

Transcript of Mrs. Johnson's Audio Diary

Prepared by Staff of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum

December 9, 1963

Monday, December ninth. Mary Lasker had come down from New York last night and spent the night with us in the Queen's Room--our first guest in that beautiful place. And so, she and I walked through the family quarters, and we hung pictures. We put the scenes in the bedroom. So I feel very much at home. We put Mr. Sam out in the--well, it's what I call the family sitting room. Actually it's a hall, but it's what's going to be the Johnsons' informal family sitting room. It's remarkable how well my own furniture fits into the room that was Mrs. Kennedy's. I'm glad for the taxpayer, and I'm glad for me too because it saves my time.

All morning, Mary Lasker and I spent going between The Elms, walking over this house, going to Lyndon's office, making plans, talking art, talking what we might put here and there. All the time I was, of course, very much aware that her main interest was to talk with Lyndon about the doctors conference which had been set for the Bay of Pigs and which naturally never happened. She did get to have a chance to talk with Lyndon about it, and I, I believe that it will happen. First, because Lyndon's whole thought about medical research is "forward march" and "the mind of man can conquer all." He's the oddest combination of cynicism and undying belief in the mind of man. And also because Mary herself is so smart.

Then when I got Mary settled on other items, I sat down to lunch downstairs, in that room where I first came to a dinner with the Kennedys in January of '61, with Bess, and Liz, and Ashton, and Tish Baldrige, who had come down to give us about four days of her time for advice and getting us started off on this strange new path.

We talked about State visits--Queen Frederika of Greece, the President Segni of Italy, and of course the first, and to me the most difficult, Chancellor Erhard of Germany, because he's coming to the Ranch. We talked about gifts, about letters and signatures and sponsorships and all the grist that comes to my mill. Tish is quite a person, so knowledgeable. She comes from a different world completely from any that I have ever inhabited or would ever like to inhabit. But I respect her and like her tremendously.

Sometime during the afternoon, Mary Margaret flew in from Houston to join Jack, and we had dinner with them and the Bill Whites. Some... I don't know exactly when, it's dawned on me, that Bill is going to write a book on Lyndon. I just couldn't be more pleased. I wouldn't want to be in better hands, both for his deep knowledge of Lyndon and for his magnificent love affair with the English language. He is a lover of words. But also, I dread it, simply because Bill is one of our dearest friends, and it's hard to write factually about somebody you know.

I keep on thinking of the book that he wrote about Senator Taft, *The Taft Story*, which I like so much, and I thought made Taft such a warm human being, which he wasn't, really, as I had known him in his lifetime. And I said to Bill, "The family must have liked that book very much, didn't they?" And he looked at me with sort of a wry expression and said, "I don't believe anything short of beatification would have satisfied them." Well, it certainly won't be that way with me. **[Recording ends.]**