

## Transcript of Mrs. Johnson's Audio Diary

Prepared by Staff of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum

December 3, 1963

Tuesday, December third. The day began with the most wonderful bunch of volunteer workers helping upstairs – Abigail McCarthy, Ann Chapman, Wendy Marcus, Jo Sherfy – a lot of good old friends putting their shoulders to the wheel.

Mary Ellen Monroney and I went out to look for some chintzes for the windows for the two rooms that will be left vacated when the two Kennedy children leave. We went first to 30<sup>th</sup> Place, that I'd lived and loved for so long--18 years it was--and then to Mrs. Hendrick's, and looked at some chintzes. As usual, didn't find just what we wanted; came home in time for a 4:00 meeting with Clark Clifford.

The meeting was all about the Fine Arts Committee, of which it may be a long time until I hear the last. Bess and Liz were there. Clark is a most remarkable man, so suave and persuasive and handsome with an almost Shakespearean delivery. I tried to tell him quite simply that the reason I wanted to continue the Fine Arts Committee in the first place is because I wanted to keep the White House at the same high level, and I'm thinking about those yellow busloads of schoolchildren that come trooping through, and the love they take away with it. And besides, I wanted Lyndon's – our administration's appearance in the public eye to keep on being good in that respect. But that my real interests were going to be directed in a good many other channels more than in arts. And then lastly, that somewhere down the line I'd have a love of my own, that is, the Capitol, which deserves the same sort of high-class treatment with a custodian and a saver of its history as the White House has had.

But Mrs. Kennedy is telling me that I ought to discontinue the Fine Arts Committee because it had finished its work, and everything was bought, and everything was in its place, and had persuaded me that I probably ought to discontinue it, and she said what I needed was to keep the White House Historical Association and to talk to Clark about the way to go about doing that. So that was the basis of this meeting.

Somewhere along the way, I began to have the feeling that I was living in a jungle of which I was not very well prepared to fend for myself. But, Lord help me, to keep some humor alive in the whole situation, and also a sense of perspective, because, no doubt, the Fine Arts Committee and Commission and Historical Association and Painting Committee, and all of those, will continue in some constructive fashion, and things will level out in the next few weeks.

When I listen to Mrs. Kennedy, I just, I just sort of want to put my hand in hers and do everything that she suggests. As for Lyndon, he'd like to take the stars out of the sky and make a necklace for her, he admires her so much.

Well, finally, Clark finished and left, after a conversation here in the house with Mrs. Kennedy, and he will report to us later where we stand on the perpetuation of the Fine Arts Committee, or what's going to happen to it.

I remember one of the expressions Clark used: "I have a deep, visceral feeling that Lyndon should continue the Committee." That expression, "visceral," how much I like it. I guess I'll never get past the point of words being one of the loves of my life.

After he left, I got dressed for dinner with the feeling that isn't it good that the end of the day comes when you can relax. And dinner was so very nice, with Joe Alsop, one of the real sophisticates I've ever known--so charming and smart and also, I think, a good friend of ours. And Susan Mary, lean and smooth, and Kay Graham, I guess the best way I can think of Kay is sweet. And she with such a welter of problems of her own. Jack and Mary Margaret were there, too, and also Homer Thornberry, who will soon be leaving.

We gathered around the fire and relaxed and had a scotch and listened to Lyndon tell about how his day had begun with Joe Meany--George Meany, I meant to say--and gone onto the heads of regulatory agencies, and luncheon with about ten governors, and Martin Luther King somewhere in the middle of it. And it was good talk and a wonderful day, and I thought to myself: "Dear Lord, if he can just rest enough to think enough, it just might be wonderful." I mean, the next 13 months might be, although I have no illusions about the state of the.... We now live with adrenaline in our bloods and a feeling of "Our Country 'Tis of Thee," and "anything for America," and how quickly that will evaporate I don't know. And while it's there, we must get a lot done, and Lyndon has sure been applying himself to that objective, with a cycle and realistic knowledge of how soon a mood will evaporate.

One thing so typical of Lyndon, he just charged right in through that silken curtain of reserve that one draws around such matters, and said to Kay, in his peculiarly innocent and typical fashion: "I thought about Phil the whole time. He'd be right here by me; he was always here whenever anything was in trouble. You just don't know how much I've thought about him these last seven days." Kay, she may have been taken aback, but I think she was appreciative. And I liked it, because it had been there in all of our minds, too.

**[Recording ends.]**