while I'm still working on the last volume of the Johnson biography, when I haven't finished it, while I'm still—at the age of eighty-three—several years from finishing it?

The answer is, I'm afraid, quite obvious, and if I forget it for a few days, I am frequently reminded of it, by journalists who, in writing about me and my hopes of finishing, often express their doubts of that happening in a sarcastic phrase: "Do the math." Well, I *can* do that math. I am quite aware that I may never get to write the memoir, although I have so many thoughts about writing, so many anecdotes about research, that I would like to preserve for anyone interested enough to read them. I decided that, just in case, I'd put some of them down on paper now.

"Turn Every Page"

People are always asking me why I chose Robert Moses and Lyndon Johnson to write about. Well, I must say I never thought of my books as the stories of Moses or Johnson. I never had the slightest interest in writing the life of a great man. From the very start I thought of writing biographies as a means of illuminating the times of the men I was writing about and the great forces that molded those times—particularly the force that is political power.

Why political power? Because political power shapes all of our lives. It shapes your life in little ways that you might not even think about. For example, when you're driving up to the Triborough (now Robert F. Kennedy) Bridge in Manhattan in New York, you may notice that the bridge comes down across the East River in Queens opposite 100th Street. So why do you have to drive all the way up from 100th Street to 125th Street to cross it, and then basically drive back, which adds almost three totally unnecessary miles to every journey across the bridge?

Well, the reason is political power. In 1934, Robert Moses was trying to get the Triborough Bridge built, and he couldn't because there wasn't enough public or political support for the project. William Randolph Hearst, the publisher of three influential newspapers in New York, owned a block of tenements on 125th Street.

Before the Depression, the tenements had been profitable, but now poor people didn't have jobs, and couldn't pay their rent. Hearst was losing money on the buildings and he wanted the city to take them off his hands by condemning them for some project. Robert Moses saw that the project could be the Triborough Bridge, and that's why the bridge entrance is at 125th Street. That's a small way in which political power affects your life. But there are larger ways, too.

Every time a young man or woman goes to college on a federal education bill passed by Lyndon Johnson, that's political power. Every time an elderly man or woman, or an impoverished man or woman of any age, gets a doctor's bill or a hospital bill and sees that it's been paid by Medicare or Medicaid, that's political power. Every time a black man or woman is able to walk into a voting booth in the South because of Lyndon Johnson's Voting Rights Act, that's political power. And so, unfortunately, is a young man—58,000 young American men—dying a needless death in Vietnam. *That's* political power. It affects your life in all sorts of ways. My books are an attempt to analyze and explain that power.

WHEN DID I start writing? It seems to me that I always wrote. I went to elementary school at Public School 93 in Manhattan. It was on 93rd Street and Amsterdam Avenue. It had never had a school newspaper, so when I was in the sixth grade I created one. We mimeographed it. I remember I couldn't get the ink off my hands—I showed up in class with ink all over them.

My mother died when I was eleven, and before she died she told my father that she wanted him to send me to the Horace Mann School. I started there in the seventh grade, and almost immediately I began working on the school newspaper. The paper meant something special. I don't think we were even conscious of what, but we knew. To this day, I have dinner fairly regularly with guys who worked with me on the *Horace Mann Record*.

I always liked finding out how things work and trying to explain them to people. It was a vague, inchoate feeling—I don't think of it in terms of, Why do I want to be a reporter? At Princeton, I was the paper's sportswriter and I had a column, but I found myself writing more about the coach and about how he coached than about how the team was actually doing. I think figuring things out and trying to explain them was always a part of it.

My first job out of Princeton, in 1957, was for a newspaper in New Jersey—the New Brunswick *Daily Home News*, "The Voice of the Raritan Valley"—that was very closely tied to the Democratic political machine in New Brunswick. In fact, it was so closely tied to the machine that its chief political reporter, who was so elderly that he had actually covered the Lindbergh kidnapping in the early Thirties, would be given a leave of absence during the political campaign—that's the chief *political* reporter—so that he could write speeches for the Democratic organization. This reporter suffered a minor heart attack shortly after I got there, so someone else was going to have to write the speeches, and he wanted it to be someone who would pose no threat to his getting the job back later, so he picked this kid from Princeton, and I found myself working for the political boss of New Brunswick, this tough old guy.

For some reason, he took a shine to me. My salary at the paper was fifty-two dollars a week. No specific salary was mentioned when I went to work for him, but every time he liked a speech I wrote he would pull out a wad of fifty-dollar bills and hundred-dollar bills and peel off what seemed like quite a few and give them to me. I was happy with that aspect of the job, but then came Election Day.

