on and on and on. We tried to put the blame on various persons in the military, I guess we always do that. Then going right on in to the present day, Watergate and Irangate, and so forth, and /Oliver/ North. I think of all the years--forty-seven years--that I've covered hearings up on the Hill, I had never seen a performance like North's before. One, I just kept waiting for the members to tear him up. He made the whole Senate look foolish. He had them buffaloed, and he did it deliberately. It was well-planned out. The man even put on a strict diet and lost about fifteen pounds so he could wear his uniform and look real good. When they finally accepted his terms for appearing before the committee, the committee originally intended that North would be the last witness. As a result, you would have heard the complaints by the Secretary of State, by the Secretary of Defense, and by these other people who came after North. But North got his story in first, and they had a hell of a time following him.

Of all the members of the committee that I talked to, only one had the balls to see this and to react to it, and that was Jack Brooks. Jack Brooks told me before he appeared and during

the appearance by North, that every time he'd shake his finger at me and I knew what he was talking about. He said to me, and I'll be very blunt, he said, "Fuck him! He doesn't want to appear, we'll subpoena him." And then after about four or five days, Jack Brooks came up to me and said, "I was so upset, I went to see Senator /Daniel/ Inouye, and I said, 'Goddamn it, I'll put my Marine record up against his any time.'" He said, "I propose that every member of this committee that served in the military put on their uniforms, including the chairman, and everybody march in here and plump themselves down, and see then what." The chairman was shocked at the suggestion. Then after a while, he said, "I cooled down. I realized we'd be playing into North's hand." North made them look foolish.

However, I personally believe that was one of the best examples of democracy in action that has ever come out of Congress. Because it has been my strong belief that there is no such thing as too much news in a democracy. As a young man I remember reading somewhere that the old Greeks in their wisdom, when they sat down and conjured up this frail being that they called a democracy, that some of the wiser heads cautioned that democracy cannot survive beyond the range of the human voice in the market place. When the people on the fringes are uninformed, then democracy dies. It's been my feeling that our country has been very fortunate that it was formed at a time when

communications were improving, you could get a letter from England in three weeks and so forth, newspapers were developing. And then the big burst of our development came right at the same time.

Then came the radio. This televised and radioed hearing was an exercise in democracy which to me helps sustain us. Radio in particular. Television demands that you sit and watch, whereas you can listen to the radio whether you are changing a baby's diapers or driving an eighteen wheel truck, you're still part and parcel of what's going on. Television focuses on the dark side, the problems, the injustice of it all, the way Israel today has got their balls in the wringer. They're being the oppressors, and no matter how many parties they can have for Martin Luther King here in Washington, the blacks are going to realize that what Israel is doing to the Palestinians is exactly what was done to them here. And it's done because of information. Do you think that we or the southerners, white southerners who held the political power for years would have given it up willingly? No way. They didn't give it up for fifty or sixty years or more--and only because of information. Also, in a democracy, if everyone is going to be equal, we have to respect the other person's viewpoint.

I've always maintained that the worst piece of legislation that can come out is one that is unanimous, or damn near unanimous. The moment I hear that word unanimous I think, "Oh,

oh, somebody's getting sold down the river." Because there's no such thing. You've got your viewpoints, I've got my viewpoints, and I'm just as sincere in mine. Everything is a compromise on the Hill. A half a loaf. And if you get sixty percent of the loaf you have really made a big impression. And you are ten years behind the general public! They want something and you're ten years slow. But that's the way it should be. I think our form of government, how frail it is, and how lucky we were that the two times in our history since our establishment that there was a demand for a dictatorship in this country, when /Abraham/ Lincoln was president he was urged to become a dictator, and he said no. And /Franklin/ Roosevelt himself could have taken over the powers and nobody would have objected. In fact, I as a young man would have approved it, because I didn't know any better. But at least those two men saw, and we're fortunate. I've always been afraid of the man on the horse that's going to come down the pike and solve all our problems. There again, television has the power. Can you imagine what Hitler would have done with television? That's what Harry Truman told me one time. Can you imagine what Reverend /Charles/ Coughlin could have done with it? Or even /Huey/ Long. When people have a grievance--I'm wandering on, I'm not talking about the House and Senate that you're interested in.

RITCHIE: No, I'm interested in all your views.

TAMES: I've thought about where we're going, and what we're doing. I hate what's happening to us, the so-called national security. In the name of security we're doing everything. If as Samuel Johnson wrote that patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel, then I think that security today is the second refuge of the scoundrels. In the name of security we're covering up everything. North was doing that. Thinking back, I'm just wondering what some of the senators would have done, fifteen years ago, twenty years ago, thirty years ago, if a colonel in the military had shredded documents and his girl friend had stuffed her clothes with the documents and gotten them out of the White House, why they would have exploded! What are we doing here? What is happening? You can't do that.

In a democracy the railroads and the airplanes don't run on time, and people's baggage gets lost. We could have a more efficient, so-called scientific government. But look how efficient the Russians are. The greatest experiment in the world since Jesus Christ, and look what's happened to them. They can't feed their own people.

People say, "Well, that Congressman is really doing that to further his own political ambitions." I say, so what, as long as the country is also being helped. I always maintained that Lyndon Johnson really didn't believe in Civil Rights, or push for them. But the moment he became president he was very conscious of what

history has to say about him. He wanted that record to show that LBJ was bigger than life. I have always felt that Lyndon Johnson got tangled up in Vietnam because he wanted to out-Roosevelt Roosevelt. At one time it was very revealing to me, when I was talking to him-- because Johnson and I were pretty good friends, as Congressman and Senator. And when you're one-on-one you're able to say things you don't want people to here. But I got on him about this habit of his having the White House photographers shoot pictures of him all day Monday, and Tuesday morning when he came into his office, they had to have the stack of prints on his desk, shot from the day before. That was the way he operated on the Hill too. He was the one who created the staff photographer on the Hill, because he wanted that photographer shooting pictures of himself. He was always conscious of pictures.

I was kidding him about the stack of pictures that he had on his desk, and how he'd go through them, and when he found one he'd like he'd leave it on the desk, and the rest he'd throw on the floor. That meant you were supposed to destroy all those, throw them away. I said, that's just the image, not how they're going to remember you. They're going to remember you, I said, for what you've done in office. He looked at me and said, "Name me five presidents, immediately /snap, snap, snaps fingers/. "Don't think!" Well, hell, he caught me by surprise, and I said, "Well, Washington Lincoln, Roosevelt." He said, "Hah /snap/, war

president /snap/; war president /snap/; war president /snap/." He said, "You remember the war presidents." And I had to agree with him, that the ones who came to my mind were the ones who were active, Jackson, and so forth. He, I think, if not consciously, unconsciously, he wanted to imitate them. I called that the "Texas Syndrome."

I used to joke with LBJ and tell him every little bit of scandal I'd heard, or picked up around the Hill, and tell jokes, and he'd laugh. But two subjects were taboo. One was jokes on Lyndon Johnson himself, and the other was jokes about the state of Texas. One time I got into trouble when I told him that I thought there wouldn't have been any Texas if there had been a backdoor to the Alamo. I started laughing. He didn't laugh. He didn't think that was funny, not one goddamn bit.

When he was majority leader I took that series of pictures we have of him with /Theodore Francis/ Green. Hugh Sidey told me after he saw my show that he was there as a reporter for *Time* when I made that series. It was an executive session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. We were allowed in until the chairman called the meeting to order. We were just wandering around, which is the time I always like to work, because you can get candid shots of the senators in action. Hugh Sidey told me that that was the time that LBJ was leaning on Green to give up his chairmanship of the Foreign Relations Committee in favor

William/ Fulbright. He finally persuaded Green to do so. Green was getting way up in age anyway, but I think LBJ lived to regret Fulbright because Fulbright finally had enough of the war in Vietnam and turned around and went after LBJ.

I'll never forget one day I was in making a picture of the Cabinet, and LBJ was sitting there. At the other end of the room by a great big map of Vietnam was a full colonel. He was pointing to the map and giving a briefing on the situation there. And LBJ was just sitting there with his head down, slumped in his chair. Every once in a while he would look up, and drop his head, look up, and drop his head. Finally, when the colonel was finished, he sort of unwound those long legs, and leaned forward, and looked up towards the end of the table, and said, "Shiiiiit." He didn't care for what was being said! I always felt that if anyone was prepared to be president, he was. He knew which buttons to push and how to get legislation done. If he had not been involved in the Vietnamese war, if he had seen his way clear to get out, or if he had won, I think he would have gone down as out-Roosevelting Roosevelt insofar as social programs.

My father always used to say that the reason this country didn't have more trouble is that it's so rich. For all the stealing that's going on, there's still some that trickles down to the little fellow. The surest way to tamper down tempers is to give a little something, give a little bit, which is a technique

we have followed, rather reluctantly, whether we admit it or not, with the blacks in this country, and other minorities. When I was growing up, nobody knew what a Greek was. We were raised in an Irish neighborhood, next to an Irish church practically. The priests came around and were giving the landlord hell for renting to a non-Catholic. They wanted nothing but Catholics in the area. At that time, the priests and the religion were pretty strong, compared to today, particularly among the Irish. We were looked down on. Between the Italians, and the Greeks, and the Jews, and the Syrians, why we were on the level with the blacks, and sometimes one step lower than the blacks.

I'll never forget the heavy drinking by the Irish, and the raising hell. Our neighbors, the mother would wait for the father to come home with his paycheck, and he had already drunk it, and there would be yelling and screaming out there in the front. She wouldn't let him in. I'll never forget one Sunday morning, bright and early, our neighbor who was drunk went several doors down to a vacant house and just lay down on the porch and went to sleep. We went over there and he was still sleeping it off, with the flies on him, and smelling to high heaven. My father took me by the hand up there, I was I guess eight or nine, we went on the porch and he pointed down to--I won't give his name--and said to me: "Tute ena Iristi," "This is the Irish." He said, "Never drink, or you'll be like them." It stuck with me. I have never cared for--

I like the effect of booze, one or two drinks and I love everybody. I like the feeling, but by the same token I don't like what it does. I don't think I've drunk a fifth of Scotch a year, when I go to social events and take a drink or two. Well, we're getting off the track.

RITCHIE: I'd like to go back, because I've heard a lot about that old Southwest neighborhood. A lot of Smithsonian curators lived there, and regret that that neighborhood was demolished.

TAMES: Oh, yes. Around the old War College and Fort McNair, that was a beautiful place. We'd go there and watch the troops parading. Southwest was a rich neighborhood. I just drove past the Washington Monument the last couple of days in the snow and I didn't see one person sleigh riding, and there used to be thousands of kids up there. All the Southwest boys and girls would come there, and all the ones from downtown Washington that still maintained apartments and houses in the area that's all full of government buildings now, and various law offices. And with the Tidal Basin there, I fished the Tidal Basin. The first time I caught a fish in my life I caught it in the Tidal Basin. The Southwest that I remember was a very heavily ethnic neighborhood. The Irish finally moved out, the ones who got money, and the area was filled by Greeks, and Syrians, and Jews. A few of the old houses were still maintained by the Irish, and Germans, but most of the people that I went to Jefferson Junior

High School with were ethnic, as we refer to ethnics today, first generation Americans. We didn't know where we fitted. I'll never forget my father, every time he'd get Teed off at something the U.S. was doing, he'd tell me: "You Americans." He never considered me Greek. "You Americans do this or you Americans do that."

RITCHIE: Your father had a pushcart?

TAMES: Yes, he was a pushcart peddler. He was right there down at the Agriculture Department, down at 12th and B Street Southwest, which is Independence Avenue now. The streets were cobblestone in those days, and he used to push his pushcart next to the Freer Gallery of Art on 12th Street, where he'd park his little pushcart. I remember as a boy, eight or nine years old, also selling sodas from a newsboy's wagon. I'd put an icebox on it, and put some ice in it and some drinks, and I'd peddle them through the park. But the police didn't like us doing that in those days. They would chase us, or try to arrest us, or whatever. But that's what he did. He was a good man. He was a hard, harsh man, and he could never understand the freedom here, coming from almost a feudal society in Albania. And being a minority in Albania, in the Greek Orthodox Church. Whether our stock is ethnically Greek or Slavic or a mixture of everything is hard to say. The way you tell a Greek today is he proclaims himself a Greek and he goes to the Greek church. Then he's a

Greek, no matter what skin color he's got, or where he comes from, that's it. I'll never forget the first time I ever saw a Greek Orthodox priest out of Uganda, speaking better Greek than I did. He was a priest in the Greek church, missionaries had gone through there.

Yes, my father was a pushcart peddler, and I dropped out of high school in order to go to work. I was lucky to meet a person who was a stringer for Time, Inc. and was able through him to get a job. When he opened up a bureau, I became his office boy. That started me off. A whole new world opened up.

RITCHIE: Who was this?

TAMES: Harold J. T. Herran, was his name. He just died last year. He hired me as his office boy and told me what to do. He went to a great deal of trouble to hire me, because Time, Inc. didn't want me to be hired because I didn't qualify. I only had a tenth grade education, and they were hiring office boys who were graduates and who had masters' degrees in journalism from Columbia and various other schools. But he kept me on the payroll from the winter of 1938 to the winter of 1939, paying me out of petty cash, eighteen dollars a week. Then in the Christmas of 1939 he finally persuaded them to put me on the payroll.

That was still the Depression. Everybody today keeps talking about displaced persons, the homeless and so forth; we used to call them bums. They were around then, and they're going to be around no matter what you do. There are certain people that just cannot be helped. They love it, or do not do any better. Sometimes I think they really like it, being out there on the grates and begging. I kid with them, I went in the subway the other day at Farragut North and there was a panhandler there, several of them, with signs saying they were hungry. I looked at one guy, and said, "You've been here for two years, are you still hungry?" And as I came up, for the first time I saw one at the Sears, so it looks like they're picking the spots like we used to sell newspapers, when I was a boy. Once somebody staked a claim on some streetcar stop, it was their's. I came up and this bum was holding out his hand, with a sign that said "I'm hungry." I said, "I gave at Farragut North. I can't give at both ends of this thing!"

RITCHIE: You said that you worked for Marriott, was that at the old Hot Shoppes?

TAMES: Oh, yes. I went to work for Mr. Marriott carhopping on Connecticut Avenue, when he opened up that one on Connecticut Avenue. He had the root beer garden next to the Hot Shoppe. We boys--because I don't remember too many girls at that time, I guess they did have them, but mostly boys--were running

the orders back and forth. He would have the big root beer mugs that they serve the root beer in, iced mugs. We fellows got to be pretty hip to what was happening. Some of the young dudes would bring their girl friends to the Hot Shoppe and sit in the root beer garden and talk and carry on, the way teenagers do. They would carry flasks with them, so when they ordered root beer they'd say: "Two glasses of root beer, please." Then he'd give me a wink, which meant I put ice in the glass, but no root beer. I sell them that, and they'd give me a little tip for that, and they'd pour a little bit of booze in it and sit there and drink it. Well, you know, Mr. Marriott being a Mormon and against that, he would have fired us if he had known. Years later, I guess thirty years or more after I did that, I mentioned it to Mr. Marriott one time, and he just became very angry at me. I thought he was going to disown me, and this happened thirty years earlier!

The other thing we used to do, my friend Frank Aurito and I would work around the kitchen. In those days the Marriott had chickens. He'd cook them en masse and then warm them up as ordered in those ovens. They didn't have the microwave, but would warm them up. These were roasted chickens. Once a week we would steal a chicken and a pound of coffee, coffee was in bags. We alternated. I would take the coffee one time, and he would take the chicken. I'd take the chicken and he'd take the coffee. The reason for that was you had to put the chicken under your coat,

and you couldn't put it in a bag, because it could make noise. You literally got a greasy chicken under your coat, naturally you got some fat on it. We had to alternate anyway. And I told Mr. Marriott about that, and he got very upset. But I must say, I invested in the Marriott Corporation and it's done very well for me.

Yes, I worked for Mr. Marriott. He was part and parcel of the Washington scene, a true blue conservative--I mean a real conservative. A Mormon, one who lives his religion, and I admire people who do.

RITCHIE: A strict taskmaster, I gather, as an employer.

TAMES: Yes. He mined the University of Utah and got the best people out of it and put them in his corporation. He did very well by them, and they did very well by him. I know the present Marriott, Bill, Junior. I knew them when he was still suckling his mother. They're very fine people.

I've searched back in my mind as far as the members of the House and Senate and maybe it's because I always try to see the best in people, but I can't recall any incidents where some real bad ones were there. Of course there was Joe McCarthy, whatever personal devils were driving him. He was trying to become popular. I'll never forget those speeches he made about Communists and homosexuals in the State Department. He started

getting publicity and got on that treadmill and couldn't get off. As things got tougher, he took to drink. In fact, I've got one of his old flasks in my memorabilia. On the fourth floor of the Russell Building, near the elevator, is a small committee hearing room, where towards the end when he wasn't drawing the crowds that he used to, he would preside over a hearing and he would excuse himself and go into the men's room, which was next to the elevator, and he'd have a flask of booze up on top of the stall. One day, I was by there and looked up and damn if his flask was there. The hearing was not going on, and he was gone, so I went up and got it. I have it back there as part of my memorabilia.

The first time I noticed Joe, Senator McCarthy, was when there was hearing being held by the Senate Armed Services Committee on the Malmedy Massacre, and Joe came and testified in defense of the Germans. They were following orders, he said, you could not fault a colonel or a captain for following orders. Of course, our position was there were some orders you just couldn't follow. This was murder pure and simple. And Joe stomped out of the room on that. Then he picked up the other thing on the homosexuals. The thing I remember more than anything else. When he was being battered by the State Department, that there were not any homosexuals in the State Department, and that he should come up with a list and prove it. I was sitting there listening to this

and realizing that I had it in my power to make Joe a hero and to get him off the hook, because the task force that the State Department had put out to investigate his charges of homosexuals in the State Department, was headed by a homosexual.

Nobody knew it, but the way I knew it was simply because I had subleased an apartment from this man. I subleased an apartment up on Sixteenth and Calvert Street, and I kept the phone that he had. In those days, if you turned in your phone you had to justify needing a phone, because of shortages, so everyone just kept the same phone. And I would get these mysterious phone calls from various people, and sailors knocking on my door at all hours of the night. It doesn't take an Einstein to finally realize what was going on. This man apparently was a practicing homosexual. But I didn't say a word. I sat there, playing God, I guess, and enjoying it, as to whether I should blow the whistle or not.

Then of course there were the Army hearings. He had the Secretary of the Army up and was beating on him. Anyway, Joe had his faults. One of the things that I remember was when one of my photographer friends came to me and said, "Look, we've got a scheme. We can make a lot of money. We need ten photographers to come up with two thousand dollars each." That was an immense amount of money then. "We would go over to Alexandria, south of Alexandria is a piece of swampland that's for sale for half a million dollars. With twenty thousand dollars we can get an

option to buy that land. Then we can go to the federal government and get a loan to build an apartment there. Not only that, we can get a loan of five million dollars, and it's only going to cost four and a half million to build it--and instead of giving the money back to the federal government, we divide the money." The federal government still has a note for five million, see, at two percent or three percent, or whatever it was. I said, "You can't do that." He said, "Yes, because we're going to get ten photographers and Joe McCarthy is going to be our silent partner. He's going to be in on it, as one-eleventh of the ownership. He's going to make all the arrangements to push it through." I just couldn't believe it could be done. My mind just didn't work that way. But it was done by somebody else later.

