SPECIAL INTERVIEW

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INTERVIEWEE: ELIZABETH "LIZ" CARPENTER

INTERVIEWER: DOUGLASS CATER

PLACE: Martha's Vineyard

Tape 1 of 1, Side 1

DC: We have with us this afternoon, a well-known lady of many parts, Liz Carpenter. Our subject is the LBJ Library and in a sense, the presidential library as an enduring institution. We don't want to make this highfalutin. In fact, I'm going to ask dumb-boy questions, which I hope will provoke Liz to speak in nonacademic terms, calculated to be understandable by the citizen who may be thinking of visiting our presidential library, and more particularly, making the trek to Austin, Texas, where the LBJ Library is located.

I'm going to divide the questions into the beginnings, the stages of growth, the future potential, and then in something I will keep as a secret till the end that goes to the larger purpose of the Library. Liz, if you will reach back in memory, when did the first glint come into the President's eye, President Johnson that is, that a library was in his scheme of things?

LC: My memory goes back to when he was in his vice-presidential years, when I went to work for him. But at that time there was a little house in Johnson City, his boyhood home, and already he and Lady Bird were trying to fix it up because there really was nothing between El Paso and Texarkana for people to visit. And he knew he was having an experience that should be shared.

And so they started; they bought that house that had belonged to his mother, and it may have passed into other hands, I don't remember. And they started getting conscious of setting it up with, for instance, with a copy of a speech that he made to a commencement in Johnson City. And so their mind was on saving things.
People would visit the Ranch, and the birthplace was there on the Ranch land. And there was an effort to haul the stuff out of the attic, and be a receptacle for sisters who might have a highchair or something, and fix it up so that visitors--at this point it wasn't public visitors, but house guests--could really see that setting. And the reason it was exciting and different is that not many people came out of that country--that had twenty-nine inches of rainfall, that was really hard country, beautiful country, but hard country--to go anywhere. And he had done it. He was excited by it, always excited by public service. He wanted other people to be excited by it. And so that is really when it started.

And of course, his job grew and so did the consciousness of keeping records, keeping--and I think that he still remains the president who has served the longest time in Congress [Washington]; thirty seven years [25 years, 1937-1961]. And so the papers, now at the Library, cover those years and what was happening. And it is valuable, I think, to students. And it has certainly grown in prestige.

And I think you're going to be surprised when you get the exact figure, but I did a speech on this at one time that more than eight hundred books have BEEN done about Lyndon Johnson. Can you believe that? And not one that really suits us.
(Laughter)
The closest one being Joe Califano's, I guess. But the scholar's room--my name for it at

the Library, that part of it [for studying] the archives[the Reading Room]--is now heavily occupied. And I can remember for the first few weeks of the library that there wasn't--you know, kind of no one in there.

DC: In the evolution of his own thinking, well before the thing began, your first indications when he was, before he was president, were that he was thinking more of a place where visitors, especially people in the region, would come to be aware of what it was like to go into public service. So it was more of a living museum concept.

LC: Right.

DC: At what point did you think that he thought that it was important to have the kind of open-access admission to the public papers, many of which are very private papers, of the people involved in governing in high places in Congress, as well as the White House?

LC: I think he had people on his staff, like Juanita Roberts, who were goading him to that and who realized it, a lot more than I did. I must say that I had once suggested that, "Glory be, let's have a Lyndon Johnson chair at The University of Texas."

(Laughter)

DC: Lyndon little[?].

LC: Yes, but I had not been all that allied; I'd been a reporter before I worked for him in 1960. And so there were people very interested. But really, Lady Bird had--she's walked every step of the way, seen every library, been to exhibit halls. It's no set evolution, and I just simply don't--I trailed along with her to some of the things to look at.

DC: I will be talking to her, I hope, but in terms of your direct relations with the president, was there any point that you sensed the vision or the reality that the Library has become, that

is to say, a fantastically impressive edifice? It's a Mecca for citizen and scholar alike, from all over the world. And it is doing a land-office business, a growth business; under its leadership it continues to access all kinds of relevant papers.