He brought me along to ride the polls with him, which meant going from polling place to polling place to make sure that everything was proceeding as it should. But on this particular day the driver of his limousine wasn't the regular driver. The driver had been replaced by a police captain.

I didn't understand why, but as we got to each polling place a policeman would come over to the car, and the captain and my employer would roll down their windows, and the boss would ask how things were going. Usually the answer was everything is "under control." But at one polling place, the policeman said they had had some trouble, but they were taking care of it. And then I saw that there was a group of African-American demonstrators, neatly dressed men and women, mostly young, who had obviously been protesting something that was going on at the polls. And as I watched, police paddy wagons pulled up. There was one there already. And the police were herding the protesters into the paddy wagons, nudging them along with their nightsticks.

The thing that got me when I thought about this in later years—what it was that really hit me—was the meekness of these people; their acceptance, as if this was the sort of thing they expected, that happened to them all the time. All of a sudden I didn't want to be in that big car with the boss. I just wanted to get out.

As I remember it, I didn't say a word. The next time we pulled up to a traffic light, I just opened the door and got out. The boss didn't say a word to me. I think he must have understood. Anyway, I never heard from him again.

But I had realized that I—Bob Caro—wanted to be out there with the protesters.

Not long after that, I decided that if I wanted to keep on being a reporter, I needed—for myself—to work for a paper that fought for things. Why? I couldn't explain it then, and I can't explain it now. But it had to do with that Election Day. With the protesters. With the cops nudging them along with the nightsticks. I had gotten so *angry*!

I looked around for a newspaper that fought for causes. There were several at the time, and I wrote letters to all of them asking for a job. It took a while, but I got an offer from *Newsday* on Long Island—a real crusading paper then—and in 1959 I went to work for them.

Newsday had a managing editor named Alan Hathway, who was an old-time newspaperman from the 1920s. He was a character right out of *The Front Page*, a broad-shouldered man with a big stomach that looked soft but wasn't. His head was shiny bald except for a monk-like tonsure, and rather red—*very* red after he had started drinking for the day, which was at lunch. He wore brown shirts with white ties, and black shirts with yellow ties. We were never sure if he had actually graduated from, or even attended, college, but he had a deep prejudice against graduates of prestigious universities, and during his years at *Newsday* had never hired one, let alone one from the Ivy League. They hired me as a joke on him while he was on vacation. He was so angry that I was there that during my first weeks on the job, he would refuse to acknowledge my presence in his city room. I kept saying, "Hello, Mr. Hathway," or "Hi, Mr. Hathway," when he passed my desk. He'd never even nod. Ignoring me was easy for Mr. Hathway to do because as the low man on the paper's reportorial totem pole, I never worked on a story significant enough to require his involvement. When I had been working on the New Brunswick paper, Ina and I had been living in a garden apartment in Edison, New Jersey, with our baby son, Chase, and we hadn't yet moved to Long Island. I had told Ina we'd better not move; I was probably going to get fired. I drove back and forth to work every day.

Newsday then did not publish on Sundays, so as low man on the totem pole, I worked Saturday afternoons and nights, because if a story came in then, I could put the information in a memo and leave the actual writing of the story to the real reporters who came in Sunday, and would do the writing for the Monday paper. The last of the other reporters and editors would leave about noon on Saturday; for the rest of the day and the evening, I would be alone in the vast, cluttered *Newsday* city room, empty but not silent with the constant ringing of the telephones lined up on the city desk and the ceaseless clatter of the wire machines.

Late one Saturday afternoon, a telephone on the city desk rang, and when I picked it up, it was an official of the Federal Aviation Agency, calling from his office at what was then, because John F. Kennedy hadn't yet been assassinated, Idlewild Airport. *Newsday* had been doing a series of articles on Mitchel Field, a big Air Force base in the middle of Long Island's Nassau County, that the military was giving up. Its twelve hundred acres were the last large open space in the county, so what happened to it was important. The FAA was in the process of ruling that it should become a civilian airport. *Newsday*, however, felt that it should be used instead for public purposes, in particular for education, to allow Hofstra University to expand, and to create a campus for Nassau County Community College, the only public higher education on Long Island, which was then being housed in temporary quarters in the County Courthouse in Mineola. The rooms there were already too crowded to accommodate the students, many from

the large low-income community in nearby Hempstead, who wanted a college degree. Public education for the poor, free public education: that was something worth fighting for.