Joe was very close to the photographers because he was a young senator, bachelor, and we had some bachelor photographers who had been around a good many years, many more years than I had. Particularly one was Henry Griffin of the A.P. He's still around. Then there were a couple of others, and they used to love to play the horses. Joe loved to play the horses, and every time he wanted to make a bet, he would tell one of the boys what horse he wanted, and they would call it in. They would go to the race track quite often together. So he knew the photographers. I don't know whether he came up with this scheme, or one of the photographers came up with it. But Joe was going to see it

done. And the beauty of it was, like I say, that not only did you build it, and own it, but you divided a half a million dollars and you had all this money. A lot of people became multimillionaires doing it. Another lost opportunity.

RITCHIE: Could we go back to when you started working for *Time-Life*. What was *Time-Life* back in those days? What was it like to be associated with it?

TAMES: Well, the bureau only consisted of six reporters, and they were hired in 1940. When I first started there was just Mr. Herran, and Mary Malloy and myself. Then Robert Sherrod came in. The man is ill, but he still gets around a little bit, and I think he might be a source for you. He was bureau chief for *Time*, Inc. during the war. He shared it with Harold Herran. We were in a brownstone at 1719 K Street. In those days, K Street was all houses, from Union Station to Georgetown. Beautiful old homes with big yards, with wrought iron fences around them. Of course, they were deteriorating, and had been deteriorating during the Depression and had been turned into rooming houses and into offices. Ours was the second floor. It wasn't even painted. We just moved in with a minimum amount of expenditures. My salary at eighteen dollars a week for a five day week was untold riches. And a two week vacation. I never had a vacation in my life.

I didn't know what to do. In fact, the first vacation I had, I hung around the office, I didn't know what to do. What does one do on vacation? I loved the work so much that I just couldn't stay away. We covered the town, but it was a lot easier, because there was a lot less press.

RITCHIE: Would assignments come in from New York?

TAMES: Oh, yes. They'd come down from New York, or we would generate assignments here and send them up to New York for suggestions. Suggestions for cover stories, and what have you, in fact that's how I got my start. Say we had a cover story pending, the writer would write a suggestion, and then they'd buy the cover story, then he would write it, and then he would also have to arrange with the subject for a photo session, so that the photographer could literally walk around him shooting his head and then send the pictures to New York so the artist could paint him. It was up to the reporter to write that his eyes are blue, and he was wearing a gray coat, and this and this and this. That way the artist could paint him. They hated to do that. Also, they would have to go into the files of the subject's wife and say, "Do you have pictures when he was on the Harvard rowing team?" And all of that, they'd go through the album. Then you'd have to take the album to the office, and have it copied, and bring it back. It was a lot of trouble. So I started suggesting that they give me those jobs, and that I could do it.

Meanwhile, I had bought a camera from Tom McEvoy, and I started making pictures of everybody in the bureau, just walking around. Nobody but nobody told you or gave you any lessons in photography. You had to learn by trial and error yourself. I learned by going in the darkroom and start printing, by watching and observing, and then started shooting. That's how I started. Next thing, I started suggesting stories, and I started trying to write. The way I would write--and I still write--I refer to the rhythm system. If it seems like its flowing, I just go. I was just at a fourth grade school the other day, photographing in Prince George's County, where some black students were being taught the parts of a sentence, and diagraming a sentence. I'm listening to them, and I can't do this today.

Well, I suggested a story one time on a new piece of art at the National Gallery. At that time they must have paid some fabulous sum, like half a million for it, fabulous sum. The gallery put out a release and they had a press conference, so I told the editor maybe I ought to go over. He said, "Go ahead." He didn't care, because in those days, any writer worth his salt who wrote for *Time* Magazine wrote for the front part of the book. Art, music, and leisure, books, all those back of the book sections were jobs for women or fags. Nobody worth his salt would touch that. This was an art story, so they said, "Sure, go ahead." So I went to the gallery, and I knew absolutely nothing

about art, absolutely nothing. Here I am in 1940, twenty years old, going over there, with a tenth grade education, to talk to the curator of the art gallery about a painting. Well, they had the painting up, and there was a press conference. I went just like the others, looked at the painting, put my hands behind my back, and leaned over, and looked at the painting. I didn't know what the hell I was looking at, but I did it just like the rest of them, and I commented. And they were just aflutter that somebody from *Time Magazine* would come there.

I went back and I had to write it. Well, I waited till the next day when the *Washington Post* and the *Star*, particularly the *Star* had a good article on it. I just took that article and sat down and started rewriting it. I only had to write two hundred and fifty words. I went in the files and got out a story that had been written on art by one of the other reporters before. I put it next to my typewriter, and I said, "Well, he's got five words in his first sentence, and he's got three sentences in the first paragraph. That's exactly how I'm going to do." I banged out five or six words there. Then I went to the next paragraph, and it took me all night to write it. I handed it in the next day, and John Denson who was bureau chief said, "Mmm-hmmm," and he took his big pair of scissors and cut into it, and rearranged it, and wrote a new lead on it, and sent it in with my name on it. God bless it, they used it. I went over and made a picture of the

painting, and they used that. They paid me thirty dollars. Fifteen dollars for writing the story and fifteen dollars for the picture. Well, from then on, man, I was a writer and a specialist in art!

Years later, some people commented on my work and said I used the triangular system of composition. I said, "Yes, I do." They said, "This is a Rembrandt technique." I said, "Mmmm-hmmmm." I don't know what the hell Rembrandt's technique was, but I accepted that for what it was worth.

One of the things people have often asked me is, "George, what was the most important picture you ever made?" That's a typical question. Well, I got to thinking, first of all it would have to be politics, because ninety-five percent of my work was here in Washington, and it had to be personalities. I started thinking of the Truman hearings, Watergate, Pearl Harbor, McCarthy, Estes Kefauver crime hearings, joint sessions, and so forth. And also I was there for the declaration of war in December, 1941. I was so young, I was frightened. I was angry, churned up. You just can't describe your feelings: angry at the Japanese, afraid for my country and particularly for myself. I was in the gallery, waiting for President Roosevelt to come up to request a declaration of war. The electricity in the air, you could just feel the tension. You could literally smell the tension. It reminded me of a high school locker room just before

the big game, the tension and the smell of bodies, the scurrying on the floor, and then the president came in and made his big speech. I thought, maybe that was it.

Then I thought no, inasmuch as I am a great one for theatre and I love grand gestures, it would have to be General MacArthur's farewell speech to the nation and the Congress to a joint session, for the sheer drama. Up until Colonel North, MacArthur held the great dramatic incident by any member of the armed services before the Congress. But he held the Congress for only one hour, whereas North went day after day, and managed to keep the Senate and the House on the ropes. As I recall, Joe Martin was the minority leader then, and he had arranged for MacArthur to speak. The tension was rising high. He was a proconsul, a hero, and that damned Truman had fired him. So we all went into Joe Martin's office because the *Times* wanted to do a story on Joe, and the preparations for the great visit. He hit the West Coast and came east like a Roman proconsul; every stop he made was even more of a celebration, the honors, just like a triumphant Caesar coming into Rome. Joe Martin was beside himself trying to figure out how to greet him when he came in at the airport, and what could we do.

So I'm in there with him, and I'm teasing him. I said, "I've got a great idea. What we should do, is he's going to come across the Anacostia, over the John Philip Sousa bridge, because he's going to land at Andrews Air Force Base." I said, "What you

should do is get a barge and load it up with some old, stale wine that they can't sell and pull it up into the Anacostia, and the moment the signal is given that he's coming, you just start pouring all the wine into the river, so it will be a purple vista as he comes across, befitting a proconsul." Joe said, "Aw, no, no. That won't do." So I said, "Well, I'll tell you what we can do then: we'll line up the members of the House and Senate on both sides of the bridge. We'll have them up on platforms, a little bit higher, and when he comes by, in his car, all the members will unzip and urinate a golden arch which the General can go under." He said, "I'm not in any mood for humor!"

Anyway, I made a few other suggestions, just to break the tension and get him to laugh, but he was not in the mood to laugh. He was really serious about this.

Then the great day came, and I was in the gallery photographing him, and he was really laying it on. I always felt that the way the Congress was, that all he had to do was say, "Follow me!" And they would have marched out of the chamber and walked down to the White House and stormed the gates. He was giving his speech, and all of a sudden he said, "Old soldiers never die, they just fade away. And it's time for this old

soldier. . . " And the House erupted, with senators and congressmen jumping up and shouting: "Don't go!" "We love you!" "Oh, no!" "Damn that Truman!" "Don't you go!" "We'll back you!" Finally he rolled his head up and said, "Old soldiers never die, they just fade away." And he just faded away.

We all went down afterwards to get photos of him leaving, and Joe Martin was there, and he gathered around the reporters, and one of the reporters asked him, "How did it go?" Joe Martin was a little short fellow with a round face, and he had a little grin just like a kewpie doll. He said, "Well, boys, there's only one thing I can say: there wasn't a dry eye on the Democratic side, and there wasn't a dry seat on the Republican side." So I think that was probably the most dramatic event that I covered, for sheer political drama. The general played that to the hilt, and that was his greatest moment. From then on he went downhill, including when he tried to run for the presidency and was defeated.

You know, we never know when to quit. We say we know when to quit, and I'd like to think I knew when to quit. The *Times* wanted me to stay on, but I decided forty years to the day was a nice dramatic way of departing. They said, "Can't you stay on a little longer?" I said, "Well, what can I do with this president that I haven't already done?" Of course, what with the television today, masses of press, it's hard to work. It's hard to get next to

someone. Everything is put on. Everything is acting. Everything is done for the camera. I see so much of that now, both in the Congress and outside the Congress. We're all acting.

I remember a comment by Harry Truman to me when I was in photographing him on the anniversary of his first year as president. Mr. /Arthur/ Krock had written a piece for the Magazine of the *Times* for which Mr. Krock received the Pulitzer--because you didn't get interviews with the president in those days the way you do today, when every other person interviews the president. I mentioned to him in passing, since we were talking, that I had been up to the organization of the U.N. at Hunter College, and that I had seen television for the first time in my life. I said, "Mr. President, that is really something." The main auditorium was too small to accommodate everyone, so they had these satellite rooms set aside with these TV screens. And I said, "Do you know, you could see better and hear better than if you were on the floor. Not only that, Mr. President, what struck me more than anything else was that members, and politicians have got to learn that they're on camera all the time." I saw some of those people doing some very personal things, scratching their crotch and picking their nose. He said, "Yep. It used to be to be a successful politician one had to have seventy-five percent ability and be twenty-five percent actor. I can see the day when that all could be reversed."

So, finis!

RITCHIE: Well, thank you. I'll be back next week with a transcript, and I thought we could talk more about some of the members of Congress you knew and photographed, and to look through some of your photographs as well.

TAMES: Okay.

End of Interview #1

George Tames
Washington Photographer for the *New York Times*

Interview #2:
A Creature of *The New York Times*
Wednesday, January 20, 1988

TAMES: Last night was the night I did the Dave Letterman show. That was a complete surprise to me to be asked. I had only seen that show once or twice and I felt that it was slanted toward the young college student and younger audience. To have a fellow like myself who's approaching seventy to appear, what could I say to these young ones? I'd start talking about Dirksen or Kennedy and they were not even born when I took those pictures!

One of the pictures that we were looking at, prior to going on, was a picture of Jacqueline Kennedy and the president. Letterman was tempted to make a few remarks along that line, and I was talking not to Letterman but to his producer, and I told him very simply that as far as I was concerned, Jacqueline Kennedy had paid her dues to this world when she stood tall during and after the president's assassination. I'll never forget her, as long as I live, the night when they brought the president's body back, and I was at Andrews /Air Force Base/, in the spotlights, agonizing, feeling loss at the death of the president, who I felt was my president. He was only two years older than me, and I felt that

for the first time we were going to take over, we young people were going to take over the world from the old ones. And here my president was dead, and who was going to succeed him but another old bugger, Lyndon Johnson. Here I was feeling sorry for myself and for the world, and the doors opened on the airplane's cargo side, and this forklift goes up to get the president's body, and there stood Mrs. Kennedy in the doorway, her husband's brains still spattered on her dress. I thought right away: there she is, the perfect symbol of all the women of the world from the dawn of history who have watched their husbands and sons go off to war, and have seen them brought home on their shields, and have lamented, and washed them, and buried them, and then carried on.

She was a symbol when we needed her. Occasionally she was theatrical, sure. The gesture of John-John saluting was Mrs. Kennedy's doing. Caroline kissing her father's casket in the Rotunda of the Capitol, that was her prompting. But those were gestures that we needed, and it really helped us in our grief. So as far as I'm concerned, I don't care what happened to Jacqueline after, or Onassis, or whatever she's gotten into. As far as I'm concerned, she was there when we needed. So I'll say, "Here's to you, Jackie. Grab life's brass ring and go ahead." That's the way I feel.

RITCHIE: Didn't she start out as an inquiring photographer?

TAMES: Oh, she started out as an inquiring photographer at the *Washington Times*, the Hearst Paper. Because Mrs. /Eleanor/ Patterson was an old family friend of the Bouviers', they gave her a job, just to have her do something. They made an inquiring photographer out of her. She was never one to mix with the other staffers. There was no question that she was on her own. There are very many amusing stories involving her. The first time that one of her pictures appeared in her column, the other photographers said: you should buy us a drink. From what I understand, she went out and bought a quart of milk, to tease these fellows.

I always had a lot of fun with her. She had her own favorite photographers and she had her own ideas about what made the best picture of herself. She followed pretty well in that line, and we just had to go along with her. She played the role of First Lady to the hilt, and used the children as part of the family image of the president. I'll never forget the pictures of her on the south lawn on the first snow, the first year they were in the White House, when she took the children out on a sled. She had pony and sled take them around the White House. That was a nice little gesture. Only Jacqueline could have thought of something like that. And the president indulged her. He was very proud of what she was doing. He looked at her and smiled, knowing that she was doing this to further his image also.

RITCHIE: Had you know them during their Senate years?

TAMES: Yes I had. I had known Jack Kennedy since he was a member of the House, and as a senator. I campaigned with him and knew him all the way to the presidency. I felt at ease around him. I used to save up all my raunchiest jokes so that I could tell him. He'd love to hear them, and laugh. I'd even try to top Dave Powers sometimes, and he had quite a few. But it was a way of breaking the tension, and also being able to make some pictures at the same time.

I never tried to contact Jacqueline Kennedy after the president was assassinated and she moved to New York, because she seemed to be involved with Onassis, and involved with fights with press photographers, and I figured she had enough problems without me showing up and breaking down and crying when we started reminiscing about the president.

But I did see her in New York--I guess it's been eight or ten years now--at a ceremony. I shook hands and we sort of brushed cheeks, and I told her what I had been doing, not ignoring her but that I just didn't want to add to her problems. She said, "You should have called me and come up. We could reminisce." She said, "Jack loved you so. He would come up to my room and say that you'd been telling him jokes, and that you were incorrigible, and he would just laugh." I said, "I hope he never told you any

of them!" She said, "No, he never told me those jokes." I said, "Well, thank God for little things." They weren't worth repeating, some of them.

RITCHIE: Was joking with someone like Kennedy a way of making him more at ease when you were photographing him?

TAMES: Oh, yes. Sure. With Senator [Howard] Baker, who's at the White House now, I used the same thing. I wouldn't call it a technique, because I loved to tell jokes, and I love to hear jokes, and I love to see people react to them. And I'm always telling them. They do break the tension, there's no question about that. It's something that I've always done. I like it. It's just my way of life. I think that's one of the reasons I've kept my sanity. Two things have kept my sanity: one has been fishing, and the ability to get out and fight the elements by wading in the ocean waist deep and walking for miles pushing against the water, all your frustrations and tensions leave you. The other has been my sense of humor. I can retreat into my sense of humor and how tragically funny some of the events are that are shaping our lives. Thus I'm able to get over it.

Sometimes I wonder if I'm oversensitive. I look at my colleagues and I don't detect externally the same sensitivity. I don't hide my emotions. I like somebody, I like them, and I guess I can count on one hand the people that I disliked. And even

those people that I've disliked I've found fine qualities even in them. Maybe that's one of my faults, that I see so much good in everyone. I'm willing to trust. I've been done in by it, and some people have fallen from my expectations. Maybe I've done the same thing, maybe I've fallen from others' expectations. But, by in large, it's been a good life. It's been rich, rewarding, stimulating. To be able to call the high and the mighty friends, that's pretty heady wine.

RITCHIE: I'd like to go back to when you were just getting started in the business. From talking to other people I've gotten the sense that for a lot of journalists, World War II opened a lot of doors. There was tremendous turnover and opportunities. You were just getting started at that stage.

TAMES: Yes, it was a great opportunity, there's no question about it. We were stagnant, the economy was stagnant, and there was just nothing, and then all of sudden: whamo it just opened up. There was demand for journalists like the demand for welders and every imaginable type of job. A lot of guys became writers who never thought about the business. A lot of photographers came out of the military. They were drafted and all of a sudden they said, "You're going to be a photographer." They handed him a camera and sent them to school for six weeks,

and he came out supposedly taking pictures. A lot of those fellows followed through. I knew a lot of them during World War II and afterwards. A lot of them fell by the wayside in the photographic business, and a lot were killed.

RITCHIE: And a lot of the regular photographers went off to become war correspondents.

TAMES: Oh, yes. The ones who were a few years older than I was at the time. When the war broke out, I was twenty-one. Although that's fairly old, at least I thought it was fairly old, but if you've never had the educational background, it was still as if I was a high school student, when you consider the formal education. There was never any question of sending me as a writer. And by the time I started making some small reputation as a photographer, the only thing I could garner was a few trips up and down the East Coast classified as a war correspondent on some of the ships that were bringing oil up from Venezuela and Aruba.

So, yes, the war opened up great opportunities, particularly at the *New York Times*. *The New York Times* had sold its news photo service to A.P. in 1941, in the spring of '41, because the photo end was losing money at that point, and they had been carrying it for many, many years back to before World War I, and they sold it just at a time when the need for pictures was great. If they had kept their service, the *Times* photo service would be rival right

now to A.P. and U.P., and I.N.P., which later folded and became U.P.I. When I came along, they asked me to open up a photo bureau in Washington, because they thought about the possibility of going national now that the war was over. They had seen the need for photos, and they thought this was going to continue. They tried it for five years, but the world economy was in such a state that there was just no way for us, *New York Times*, which was maintaining photo bureaus in Germany and in various countries of the world, to make any money. Not only were they not making any money, but they were losing money.

I'll never forget when one of our correspondents went overseas and went into Germany. He went into the *New York Times* bureau there, they just opened up a closet just full of German marks, because they couldn't take the money out. At least they could spend it; they could give it to the correspondents who wouldn't be spending U.S. currency. And there was no exchange really worth much.

So they decided to give it up. Plus the fact that the technical know-how was not there. The *New York Times* was trying to go national by using the wire photo machine, which is a technique that the *Times* helped develop. They totally owned a subsidiary which made the wire photo machines. The A.P. was using our machines. But the biggest piece of film that they could take was eleven by fourteen inches. The *Times* was thinking of printing

that way, but they wanted to print it full size. They didn't want to go with a miniature. Unlike today, they push a button in New York and our satellite printer plants in Chicago, or L.A. or San Francisco, wherever they are, will immediately start rolling the same time the presses in New York are rolling, with the same copy, because it's all been sent by satellite. If we had had this technique available in '46 and '47, I think the *New York Times* would have gone national. We would have been the first truly national paper, way ahead of the *U.S.A. Today*, and a helluva lot different, I can assure you.