LC: And it is one of the few presidential libraries for which there is no fee and never will be, at his direction.

It really was really after he went into the presidency; there was a time when he had a dinner, I believe, of people, and he said--he said this often informally--"I don't believe that all the brains of the country are at Stanford or Harvard. I think that there are brains in the middle of the country. But I find that when I'm appointing people that's where I'm going for." So what he wanted it to show was, to show that we were smart as anybody else in the middle of the country. And it was always entwined together: a school of public service as well as a library. He never wanted the Library as a just monument to him, but a launching pad of ideas. And that is what it's striven to be.

I think that he saw himself as somebody out of Johnson City, with a limited education at a state teacher's college, and propelled by fate or circumstance into running for Congress, and winning in a really surprise race, and then finding that his education about the world, about many things, could only come from the heart, because originally he hadn't had much training for it from the head. And when we looked at that Texas delegation this was true. They didn't know where the heck--I mean, so many people were elected, not just from Texas, but from other places, who really didn't know world geography, and were hit with things all of a sudden. And he thought you ought to be trained for it.

DC: That's interesting because nothing in his public behavior, once he got to Washington much less to Congress, showed that he was cowed by what he might sense as inferior beginnings. He, as a congressional aide, was already running for leadership.

LC: That's right. He was enthusiastic; he was up early, he believed in people intensely. He wanted everybody, including himself, to make the best of themselves. He wanted you to sell at your worth. What had happened with that library is really thrilling because it is the role model for every other presidential library.

DC: That's just what I was going to ask you, and this again goes to your perception of what was his awareness. At that time that you are talking about, the significant libraries, and I believe the only ones that I that can think of, and that was the Hoover Library--which is really not quite a library; it is not a place that people come for library purposes, more a research center--the Truman Library--well, excuse me, I skipped over the Roosevelt Library at Hyde Park--and the Truman Library, those were the prototypes of what he must have been aware of. And I know we all went out there together to sign the Medicare Act at the Truman Library. How did he refer, in your presence, to other presidential libraries and what they did right, and what they did wrong, in his perception?

LC: I think he had an open mind about it. He wanted to learn from it. What evolved with presidential libraries is that the public has access to a president's past and his years of service in two ways: One, in the artifacts that you see in a museum, and they serve a good purpose. In the Hoover Library, for instance, you see the bags that were used to carry food to starving Europe, and this gives a view of Hoover that you don't get through his papers.

Gerald Ford has divided his library. I think it must be hard to make it work, but the papers are at the University of Michigan, and the library is in Grand Rapids, the library as far as the museum part [goes].

Truman told Mrs. Johnson when she went through [his library] with him, "A library is like an iceberg. You don't see all the valuable part, which is underneath."

And so I think that everything they learned--and he sent her out as his scout, with an architect friend, to look at libraries--made the Library what it is today. And that is where you see, in his case, thirty-one million papers, bound in red vellum with gold seals, and the public is tied to it. [None at] all of that spirit at the Truman Library. You don't see it at any other library that I know of. But it was also inspired by the Beinecke at Harvard [Yale], where they used books as part of the architecture. And again, that is a lure to make you know that it is all there. We have less space now for the artifacts, the story for the public, even though we draw more public than any other library; about half a million a year that walk through it. We have less space to show off the state gifts, the rock from the moon, the story--and this is hard to tell--of the Great Society which was the great Johnson--it's hard to tell the civil rights story and the story of the Great Society unless you have very good exhibitors. And we have done the best we can.