I hadn't been working on any of the Mitchel Field stories. But on this Saturday, suddenly this guy from the FAA was on the phone, and he says something like, "I really like what you guys are doing on Mitchel Field, and I'm here alone in the FAA offices, and if you send someone down here, I know what files you should be looking at, and he can look at them."

I was alone, the only person in the city room. This happened to be the day of the big *Newsday* annual summer picnic on the beach at Fire Island. Just about everyone else had gone, except me. None of them had a cell phone, of course, since there were no cell phones then. I called the editor who was my immediate superior, and then *his* superior, without being able to reach them. When, after many calls, I finally did reach an editor, he told me to call the paper's great investigative reporter, Bob Greene, and have him go down to Idlewild, but Greene wasn't reachable, either, and neither were the other reporters I was told to call. Finally the editor told me that I would have to go myself.

I will never forget that night. It was the first time I had ever gone through files. The official met me at the front door and led me to a room with a conference table in the middle of it, and, on the table, high stacks of file folders. And, somehow, in a strange way, sitting there going through them, I felt at home. As I went through the memos and the letters and the minutes of meetings I could see a pattern emerging of the real reason why the agency wanted the field to become a civilian airport: because executives of corporations with offices on Long Island, who seemed to be quite friendly with FAA officials, wanted to be able to fly in and out of Long Island in their company planes without having the inconvenience of driving to Idlewild or LaGuardia Airports. I kept looking for a piece of paper on which someone came right out and said that, but I didn't find one; everything I could find on paper talked around that point. But between all the pieces of paper, I found sentences and paragraphs that, taken together, made the point clear. I found enough to demonstrate that.

There are certain moments in your life when you suddenly understand something about yourself. I loved going through those files, making them yield up their secrets to me. And here was a particular and fascinating secret: that these corporate executives were persuading a government agency to save them some driving time at the expense of a poor kid getting an education and a better chance in life. Each discovery I made that helped to prove that was a thrill. I don't know why raw files affect me that way. In part, perhaps, because they are closer to reality, to genuineness. Not filtered, cleaned up, through press releases or, years later, in books. I worked all night, but I didn't notice the passing of time. When I finished and left the building on Sunday, the sun was coming up, and that was a surprise. I went back to the office and before driving home, I wrote a memo on what I had found.

Early Monday morning, my day off, the phone rang, and it was Alan's secretary, June Blom. Alan wanted to see me right away, she said. I said, "I'm in New Jersey."

"Well, he wants to see you just as soon as you can get here." I told Ina, with what I suppose was a wry smile, that we had been right not to move. I drove to *Newsday* that morning sure every mile of the way that I was about to be fired.

I ran into June just as I entered the city room; motioning to Alan's office, she told me to go right in. Walking across the room, I saw, through the glass window, the big red head bent over something he was reading, and as I entered his office, I saw that what he was reading was my memo.

He didn't look up. After a while, I said tentatively, "Mr. Hathway." I couldn't get the "Alan" out. He motioned me to sit down, and went on reading. Finally he raised his head. "I didn't know someone from Princeton could do digging like this," he said. "From now on, you do investigative work."

I responded with my usual *savoir faire*. "But I don't know anything about investigative reporting."

Alan looked at me for what I remember as a very long time. "Just remember," he said. "Turn every page. Never assume anything. Turn every goddamned page." He turned to some other papers on his desk, and after a while I got up and left.

ALAN HAD IN FACT heard what I said. A few days later, he called me in and said, "I'll sit you next to Bob Greene." Greene was an already legendary investigative reporter. As I recall, for a while I didn't have any investigative stories of my own, but from those two—Alan and Bob Greene—I learned how to be a reporter. And these weren't lessons you'd be taught in journalism school. One time Bob and I were looking into a phony charitable "cancer research" organization which was spending the bulk of its money on a luxurious lifestyle for the director and his mistress. We had the goods, but we weren't going to be able to use them. We needed an admission from the director, or at least a good comment. We took our material to Alan before we went to interview the director. He said, "When you talk to him, don't sit too close together. Caro, you sit over here, Greene, sit over there. You fire these questions fast—Caro, you ask one; Greene, you ask one—I want his head going back and forth like a Ping Pong ball." It worked: the guy's head kept swiveling, he got rattled, he made a comment I'm sure he wished he hadn't. We had our story.

Another time Alan said about a guy I was investigating and who didn't want to talk to me: "Tell him that if he doesn't, he'll be eating his meals off a tin tray for the next ten years." It sounds funny, but there was a lesson I learned then: When you need to get information from somebody, you have to find *some way* to *get it*.