RITCHIE: But during the war you stayed with *Time-Life*?

TAMES: Yes, I stayed with the *Time-Life* bureau during the war, and developed the job of *Time* photographer. I was just hustling as much as I could, going out with the other photographers, George Scatti, Tom McEvoy, and all of the others who had come down on various trips from New York. I'd help them by carrying their gear, and making myself as useful as possible in the photographic end, because I looked upon the photographic end as something that could be done mechanically, with the little instrument, at the same time I could stay within this business and find a niche for myself, which was what I was really doing. Who knows, if the opportunity to become the office manager or the janitor of a *Time, Inc.* bureau had come along, I probably would have jumped at it, being unskilled.

But by the same token, I've always figured that I would have somehow or another come to the top, or near the top, of any profession or any group that I would have done in. I always figured that if I had gone into the Mafia, like a couple of my friends--who are now dead, by the way--that I would have either been the top don or encased in cement at the bottom of the Potomac. I always felt that I should be out front. When we had gang fights, I was the one who was always getting hit by the bricks. I was up in front, I wasn't in back. I was up in front to throw the first brick, or to take the brunt or the curse, or what have you. I felt that way all my life. I've always felt that one of my roles was to be the shield for less fortunates. Either they were less fortunate because they lacked the guts or the desire, or they just simply like the New Testament were the meek who were going to inherit the earth. I wasn't ready to inherit the earth. I wanted a little something else first.

RITCHIE: I'd think that would be a good attitude for a photographer, who would have to get in right up front to get pictures, and to go where you might be wanted at times.

TAMES: Oh, yes. No photographer has ever won the Pulitzer Prize by sitting on the deck of a battleship and watching the action through a pair of binoculars. You have to be in the front. One of my best little friends, he's now dead--that's one of the troubles when you start reaching the Biblical four-score-

and-ten, that so many of your colleagues have left you. You start realizing that you're very fortunate to be here today. This poor fellow, we called him Buckwheat, he was in the navy. When they landed on one of the islands, he was a movie camera man, and he jumped into a shell hole, and then he got up and started running towards the Japanese lines, and all of a sudden he said he felt like he kept putting his foot in little holes. Finally when he looked down, half of his leg was gone. From the ankle down was gone. He was just bouncing along on a stump, he was so excited. It was only when he saw it that he felt the shock and the pain and he fell down. He put a tourniquet on there, and the medics got him. He got the purple heart. The war made a lot of heroes, and a lot of fellows who should have been heroes, but nobody heard about them.

RITCHIE: Did you find the same when you were covering political events? That you had to have some moxie to get inside?

TAMES: Oh, God, yes. If you weren't up on the political end of life, you'd miss it. You have to know the ballplayers. You have to know the scores, you have to know what they're batting. When a man comes up to bat, and he's a .210 hitter, you know how to play him in the infield. But when he's hitting .415, you know you've to back off, he's a heavy hitter. He doesn't hit

them every time, but when he does they'll come out your way. You have to know just exactly how much weight they're pulling, how serious these presidential bids are, and what chances they have of making the presidency, or the vice presidency.

I was in Chicago in '52 during the Republican convention when Eisenhower was nominated. I just happened to be coming out of the Drake Hotel when Richard Nixon pulled up in a cab and jumped out. "Hi, Senator," I said, "how are you doing?" He said, "Fine, how are things going?" I said, "Pretty good. They got this thing pretty well wrapped up. Ike is going to be the nominee, and they seem to be shuffling to find out who's going to be the vice presidential nominee." He said, "Who is going to be it?" I said, "Well, the betting seems to be /Henry Cabot/ Lodge." I think I mentioned one or two other names, but Lodge was the prime contender for vice president. But Nixon was not on that list. Nixon just nodded, and said, "Mmmmm-hmmmm." And he went on it. To this day, I've never asked him, but I always wanted to ask him, whether at that point he knew that he was under consideration or whether he was just feeling me out to see what I knew.

So you don't guess right all the time, but it's just like a commander going into a battle, unless he has some preconcept of what's going to happen and what forces he's going to face, he's out of it. You just don't show up with the army and say, "Well, what are we going to do?" I've seen photographers show up on a

scene and say, "Well, what are we going to do?" Right now, when everything is being arranged so, we've become like Pavlov's dogs. We look around, and if there's no rope to get behind, we're lost! We don't know what to do! We're being restricted so that we're just like the animals in the zoo. They tell me that the guerrillas in the zoo look so ferocious, and he has these iron bars between you and him. You think they are there to protect you from him, and he's inside. He knows they're there to protect him from the people. It's just a question of how you look at these things.

Photography is just like anything else. You have to know what you are doing and angle your way. The picture I made of George Bush, where he's leaning against the dais of the renovated old Senate chamber, where they reenact the swearing in of the senators. I showed up late, and Bush had been swearing in and reenacting these, he had about twenty of them he had done already, and he had about four or five more to go. He was getting a little tired, and the other photographers there were getting a little tired. They were there to photograph every one. I walked in and greeted the vice president, and we were standing around. Then another senator came in and I watched the vice president go through his act. Then he backed up and put his back up against the dais, sort of rested a little bit, crossed his legs, and was sort of thinking. Gosh, looking at him dead ahead it was a good

picture, but it didn't really mean much. But with my eye I was figuring, "If I went to the side, with those beautiful columns, and the juxtaposition of that, that would probably make a very dramatic shot."

So in order not to alert my colleagues, I sort of eased on over to the side a little bit, and when the next senator came in I did not photograph him. I went over to the side and I just stood there trying to be as nonchalant as possible. All of a sudden, after the ceremony was over, the vice president backed up and put his back against the dais, and crossed his legs, and sort of hung his head a wee bit, thinking. I lifted my camera, and wham, wham, I made two quick shots. The moment my motor went off, all the other photographers' heads popped up. When they saw where I was, and where he was standing, they all came running around to my side. Immediately, I broke the spell by yelling: "Mr. Vice President!" He looked up and he smiled, and broke that whole mood.

There's something else, how some people see things in pictures that even the photographer who made it doesn't see. When the vice president would walk toward the dais, he had the Bible in his hand, and he'd put it on the dais, and then he'd turn his back and lean against it. You could see the Bible there if you looked. I received a letter from a fundamentalist preacher from down here in Virginia, in which he asked for a copy of the

picture. I sent it to him, and he said the reason he wanted it was that Bush was going to be the next president of the United States, because he had God behind him. Look where the Bible was! Well, that was his interpretation. Be that as it may.

RITCHIE: Covering the Congress strikes me as presenting a lot of difficulties for a photographer. The chamber is off-limits to photographers, many of the committees met in closed session when you first came there. The corridors of the Capitol are very dark. How did you get started getting a feel for photographing members of Congress under those limitations?

TAMES: When I first started up there the whole Congress was off-limits. In '38 and '39 the photographers were literally sitting on their camera boxes on the Senate side of the Capitol, down by the steps, and watching members as they walked over from the Old Senate Office Building, which is the Russell Building today. Coming toward them, they would photograph them. All the corridors were off-limits. All committees were off-limits. Only at the discretion of the chairman were you allowed in, and you were allowed in for just enough time to make one or two shots and then get out. This was carried on all through the post-war period until television started breaking down the barriers. By that time, the still photographers had broken down the barriers in the majority of the committees, but there were still a few committees that were being chaired by senators who had been there quite a few

years, who did not want photographers to be operating freely. Judiciary was one of them. Ways and Means on the House side was another one. But with the advent of television, these committees have opened up.

In a way, I approve of the opening up of the committees, because I don't think there's any such thing as too much information in a democracy. This is one way that everyone can participate in a democratic system, by listening and watching the Congress in session. By the same token, there is a tendency on the part of some members, that is hard to suppress, to showboat. They will posture and they will become extra verbal, what do you call that?

RITCHIE: Verbose.

TAMES: They become more verbose. It's a tendency that I deplore. It turns me off. They're playing for home, I guess.

And you mentioned about the corridors--yes, it was difficult, much more difficult than today. Today: one, there is a lot better lighting; and two, the films and cameras are so much better. If we had had the films and cameras then that we have today, even if we didn't have the light, we'd have still been able to operate a lot better than we did. I understand that Eastman Kodak is coming out with a film that is 3600 ASA. Three thousand six hundred ASA! Do you know what you can do with that? You could walk out

in the middle of the night, anywhere, and make pictures as if it was daylight. You don't need any light, very low light, to shoot at that high ASA rating.

But slowly we worked on the chairmen of the committees. The old-timer photographers would work on the chairmen, or on the senior opposition party members. If the Democrats were in power, we'd always make a point of going over to the Republicans, so that they understood our problems. We tried to tell them that what we were doing was helpful to them, and to the legislative process. Slowly they started letting us in, to make the opening for three or four minutes, or until some member objected, or mentioned to the chairman that it was time for the photographers to go. We would pack up and go, there was never any question about it. But slowly they opened up. Foreign Relations was one of the first. Harry Truman, to his credit, his War Investigating Committee was open all the time.

We do sometimes make a theater of a very serious hearing; that's the nature of our business, I guess, today. But with new equipment, there's really no need for lights, there's really no need for that theatrical atmosphere. You can operate and work just as well without it. Then you come into the prima donnas of the networks. The moment they start getting long in the tooth, and want to look their best on TV, they need light. You have to have the flattering light. You can't stand in the corridor with

crisscrossed lighting, and you look like something out of the Hound of the Baskervilles. One of the ways we used to make pictures in the old days of a rapist or a murderer in a jail cell, and he agrees, instead of shooting straight on or holding the light high, so you're imitating sunlight, you hold the camera to your eye and put the light down by your crotch, or lower by your knees, and shoot up. Oh, that makes him look terrible! He looks like something sinister. Well, that was a technique. I might say, we never did that with any member of Congress. At least I never, and I don't recall any of my colleagues ever doing that, not even to Joe McCarthy or Bilbo, or some of the ones we started feeling real personal animosity towards.

By and large, what we had going for us was the fact that we were part and parcel of the media, but at the same time we were not crucifying the individuals by writing about them, or trying to dig up something that would be a problem. I've seen many a member, either in a nightclub or even in the Senate dining room having a meal with someone of the opposite sex, or with a lobbyist, or someone who would make him look bad, or raise a question. I have looked at them, and they have given me the slightest nod of their head: no. And I have just gone on. If I had been a reporter, I'm sure that I would have just barged right in and started asking questions. But I've always played it that way, as long as they're playing fair on the Senate floor.

It's just like /Gary/ Hart right now saying, "If I become president, I won't be the first adulterer in the White House." He's missing the mark there. That's not the issue at all. He's probably right, I'm sure he is, but just because he's going to pick someone whose personal social habits might be deplorable, that doesn't mean then that he'll drop himself to that common denominator and expect to be elected. It's one thing for me to vote for you when I don't know it, and another thing when I do know it. But I do want to know, and I'll make my own judgment. They say, "Well, you don't want to vote for him because he's a homosexual." I say, "Be that as it may. Are we voting for him to be school superintendent or scoutmaster? Or are we voting for him to be fire chief or to be a member of Congress? I want to know, and I want to be able to use my own judgment. After all, whether consciously or subconsciously, we are all preachers of our basic instincts, for want of a better word. I sometimes wish I had a better command of the English language. Sometimes I can't say some of the things I want to say, I just can't seem to be able to put it in words. But anyway.

RITCHIE: I was interested about the old-time senators from the '40s. I've seen a lot of the still pictures of them, and they always look very formal. I saw one of Tom Connally, where behind

him you could see his cigar on the edge of his desk. He had obviously taken it out of his mouth and stuck it back there so it wouldn't be in the picture.

TAMES: That's correct. He didn't want to be photographed with his cigar in his mouth. When he was chairman of the committee, we photographers once crowded around a witness and fired away with our flashbulbs. Finally the witness complained: "Mr. Chairman, can you get these photographers to stop? They are disturbing me with their flashes. They're blinding me." So Connally, with his cigar in his hand--he always kept it below the table; he would puff on it, and then drop his cigar down--he took his cigar in his hand and sort of waved at the photographers and said, "You photographers, you can click but you can't bulb!"

We photographers, when we had just a little time, when we were pressed, we had to get a little action out of the witness. We would say, "Sir, would you say something? Would you wave your arms?" They'd say, "What am I going to say?" I'd say, "Say anything, say walawalawalawala." And they'd go "walawalawala." And bang, bang, bang, we'd get them. But you only got one exposure off. You had it if you had it, or you if you didn't have it you didn't have it.

There were some witnesses that just wouldn't bend. Dean Acheson was one who was very proper, always dressed immaculately. His little mustache would twitch as he stood there in front of the committee. Al Muto, who was a photographer for I.N.P., was covering Dean Acheson one day. They were leaning across the desk, and saying, "Mr. Secretary, would you do something? Do something, Mr. Secretary. Make a gesture. Do something!" And he wouldn't do anything. He just looked at Al. Al had a short fuse anyway, he got so angry he finally leaned over and he grabbed his Speed-Graphic in one hand and with his other hand he started patting his Speed-Graphic, /bang, bang, bang/, patting it like that and saying: "Mr. Secretary" /bang, bang, bang/, "I make my living from this." /bang, bang, bang/. He said, "My wife and my daughter get their bread and butter from this." /bang, bang, bang/.

All the while, Dean Acheson was looking up at him. Then he said: "What do you wish me to do, take up a collection?" With that, Muto straightened up, and he was struck dumb. He didn't know what to say. Little Frank Cancellare, who was a U.P. photographer at that time, grabbed Al by the arm and said, "Come on, Al, let's go. You lost that round." Al went outside the committee room and said, "I am going to go back and take this

camera and smash it in his face! I'm going to wait till he comes out of that committee room and I'm going to deck him!" Frank Cancellare said, "Al, take it easy. There's no doubt in my mind that you can whip him physically. But please, don't trade wits!"

RITCHIE: Do you feel that politicians in those days were stiffer, and wanted to appear more formal?

TAMES: No, I don't think they were stiffer. It's just that the means of recording them was stiffer. I look back at some of the old five-by-seven inch pieces of film, and before that glass plates, in the five-by-seven Graphflexs. When they got the four-by-five Graphflexes they thought they were improving. And a Graphflex is when you look down into the hood. You're blind to everything else. You could get kicked by a horse and never know it, because you don't see anything coming. All you're doing is looking down into that one little reflex. It's pretty hard. A good example of this is Abraham Lincoln. Have you ever seen a picture of him smiling? No. And you're never going to see a picture of him smiling. Because in order for Matthew Brady to make an expression, he had a minimum of one minute. When you have a film where the ASA was so slow, you had to be in bright sun, for a long time. So politicians who were raised in an era of the first Kodaks, starting in the 1880, 1890s, and 1900s, in spite of everything, you got a blur if you moved too fast, even when you were using flash. So they had a tendency to pose. You had to

keep telling them to relax. That's why the advent of the 35mm camera, where they didn't even know they were being photographed, ended up making the best candid shots.

Show biz that has taken over politics by and large. It used to be that maybe ten percent of the members had an instinctive show biz mentality. General Patton, say for example, General MacArthur, Montgomery, various generals during the war between the states, the Confederate cavalry general who wore the feathers in his hat, they had a sense of drama, and by priming themselves and making themselves outstanding that way, their followers noticed them, and appreciated them. "Good old Monty," and General Patton with his pearl handled pistols, and the general in Korea who carried the grenades on his chest, a couple of belts of grenades. These people cause others to look at them. Your politician, in his way, is starting to learn to do that, to attract attention.

It's just Senator /Alben/ Barkley's favorite story about the mule skinner who was cited for being one of the humane of the mule-breakers, because he broke thousands of mules just by whispering into their ears. Barkley told this story, and I remember the first time I heard him I just broke out laughing. A delegation from the humane society went over to see him in action and give him a plaque. To demonstrate his technique, he went down to the paddock where the mules were, and the first thing this fellow did was to pick up a two-by-four, go to the nearest mule

and whop him across the head. The poor mule went down on his knees, and his eyes were crossed. Then he just gently picked up one ear and started whispering: "You want me to do this again?" And the humane society people were horrified. They said, "What are you doing?" He said, "Well, first I want to get their attention." Well, you get the attention of the people by posing this way.

RITCHIE: Did you find that there were some politicians who went out of their way to pose for the pictures, or tried to present this image?

TAMES: Oh, yes. They learned very early like Hubert Humphrey, he used to make a big joke out of it, we knew that. If you were in a group of five or six senators and we form a circle of pro and con, or a group talking, the ones on the end stand a good chance of being cropped out. So Hubert always made it a point of being in the center. He also made it a point of carrying the action by waving his arms and talking. That way, the reader's eyes go directly to the one who's doing the acting, or making the motions. The first thing you know, all the senators started learning that. So you'd get five of them waving their arms at the same time. They looked like a bunch of windmills in Holland. But Hubert always used to get in the center, or if he couldn't get in the center he'd go around the back and stick his head between two others in the center where they couldn't crop him out.

RITCHIE: I've heard that Nixon was a pointer, that he used to point his finger at people while he was talking.

TAMES: Oh, yes. In fact, he used to point and poke, poke you in the belly, right in your bellybutton. This way, you kept backing up. One time I was photographing Hubert Humphrey in President Kennedy's office, and the president said, "Wait till I'm ready, George." And then he said, "I'm ready now." He buttoned his coat, and then he went up to Hubert and took his finger and started poking Hubert right in the bellybutton. Hubert started backing up and saying, "For Christsake, Jack, what are you doing?" The president said, "Just a little trick I picked up from Nixon. Not only do you keep him off balance, but you upstage him." Then they laughed and I went on to make my shots.

RITCHIE: During the war you stayed with *Time-Life*, covering mostly Washington, and then in 1945 you went to the *New York Times*.

TAMES: Right.

RITCHIE: How did that switch come about?

TAMES: I had been doing some free lance work for the *Times* magazine, and I happened to be New York to see the people at *Time* and *Life* about my future. The war was over, and I was still an office boy. I was shooting pictures, but I was still classified

as an office boy. By that time I was getting paid forty-five dollars a week, but I was getting twenty dollars for every picture of mine that appeared in *Time* and forty dollars for every picture that appeared in *Life*. I thought I was the hottest thing that ever came down the pike, and I went up to ask about being put on the staff. I still had some enemies up there, people who just couldn't conceive of a person of limited formal education like I had to be able to come to the top without going through all the steps. I could understand how they felt. They didn't encourage me, but they didn't discourage me either over at *Time*, Inc. There was one fellow, Bob Boyd, who was picture editor of *Time*. He kept trying to get me on, but he couldn't get it through the hierarchy up there.

So I went over to the *New York Times*, to see them and meet some of the people that I'd been doing some work for. While I was there, I was offered a job on the *New York Times*. I told them that I didn't know, because I was a magazine photographer, and being a photographer on a paper would be a step down in the hierarchy. The magazine photographers were the tops. I don't know, I didn't particularly care for newspapers in general. Also, I had heard that they paid notoriously low. I needed to make at least a hundred dollars a week, because I was thinking about getting married. They said, "You're shooting pretty high." I said, "Well, I need that kind of money." So the next thing I

know, they offered me a job in the Washington bureau. I said, "I'll take it under the conditions that I get paid a hundred dollars, and I'll stay in Washington." Well, I got a call from the *New York Times* the next morning saying could I come back up to New York, because the publisher wanted to talk to me. I said, "Sure, if you pay the expenses." They said they would pay it. It cost around thirty-five dollars to go up and back on the train.