I went the other day through the Kennedy Library; they're using television sets and video tapes to a much greater extent than we do at our library. And yet some of that is a little bit too gimmicky for my blood. To me, as a person, you are a long way from Washington, D.C., in Texas. And if you want to be inspired to be a public servant, I think these presidential libraries are marvelous, in that you have role models, and you can go

and see that somebody from home, a country boy from Johnson City made it, and that's bound to have its effect, and lots of school children go through. And the miracle is that so much of the United States is covered, within touch of some presidential library. About the only really neglected part is the Pacific Northwest, which might be the reason somebody like Tom Foley ought to be elected, or Henry Jackson.

DC: He might make that his central plank--

LC: --a presidential library.

But everything else--you have the Midwest and you have--well, just all of them. Now we're about to have the George Bush Library, which is, strangely, located at Texas A&M, about a 110 miles from us.

DC: Bush had no relation to A&M.

LC: None, but the donors were eager to capture it. We were very fortunate in having a wealthy, well-endowed, great university sitting on a major thoroughfare, I-35 through Texas. And so we sit right next to it, and I think the location is really important. But it--I believe this is true--next to the Alamo, and maybe a theme park in Dallas, draws more people than anything in Texas.

DC: We should remember that the JFK Library really only came into being, into operation, even construction after the LBJ Library was well along. I believe even the construction was certainly not completed before the dedication of the--

LC: Well, we were better prepared.

DC: I know, I'm not asking for that. I'm asking, in any of your encounters with LBJ, did any reference to the JFK Library, and what it would do, and how it related to its own

perpetuation of memory, was that ever made?

LC: No. We just knew we were lucky to have friends in Texas that were in a position to get The University of Texas--

DC: To move.

LC: To move. And it wasn't particularly--there were students who were against that. At the opening of it--which it opened with two presidents--

DC: Right, I was there.

LC: --there were the demonstrators because the Vietnam War was still fresh in the memories of many people.

DC: It was still going on at that time, because that was during the Nixon Administration. I think we've covered the beginnings well enough.

Stages of growth; and I think we should try to confine ourselves to the Library and not the School, although I may make a brief reference to how it stacks up in the perception of the total LBJ perception. It is said about the Library that the strangest thing in this enormous collection of papers, and this is not just true of the LBJ Library, but it is certainly relevant to it, is that the absence of papers that bear the President's own imprimatur. It is really a collection of the important papers with which the President dealt, and sometimes scrawled on, but you don't read anything at length in which Johnson wrote himself, a memo, or things like that. There [are] some short notes of recollections of a particular conversation, but he did not keep a diary in any real sense of the word, I don't think, the way Lady Bird did. How do you, in your assessment of his perception of the Library, and indeed your own experience with the Library, how do you build a

memory chest of a living president who made a mark on his time, when his own particular mark is not all that much in the collection?

LC: Well, we have an accumulation of years and letters, and second, calendars. After he became vice president, the secret service daily things [schedules] tell you exactly where he was every minute. And those have been very valuable. Speeches in different areas of writing, and how it evolved. I think you are going to have less and less of the personal because of the high-tech age we're in. And presidents don't write letters by hand.

DC: No, they don't.

LC: But we have lots of Johnson correspondence that has been terrifically invaluable and even--I've worked on the eulogy book about his death, and was the editor of it. And we gleaned from, even just letters coming in at the time of his death, anecdotes of people whose lives had been touched in one way or another. "I can remember that he got me information when my son was lost in the Philippines during World War II," one letter would say.

See, Johnson really started out as an errand boy for the Tenth District of Texas, which is central Texas. He was the water boy; he was the person who wanted every letter answered before anybody left the office. And he had a voluminous correspondence, and all those records were kept. It tells a story.

DC: So you can get at the person of the president through all of that.

LC: I think you get terrifically at it. And we've just--this is a side bar--but the person who's written the newest biography about Sam Houston, who was in the U.S. Senate for twelve years, has read four thousand letters written to Sam Houston. This is the whole history of

Sam Houston, which Texans were never taught in school. We were taught about the [Texas] Revolution. But my God, there it is, this big block to make him president. And the man who read that said that he felt that his eyes were the first to ever read those Sam Houston deals.

