

Transcript of Mrs. Johnson's Audio Diary

Prepared by Staff of the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum

December 10, 1963

Tuesday, December tenth. This morning began with Marny Clifford and Jean Ikard coming over to help me arrange books, in the endless miles of empty bookshelves. And to put around my beautiful Lowestoft pieces and my Dorothy Doughty birds.

Because I want it to start looking like, that is, the little bit of the room that I can call mine, that is the Johnsons' home, and I want it to start looking like the Johnsons lived here. I put out a picture of President and Mrs. Kennedy--no, I believe it's just the President--and Caroline, and the pony, the little pony that Lyndon gave them. And then I put out a picture of Daddy with Tommy and Tony, and one of Lyndon's father and mother, on a table. It will take shape and warmth and life and the story of a family, but it won't be done in a day. And it's marvelous to have the help and the guidance of people like Marny and Jean.

Beginning in the afternoon, I had a business meeting with Sheldon Cohen and Walter Jenkins, in the forbidding sanctum of the Monroe Treaty Room, that vast, dark place lit by the chandelier that came from Lyndon's office, P-38 in the Capitol, that he sent down here at Mrs. Kennedy's request several years ago. Our business concerned everything relating to the furniture in The Elms, the sale of The Elms, and it's going to entail hours and hours of bookkeeping that can be done only by me, in tracing back values on every piece of furniture, deciding what I want to leave to two little girls that may someday get married, what I want to put down here, what I want to give away--the sheer volume of it overwhelms it, overwhelms me. And sometimes, somewhere, I'm going to have another little house, and I want to save something of that life out at The Elms, some of the furniture for myself.

The main thing now is to get it wrapped up in a tidy fashion, the house clean, the decisions made, ready to be shown to possible buyers, and sold in the most clear-cut, simple manner possible--getting our money out of it.

In the evening, at 7:00, we had a group of people up for a drink and some talk about our work together. It's what Lyndon would call a sort of breeding of the Kennedy forces with the Johnson forces. The Feldmens, Sorensen alone, the Fortases, the Lee Whites, the Bill Moyers, the Reedys, the Salingers, the Busbys, the Jenkinses, Jack Valenti. It turned out that Feldman used to work for Don Cook.

One of the most interesting faces to me to watch was that mask-like face of Sorensen, behind which I have no idea what goes on. And yet, he is, to me, one of the most interesting ones.

Of course what I liked best was sitting down on the sofa and talking quietly to Abe about art. I knew that the violin was his great release, his getting out of this world into a quiet world. But I didn't know that he was so knowledgeable and so interested in paintings and in all phases of art. He does know the people and the things, and we planned a quiet luncheon sometime later, perhaps with the...oh, perhaps with Mrs. Wrightsman, or the Fosburghs, and Mr. DuPont, to make plans for the future of all the things that Mrs. Kennedy has brought almost entirely to accomplishment. But there will be things to go on.

Pierre Salinger has such a cute young wife. She's an artist herself, and I did so want to get her aside and talk to her about some of the pictures. Lyndon took all the ladies on a tour of the rooms, particularly the family rooms, and they seemed to like it.

And of course it was fun for me to sit around the fire and listen to the talk. The two great monolithic structures that stand between us and some degree of success right now are of course the civil rights legislation ... **[Recording ends.]**