I went up to New York, and was ushered into Mr. /Arthur/ Sulzberger, who proceeded to talk to me about how the plans were to go national, and to put plants here and there and go be a national paper. What did I think of it? I said, I thought a hundred dollars was not too much money. We talked a little longer, and he said, "We'll let you know." So I got a call the next morning from the director of photography telling me that they were offering me a job at a hundred dollars a week, and that I was to have the title of National Photo Correspondent for the *New York Times*. I said fine. I didn't even know what a National Photo Correspondent meant, but it sounded good. So I accepted. I submitted my resignation over at *Time*, Inc., and boy they got upset at that. I said, "Well, I've been waiting all this time." They made me a counteroffer to keep me on. I said, "How much are you going to pay me?" They said, "We haven't got that down." Well, needless to say, they hired a photographer for two hundred dollars a week after I left. But they hired one who had a little

more experience than I did. But if they had paid me two hundred dollars I would have stayed there. I wouldn't have gone to the *New York Times*, and I wouldn't be here talking to you, I don't believe. Although, I don't know, you can never say, the varied experiences I've had.

Although *Time*, Inc. is a great company and has great people working for it, I think that by far and large the *New York Times* has the greatest reporting staff, and the greatest and finest writers and personalities that I have ever run into in my life. I was very privileged, at a young and impressive age, to literally sit at the feet of Mr. /Arthur/ Krock, Scotty Reston, Tom Wicker, Johnny Apple. These people have always influenced me, because I read the paper quite religiously, and know them by their writings. I've always considered myself a creature of the *New York Times*. If any species were to be created called creature of the *New York Times*, it would have to be me. I came to the *Times* without any background, without anything other than the fact that I could operate this little instrument called a camera. You could be the dumbest person in the world, but when you're immersed in this intellectual ooze that's the *New York Times* Washington bureau, you just cannot help acquiring some measure of culture and

education. It's impossible, if you don't get it through your brain you get it through osmosis. So I've always been very grateful to the *Times*, because looking back sometimes I was not quite as good or as productive as I thought I was, and they tolerated me.

RITCHIE: How different was it working for a newspaper than for a magazine?

TAMES: How different was it? Well, for one thing, in your analysis of the news, say if I made a statement to you on a Monday, *Time Magazine* would not try to print it until Friday for next Monday's issue. They had a whole week for this statement that you made to be developed. You know, many times the reporter has to run with something that is being told to him verbatim. He has to use his own judgment as to whether this is true, or what other source he goes into. The magazine reporter was a little more leisurely. He had time to pick up the paper the next day and see exactly how you wrote it, and what you thought, and got his own sources. You have a tendency to lay down on the hustle and bustle and the five o'clock deadline, when you've got a weekly deadline. It's a snobbish thing. Of course, we all want to be better or considered better than the other guy, and do our little thing.

RITCHIE: What about as a photographer?

TAMES: Photographers did the same thing. As a magazine photographer, say for *Life* Magazine, you're covering the world, you're covering all the figures, you're covering the whole higher spectrum of political life. The newspaper photographer, he wasn't covering anything. It's only been in the last twenty years that the *Washington Post*--less than twenty years--that they have had a photographer full-time at the White House or the Capitol. Jim Atherton is up there now, and he's been doing a good job for many years for them. They have a permanent person at the White House. They cover the State Department, they cover the national news. They've just covered the local horse races and handshakes and bar mitzvahs and what have you. You know, they didn't have the opportunity. You look down on somebody like that, just like the old foreign correspondents used to look down on the fellows who never went overseas. They talked to world leaders, woh, oh, oh.

RITCHIE: What kind of marching orders did you get? Did they tell you what stories were breaking that day and they wanted pictures to go with them? Or did they send you out on your own?

TAMES: On my own, right from the beginning. It was hard going. That's how I learned how to cover the news. I had to be able to read the papers, and I had a routine set up which I've only managed to break in the last year since I've been retired. That's simply you catch the eleven p.m. news, the latest breaking

news, you catch the seven a.m. news. You're on the Hill between eight and eight-thirty in the morning, and you go down to the Senate coffee shop and see which senators are there early. I used to be able to find Mike Mansfield in there, Senator Stennis, as a rule both of them were in there. Then Senator Aiken, and a few of the other old timers. I'd look and see if they were in conference or alone, and I'd sit with them and ask them what's going down today? Could I come in on it? What does it look like? That's the way it was done.

Then during the morning after you see what the senators are doing, you walk over to the House leadership, stick your head into the Speaker's office and see what's happening over there. You get a feeling of how the legislation is going. But if you expect to sit back and have some one tell you, "Go over and make a picture of the Speaker, because they're going to be voting today," you're not ahead of it. You're lost. It's already happened. I've had photographers show up on the Hill at nine-thirty, quarter of ten, asking me what's happening, and I've already done my job. I've already covered the main story of the day. The members are usually moving a lot faster than the average person gives them credit for.

RITCHIE: So you have to anticipate what the reporters will be working on?

TAMES: Oh, yes. In fact, many a time I've told the reporters what's happening. I discovered early that the *Times* would not run a picture of mine unless they had a story to go with it. Today they are more likely to run one without a story with it, however, I would say: "This is what's happening, and I've just made a picture of so and so." I've gone into Senator Baker's office when he was Majority Leader and asked him about certain events. He'd say, "I haven't even thought about that." I'd say, "You'd better start thinking about it, because it's coming up!" I was anticipating. You could say things to him or to anyone and they knew that you didn't mean it disrespectfully. You were just anticipating. Once you get a reputation like that around town, they're more likely to open up to you anyway.

And the fact that I'm with the *New York Times* didn't hurt me, I assure you. There was never any doubt in my mind that if George Tames had been representing the *Alexandria Gazette*, he never would have had the entree that George Tames of the *New York Times* has. I've always felt that George Tames was just the prow of the icebreaker, and that the *New York Times* was the full weight of the ship behind me. That's how I got in. Some members of our profession acquire the feeling that it's they themselves that are doing all these marvelous things, and the fact that they are with the *New York Times* is incidental, or any other papers, that it's just them. But they soon discover, once they've gone, that the

phone stops ringing, the invitations stop coming, and who they thought were friends of their's were really just acquaintances. They were just tolerating you, not only for what they could get out of you, but what you could do to them--what you could do for them, and what you could do against them. Thank you.

RITCHIE: Well, thank you.

TAMES: I don't know, this is just rambling.

RITCHIE: No, no. It's a matter of one thought associating with the next, and I'm getting a very good picture of the time and place, and what the work was like.

TAMES: One of the things that I remember more than anything else is the wonderful times we had at the Senate dining room, at the press dining table. These were the years from '48 up until '61 or '62, when I used to make a practice of eating lunch every day at the Senate, at the same time, at the same table, at the press table. It was a wonderful, stimulating event, because of the jokes, the information. Also we were served by Mr. King, the waiter, who was a wonderful person, sweet tempered. He knew that I liked lemon meringue pie, and ever Friday, the Senate Bakery would bake these wonderful lemon meringue pies, and Mr. King would always take a big slice of one and put it aside for me. I would call him from wherever I was in the country because I knew he was expecting me there on Friday. I'd say, "Mr. King, I

won't be in today, you better sell that piece of pie." He'd say, "Mr. George, you're not going to be in? Are you sure you're not going to be? I'll save it for you. Even if your late, I'll put it aside, you just come on up." I'd say, "I'm in California, I will not be in." "All right, Mr. George, I'll see you next week." Mr. King was an ex-vaudeville hooper with his sister, who in his latter years got a job as a waiter there for the press table. He was beloved by everyone. In fact, if you go up to the Senate dining room, there's a plaque on the wall, a tribute to him signed by quite a few members. He was a great person.

I think that's something else--the staff, the policemen, everyone was on a much looser basis. The awful feelings of tension, and the security, it's an entirely different atmosphere now. I just don't like it, but I don't know what to do with it. I was walking by the White House the other day, and I see they're putting barricades up in the street. What are we coming to? Antitank barricades facing the White House. Next think you know they'll want to build a Kremlin. They'll want to put a wall all the way around Lafayette Park and the president's house and we'll be like the Russians. I don't know what the answer is, but I feel that I was there at the right time and was able to record in my own way the events.

I've always felt very close to the presidents, from Truman to Carter. I felt less close to Roosevelt, who was my first president, and to Reagan. Coming out of California that way, I never got to know him, just a few times at conventions. Here it's been seven years of Reagan's presidency and I still don't know him. Here's a president who goes every weekend--every weekend--to Camp David. He has been away from Washington more than any other president that I have had anything to do with. I just wonder what he does up there, other than look at the beautiful scenery. I know Camp David. I've walked that whole area many, many times before World War II, because a friend of mine's grandfather owned about twenty acres up on that mountain. We used to camp out there, so I'm very familiar with that area. I've always wondered what he did up there.

The *New York Times*, ever since I've been on the staff, starting with Truman, has asked every president to list their ten favorite books. Which books are your favorite? Which books do you consider the ones that have shaped your life? Or have followed the general trend of your thoughts? You find out a lot about a person from what books they read, or which ones they like and which ones they keep around and pick up again and read later, or remember a passage from. But we never did that with Reagan.

There's a beautiful view up at Camp David. If I recall, we used to climb up on a rock overlooking the little valley there. On your right is Frederick, and the whole wide panorama of the trail through the Cumberland Gap, where so many people went west in the early history of the United States. And over on the left, if you looked on a clear day, you could see Gettysburg, where the high tide of the Confederacy finally broke on that hill there, Little Round Top. And I always wondered, what does Reagan think when he sits up there? Does he wonder: where do I belong in all of this? How do I fit in this? What will history think of me? Does he sit on a rock or a stump, reach in his back pocket and pull out a copy of his favorite poet, and dream a bit, muse a bit, and then be recharged and come back Sunday afternoon to Washington, ready to tackle the world. But I still don't know him. I felt I had a handle on everyone of them, including Roosevelt, but not this guy.

RITCHIE: He's that much more removed from the press?

TAMES: He's not that removed from me, and he's pleasant to me. I can't say that he's been mean or refused any demands, or refused any requests--you don't demand anything of the president. Although sometimes it sounds like we're demanding, we

really mean it to be a request. "Would you?" Sometimes we forget the word "please" in the push and shove. "Mr. President, do this, do that." He's never taken us to task, in fact, he's never showed any passion. Maybe that it. You have to have some passion.

RITCHIE: You told me a story once about trying to get him to show you how he made a decision.

TAMES: Yes, was that on the tape?

RITCHIE: No, that was before.

TAMES: Oh, gosh, that was a good one. I happened to remark to one of our reporters on the *Times* about this. He brought it up at a meeting and they decided to do it. They called it "The Mind of the President." A reporter went over and interviewed the president, and he came back shaking his head. But he sat down and very dutifully wrote a piece for the Magazine of the *New York Times*. So they decided that I should go over and photograph him, sort of try to get a mood picture. Ever since I made that picture of Kennedy /"The Loneliest Job in the World"/ every publisher in the job always wants me to go back and make one like it. It's not there.

I put a request in, and I got a call back from Weinberg, who said, "You've got eleven minutes." That's a lot of time. I said, "I want a one-on-one." They said sure. I went over and I took an

assistant with me so he could put up some lights. The first thing that happened when we walked over, there were three people from the press office in the room, one TV crew, and one still photographer. A total of nine people; ten with the president. How can you get a one-on-one? I was trying to get a mood picture, trying to talk him into something. Anyway, I finally said, "I'm ready." And I had taken his chair and pulled it away from the desk, and had it by the window. They called him in, and he walked in very briskly. The first thing he does is grab his chair and pull it to his desk. He sits down and starts looking up and me and giving me one-liners, bing, bing, bing. I'm laughing, I'm loving the jokes. I made a few shots of him smiling like that. Finally, we just weren't getting anywhere, because he just kept the jokes going. I said, "Excuse me, Mr. President. This is a very serious piece we're doing. It's called the mind of the president. The whole concept of it is how you make decisions. How do you come to conclusions? When someone presents a very difficult position paper to you, and you read it, how do you make up your mind? Do you scratch your chin? Do you suck on a pencil? Do you get up and walk around? Do you walk out in the garden and check the roses and come back in? How do you do that?" And the whole time he was looking at me. /Makes expression./

RITCHIE: With sort of a blank stare?

TAMES: Just a blank stare looking at me. Then when I stopped, he said, "I never do any of those things." So I said, "Don't do it for me." And I turned to the press officer and I said, "Thank you, I've got enough." He said, "You've got five more minutes." I said, "I don't need it. This is all I'm going to get out of this." We started breaking down our gear, and I learned long ago that like a good soldier you never fire your last rounds in your chamber, you always keep a couple just for emergencies, and that as you back towards a door you keep your camera ready. I was just backing away, and backing away, and shuffling my feet, and delaying the departure as long as possible, so that I was literally the last person out the door. As I did so, he had been reading while we were packing up, he picked up the papers, and stood up, and faced the window, and just started flipping them over. From the door I made the shot that we used. It was like pulling teeth.

We ran it full page in the *New York Times* with our story. The *USIA America* magazine called and they used it full page for the Russian edition. They used it everywhere. There are not that many real candid shots of this president, and it's so unusual because here is a person who has been in the movies and the theatrical end of the business for so many years. He cannot get into a natural looking situation. Everything looks contrived. He doesn't have any passion. He doesn't seem to project

forcefully. I haven't read anything that he's written that has really stirred me or set me afire. Sometimes I wonder, maybe the Oscar nominating committees were correct. He's never given an Oscar performance, whether as an actor or as president.

Well, that's one man's opinion.

End Interview #2

George Tames
Washington Photographer for the *New York Times*

Interview #3:
The View from the Press Gallery
Tuesday, March 8, 1988

TAMES: We were talking about reminiscences of Southwest Washington, and my family life --why Sam Lyons became like a son to my mother. He's not that much older than me. He's about three years older than I am. He was a heavy drinker, and Mom used to be very upset about that, and try to break him of the habit. But he and my father got along great, because my father used to make booze in the kitchen, Mastika they call it Greek, by cooking it on the stove. He and Sam would have a drink after he'd just finished making the stuff, when it was just about an hour old, and used to smooth it off with a little licorice.

When Sam went into the military he went out to Texas for tank training. It was dusty, and he wrote back that he sure could have a drink, but there was absolutely no way to get any booze. So my mother and I conjured up an idea. It was Easter time, and the Greeks make this special bread for Easter, in which they shape it into a cross, and there are eggs in the four corners and one in the center. This symbolizes the Easter resurrection. She made an extra big one, and I hollowed it out. In those days there were no

plastic bottles, so we had to use regular glass bottles. I put two pints--or half pints, I don't know which now--in the bread, and stuff it, and put it in a box and marked it: Easter bread, eggs, be careful, stamped all over it, and sent it to him in Texas.

Well, it almost got there intact. In spite of all the cautions on it, apparently the bottles broke there in the camp. They got to the camp okay, but apparently they broke in the camp, and the stuff just permeated this bread. Sam very gingerly picked out the broken glass and then cut up the sopped up bread into small squares, just like they serve at a Greek Orthodox service. At the end of the liturgy, if you're not prepared to take communion, then you just simply receive a piece of bread at the end. Everybody files past the priest and received this bread, and it's called, which symbolizes the body of Christ. So he cut it up into squares like that and then called his friends into his tent to participate in this Greek service that he was having, and it was a great success. Everybody was taking it, and everybody was getting bombed off eating bread! The word got around so that one black GI tried to join in with them, to go in to participate, and he was stopped by a sergeant who asked him where he was going. He said he was going in to participate in this Greek service. The sergeant said, "You don't look Greek to me." He said, "I am." The sergeant said, "What is your name?"

He said, "Tyrone Popanopolis." The sergeant, "Well speak some Greek to me." And the guy said, "Happo pie pine happo pie kikki." The guy said, "Pass, Greek!"

Sam always thought my father missed his calling. Instead of being a pushcart peddler in the United States he should have had a cottage industry of making this Mastika-soaked bread. It would have been a terrific hit, he said. He knew he would have bought quite a few loaves of it. He said it was the only way he knew that he could drink and eat at the same time, and keep it down!

RITCHIE: And Sam will be one of the speakers at the American Legion tribute to you this week?

TAMES: Yes, Sam's going to be the lead off speaker. He's got a few things to say. He reminded me about the time Sam had written a story about Cordell Hull's Under Secretary of State, Sumner Wells. In his story, Sam wrote that Sumner and his wife liked to bathe together in a huge double tub. They faced one another and bathed and talked. So I went over and asked to take a picture. With great delicacy and diplomacy, I said I would agree to shoot them from the back. But of course, naturally, I didn't get the picture. But at that time that was really risqué. The whole idea of a husband and wife bathing together was really a little off the wall.

Well, I've been thinking more and more about this dinner, tribute as they call it. It's a tribute to me in name, however I think it's more of a symbol for all the first generation of immigrants who are in this great country of ours and the opportunities that we shared, and that still continue as we see in this latest wave of Vietnamese, and Eastern Asians, and South Americans. The dream is here, and it is possible. I'm going to use an example of that. One of the young men, a young black whose name is Ron Thomas, is going to be there as our guest. Three years ago that young man was bagging groceries down here in Safeway. He was putting some groceries in the trunk of our car and saw some of my gear, my lights than things, and he asked my wife if she was a photographer. She said, "No, my husband is." He said, "Well, I've always wanted to be a photographer and I wonder whether he would talk to me." Fran said, "He talks to everybody. He hasn't refused to talk to anybody yet! So you just come on up, make an appointment." He called me, and he came in with his pictures. He showed me what he had done, and what his ambitions were. I could sense that his command of the English language was not on par with his age, that although he was in his twenties he was speaking like a nine or ten year old in the normal white schools that I have gone to. I could sense that he didn't

have the qualifications, or a background of any kind for photography. I looked at his pictures and I encouraged him, but at the same time I told him: don't give up his job bagging groceries if he expected to eat.

About six months later he came back, with much improved quality of work. Then I sent him back, and gave him some encouragement. I told him that if he could spare the time, and if he wanted to follow me in the summer, he could follow me around, and see how I worked. I could give him some tips and explain to him what I was doing. He did so, in fact, he stayed for a whole year. We literally had to drive him away because of the union problems. We either had to drive him away or hire him, and the *Times* was not about to hire him. So he went off on his own. To make a long story short: in three years he went from bagging groceries to having an exclusive interview with the president of the United States. So it can be done, but you have to work hard and you have to put your nose to the grindstone and apply yourself. But it can be done. He'll be right there in the audience and I might even ask him to stand.

RITCHIE: Is he working as a photographer now?

TAMES: He's freelancing around town now. The ironic thing is that he's recommending me! That's what really gets me! He called me up one day and said, "Look, I can't do this job for this

advertising agency in California, but when they call, don't sell yourself cheap, because I've been charging them a thousand dollars." I haven't charged a thousand dollars for an assignment in my life! With all the years I have! So I'm selling myself cheap, I don't realize what the market is out there for the talent.