DC: In trying, from a scholars point of view, to peel the layers free to get at the real sap within--I like that metaphor--the problem of a presidential library is that not all of these valuable collections are available all at once, but they have to be processed and they have to go through two restrictions, both of which are eminently understandable, but which mean that you don't get at all the papers all at once.

The first is the requirement that the President put on in his deed of gift, and which I believe pertains to most other deeds of gift to that library, as well as others, is the restricting of materials that could cause embarrassment or harassment to an individual. And that has meant, in many cases, restricting it until that person is dead. Well, if one wanted to be tendentious about this you could say, "So you save the stuff on a poor guy until he's dead, when he can't defend himself, and then you make it available." So that in a way, the [risk of] embarrassment, in this age of continuing embarrassment of anybody in public life, seems like an overly restrictive thing. Have you ever considered that as a dilemma for a presidential library as it grows towards its potential?

LC: I think that they are best served if they make it available as soon as possible, and with a light hand. And I know you will want to ask Harry about the Edith Green story--

DC: I know that one.

LC: For instance, John Connally has been given a big raft of paper, and they have a lot of

restrictions on them. But in addition to papers that you give, or with anybody who is significant, there is an oral history; somebody has interviewed you. And those are generally--you have the right to restrict them, but most people don't. And so our policy has been to get it out as fast as possible.

DC: That of course I think is one of the key differences of that library and most of the others that I'm aware of. The second is the area of security material which, of course, is a stamp put on a document by some third-party agency, not the White House, and yet it can often--

LC: Block.

DC: --block progress. And I know from one paper given by Claudia Wilson Anderson about the life cycle of presidential libraries, she notes that in the LBJ Library there are a million and a half pages of security-type documents. We have declassified about 150,000 pages since we started. That would be 10 per cent of the classified pages, although they have been working morning, noon, and night on declassification. This paperwork given out in 1985--I don't know what the current statistic is; I'll get it. What is your thought about that?

LC: I just can't believe that, with the world changing as fast as it has, that almost anything--nearly everything that happened yesterday, is really yesterday. I don't see the need for all of that. My old reporter instincts are that that's probably overdone, or it isn't going to produce much anyway, because the world changes so fast.

DC: Have there been any that you, or in your awareness, that LBJ had any disappointments or defeats in connection with the growth of the Library?

LC: For me personally, I'm sorry that we have had so many reviews and exhibits devoted to war; World War I; World War II, we've had a session on Vietnam. I think that's too heavy-handed on war, for my cup of tea. I like the fact that the Jimmy Carter Library is devoted to humanity, human rights. And I wish that we would hold--although it is hard to hold--conferences that make peacemaking as exciting as war-making. And we have big turnouts for the old soldiers. But that is my disappointment in the Library--how to make peace.

DC: It's been said that in the architecture of the Library, the creation of that auditorium was the defining thing. You couldn't hold a small conference in that auditorium. There are other places, obviously.

LC: It has, because it's a thousand seats. If some of them are empty this doesn't bother the academics, but it sure bothers the people who are bringing in public figures. We used to [do] "pew packing," and [yet] it's not big enough now, for some events.

DC: The circus wouldn't be big enough for some events.

LC: Anyway, I think the second part of the structure, although Ada Louise Huxtable [Pulitzer Prize-winning architecture critic] gives us high marks for our library; gives the Kennedy Library low marks--but the hall is so mammoth, and the material is so resounding, that you can't have a toast in it. You have to go to the eighth floor. And we've adapted our habits to it pretty well. But it still would have a great advantage if you could have a dinner in the Great Hall where somebody could be a speaker.

DC: That is a very good point.

LC: In my opinion, we needed a restaurant because there is no place really handy for anybody

to get lunch. I think we could have used our terraces, which are wide, for something like the American Red Cross used to have in Washington. That is, just a place [where] people could get a simple sandwich and salad. And it would help the tourists; it would be more comfortable for the tourists.