A FEW YEARS INTO my tenure at *Newsday*, I'd had a few scoops and successes. I'd been nominated for a Pulitzer and had won a couple of minor, I mean really minor, journalistic awards, but when you're young, and you win something, even minor, you think you know everything. I thought I was really something. I thought I knew everything about politics and how politics and political power worked.

Robert Moses wanted to build a bridge across Long Island Sound between Oyster Bay on Long Island and Rye in Westchester County. *Newsday* assigned me to look into it, and I did, and the bridge was a really terrible idea. It would have created even bigger traffic jams—you would have needed something like eight more lanes on the Long Island Expressway just to handle the additional traffic from New England that would have been created. And because the bridge would have been so long, the piers on which it stood would be so large that they actually would have caused pollution along the coastline of Long Island Sound.

Newsday sent me to Albany. The governor was Nelson Rockefeller. I spoke to him. I spoke to his chief counsel. I spoke to the Assembly Speaker. I spoke to the president of the State Senate. Everyone seemed to understand that this bridge was a terrible idea. So I reported back to *Newsday* that the bridge idea was dead and went on to something else.

I had a friend in Albany. A couple of weeks later he called me and said, "Bob, I think you better come back up here."

And I said something like, "Oh, I don't think that's necessary. I think I took care of that bridge."

He said, "Bob, Robert Moses was up here yesterday, and I think you better come back."

So I drove up. I'll never forget this. I walked into the press room to find a stack of press releases from Robert Moses announcing that a "study" of the bridge, an obvious first step toward its construction, would begin immediately—with the participation of the state. And now, when I went back to the same officials who had assured me they were firmly against the bridge, I found there had been a change in their position. They were now firmly for it.

I remember I drove home that night, and all the way down from Albany to our house on Long Island—it was 163 miles—I kept thinking, Everything you've been doing is bullshit. Underlying every one of my stories was the traditional belief that you're in a democracy and the power in a democracy comes from being elected. Yet here was a man, Robert Moses, who had never been elected to anything, and he had enough power to turn around a whole state government in one day. And he's had this power for more than forty years, and you, Bob Caro, who are supposed to be writing about political power and explaining it, you have no idea where he got this power.

And, thinking about it later, I realized: and neither does anybody else.

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I DIDN'T DO MUCH with this thought at the time. I loved being a reporter, but you're always running from one story to another: There's always a new story. It wasn't until I became a Nieman Journalism Fellow at Harvard that I finally had the time to think. I was already twenty-nine years old. The Nieman fellowship is for mid-career journalists who want to spend a year at Harvard learning more about the areas they cover, and I was taking courses on urban planning. One of my courses was taught by two professors who had written a well-regarded textbook on highways, including an analysis, in great detail, of highway location: why highways get built where they're built. They were doing this by means of a mathematical equation. There were factors such as population density, traffic patterns, elevation of grades—that sort of thing. And at each class they would write the equation on the board, and then they would add new factors to it. And this equation was getting quite long. When I was at Princeton, I was a very diligent note-taker, and I was being a very diligent note-taker in this course and writing everything down. And then one day, while I was taking notes, I suddenly thought, No, that's not why highways get built where they get built. They get built there *because Robert Moses wants them there!*

There were a great many social events for the Nieman Fellows that year. But Ina's mother was very sick, and she had to be home to take care of her, so I was up at Harvard alone a lot of the time, and I've never liked going to social events alone. Harvard had given each of the Nieman Fellows a small office, and I spent a lot of evenings alone in mine. For the first time, really, I had a chance to think about what I had been doing and what I wanted to do with my life. And I guess I came to feel that if I could find out where Robert Moses got his power—this power that no one understood; this power that nobody else was really even thinking about, the power was just sort of there, it had been there for more than four decades—if I could explain it, I would be adding something to the knowledge people ought to have about political power, not the kind of things you learn in a textbook but the raw naked realities of power, about how power works in cities, how it really works.

I knew one book editor in New York, and only one. I wrote him a letter, and I got a contract, a very small contract. It was for $5,000, of which I got $2,500 in advance. And I started out to write a book that turned out to be *The Power Broker*.

WHEN I FIRST BEGAN *The Power Broker* in 1966, since we didn't have any savings to speak of, and we had a son, and my advance was so small that I still needed a weekly paycheck, I convinced myself that I could write the book while continuing to work at *Newsday*. But that illusion didn't last very long. I wasn't making much progress on the book, hardly any progress at all. Then I heard about something called the Carnegie Fellowship in Journalism. They took one working journalist at a time and paid him his weekly salary for a year while he wrote a book. I wrote a letter of application, and I received the fellowship. I quit *Newsday* immediately and told Ina, "They're paying me for a whole year and I have this outline, I'll be done in nine months, and then we can finally go to France." I had always met my newspaper deadlines. And my outline said I'd be done in nine months. At the end of the year, of course, the book was barely started, and we were completely out of money.