I've helped him, and I've helped others. I look to Ron Thomas and to Al Shuster, who is now foreign editor of the *Los Angeles Times* as two of my greatest proteges. Al Shuster went from my office boy, carrying my gear--I hired him for the *Times* when he was seventeen as my office boy. I've helped quite a few people. I've never been reluctant to let anybody know what I know. Unlike when I started, when everything was kept as a close guarded secret, I cut loose. I figure, if I let you know everything that I know, I can still beat you, because you're just trying to catch up to me. Unless you take that quantitative leap like the Japanese, you're always going to be right there. You've got to think. That's the big thing I have found about the young people today, most of them, they're content to be "as good as." That really guts me.

RITCHIE: But not "better than."

TAMES: Not "better than." Those are the three words that really gut me. God almighty, if I here those words, "as good as," I'm ready to fight or to turn around and walk away. It is just not in my nature to be that way. If you're only as good as someone, don't even say it. It's just like winning second place in a photo contest. I said it's just like kissing your sister. It's very pleasant, but it doesn't lead to anything.

RITCHIE: When you have someone like Ron Thomas in tow, what kinds of things would you tell him? What kinds of things would you try to train him to think as a photographer?

TAMES: Basically, more than anything else to young ones, and particularly minorities who have been depressed, like the blacks, they have a built-in inferiority complex: you have to take command. The moment you work into a situation, and you are a photographer, you are taking over. You are in command. You are the one who is telling them what they are supposed to do. You do it either by direct command, if you can get away with it, or you do it by showing, gently. If people have their own ideas about what they want and how they look, you say, "Fine, I'll do everything that you say, but afterwards I want to do it my way, and then we'll let the editor or let you decide which one is the best." It satisfies me, it satisfies you. So you've got to be able to work with people. This is one of the secrets of my success with the members of Congress. I have always been very,

very careful about overstepping my bounds. I have always prided myself that I am able to go to the limit before I have to back off, and know when I'm approaching the limit in pushing for any particular thing, and then back off. That way I maintain friendships. Ah, well.

RITCHIE: I wanted to show you one of your pictures, speaking of first generation immigrants. Do you remember this picture you took of Harry Bridges, ten years ago, 1978? Bridges gave a talk at the National Portrait Gallery.

TAMES: I'll be damned, yes.

RITCHIE: The reason why I brought this photograph is because I was one of the people attending that conference, and it was the first time I met you. I think you were the only photographer who came to that meeting.

TAMES: That's right.

RITCHIE: And while he was giving that speech, I recall you moved silently around the room, and there were balconies up above and every once in a while you would appear on a balcony and snap a picture, and then come down below. You must have snapped thirty or more photographs, it seemed to me at least as I was watching.

And then the next day this picture of a cocky, self-assured looking Harry Bridges appeared in the *Times*, just the right pose, the chin up in the air.

TAMES: There again, see I had photographed Bridges before, usually in a more defiant character at hearings, or maybe at a strike or in some other situation. He had mellowed, I guess we all mellow as we get older, at least we're supposed to. Anyway, although he had mellowed, he was still defiant. He knew his own mind, and he represented his union well. It's amazing that you should bring this here, because I had forgotten about that incident, yet I remember it now very well. I used to enjoy those lectures over at the Portrait Gallery. Gosh, maybe I ought to go over there and give one.

RITCHIE: That's true, that lecture was called a "Living Portrait." He was telling his life, and they were videotaping it, and you were photographing it at the same time. I wondered the next day when the article appeared in the paper, I wondered out of all the pictures that you took, how do you choose the "right" one.

TAMES: Well, there again, I don't remember this incidence, but there are very few pictures that you can show me that I don't remember making them. I picked this one because I thought it fitted into the article physically, that is the picture itself, and it also gave a little bit more than just the--what shall we

call it--well, it gave more of a portrait of him, still a defiant, chin up guy. I'm sure that this was made just at a moment when he was making some outlandish statement and was reacting to the audience. I knew he loved to make statements where he knew that the audience would respond. In this particular case he threw that chin up. Also what attracted me at that time, if you will notice, is this very outlandish tie that he was wearing, which I thought was part of his defiance, and I wanted to show that.

RITCHIE: Even the article mentions how "dapper" he was dressed that day, but the time really fills up that picture.

TAMES: Yes, it's the most dominant thing there. It looks like a dinosaur's tongue or something, it's a huge thing.

RITCHIE: And he's obviously standing on the podium, so you're shooting up at him.

TAMES: Yes, he's on the podium and I'm shooting up, so this is a reaction. I caught him just at the moment when there was a reaction by the crowd, or he was listening to a question that was being asked that he didn't particularly care for, someone was reminding him of something that he didn't particularly like. He threw that chin up in a defiant sort of way and semi-closed his eyes, as if he was thinking, but really that's a gesture of defiance. Closing your eyes, you're not really thinking, you already know what answer you're going to give. It's just part of

the acting. You know, a good orator, so much of it is acting in order to grab your audience, or grab your committee. I've seen it happen so many times. Then again you get some people who are so intellectually bright, who just cannot seem to do it, it's amazing. /Paul/ Sarbanes is one, Senator Sarbanes. Senator Sarbanes is a very, very intellectual man. He's very well read, and he can write well, but God bless it, he can't give a speech! He cannot project that. Sometimes I think, God, I wish I could give that speech for him! It's been unfortunate that we have had members of Congress that way. The Republican chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee two years ago. . . .

RITCHIE: Percy or Lugar?

TAMES: /Richard/ Lugar was very smart, very intellectual, a very fine senator, but he doesn't get the press. He doesn't get the attention. Yet he's well read, he writes well. He makes sense in committee hearings. We have a tendency. . . I think one of the greatest inventions is the world has been this automatic clicker /remote control/ on tv. You sit back there and the moment somebody says something, click, you click them right off. The moment somebody says Lugar, you have a tendency to think of a 9mm pistol and click you cut it off. That's a shame, but that's what happens.

RITCHIE: I wanted to ask you again about a picture like this one of Bridges, where you've taken twenty pictures or more of one incident, did you normally just present one to the Times, or did you give them a sampling?

TAMES: No, no. Normally we tried to give them three: one, a single column; two, two columns, if it's one person; and then three is just a straight, dramatic head, just a big head. This is a one column deep, so it could go either way. In fact, sometimes we get away with just two pictures by giving them a good deep one column this way, so they can come in and cut the head off and just use the head if they decided that that's what it calls for in this space. It depends on the dressing. Also, in a case like this where it's a feature story, a feature picture, you also try to dress the page. In other words, if you have two good pictures of him, one looking right and one looking left, you send them both, because you don't know how it's going to look. In this particular case, he's looking to the right of the reader, which is the correct way, into the story. Now, if you had this flipped and he's looking off the page, it would be distracting, and they wouldn't use it. See, they wouldn't use it. Now, of course in the old days, in a case like that and it was the only picture they had, they would just take his head and flip it, and you wouldn't know whether it was the right or left. But if they left the tie in and a few other things, you can distinguish that they are

flipped. But you usually try to give them three: looking right, looking left, and a good two-column in the center. Sometimes more, depending, but usually right about that.

RITCHIE: I wondered, did you ever regret, sometimes, when a picture you had taken wasn't used?

TAMES: Oh, yes, many times. Of course, that was my fault. Unlike the young ones--see, I had an advantage and a disadvantage. I never worked in New York, I worked in Washington, so I didn't know how the picture desk worked. Now, many times I made pictures down here that were exclusive, that were very newsworthy and on top of it, and I would send them up to New York and they never would get used, because the people in New York didn't recognize what the story was about, and they didn't recognize how important this particular picture was.

I made a picture when a Republican candidate eight years ago dropped out of the race. He was a Congressman.

RITCHIE: Phil Crane?

TAMES: Not Crane, no, it was another one. The one who was a very religious one. He had an office on the first floor of the Longworth Building. Oh, God, what was his name?

RITCHIE: He was running for president?

TAMES: He was running for the nomination, and he backed out right on public tv. I happened to be there. I followed him that day. I didn't know that he was going to say this, but the moment he finished on tv, the McNeil-Lehrer Report, they offered him a cup of coffee, and he cupped it in his hands and was bringing it up, and was blowing into it. The look on his face of weariness and resignation--I sent that up. Then I sent a regular talking shot, when he actually made the announcement on tv. Well, I didn't call New York. I sent them two, I should have only sent them one, of him blowing into the coffee, because to me that was a more dramatic shot. But they went with the talking shot. Yeah, I remember that, I never forgot that one.

RITCHIE: What is the role of the photo editor? Your photo editor gave you the award at the Kennedy Center the other night, and that raised a question in my mind: what's the relationship between the photo editor and the photographer.

TAMES: Well, of course, there are a lot of assistants. She's the picture editor, and then there are editors on the various desks. The *Times* now has gotten so big that they have regional editors. They have one that does sports, one that assigns photographers to travel the country, or picks up freelancers, then there's one that does the domestic, metropolitan area, and so forth. But the relationship between the two is that you shoot it--and here in Washington we have the advantage that we

print it and then we send what we like. Now, of course, if you send up your raw film, or contacts, or just contacts, then he or she will look at the prints and decide which picture they like. It should be a very close relationship between the two, so you could call up and say, "Look, this is what I think," and let them decide. See, we're looking at it from the picture point of view, and they're looking at it from the page, how does it fit and how does it dress up the rest of the page. Unless the picture is so outstanding that the picture is used and then everything else has to be worked around it. We've had occasions where they have said, "We're holding that story because we need some art with it. Go ahead and make something on it." And we try to do what we can on that.

RITCHIE: Have you ever tried to second-guess the photo editor? You know that they like certain types of pictures, and you aim for that?

TAMES: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Many times. The late Lester Markel, the editor of the Sunday department of the *New York Times*, who had a finger in everything, used to pick the pictures for the *New York Times* magazine cover, and so forth. I knew that he used to love silhouettes, and he used to love chandeliers and mirrors, reflections, that type of thing. I used to always try to do something like that, that would please his eye. Silhouettes particularly, I'd always try to get something silhouetted to make

it stand out. Yeah, you do that. You learn to work with your editor. He's the final arbitrator of what goes in, so you have to have a good relationship. You can call up and ask, "Why did you do this?" "Why didn't you do that?"

Sometimes they'd leave things out of captions. We did it just recently. We had a piece on the State Department's lawyer, the counsel for the State Department. I got a very nice, moody shot of him, leaning up against his desk, in front of his desk, with his legs crossed, and some papers under his arms. He had folded his arm, his flag was over his right shoulder, and there were some pictures on the wall. It was a beautiful picture, but he's looking at a tv set. I made the tv set prominent in the foreground, shot so that on the left you could it was a tv set and he's looking right at it. The caption read, "Sawyer in his office today." Well! And I went to great lengths to describe the fact that he keeps three tvs going on in his office all the time. One on CNN for the debate in the House and Senate, and one for any committee hearings that are going on. So anytime something attracts his attention, he can zap in on it. We failed to mention it. To me, that took away from the whole picture.

Then another thing we had, just recently, I made a picture of the Secretary of Defense, /Frank/ Carlucci, up with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral /William Crowe/. They were testifying before the House Armed Services Committee. Just before

they started testifying on the Defense Department budget, just two days previously the Secretary of the Navy /James Webb/ had resigned, and it was still hot news. So the Admiral leans over and puts his hand on the microphone and leans in and whispers to the Secretary: "What's my answer if they ask me about why the Secretary of the Navy quit?" And Carlucci laughed and said, "Just keep your mouth shut." Well, I put that in my caption, and we didn't use it. But we used the picture of his holding his hand over the mike.

RITCHIE: Are there many occasions when you feel that the photo editor has a particular slant, or a dislike of people or groups? Do they ever choose pictures out of a particular bias?

TAMES: Well, yeah, they do have some. But I never catered to their whims. If it's there, I'll do it, but I'm not looking for something just to justify some preconceived idea that somebody might have.

RITCHIE: I don't know of any examples on the Times, but I know that people have complained that some newspapers run unflattering pictures of Republicans or Democrats, or this politician never gets a good picture in that paper.

TAMES: The only reason why he doesn't get a good picture is because he doesn't make a good picture! Some people make good pictures, and some don't. It's just a quirk of the camera.

Sometimes I will look at people through my lens, and then look at them with my eye, and look through the lens again, and it seems like it's two different people. It just does something. We call it "photogenic." Well, there is something there. Some try all their lives to get something, and they never get a good shot, or never have anything that really pleases them.

No, of all the years that I have been in the business, I've never heard of any one person, photographer, going after some member of a political party just simply because they didn't like them. I mean, I will admit that there are times when say the Ku Klux Klan or some of the more obvious brutal sheriffs and deputies in the South during the Civil Rights fights, that we photographers would try to catch their most unflattering angle, if we were able to without being too obvious at it. Yeah, we've done that. We make sure the background doesn't do them any good. But by in large we try to bury our personal feelings, otherwise if you don't you're never going to come up with anything that's worthwhile. And once the word gets around that you're doing that, why. . . . But in Washington I've never heard of anybody doing that, or getting a reputation for deliberately going out of their way to make someone look bad. Although there are photographers who earned their living deliberately making cops look bad, or society in general look bad.

RITCHIE: The other thing I remember from that night when Harry Bridges spoke was that afterwards there was a reception downstairs in the hall where all the paintings of the presidents were hung. I was with Jim Ketchum, the Senate Curator, and you came over and walked us passed all of the portraits of the presidents that you had photographed, and told us each of the quirks of these presidents. Eisenhower was sensitive about his earlobes, as I recall you said, and Johnson always wanted to have his left side taken.

TAMES: That's right.

RITCHIE: It was a wonderful account of the vanities of famous men. I wondered how much as a photographer you had to take those vanities into account. Did you run the risk of encountering the ire of some of them if you didn't take the pictures they wanted?

TAMES: Oh, yeah, sure you ran the risk. LBJ used to blame me for every picture that he considered unflattering that ran in the *New York Times*. He never bothered to look at the credit. I just caught hell, because I was his friend, and I was supposed to make sure that these types of things did not get in, that's all there was to it. It was almost impossible to avoid the left side of Lyndon Johnson's face, because he deliberately presented that every time that he possibly could. At one time I told him that if

he could walk on the stage backwards, just so his left side showed, he would do it. If you notice, at every one of his rallies, that when he walked on stage he came from the right and walked on stage with the left side of his face showing to the audience. He always entered from the right of the audience, so it was always the left side of his face that was showing when he walked across the stage.

RITCHIE: Do you recall that night you told a story about taking a businessman or a banker in to see Johnson?

TAMES: Yes.

RITCHIE: Could you tell me that story again?

TAMES: It was a group of IBM-ers who were going through the Hill that day. He was Majority Leader or Vice President, one or the other. We went through his office, and I told them before we went in that he was going to give them his "sound dollar" pitch, where he started talking about "what makes Amurrrica great: it's the dollar that makes Amurrrica great." You could see these business people's eyes start sparkling when he started talking. Then he would take out a dollar bill and very dramatically flattened it out and used his fingers as if he was cutting with scissors: "This much for defense, and this much for that." He was showing how much of the dollar it took to run the federal government, and their eyes would light up.

But just before we went in, the public relations man for the group was also about six foot five, big outdoor type, and he asked me if I could get a picture of him with Johnson. I said, "Sure, I'll make the other pictures and I'll introduce you to him and make a picture of you." He said, "Well, before we go in there I wanted to let you know that. . ." I said, "Don't tell me that you have a favorite side of your face." He said, "Yes." I said, "Which side?" He said, "The left." I said, "No way. LBJ thinks the left side of his face is best, so we're going to stand with his left side showing, your right showing." He said, "Well, I'll take care of it." I said, "You take care of it, I'll photograph it, but I know what's going to happen."

We went in and I introduced him to the Vice President, and I said, "Can I get a picture?" And LBJ said, "Sure." He got up and buttoned his coat, and just as he was buttoning his coat, this friend of mine grabs him by the elbow and spins him around so that his right side is showing, and the other fellow stepped in left. Just as fast, LBJ spins him around. Then they spin around again. Finally I said, "Hold it guys! If you both want the left side of your face to show, stand back to back!" And LBJ said, "No, George, I don't mind, you know that I don't mind." I said, "Yeah, I know you don't mind." So we made the picture with LBJ's right side of his face showing. He was very unhappy with that, I could tell that. I said, "Now, Mr. Vice President, that was nice

behind your desk, but let's make a different picture over here by the fire place. I think this is a nice mantle here." He said, "Oh, sure, George." We went over there and he stands with the left side of his face showing, and this time I signaled to my buddy just to go along with it. He was smiling and shaking hands and I was banging away. Then as we were going out the door, LBJ put his arms around my shoulder and gave me a big squeeze. He looked down and said, "You pick the best one, you hear?"

When I had them printed, this friend of mine said, "Jeez, I'd love to get it autographed." I said, "He'll never autograph that one with the right side of his face showing." So what I did was to take a mounting board and lightly glue the picture by the mantle place, with LBJ's left side showing, and put it on the board. Then I took it in and had LBJ look at it. He liked it and he signed underneath. When I left the room, I just removed that picture and put the other one on, and everyone was happy. That's called diplomacy.

RITCHIE: Were there many members of Congress who had vanities about how they wanted to be photographed?

TAMES: Not that I'm aware of to the extent that LBJ did. There were quite a few who would joke about not having had a good picture made, I'd do this or do that, but I never really had any problems.

RITCHIE: I've heard that Johnson particular was interested in getting a good coverage from the *New York Times* and cultivated a lot of their correspondents, and was very close to William S. White in the 1950s. Did you feel that he sort of cultivated you as well?

TAMES: Oh, yes. He cultivated me and he cultivated all photographers. I think White was just one of his favorites and I think I probably was one of his favorites. The reason for it, of course, from my angle was I love to joke, I love humor, and I use humor quite a bit. I would tell him what jokes I'd been hearing and what was happening around the Hill, and he would laugh and tell me a few things. And I knew him for so long, from when he was over there as a member of the House, so that had something to do with it.

Yes, he had favorite photographers, like Okimoto, who was his official photographer. He kept calling him "that Jap," but he didn't mean it in a derogatory sense. "Where's my Jap?" he say when he wanted some pictures made. He didn't ask for Okimoto. He probably couldn't even pronounce it. He'd say, "Where's my Jap?"

I'll never forget the time after he became president and he called in Pierre Salinger, who was still working as press secretary. "Pierre," he said, "I want you to get my Jap and bring him over here and take some pictures." "Yes, sir, Mr.

President." Pierre didn't even question what the president was asking. Then he went into the press office and said, "Who the hell is this Jap that he's asking about?" He found out it was Okimoto, who was working for USIA at that time, and had followed LBJ when LBJ took that tour of the world and ended up in Pakistan and got the mule driver a car and all that stuff. Okimoto was along, and Vice President Johnson liked what Okimoto did. I think Okimoto presented him with a huge album of all the pictures that were made by him and the staff. That's how Oki got the job over there as the first official White House Photographer.

RITCHIE: When they created an official position, how did the rest of the photographers feel? Did they see that as competition in a sense?

TAMES: Well, no. We saw it both as competition and a source of pride, that finally still photography was becoming recognized as a force. We had pride in having one of us make it. In fact, I make no bones about it, that was my ambition to have that title, personal photographer to the President of the United States. I thought, hell, you couldn't do any better than that. I was perfectly willing to do it for Hubert Humphrey, and I would have become the photographer for Hubert if he'd have made it. Then some of Jimmy Carter's staff people asked me to come over: would I like to go over there and work? They also asked Bernie Boston. But when they asked me, I told them yes, I was

interested, until I found out that Carter didn't want to give me the title. He didn't want the Imperial Presidency, so he said. But he was willing to let me run the place. I said, "I'll stay where I am." As far as I was concerned there's not enough glory or glamor in the job to compensate for the fact that you were doing the work without getting the proper credit. I guess we all like a title of some kind.