DC: Can the tourists use the little cafeteria that's in the building nearby?

LC: Next door? Not to any excess. They do if we have a conference, and we have to bring in a caterer if we have a conference. And we still can't accommodate all the people, and to me that is an inconvenience.

DC: What about projects, or programs in the developmental stage? Do you see anything that you like or don't like about the way the Library is pushing into the future?

LC: I like what we do because it is eclectic, and by the series of the "Evenings With So-and-so," we've been able to latch onto speakers of a wide variety. They don't have to pertain to the years of the Johnson presidency, but they just have to be interesting and bring ideas. And so those happen once or twice a month, and we get a fabulous turnout for that. And at a very low cost people can become members of the Friends of the Library, and have a good forum on a variety of issues. We've had everybody from Senator Barry Goldwater, who was Johnson's opponent, to a British detective, somebody from their CIA. We've had speakers on every kind of subject. And the Austin public likes this. And for, I believe it's fifty dollars a person for a year, they can go to as many as fourteen programs, or be alerted. Nobody's going to be turned away.

Students are not using it the extent they should. But we have worked on that. Sitting next to a university that has 48,000 people, we should be drawing more from

students. But that is, I guess, true at every university: You cannot find enough time for a student to do anything but study.

DC: One of the marks of the Library, in my perspective, is the continuity of the leadership, in particular the director. I don't know that there's been any other library that has had a one person on top of it for that many years. I would like to get your perception of the defining role of Harry Middleton. We know Lady Bird Johnson has donated a personal sum to endow a lectureship in his name, which means she must be more than satisfied with his leadership.

LC: Well, she certainly is, and all of us are. Harry has good insight into the total history of the LBJ Library. He knew the President, and understood that the President wanted this place wide open. And the third thing is, Harry does things with a lot of style. And he has the respect of the other presidential library directors. But he puts on a really class act. He has had the support, and will continue to have the support, of the Johnson family. And this has been a major plus because Lady Bird, having been in on the ground floor, and one of the key people and advisors to the President--and it was also her university, after all, where it is--that kind of support is invaluable. Any library without it lacks a lot. Luci and Lynda will both follow; even their children are part of a young people's effort to keep things going. So I think you'll have the personal Johnson touch for a long, long time ahead. And that's really important, because he was a highly personal president. Nothing is sterile about it. You can sense the man. You can sense the "Come on, let's get moving. We're a can-do place." And you feel that in that building, and you certainly do through the people that were associated with him. But the fact that Harry was part of his

administration--and I don't believe other libraries have that advantage.

DC: Let me ask a personal question. You have known people who are proudly clean-desk men, who manage to make their out-box keep up with their in-box. Harry, I perceive, is the exemplar of a dirty-desk man.

(Laughter)

His desk is piled high with a detritus heap.

LC: He is the agony of secretaries he's had, who all want to go in there and get it organized. They can hardly keep their hands off of it. But he knows where everything is, and he has it in little piles around; his American Express card bills, and his memos about this [and that], and you go tiptoeing through all the papers. And about twice a year he cleans it up. It would run me to distraction, but maybe he goes with the theory that if it's not in sight he's likely to forget it.

DC: He's a man of such becoming modesty, and lack of what we call side [?], by which we mean ego, or display of ego. And yet he has established certain working rules in his life which do require enormous presumption. One is that neither he nor his wife drive a car, which means that somehow--mobility [problems] in a town like Austin, which is not known for its public transportation service, is a continuing thing. How do you define these--

LC: Idiosyncrasies?

DC: --idiosyncrasies of Harry, yes.

LC: Well, think of the young man in New York City, and a reporter on a small salary for AP when he began his career, and New York City isn't a place that invites having a car.

DC: But he didn't just work in the city.