For about the next four years money was a problem. As I've said, Ina sold our house in Roslyn, Long Island. We had talked about selling it but in my mind we hadn't finalized it. Ina finalized it. After the mortgage was paid back, we cleared about $25,000, which was enough to live on for a year, and we moved to an apartment in the Bronx that we really disliked. I went around and asked superintendents in the nearby buildings if they had a small room to rent as an office, and found a tiny one, a cinder-block room in a basement, for a little money. When I remember these years, it was a time of just getting by. We didn't go out to eat much. Ina went to work, teaching, for a year, but then I hurt my back playing basketball, and I had to stay in bed for several months. I needed someone to do the research, so Ina would drive out to the Nassau County Courthouse. I'd say you go up to the second floor and there's a phone booth there—I knew this courthouse backwards and forwards from my days as a reporter—and call me. She'd call and I'd say now go through the doors right behind you, go in there and they'll ask you so and so, but you want to go to the second row of the file cabinets on the right. I'd tell her that sort of thing. But there came a time when we really totally ran out of money. I just didn't know any place to turn.

By this point, I'd written about half the book, about five hundred thousand words. I gave it to my editor. I didn't hear back from him for a long time. When he did finally call me, he took me to dinner at an inexpensive Chinese restaurant on Broadway. And he basically said, "We've read the manuscript and we like it. Keep going." And I said, "Can I have the other half of my advance?"

There are sentences that are said to you in your life that are chiseled into your memory, and his reply was one. "Oh no, Bob," he said. "I guess you didn't understand. We like the book, but not many people are going to read a book on Robert Moses, and you have to be prepared for a very small printing. We're not prepared

to go beyond the terms of the contract." Even I understood that that last sentence meant, You don't get the other $2,500 until you've finished.

That was the worst night. We were really at the end of our rope. I didn't know what to say to Ina. I didn't know how to face her. I remember I walked all the way up Broadway through Harlem and Inwood to our apartment in the Bronx. This was 1971 and Harlem was not a friendly place, but that night that never crossed my mind. I knew I was going to have to go back to work, and it was going to be very hard to finish the book.

By this time I felt, rightly or wrongly, that I had learned some things it was important for people to know. But they were never going to know them if I didn't finish the book. And that night, I just couldn't see any way of finishing it.

Soon after, luckily, things changed. My editor left his publishing house, and there was an "out" clause in my contract saying that I could leave if he left. I knew I needed an agent. I didn't know any agents, but I had a friend who gave me a list of four. Three of them were men, and one was a young woman named Lynn Nesbit. In 1971, awareness of the women's revolution had not yet penetrated to the Bronx, so I went to see the three men first, but they all reminded me too much of myself. In my memory they all wore horn-rimmed glasses, like me, and sports jackets that had elbow patches on the sleeves, or that looked like they *should* have elbow patches on the sleeves. Then I went to see Lynn. I remember sitting across the desk from her, and there was a call she said she had to take. She was selling a Tom Wolfe story to some magazine. And as I listened to her on that call, I said to myself, *that's* what I need.

Lynn had read my manuscript, and said, "I'd like to represent you, but you have to tell me something first. Why do you look so worried?"

I didn't know I *looked* worried. But of course I was. I told her, "I'm worried that I won't have enough money to finish the book." My editor had left me feeling that few people would read a book on Robert Moses, and that therefore no publisher would give me the money I needed to finish it.

She asked how much money I was talking about. I told her I needed enough so I could spend two more years on the book. I thought it would take me two years. I don't remember the exact amount I specified, but I know it was not that large. And all of a sudden there were other sentences that I'll never forget. She said, "Is that what you're worried about? Then you can stop worrying right now. I can get you that by just picking up the phone. Everybody in New York knows about this book."

Then she said, "You can stop worrying about money. But I've read this manuscript. What you care about is writing. My job is to find you an editor you can work with for the rest of your life. I'm going to set up lunches for you"—I think there were four, all with well-known editors—"and you can pick the one you want to work with."

Three of the editors took me to the Four Seasons or some other fancy restaurant, and basically said they could make me a star. Bob Gottlieb at Knopf said, "Well, I don't go out for lunch, but we can have a sandwich at my desk and talk about your book." So of course I picked him.

Robert Moses