RITCHIE: Has there been a tendency of presidents to try to get the newspapers to publish their official photographs rather than candid shots taken by the press photographers?

TAMES: Oh, yes. Very much. This goes back to the times when Harris & Ewing had a lock on it. Up until my picture of Eisenhower they had a lock on the president's pictures. They had every president's picture there, God, I believe from Lincoln on up. They would sell them, and they would make thousands of prints, and make quite a bit of money out of it. Also the state of the art was such that you could only take pictures by elaborate set ups, and so forth, that took a lot of time. Of course, it's reached a point now where we're getting so much media coverage. When I showed up at the White House first before World War II, it was practically deserted. If you got five, six still photographers, you had a crowd. Normally, you had three. Today, on a simple, routine assignment, you'd see eight or nine.

Just last Friday I was at the announcement by the Postal Rate Commission, recommending the increase of a U.S. stamp from twenty-two cents to twenty-five cents, and there were eleven tv cameras there! For a simple little old announcement! And four still photographers. So you have an increase not only there but everywhere in Washington. The media has increased. Just look at the Congressional Directory, with the names of the newspapers represented. And today, with instant communications, my goodness. I understand that the Architect of the Capitol turned down a request by the tv companies to put a huge satellite dish on the roof of the Capitol, so they could beam to world everything that was going on, right directly from the Capitol. Gosh, if this is happening, you can imagine how much more is demanded of photographers.

RITCHIE: You mentioned Harris & Ewing. They were an old-time Washington photographic studio. I gather they must have kept someone standing outside the White House regularly, because I've seen loads of their picture--they all seem to be the same pose--of somebody coming in or out the White House door.

TAMES: That was all you could get. You see, when I showed up in 1940, by that time photographers were allowed to hang around the door leading into the press room, which was in the West Wing of the White House, where the president's office is. Previous to Roosevelt, the only place where the photographers could stand was

on West Executive Avenue, down the bottom of the steps. They used to sit there, when they would hear that some king or queen or some big personage was coming, and try to get a shot of them as they came in and out of the gate, from outside. Then when they were allowed inside, all dignitaries were always escorted through the west door of the West Wing, why we always used to stand them right there at the door, with their hands on the doorknob, or just standing there talking to one another, before they went in or after they left, after seeing the president. We'd just stop them there. We'd just stand there and just wait. Yes, we spent a lot of time staked out that way.

The room that the photographers had as their office at the White House, when I first showed up, was a little room which we called the "dog house," because it really was like a kennel. It was six feet wide and about twenty-five feet long. It was on the side of the White House where today the present offices of the assistant press secretaries are, inside the little building. In other words, it was in that little extension where Roosevelt had his swimming pool, which is now the press room. When you come up to the dais, where the press secretary gives his briefing, directly behind him was where the old room was. We stayed in there, and we literally had no chairs or nothing. We just had a changing room, we could go in and change our four-by-five holders and re-load and unload. The way the wire services would send

their film back to the office was they would go into this little room and put their exposed film in little light-tight boxes and tape them and put a caption on them, and then walk out to the gate and wait for the messenger to come from the wires and they'd take it back for printing.

We weren't even allowed into the press room. It wasn't until Harry Truman became president that he went on an inspection tour of the West Wing of the White House, after he had been in office for about a month, and he went into the press office. There Merriman Smith, who was then the dean of the White House press corps, escorted him around and showed him the offices. And Harry Truman said, "Well, where are the photographers?" Merriman Smith said, "Oh, Mr. President, we don't let them in here. We just keep them outside in the dog house." Harry Truman said, "I want them in here." That was the first time we were allowed to come in. Sometimes the press reporters would suffer us to come in when the weather got cold or rainy outside, but they had a bar: photographers were not entitled to come in to the press room. Harry Truman made us first-class citizens. That's why I've always claimed an affection for him. He made us first-class citizens.

RITCHIE: How do you account for the reporters' bias or feelings against the photographers?

TAMES: Traditional. I've always claimed, to be very facetious, that the photographers were the asshole of the Fourth Estate. Through us all the crap wends out, and we received all the abuse, because by and large we were a craft in a literary profession. We were craftsmen, we could operate this little gizmo, this little thing called a camera, and take images. But it would only take minimal training to get someone to use one of these boxes. The writers came out of backgrounds in journalism schools--while photography schools were unknown as part of journalism. It wasn't until the advent of Life magazine that everyone started thinking of photography as an art, and as a visual adjunct to the writing.

Of course, the writers always kept their numbers small. They were very jealous of their proximity to the president. They still are, to this day. They become prima donnas themselves, and start telling the world how the presidency should be run. You can see that today in some of their writings. But the presidents, by and large I have found, felt more at ease around still photographers, and photographers in general. Today the photographers are just as well educated as the writers or they can't get the job, at least around here. And I think it was just a class distinction, and it has only been fairly recent that when a photographer went out with a reporter, that you were always introduced as "my photographer." We used to resent that. "This is my photographer,

and we're doing this story." Until we photographers started introducing the reporters as "my reporter." Then that kind of took the edge off of that.

I think the reporters also looked upon us as infringing on their time. Say if they had fifteen minutes for an interview, they thought that the photographer distracted because of his movements and so forth. Where I've always maintained that we added to the interview. At least particularly in my case, I used to ask questions myself that I thought that the writer hadn't asked. I brought them up in such a way that it wasn't taking away the job from the reporter, but at the same time I was asking the questions.

RITCHIE: How did the accommodations at the Capitol compare with the accommodations at the White House for photographers?

TAMES: Oh, the Capitol accommodations are sensational. We can't complain. The set-ups today, with free access particularly to the combined press galleries--you know, this tradition extended to the galleries at the Capitol. The photographers were not members of, or allowed to be members of, or tolerated in the galleries. We were not allowed to go up into that area. It was for reporters only, and members of the gallery. It wasn't until we formed our own gallery, and petitioned the Congress to be allowed, that we were allowed to come into the main gallery and

even look over the railing. No, that's why you have such a proliferation of galleries. If the writers had allowed the radio-TV, and the magazines, and the photographers, to join their gallery, there would only be one gallery today. That's what the Congress tried to do in the last four years: consolidate the galleries into one, where they should be. But once you get an entrenched bureaucracy, and the various superintendents who are seeing their jobs in jeopardy, they didn't want to give up up their galleries and combine.

But today in the gallery, with flashing on the monitor who's going to appear in the gallery and at what time and on what subject, everybody's invited to go there. The set-up we have in the Dirksen Building, with our labs and our studio where we bring the members down for portraits, and TV also uses that for interviews, a lot of space is occupied and a lot of money is spent on the media.

I for one wouldn't mind seeing the Congress ask for rent, because we are occupying the space, and we are their guests, so to speak. Of course, the *New York Times* has its own phones. We have telephones and our own lines. We use them when we're calling back and forth. However, there are hundreds of reporters up there who use the government's phones every day. It's sort of a subsidy for the media. Yet you try to tell them it's a subsidy and they rear back and tell you no.

RITCHIE: Well, it's an old tradition. Congress always provided pens and paper for the reporters, and eventually typewriters and telegraph machines.

TAMES: That started early when reporters suggested this, particularly for some of their poor colleagues, who were getting paid by the word that they were writing and were frequently down on their luck. They used to sleep up there in the gallery! They spent all night in the gallery. When I was a young man, a lot of fellows slept out in the gallery and got up and washed in the wash stands in the morning and went downstairs and had coffee. When they had the bar in the Capitol, they used to tell me that they would go down there and have a free lunch. That was up until fairly recently, until the prohibition went into effect, there was a bar on the first floor of the Capitol, down on the House side, where the old barbershop used to be. There's a hearing room there now.

Yeah, they provided the pens, they provided the space. This just led into more and more, step by step. All of a sudden you find young reporters showing up *demanding* these things. Now you've reached a point where it's part of life. It's just like reporters going into an enclave of poverty in some part of the United States and the first thing that strikes you is the forest of TV antennas. How can they be so poor if they've got TVs? TVs have become necessities. We change. Hell, yes, I have seen

members of the press who actually have gone off their rocker up there. They think they are members of the House or Senate in that their advice should be taken. I think it's gone about as far as it can go, and I think that a fee for use of the space--there's nothing in the Constitution that says that free space has to be allocated for the media. The only step after that is to feed them, and then they'd better write favorable articles or they'll cut them off, and that's a danger that we have to be very careful with here.

RITCHIE: Did you have a desk or working space in the press photographers gallery? How did they work that?

TAMES: No, no, we have a communal arrangement. There are about three desks and a long table where we put our gear. There's also lockers where we can keep valuable gear. Valuable gear has been stolen from us around the Capitol over the years, so now we try to keep everything under lock and key.

The only slots that are marked for the *New York Times* up in the Capitol are for the reporters. We use it also, but it's one little desk and three phones in a corner of the press gallery. I think maybe one phone line is for our direct computer to the office, and the other two are for conversation. Then of course there are other desks allocated to other reporters on a seniority basis, for the ones who cover Capitol Hill regularly. Sarah

McClendon has a desk, for example, because I know her. Her desk is right next to the *Times*. There are others, the wire services and individual newspapers. The *Washington Post* has about as big a space as the *New York Times*. Some of the other papers have individual desks, which are their desks. I don't know whether they were bought by the individuals or they are provided by the Capitol but at least the phone service we provide ourselves, and I think we are perfectly willing to buy our own furniture too, if it had to be. It's a convenience. It works both ways up there. By having the desk there you know that the reporters can spend a lot more time there, instead of having to come downtown to write their story, they can just write it directly from there and have it filed.

RITCHIE: Was the gallery a good place to pick up gossip about what was going on?

TAMES: Oh, God, yes. The gallery plus the place I loved, and I picked up more stuff there, was the press table in the restaurant on the Senate side of the Capitol. I'd have lunch there every day. I made a point of having lunch there every day. The same gang, usually the same bunch. We'd bat it back and forth. You'd pick up a nugget here, a nugget there, and you'd put it together just like an intelligence service.

But my greatest asset was that I was at the Capitol every morning no later than 8:30, sometimes 8 o'clock, about 8:15 was average. And I'd walk back to the Senators' Dining Room, and I'd see Mike Mansfield and Senator Aiken, Senator Stennis, Senator Long, Kefauver, some of my favorites who were early risers and would get in that early. Senator Stennis was one who had his coffee and his breakfast up there in a corner--he may still be doing it to this day, although he's so crippled--but he would spread out the daily paper and mark articles so his staff would clip them out and follow up and these particular stories. I'd have breakfast with him, or I'd be having breakfast with him and I'd walk over and say hello and ask him what he was doing that day. We just bat it back and forth, and as a result I was able to pick up what was going on, and the feel and the drift of the Senate, which way the Senate was going on various issues. Of course, there weren't that many issues, either. I will admit that it's so overwhelming today, there's so much legislation, so much happening. If it was happening then, I didn't know it. But I thought I knew everything that was going on, and it was a little more leisurely pace. It was work, but it wasn't as frenzied as it is today. So many things happening, one on top of another.

I'd ask a few questions, and have coffee, and talk some more. I'd pass on what I heard. I would have already read the *Washington Post*, because I wasn't getting the *Times* until I got to

the Hill myself. I didn't get a chance to read my own paper until a little later. But I always did get the *Post* at home and I knew what was happening. I'd comment. I'd say to one senator, "Well, what do you think about what David Broder said today?" Or "What do you think about what such and such a person has written?" "What do you think of the editorial in the *Post* today?" "What did you think of the editorial in the *Times*?" "What did you think of the editorial in the *Baltimore Sun*?" When they were in the field, the individual senators, I'd ask them what did they think of it, and they'd let me know. And it was on a personal basis. I got information just for my own satisfaction and my own judgment of what was going on, not necessarily for the office, except on occasion when I got a real good piece, I would pass it on to the reporters.

Invariably I would say, "This is what I hear, but you'd better check it out." Because I learned early, one time I told somebody to check it out, and they didn't check it out. It ran as a headline in the *New York Times* the next day. It was true, but it frightened the hell out of me. It was just my perception of what was happening, not any facts. I don't know whether the reporter was being facetious or not, but I walked up to him with a great big smile and said, "Well, you checked it out and it was true." He said, "Oh, I didn't check it out, I just went on what you told me." I said, "You what!?" He said, "Yes, I went on what

you told me." I said, "Why did you do that?" He said, "Listen, George, I discovered early in my career not to dig too deep into a good story. It might turn out to be untrue." Well, I never forgot that! That was a lesson I never forgot. I made a point of always telling them: "Be sure to check this out."

But most of the time I just kept it to myself. I'd pass it on to the other senators, you know, this is the feeling. Or someone would ask me: "What do you hear, George?" "This is what I heard, what do you think about it? What do you think are the chances of this bill? What do you hear?" I'd say, "Well, this is what I hear." I don't know if they were just trying to get from me the viewpoint of the media, or if they know that I talked to quite a few members. I enjoyed it, too. You know, it gave you a sense of power. It surprises me, its a feeling of power, psychologically I guess, when you know some big secret and everybody doesn't know it. You know that something is about to happen, and you can't tell anyone.

It just reminds me of during World War II when some of our correspondents were writing these super-secret memos to *Time*, Inc. They would send up confidential and secret messages to the editors in New York, a few select ones, about what they were hearing here in Washington, or what was told to them by the military here about certain operations, or certain things that were going to happen, certain new weapons, radar, which was hush-

hush. I knew all about radar. The big to-do one time was they spread the word that they had the answer to the German tanks. They were going to really take care of them with rocket propelled grenade launchers; they called it the bazooka. Hell, I knew what a bazooka was when nobody else knew about the bazooka.

How did an office boy know? Very simple. Everything was hush-hush, yeah. They'd bring the secretary in, who takes this all down, or when the guy types it they have to make twenty copies. So who did they give it to? They give it to the office boy to run it off on the machine? So I'd run off twenty-one! Get one for myself. I'd read it, I wouldn't tell anyone, and I'd destroy it later, because I'd probably get fired if I got caught. I often wondered if this was the weak link in a lot of information that's leaked. You can make all these elaborate arrangements, and then you send it to the printer, and the printer leaks it!

Mary Malloy the office manager would sit there and she'd count as I ran it off the machine, because that was my job to run it off the ditto machine. "How many are you going to make off this, Mary?" "Oh, we're going to make thirteen of those." "Fine, okay. One, two, three." And up to thirteen, and then I'd run it through one more time as I was counting thirteen. Or, if I didn't do it that way, I would take the stencil master, and it was very inky, you would take it off that damn thing and drop it in a

special bag and drop it in the trash. I would retrieve it and read it, and then drop it back in the trash. I told one of my friends one day what I was doing. He said, "Shit, don't you know that your fingerprints are all over that thing." I said, "But they're all over everything anyway. I handle it, they know I handle it." "Got another one Mary?" She'd come over and say, "Okay, shove this one through." I'd shove it through, and that way I'd find out what was going on.

I knew a great deal about what was happening in the military, as much as they'd let the media know--particularly *Time* magazine, because *Time* magazine was publishing a week later, so it was news by that time. What they were telling *Time* two or three days in advance was secret. God, a hell of a lot of memoes were going back and forth on the timing of the invasion of Europe, at that time they didn't say Normandy. I don't remember the word Normandy, but I do remember invasion, and a lot of plans, and a lot of preparations, and a lot of artificial bulwarks or docks, supersecret artificial docks. I don't know whether the Germans knew about it that much in advance, or whether it was a complete surprise to them, but I knew about it. It was pretty heady stuff for a twenty-one year old. It was just like fine wine, I guess. It's been a very interesting career, when you consider it all. I just fell into it.

RITCHIE: You're in a city where knowledge is so significant. Knowledge is power in many ways.

TAMES: Knowledge is power. Knowledge is money. And words are power. That's what I keep trying to tell these blacks. "So you want to keep black English, beautiful," I'd say. "Keep black English, but don't speak it when you go out in the public. Keep it for yourselves, like I kept Greek for myself." The moment you try to start speaking black English and carry on a conversation on a high level, nobody's going to listen to what you say. And the English language today is the language. Everybody speaks it. It's the lingua franca of the present world, and it's going to be that way for quite a while at the rate we're going. I don't give a damn what the French do, and how they fight for the purity of the French language, the French language is going to pick up English, the way the English language picked up French. They might as well lay back and enjoy it as they see the words "computer," and "chips" going into the French language.

Language is a living instrument, and words are power, and the same word means different things to different people in different eras. You have a very simple word like "Theodore." That's "gift of God" in Greek, but "Theopholis" literally translates "friend of God." At the time it was created, it meant "love of God." So the same sounding words a thousand years later mean something different entirely, so you have to be very careful with your

words. The Greek speaking people here in the States picked up many English words and incorporated them right into their Greek and rattle it off as if it was Greek. The same way I hear Japanese today rattling off Japanese and you can pick up the English words they are using. I'm sure the young Japanese boys in school think that it's Japanese they are speaking, and when they hear the Americans using the word they think, "Ah, using Japanese words."

Well, we covered a lot of subjects again. We didn't do much on the Hill.

RITCHIE: That's okay. I think we can cut it off at this stage today, but I would like to come back and follow up more on the Congress, and look at some of your photographs, and talk about some of the individuals who you have photographed.

TAMES: Sure. I'm fixing up the third floor where we'll have a lot more room. I'll put the pictures and that way we can go over them. Like you triggered me on Bridges here. I hadn't thought about him. I remember that big tie he was wearing, I was very taken by that.

RITCHIE: Well, photographs are wonderful for triggering memories, and yours in particular because photography was your life, or your career at least.

TAMES: My career and life.

End Interview #3

George Tames
Washington Photographer for the *New York Times*

Interview #4:
Competing with Television
Wednesday, April 27, 1988

TAMES: The role of photographer, and photography in general, has been influenced by new techniques. There have been drastic changes in photography that have been almost unbelievable. Right now, the AP is experimenting with and has a very advanced transmitter that takes your negative and transmits it over the telephone lines to a computer in the AP bureau, which then goes on digital, on a tape. Then they can project that on a screen, and they can actually pick up, out of a 35mm, one tenth of a 35mm negative and make it an 8 x 10 print that looks as good, grain less, as a regular 8 x 10s shot today using full 35s. This technique is going to revolutionize photography, because pictures are going to be stored in computers, and they are going to be conjured up as needed, flashed on the screen, captioned there on the machine, push a button and they go straight to be printed. So there won't be any files. The photographer who shoots has then got to be very careful that the images that he has are not lost, in the sense that he doesn't have any permanent file. But he will have a memory bank, so to speak, and he can conjure up pictures years from now out of the machine, and make prints right off of it. That's going to be a big revolution in photography.

RITCHIE: The Library of Congress is preserving photographs now on video-discs.

TAMES: That's exactly the system that I'm talking about. And as fast as they do it, somebody comes along with a better system. I think that's going to be the way of the future. They'll only be having pictures on the walls when people deliberately ask for them. News photography is going to change dramatically.

RITCHIE: Speaking of changes in technology, I wanted to ask you about the impact of television on your trade. Did having TV cameras around make life more difficult for you?

TAMES: Very much so. It was a shock for me to discover all of a sudden that showing up at an event, be it political or social or an event of national importance, like a convention or a signing of a treaty, something involving national importance, where the *New York Times* usually was front and center, because we were the paper of record and the prestigious paper, and I had no trouble getting the positions that I wanted. And one day I showed up at a session and saw a TV camera and a man operating it in a roped off area. So I just ducked under there to get into the roped off area--and was ordered out by the officials, who were State Department, I believe. They told me this was a TV stand. I said, "Well, what about us?" "Oh, well, TV reaches more people

and this is an event for the majority of the people." So they had decided to let TV have front and center and we just had to go up where would could. That was the first time that I had felt the full impact of TV, although I could see it coming. There was no question about it.

At the time, everybody was shooting for the six or seven o'clock afternoon news. Today with [Ted] Turner's cable TV, when we have five waves of photographers going into the president's office to greet a dignitary, or to photograph a dignitary like Brezhnev with the president, after the first wave goes in, and when they come up each other wave has forty-five seconds in the room. By the time the last wave has gone through and has come out, they walk into the press room and it's already on CNN [Cable News Network] coming over the TV. The first wave just went to the wall and slapped a disc in without even any voice-over. Just zip, there it goes. The event only took place three minutes ago and it's already on TV. Instantaneous, you don't even have to wait for the afternoon news any more. Of course it made a tremendous difference.

Politicians are playing for it, and what's even more important, the discs and the satellites, which means that every TV station in the country--every TV station in the world--has the potential of receiving a signal for them alone from any part of the world. So whereas a Congressman or a senator who wants to

talk to his constituency on any subject used to have to wait two or three days after he taped something or filmed something in Washington in the studios and then mailed it, or air expressed it to the local stations; now all they do is phone them and say, "Look, this is what I've got and it's coming at two o'clock, bouncing off the satellite." So they just tune into it and pick it up. So it's almost instantaneous. I don't object to that. I think that an informed citizenry is the only way that democracy can work. But I sometimes wonder whether we're getting too much of a one-sidedness of the issue. Naturally, if I was a member of the Senate I would give my view, and naturally my view is the correct one. Everybody thinks their view is the correct one. I've never known anyone who didn't think their view was the correct one. I've known generals who outnumbered their opponents ten to one and they still wanted more troops; they never have enough. The truth of course is how we perceive it.

Look at the Israelis and the Palestinians. In a way it's ironic that the Israelis can raid in Algeria and kill a Palestinian, who's the second in command of the Palestinian forces and say that it's part of an act of war and not terrorism. Yet the same Palestinians fly into Israel and kill five or six soldiers and it's terrorism. It's a different viewpoint. One man's terrorism is another man's heroism. One man's subsidy is another man's give-away. It depends on which side of the fence

you're on, and it's amazing how values and viewpoints change. I have a friend who has had a very bad streak of luck. His hospital bills have run him down. He's always been a rock-ribbed Republican, able to take care of himself, and gung-ho for independence and free-enterprise. Then he ran into this bad streak of luck healthwise. He had to declare bankruptcy, he went through his whole fortune. He wasn't old enough to qualify for Medicare. Here's a man who's always been against the socialistic programs of the Democratic party now advocating national health insurance! So your viewpoints change. Isn't that amazing.

RITCHIE: Tell me, when television really began to make its impact, did you feel any pressure from your newspaper to respond? Did they want more pictures, or different views? How did they approach the competition with television?

TAMES: Well, you were competing not only with your editor but you were competing with TV, because he sat up there on his fat butt watching it, and he was getting the whole thing from different camera angles, and you were in one spot, and you were just shooting singles of what you see. Previous to TV, the only way he had to judge how you did was what the wire photos sent him. So he'd have three wire service photos and your picture. Then he could say, "Well, Tames did a better job. He got a better angle." Now, with TV, we're really hustling. We're trying to get into situations where TV hasn't been. We're trying to get behind

the scenes and trying to anticipate one day in advance of what the situation is going to be, what the report is going to be, who the senators are that are involved in an upcoming report.

Senator Baker, at the ceremony for me last month, when I was the [American Legion's] Man of the Year, spoke about our relationship, and friendship we had over the years in the Senate. He said I'd come into his office, and he'd say to me, "What am I suppose to do?" And I'd say, "Well, aren't you meeting with X, Y and Z, on X, Y and Z subject?" "George," he'd say, "I haven't even thought about that yet." I'd say, "Well, you'd better start thinking about it, because it's coming up." I'd say, "Are you going to see so and so?" He'd say, "Not today, but maybe tomorrow." So I would come back the following day and try to get something in anticipation of what was going to happen. Then TV would pick up on that. They'd walk into offices and say, "Look, you gave this to Tames, you didn't give it to us. We're catching hell from our office in New York." And when those men are making a hundred and fifty thousand dollars a year, they're supposed to produce. So then all of a sudden I found that some of the senators and members of the House, and the Speaker particularly, would say, "George, we can't let you in. If we have to let TV in, then we might as well not let anybody come in." So we all lost. That made me feel unhappy. I felt that not only I wasn't doing my job, but some of the flavor of politics was being lost.

I used to say that "this is historic, and you should let me do it." It's just like the day that President Kennedy was assassinated. I immediately grabbed my camera and rushed into the press gallery and leaned over the gallery and started taking pictures of the senators on the floor, milling around, and pointing, and shouting. It was turmoil on the floor, and unlike today it wasn't recorded on TV. The Capitol Police grabbed me and confiscated my film, which by the way I don't know what they ever did with it. We've never been able to find out what happened to that film. I tried to impress upon them that it was historic, that at least give it to some one who could keep it, rather than throw it down the toilet. But I don't know what happened to it. It would have been the only pictures of the reaction in the Senate. I did make a picture of Mike Mansfield. I was with Mike Mansfield when the story came through. I was in his office, and we had heard that the president had been shot, and was seriously injured, and was in the hospital. Since I knew Mike Mansfield for many, many years, and we're old friends, I went down to his office and we just sort of sat there and drank coffee and just started talking about how we were going to operate with the president recovering and with Johnson taking over, and how the Senate was going to operate. We were discussing various methods, and he was telling me the feelings he had, and then the phone rang. It was Lyndon Johnson on Air Force One, telling Mike Mansfield that the president had died and that he, Lyndon Johnson, had just taken the

oath of office, and asked for Mike Mansfield's help. Mike said yes, you can count on me, and put the phone down. And then Mike just almost broke down, and I have a picture of him. I picked up my camera and made a shot of Mike in that mood.

I'm wandering--because you know how my mind works--but TV has made a tremendous impact, so much so that I'm afraid that more and more it is becoming the news itself, rather than the subject. Because the human element comes in here, where the individual who is a correspondent for TV has got to come up with something. Literally, that's what they are doing: conjuring up confrontations. I saw them baiting [Michael] Dukakis the other day on this Persian Gulf situation. They had just announced that we were attacking the Iranians and had hit one of their ships, and they were firing some missiles at us. That was all that was released. Next thing you know they were poking the camera lens into Dukakis' face and saying, "What do you think of it?" I mean, he just heard about it! If he had been stupid and made some comment, they would have blown it all out of proportion. Then they started badgering the guy, because he wouldn't comment! He said, "I can't comment, I only know what you know. This is an ongoing situation, wait until we get all the facts in. Then we can come to some judgment on it." I guess they wanted him to say, "If I had been president, I would not." He's *not* president.

We have this confrontation-type of journalism that I call "red meat journalism." We've raised a whole generation of correspondents on it since Watergate. They saw how members of the media made their names, not through writing books, or writing thoughtful articles, but simply by exposing so-called corruption. They all want a big piece of this corruption, and there's not that much corruption out there. So they try to conjure it, or try to make something out of the littlest things. We used to think a reporter who was writing a story today for tomorrow's paper, was writing too soon and too fast after the event, and didn't have time to think. But here today, with television reaching so many millions and able to influence people so greatly, we are moving even faster. But I can't think of a good answer. If someone had a better way of doing it, I wish they'd come up with it.

RITCHIE: You said that because of television you were shut out of certain areas. Do you think that held back on the informality of pictures, the backdoor meetings, people at ease, and the rest of that?

TAMES: Oh, yes.

RITCHIE: And is television perhaps a moral formal recording of events?

TAMES: Well, when I used to go in on a one-on-one basis, or one-on-five with five senators in there really discussing very important events, I was able to slip around and make my shots and be almost invisible, with a silent click of the camera. The most important thing was that I had the complete confidence of the members, who knew that if I heard anything I wouldn't say anything. And a photographer's ears usually are closed when you're working, because you're concentrating on a picture and what is happening. It's only after you leave the room or you leave the situation that all of a sudden your subconscious has picked up conversations and words, and you sit there and you wonder, "my God, that was pretty important."

I think I can say--and I'm very proud of my record--I have been privy to a lot of information that could have been very, very detrimental, and also beneficial to our country, and I have never once opened my mouth. And for a guy who loves to talk, let me tell you that is something! I tell you I was right on the verge many times of saying something, but then I'd back off. I don't believe you will find *any* member of Congress who will say that George Tames leaked, or that George Tames heard something that he shouldn't have heard. Now, I have heard things, and I have typed them, and I have gone back to the individual members with the

typed story and said, "Look, this is what I heard. I think this is good for you and good for the country." I did that with Eisenhower. And I've had them say no, and I've had them say yes. That's the way I work.

Now, with TV, it's impossible, because it's not only that they want the image, but they want the sound. They're picking up every word, and you can't say anything. It's almost reached the point of the old movie when individual senators and the president would actually carry on a very serious conversation when we were in the room, stills and newsreels, only to discover much later that there were people watching the newsreels who could read lips, and were actually picking up the conversation of the president and others. So they had to stop. It became a favorite trick by politicians like Senator [Arthur] Vandenberg, particularly--because I remember he started it--where the newsreels would ask him to talk to his visitor, and he'd say okay, and he'd go, "Walla, walla, wallawallawalla. Walla, wallawallawalla. Walla? Wah, wah wah." And that's all he'd say. The guest, unless he was in on it, didn't know what the hell was happening. Or if he was he would either laugh, or carry on in the same vein. It was just simply to keep the theater goers from reading lips.

Now the president can't even sneeze or an open mike will pick up any word. This particular president has almost a compulsion to be funny, to have his one-liners,

and he has some good one-liners, and he is funny, but it's almost a compulsion to be continuously funny. He'll make cracks which are meant for just the inner-circle, that are not meant to go out on the air, and he'll get caught. It's the same way that Lyndon Johnson had a compulsion to tell scatological, Texas cowboy, bunkhouse jokes, which are great in the bunkhouse, and great bonding for cowboys, but by far and large are chauvinistic, degrading to women and minorities. You don't say these damn things out, except within the circle. I'm sure that the blacks and the Chinese and all the other ethnics have jokes they tell about us. In fact, I've told jokes to Mexicans, and they say, "Oh, no, we tell the same joke, but about Texans." You understand what I'm trying to say?

RITCHIE: One other thing I wanted to ask you about--especially about the TV cameras--in the Capitol it's common to see the press and photographers bunched together, say outside the Foreign Relations Committee room. Everybody's got the cameras set up, they've got the TV cameras and the still cameras, and they're all hovering around waiting for someone to come out. While looking through your pictures, I don't get a sense that you spent a lot of time in crowds like that.

TAMES: No, not in stakeouts.

RITCHIE: What was your reaction to that sort of situation? And why do photographers spend so much time on those stakeouts?

TAMES: One, TV has got to do it so they can get their talking heads. Still photographers do it because they're lazy. This is the easy thing to do. You show up, it's there, you shoot it. Nobody's going to complain that you didn't get anything good, or you didn't get anything different, as long as nobody else did. Let me tell you, a lot of photographers breathed a sigh of relief when I was no longer up there. Because their offices are not constantly hounding them saying, "Look what Tames got yesterday. Why didn't you have that?" Then off course, they reached the point where they used to say, "Oh, that's just a *New York Times* picture, no other paper in the country would want that, except the *New York Times*." So it's a *New York Times*-type of picture. Now you can justify not working. But basically I think that's the thing. They're going to get their salary, they've got something usable. They got the same thing that TV got, so they'll go with it.

I always want to go around the back. I always want to go in advance. I always want to make my pictures when the witnesses shows up, just as he sat down, just as he talked, do a few little things there, and then get out. Another picture of him gesturing and talking is just not worth it. Try to get him with the chairman in advance, try to get all these things done way in advance, that's the only way, anyway that I'm aware of, of doing the job. And of course, unless you're completely immersed in the

news, and right up to date with events that are moving so fast, you lose your touch. It's taken me two and a half years but all of a sudden--although I still read the newspapers--I'm starting to lose the feeling that I've *got* to be somewhere, or that I'm missing out. I still get the feeling that I'm missing out. I'd love to be at the primaries, or following this guy or that guy, but then think of what a mob scene that's going to be, what a push and a shove it's going to be! I'm not six-foot-six, I'm five-foot-seven. I can't see over these monsters that are TV cameramen today, and they just block everything. Photography is a young man's game, I'll be seventy. Although I think of myself as being in excellent physical condition, I hope to God I know my limitations. I'd like to sit back and do what I want. I'll be shooting some stuff tomorrow, give my lectures.

I've never had any secrets as far as my business is concerned. If I found out a new angle, a new gimmick on a camera or a lens, I was one of the first ones that broadcast it. "Look," I'd say, "this is what you can do." "You don't have to do it this way, you can do this." And by and large I find the majority of the good photographers are that way, because this business, like most business, still pays off on brains and imagination. It's flattering to have someone follow behind you and imitate you. There are very few, and you don't have to worry about them getting ahead of you, because they're always following you.

Today I lectured to the Smithsonian Institution Associates, there were about fifty of them I guess who came from all over the country for a one week seminar here. It's part of the Smithsonian Associates program. I found it pretty stimulating, as I usually do. One of the photographers was showing me some of his work, and he told me that he thought it was as good as mine. I agreed with him, it was "as good as," it wasn't better. I said, "Son, are you familiar with the Caine Mutiny?" He said, "Yes." I said, "What was the trigger word that made the captain go nuts, when he was finally exposed as being a psycho?" He said, "Strawberries." I said, "The words that trigger me are: as good as." When I hear that word, bam. I had a person call me on the phone and tell me: "Mr. Tames, I was walking by and I saw some of your guttering needed work. We're a small firm, but we're as good as the big firms." I said, "Whoops, right there, don't go any further. You ain't got the job." [Laughs] If there's anything that I've ever heard in my life that really sets me off it's I'm "as good as" you as a mechanic, or as a writer, or as a runner, or as a photographer, or any other profession. If you are as good as I am, just keep your mouth shut. If you're better than I am, you let me know, and you show me, and I'll be the first one to pat you on the back.

I *still* do not fear any of these guys out there. And they should be making me feel old and out of it, but they're not. Now, this new technique, with the disc cameras, I'll have to get into that. There's a complete new era we're getting into, and the young guys using this medium might come up with something. It will sure make news photography a lot easier, but then you become mechanical, you become a technician. You're just simply recording instead of interpreting. You've got to get the feel of it. You just can't go sit on a stakeout and make another head shot of [Barry] Goldwater today or Tip O'Neill tomorrow, and get by. Then when they say, why didn't you give us something different, you say, "Oh, they won't let me in." That's the easy way. You have to convince somebody that what you're doing is not only important, you have to play on their ego.

When I say I'm from the *Times*, those are pretty powerful words. I never make any bones about the fact that I'm a member of the *New York Times* company. I'd be lying if I said it didn't make any difference. It does make a difference.

RITCHIE: You mentioned before about not being six-foot-six. But we looked at two of your pictures, one of the looking at Joe McCarthy through the door of a very crowded hearing room during the Army-McCarthy hearings, where you were obviously standing up on the railing, or someplace high to get the perspective, and the same thing was true looking over the railing

down into the Rotunda during Eisenhower's funeral. I gather that a good photographer has to be agile, and couldn't be afraid of heights.

TAMES: Oh, yes. I've had photographers go up with me to the Capitol dome and hug the wall, literally hug the wall, and not walk over to the rail and look down much less get up on top of the railing like I did and lean over, you know, to get that angle. Oh, I think about some of the things I did! I could have fallen down and I would have joined Eisenhower--parts of me would have, anyway. But you don't think of the danger, you just do it, and then later you might shake a little bit thinking about what you've done. But not in the excitement of the moment. You have to have good balance, and know what you're doing. I always try to show something that showed the whole thing, the feeling of a hearing, the feeling of an event, in sort of an abstract way. You can record any event, but at the same time, it's an artistic view of what is happening. It can be used again and again, like some of my stuff has.

I'm still very flattered when somebody asks for something. When I was at Western Kentucky, I took about four of these posters I have [of an exhibit of Tames' photographs], made for me by the *Times*, and I said, "I have these four posters," and my God the hands went up before I could even say I'd give them away if they wanted them. Then I said, "If you really want them, you can write

down your names and I'll ship them to you." Well, I had twenty-seven names! My wife and I packed up twenty-seven posters, which I signed individually, and I shipped them out. It cost me forty-four dollars. But I'm flattered that somebody would even want my work. People say, like you and others, that you're doing great work, this is historic--I do have a sense of history, no question about that, because I don't think you can go to any other photographer's house in Washington and see what we've got here.

RITCHIE: I noticed this picture of Hubert Humphrey. It's an uncharacteristically solemn-looking picture of Humphrey.

TAMES: Yes, this picture was made shortly after word came of the assassination of Martin Luther King. We were at a rally at a hotel, I think it was the Sheraton Park, I could be wrong, but at a political rally and Hubert Humphrey was speaking. When the word came, Humphrey got up and made the announcement and then he asked for a minute of silence for Martin Luther King. This was taken then, and the juxtaposition of LBJ's portrait in back, I composed that. I think this is in color and in black-and-white.

Then I left the hotel and went to the White House. All the way down Connecticut Avenue I could see this black smoke, just beyond the White House and to my left, and up Fourteenth Street. When I got to the White House, there on the lawn by the fountain in the center of the White House north lawn was the whole press

corps, standing there looking towards Fourteenth and F Street, where the fire was burning that close to the White House, just two city blocks away. This smoke just kept building up, and building up, and building up, and getting worse. I went to the Capitol and took some pictures around there, the troops in their positions. I went into the predominantly black sections of the city, and automobiles were burning in the street, and buildings were burning, and the police were coming and tear gas was very much in evidence. I just couldn't believe it was happening to my city. I came home and had dinner, and then insisted on going back. Fran, my wife, objected. She said "You have five children, you don't want to get killed. You just stay here." I said, "I've *got* to photograph this, at least as much as I can, but I promise that I will not go too deep into the riot." I made a few pictures of the burning and stayed away from the actual rioting. I figured I'd leave that to the younger ones. Yes, that was a very dramatic time. I never thought that I'd ever see a reaction of that type in this city. And it could happen again.

RITCHIE: This picture was also taken while Humphrey was running for president, and you mentioned that if had been elected you would probably have become the White House photographer.

TAMES: Oh, yes, I would have become the White House photographer because Hubert Humphrey and I were very good friends. I was privileged to call Hubert Humphrey my friend.
We

talked about it several times, that I would become the official photographer. I would have, and probably you wouldn't be here today taking this down, because I would have ended my career, at least the type of work that I'm doing, after his term, probably in '72 or '76 or thereabouts, and who knows what I would have done after that. I wouldn't have had the continuation of the presidents. Or maybe I would have. Who knows? I would have gone in and had the confidence of Hubert Humphrey and I would have been able to do the type of work, and record his administration in a way that was not possible say under Carter.

I got a request unofficially, sort an inquiry as to whether I'd be interested to be Carter's White House photographer, but you see, Carter did not have a White House photographer. He campaigned against the Imperial Presidency, and he didn't think that it was necessary to have an official photographer. He was perfectly content to let the photo office work the way it does without the title or designation. So as far as I was concerned, I would just as soon stay at the *New York Times*, which gave me a variety of assignments, instead of taking a chance and going over to record the Carter presidency, where I knew that I would be restricted in my access. So that never came off. Carter never had any official photographer.

When Reagan came in, he had Mike Evans to be his official photographer. We knew that was going to happen. Mike had been hanging around him and photographing Reagan for eight years, for *Time* magazine. Every time there was something involving Reagan, he'd go and do it. So he got to know him, and Reagan got to know him, and then he became the White House photographer. But Mike only stayed four years, and when he left they never replaced him. The staff is still there, they're still functioning the same way, but they don't have the title. And I have enough of an ego to want that title, even though it doesn't mean that much. But still you would just be *the* top photographer in the country, at least in title if not financially. So it never came about. I think that not so much my own personal disappointment at not becoming the photographer, but I think the country would have been better off if Humphrey had become president. We would have gotten out of Vietnam a lot earlier.

RITCHIE: What sort of person was Humphrey, especially when you knew him as a young senator in the '40s and '50s?

TAMES: I first met him in Philadelphia at the Democratic Convention of '48, at which time he was mayor of Minneapolis, and he gave a civil rights speech. His ideas on where the country, and the thrust of the Democratic Party, made me fall in love with him in a moment. I had never met him, and then I met him. What really cinched it was when he started speaking, the Dixiecrats,

headed by Senator Strom Thurmond, got up and walked out of the convention and formed the Dixiecrat Party, of Southern Democrats, nominated their own presidential candidate. So you had the regular Democrats, the Dixiecrats, then you had that left-wing group of Democrats that were headed up by former Vice President [Henry] Wallace, and I think a cowboy named [Glen] Taylor, who was a senator. He used to strum his guitar on the steps of the Capitol. I'll never forget, when he first came he got his guitar out and started strumming, "Oh, give me a home near the Capitol dome," or something like that. But he ran as the vice president on that ticket. So the Democrats were split three ways that year.

I met Hubert then, and then he came to the Senate and we became fast friends. I always followed his career and tried to help him in any way I could, promoted him. He was a very good senator, I used to say. I made some very good friends. We were all young, we were all about the same age, and we all had the same ambitions and same dreams. I was absolutely convinced that American was going to be a helluva better place to live after World War II. I never thought we'd be in this race with the Russians, and the armaments. I thought we'd be lifting the whole world out of poverty and ruling the show down there. But I've always been sort of a mystic and a dreamer.

RITCHIE: Humphrey had that streak of idealism.

TAMES: Yes, he did. Maybe that's what appealed to me, that this is the way you do it. And if you had Humphrey it could be done. He reminds me of Jesse Jackson, with the type of programs he has, and the enthusiasm he evokes. But Jesse Jackson is just all talk, whereas Hubert at least had this record as a mayor, his record as senator. Jesse Jackson right now would be giving Dukakis a helluva run for his money if Jesse Jackson had been governor of South Carolina. Jesse Jackson won the primary in South Carolina, he should go back and run for governor. Amass a record and then come back. He's still young. But you're never going to become president of these United States based on just what you *think* you can do. Anybody can project what they would do, it's just when they start asking questions about your record. Jesse has the magnetism, he grabs people, he's got enough of the mystic in him--more so than Hubert, in the sense that he can bring in the religious and evoke emotions in people.

I myself don't believe that Mr. Jackson is going to do anymore than what he has done already, and as of this recording today he's just lost in Pennsylvania, which I think is about what he's going to do from now on. Of course, the blacks have every right to vote for him. I get a big kick out of the fact that some of the whites say that the blacks are voting for Jackson only because he's black. I want to say, "Why are you voting the way you are?" They never think of the fact that they are

subconsciously are voting white. That's okay. I think the blacks have every right, also the Irish or the Catholics did to vote for Kennedy, or anyone else to vote for anyone. If you can get enough votes, fine, do it.

My own personal feeling is that Jesse Jackson is doing a valuable job for this democracy of ours, because he is a sort of a stalking horse. He is stalking out a position and making it possible for black politicians who will follow him to be creditable candidates, particularly Reverend [William] Gray in the House--he's also a reverend--who's staking out a record as a very good Budget chairman. A lot of people were voicing doubts because he's a reverend and a black to head up a committee. More of these stereotypes are dropping, more and more, the same way they are about women. Before long we're going to be voting for people strictly on the basis of their record, and not on race or religion or anything else. I think that's a beautiful thing. Jackson is doing us good in that. He is making it possible.

In an ironic sort of way, he has suppressed any kind of racist remarks that might be made about Dukakis. Whereas it has only been a short, short twenty-five years when my brother went to Roanoke, Virginia, to work, as a young stock broker, and was denied admission into one of the exclusive clubs because he was a Greek, and they did not allow "people of color," as it was put to him, to be members of the club. In this particular club they had

designated all the Mediterranean nations as "people of color," so the Spaniards, and Italians, and everybody else were not eligible, and they maintained that. It's been such a short time, I keep trying to tell some of the Greeks. In fact, some of the Greeks themselves were raising the question in that period in the sixties, about racism and whether the Greek Orthodox Church would admit blacks. I was pointing out to them that the blacks a great portion of the Greek church in Africa. Oh, the Orthodox church has the Russians, and the Syrians, and the Armenians, so we're all in the same boat. But we can't seem to see it. Everybody's got their own opinion, and if you've got any problems, just blame it on the other race, don't blame it on yourself.

RITCHIE: You obviously think very similarly to the way Hubert Humphrey thought.

TAMES: Oh, yes.

RITCHIE: And that would have made you sympathetic to him as a photographer. Could you have been official photographer for a president with whom you weren't sympathetic, say a Nixon or a Reagan?

TAMES: Yes. Yes, I could have, because I have enough pride in my work, and also I have had the experience of working with people that I didn't necessarily agree with. Some of the people that I have photographed were to the right of Ghengis

Khan! You know Pat Buchanan, for example, I told Pat Buchanan that other than mother I think I've probably read more of his columns than anybody. I hate him--I mean, I don't hate him, I just don't agree with his views, but I read him, just like I read [Jeane] Kirkpatrick, and her views. I read them because I want to find out what the hell they're thinking. But it's hard going for me.

I would have done a creditable job, depending on how much they felt about me. See, also you have to feel at ease with the person. I don't know how Reagan felt about me. Nixon, though, he was not above putting his arm around my shoulders and talking on a very close basis, because I knew him since he was a member of the House. Many a time he'd say, "It's not you, George, it's the *New York Times*." No, in my heart I believe I could have done so, because unlike writing, where you can shade your opinions, photography is pretty straight forward.

It's only now, under the new techniques, the digital stuff, my God you can conjure up pictures. You can take the head of one person and put it on the body of somebody else. I've seen cover pictures on *U.S. News and World Report* of Mrs. Reagan and Mrs. Gorbachev sitting there, and they're looking like they're talking to one another, yet one was made in Moscow and one was made in Washington and the digital machine put the same background, put them in the same chairs. One of the great photography books, *A*

Day in the Life of the United States, and the cover picture was a digital composite, where there was a shot of a cowboy coming across a ridge in the moonlight and they were too far apart, so they just simply put them in the digital machine and brought them together, so they were able to fit the format. They used to say that we were conjuring up pictures and we were recreating, or faking. I used to say, "No, we don't fake anything, I recreate." If I see a scene and I can make it better, I shoot it. If I think I can make it better by moving the subjects into a spot within the area they are, just to get a better light, or dramatic light, I'll use it, because I'm controlling the situation. Now, with this digital mechanics you can enhance something, you can correct it. Joe McCarthy did a very sloppy job of splitting a picture of Stalin and. . . .

RITCHIE: Millard Tydings.

TAMES: Tydings, remember that thing? He made it look like Tydings was cocking his ear and listening to Stalin. And it was so poor, because you could actually see the line. Yet the implication was there. Today you can do that and put him in his pocket. Talk about propaganda potential.

RITCHIE: Because people, when they see a photograph, think that it's real.

TAMES: Oh, of course.

RITCHIE: Because a photograph doesn't lie.

TAMES: It doesn't lie, but it does lie. And I think it's going to be doing a lot more of it. We have to be very careful with what we're doing, computer enhancing, computer this and computer that, everything is computer.

RITCHIE: Going back to the official photographer idea, is it the job of the official photographer to make the subject look good, or is it to give an honest rendition of what's going on?

TAMES: Both. First and foremost it is to record an honest photographic history of the presidency, and if while you're doing this there is a beneficial fall-out for the president, say if he's running again and he wants to use your pictures, of course. You always shoot with that in mind, also: does it look good? Does it show how the president very forcefully did this, or was very emotional in doing that? Sure, it works both ways. But I approve of the idea of an official photographer. Just think if there had been an official photographer for Lincoln, what a wonderful series of pictures you would have of that man and what he went through.

RITCHIE: By contrast to the official photographers in the White House, the official photographers on Capitol Hill are sort of reduced to doing what they call "grip and grins"-- photos of senators shaking hands with their constituents.

TAMES: That's correct.

RITCHIE: Why do you think the two jobs are so different?

TAMES: Well, for one thing, Lyndon Johnson is responsible to a great extent for the official photographers being on the Hill. He wanted pictures of himself with some of his constituents, and he set up the Senate photographers. Then of course the Republicans, not being dumb and observing what a good thing this is, went along with him. It's all being paid for out of the federal treasury, and it's a set-up where they are photographing individual members as part of the advantage of being on the in. And of course, "grip and grin" type of pictures are the meat and potatoes of this business of ours. They're the type of pictures that are going to be used by the local media. So they are doing a job. They are not paid to be creative or innovative. Their job is to make the senator or member look as good as possible, and then to take into consideration how his constituent looks when you make that "grin" shot. But as far as actually recording history, no. It's an almost impossible job. Not an impossible job, but a difficult job, particularly the staff that they have. They literally would have to have twenty-five photographers call clicking away at a terrific pace, with a staff backing them up, so they could file some of this stuff that they were conjuring. A lot of it would be superfluous.

RITCHIE: You mentioned before about photographers being cut out, and losing the flavor of things. It strikes me that Congress and the Capitol are so diverse, there are so many corridors and back rooms. The people who aren't on Capitol Hill don't really get the flavor of it, and it's very hard to capture it in general. But I found this one picture in your files which to me has a wonderful feel of Capitol Hill, the man in the chair in the corridor. It's a very different shot, and I wondered how that came about?

TAMES: Well, I was walking by the Senate and heading toward Minority Leader Baker's office, and I spotted this man sitting in one of those overstuffed chairs just off the Senate floor, smoking a cigar, puffing away very contently. I recognized him for a lobbyist, so you literally he was stalking, waiting for a member to come by, at which time he was going to buttonhole him and make his little pitch. I've forgotten who he was lobbying for, but it was pretty prestigious, and it was not something to be ignored. I have his name somewhere. Either way, I caught it and I just shot it. I thought it was a very interesting type of picture.

RITCHIE: Well, you hear the expression the "corridors of power," referring to politics, and here's the corridor with the marble statues of famous senators of the past, and the Minton tiles on the floor, and the overstuffed chair and a very well

dressed man just waiting for the powerful to come down the corridor. Somehow that picture just expresses what I see walking casually through the Capitol Building, that you don't see in the newspapers and the magazines.

TAMES: No, no. The good lobbyist doesn't advertise himself. He didn't pose for me. He was there waiting and it just the juxtaposition of the sunlight, everything there just blended into this picture and gave me something out of nothing. I shot it with the idea that if I ever needed a picture of a lobbyist, this would be a good one.

RITCHIE: There are certain things in the Senate that portray themselves readily, you can portray a filibuster with someone speaking, but lobbying is a difficult art to capture. It's hard to distinguish a lobbyist from anyone else.

TAMES: And also lobbyist has become a dirty word. I don't agree with that. If someone is expressing his viewpoint, or is representing a group's views, that's fine, even if I disagree with him. I think the tobacco lobbyists are some of the most aggressive and well-informed and innovative in fighting issues and blocking issues that would be detrimental to their industry, smoking. Yet I don't object to them doing their thing up there. Sooner or later everybody's going to realize that what they're proposing is wrong. It might be available for a while but sooner

or later it's going to go down. In this democracy, it takes a while for consensus to develop on most any subject. I heard somewhere that there's nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come, and I've seen this in various ways on the Hill, where issues that have been thwarted for years and going nowhere, all of a sudden, wham, they're through. Like LBJ and the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act. They'd been hanging around for forty years, and all of a sudden he grabs it and whamo it goes in. He couldn't have done it four years earlier. The time had come, the people were ready. I think this applies across the spectrum.

RITCHIE: Did you find that lobbyists were good sources of information as to what was going to be happening? Were there any who were helpful to you?

TAMES: Only the ones who wanted publicity for their own projects. The right-to-lifers, say for example, made a point of calling me up or passing the word down by whispers or gestures that they were going to do something grisly, like have a fetus in a jar and leave it in a senator's outer office, someone who was a proponent of abortion, as a demonstration against abortion. Or they were going to try to present him with a fetus, those type who have been lobbying the Hill have come around. And of course the potato lobbyists, the lobster lobbyists, the navy bean lobbyists who once a year would serve free bean soup to the members of the

press. Right along with your lunch you got a bowl of bean soup, whether you asked for it or not, and every senator got one in the Senate Restaurant. Or, like Senator [Allen] Ellender used to once a year have a luncheon for the press of crayfish gumbo, that he made himself, which was very tasty. He was promoting Louisiana. That's lobbying. Of course, he was a senator, he could do it.

Then you had ice cream lobbyists, and one to beat all lobbies as far as I was concerned was the pasta lobby, who had about ten cooks. They took over the House Caucus Room, and they were conjuring up spaghetti, linguini, spinach pasta, you name all the pasta dishes. They had pasta with lobster, pasta with fish, pasta with everything including--and this really turned my stomach--pasta with chocolate. They had this chocolate spaghetti type of dish. It was soft and they dipped strawberries into it and topped it with cream and gave it to you on a dish. Well, my stomach can take most anything, but this was one that I could not quite get down. But I will say that I enjoyed their pasta New Orleans, and they had hundreds of people going through, senators, congressmen, all sampling. That's a good example of lobbying.

The National Association of Retired Persons has got a very strong lobby, and is becoming stronger all the time. There are altogether about twenty-seven million people who they represent, I'm a member, because of their cheap insurance and so forth. They are expounding the views of the Social Security set. Of course

when I was not on Social Security I was against raising Social Security, but now that I'm a beneficiary, I like some of the things that they're saying. But I'm also realistic and I believe that the budget should be balanced and that we should make an effort towards it, and I'm willing to have my benefits cut percentage-wise to the overall cuts, so we may go down that path. We're all lobbyists after our own fashion. One of the things that I discovered over the years is that the number of people who consider themselves right-wing, upstanding, free-enterprise, gung ho for the American way, and so forth, are the biggest receivers of subsidies, who are sucking harder on the public tit than any other person. Yet when you point this out to them, they recoil in horror. Of course, my subsidy is necessary for our way of life to continue; the other people should be cut. From your own point of view, everything looks so different.

When I was very young, I was always looking at these old reporters hanging around, hardly doing their job, I would say, "These old folks should be retired." Until I reached their age. Then I suddenly realized, oh, my, no, I'm too valuable to go. So it's a different view, it depends on which perspective, which angle you look at things, which end of the telescope you use.

RITCHIE: The definition of a special interest is it's always somebody else.

TAMES: That's right. It's always "special interests." I'm honestly amazed at the various organization that keep springing up in this town. It's reached such a point that every member of the House and Senate, particularly the Senate, has to have an aide who focuses on one primary problem. Abortion, he has a specialist on abortion and right-to-life who answers all questions regarding that. Then he has one on labor, foreign policy. And all of these people feed into him. It's becoming more and more complex to be a member. That's why I keep favoring this "don't repeat" reform: go in, do what you can, make your pitch for what you think is good for the country, stay twelve years and go home, we've done your bidding. Let the next person come in. Well, they say, "you're advocating a very inefficient form of government." I say, "show me a more inefficient form of government than a democracy." If you want an efficient form of government, then you'd have fascism. I would say communist, but I think they're worse off than we are. I mean, the fascists, the Germans and the Italians made the railroads run on time, and you never lost your baggage at the airport, and you got your checks. Of course, you couldn't think. If you like that type of life, and human beings can adapt to anything, after a while you like what you're doing, you don't have to think. You just go home and plunk yourself in front of the TV, or your walk around the block.

RITCHIE: Have you noticed in the years that you've been covering Congress that lobbyists are more open about what they do now?

TAMES: Yes, very much so. For one thing, they can't conceal it. They have to register. They have to list their expenditures, their contributions. Wasn't it a lobbyist who coined the phrase that an honest politician is one who stays bought when you buy him?

RITCHIE: Now, you mentioned that you took this picture of a lobbyist in part so you would have a picture. Do you think in terms of categories, that you want to cover your bases in case a paper or magazine wants a certain picture. . . .

TAMES: Sure. You're always thinking of new stories, and constant stories, and they keep coming up. After all, news by and large is what is dug up or conjured up by the reporter or the photographer. If you see something that makes a picture, you shoot it, then you submit it. It could go as a floater with no story with it, like this could go as a floater, you just set it up as a floater.

RITCHIE: Or do you get requests from the paper from time to time that say, we're running a piece about lobbying and we need a photo?

TAMES: Oh, yes. Many times. I'll say, "I have something in the files I think will do that." I'll tell them what it is, that way they'll go back and get it. And invariably it would be much better than what I could go out and shoot immediately. Then, of course, other times I see this, and I say, "Well, if I'm going to do a lobbyist, a particular lobbyist, I will then remember a pose that I saw them in, or *a* lobbyist, not necessarily the same one. I'll say, "Did you ever sit in that box by the window there, that comes down very dramatically in the Reception Room of the Senate, sitting over there with a senator like I've seen others do? Go over there and sit down." He'd go over and sit down and I'd make a picture of him. Either by himself going through some papers, or with a senator, it makes a very interesting shot.

Yes, you copy constantly. They say, "We're doing a story on the Speaker." Okay, you've made the Speaker four or five times, then what do you do? I brought in Tip O'Neill one time into the Rayburn Room, with that big, beautiful painting of Rayburn in the background. I made a picture of Tip O'Neill, with his big face and with this big picture of Rayburn sort of leaning over him, to get the feeling of Rayburn and to get something different. You're constantly thinking.

See, the easiest thing to cover is a war. You just try to keep yourself alive and watch what's happening. You get pictures of destruction, and you've got good stuff. Look what's coming up out of Israel with the Palestinians. The Palestinians are reacting to their dead, and you get good pictures of wailing women, and bodies all over the place. That's about it. You've got more stuff than you know what to do with.

RITCHIE: We're getting a good story here.

End of Interview #4.

George Tames
Washington Photographer for the *New York Times*

Interview #5:
The Story Behind the Photograph
Monday, May 16, 1988

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 shirrtail 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 Vandenberg 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 Hagerly 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.

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