LC: I don't know why; I don't think it affected his job at all, because all of us--he never has to ask anybody to pick him up. We all pick him up because we know of this. But he is a big user of the Austin taxi service; they all know him. And I'm not sure, I don't think it has any effect; it's just an eccentricity. He's an early riser; he gets up and swims before daybreak everyday. He carries around a clean shirt in his briefcase, back and forth--a heavy briefcase to the office everyday. And I'm sure there are things in there that he hasn't seen for years, because it's so heavy.

DC: How much is he, in the development of the leadership of the Library, what might be called an original thinker, or a consensus thinker; that is, that he brings together the best ideas that generate around him?

LC: When he first got there, there was a lot [of] antagonism, and enmity towards Johnson from the faculty at UT. Harry's big job, and he did it extremely well, was to make friends with the faculty and get them involved at the Library, and they went on committees. They're a little too academic for my blood. But that was a gap that he bridged very quickly. And the Library is really touted now by the faculty of UT, and by the presidents of The University of Texas. So we're deeply involved with it. We are involved with the School [LBJ School of Public Affairs], in that Max Sherman, the head of it, or whoever has been head of it, has been part of the committee structure of the Library, so that we are one. And physically we are just across the terrace. And it's served both purposes.

So I think that he pulls people together extremely well, that's one of his arts. Too, he does not lose his temper; he has patience. He stays in touch with the East, with

Washington, and New York, and our membership there. We have had several reunions, and a Johnson reunion is twenty-five hundred people who all have a story to tell about Johnson. I don't believe any other president is the spring board for so much folklore as LBJ, and such intense loyalty. I know one of the things at the time of [his] death was, he gave friendship and he got it. Well, he gave loyalty and he got it. And I find that such a declining quality in political life that I value it. And I think that LBJ was an inspiration to all of us because of that.

DC: On the matter of the School--I'm glad you referred to it--one could make a case that that school, as deservedly a good reputation as it [has], it was not his vision that it is a school that prepares the upper-level bureaucrats of government, mainly going into local and state government, not aiming for Washington. It is not a breeding ground for incipient politicians in the LBJ mold. In fact, I don't even recall any who have come out that School and gone into elective office of any consequence.

LC: It's my opinion that the people who have been directors of it were more interested in making people for middle service in government. But it certainly was not LBJ's idea. I think Johnson would have loved to have seen good candidates, better-informed than any of their predecessors, be able to get out and run for office. Now, those people are smart and they are in demand, God knows they are in demand. Any LBJ student can get a job in Washington or in Austin, and the government is better in both cases because of it. But Johnson wanted candidates. He thought in terms of politics being running for office. I think that has been a lack at the LBJ School, not to encourage people to run for public office.

DC: There it seems to me that even in getting a tie on them after they've gotten elected to public office, that the one could make the case that the JFK School [of Government] has done this much more effectively. They bring congressional elected people up there for seminars before they actually take the oath of office. They have recurrent visitations of groups to the School. I don't know of them running any programs in Washington, although it would be no limitation, I would suppose, on a school as opposed to a library, to run a seminar.

LC: There is not a close tie between the JFK School and the JFK Library. We asked them about that the other day, and they regret that. I think that the school is much more tied to Harvard. I think those people are trained more to be an expert in foreign policy or something like that. I'm not that familiar with it. We just aren't to the point yet where all these schools share their know-how with each other.

DC: Before the JFK School was created, I was a member of what was then called the Littauer School. They took that name away and left it on a building, but they preempted the name in order to name it after JFK. It was becoming more a training ground for upper-level bureaucrats, just in the mold of what I perceive at UT. But it is now, with the active entrepreneurship of its director, especially the one who is now retired, I think taken giant steps.

And we are heading toward the home stretch. Looking at the future potential, you mention oral history. I have worried, in the case of my own oral history there, plus other people's which I've read, is that they frequently were done in the early stages after leaving government, in which one was still grappling with the hang-ups of what did it all mean?

And one often cites things that are not in their full context, because you are thinking out loud; you do not do any elaborate research in papers and preparations for them. So that an oral history establishes a certain certification of authenticity on a treatment of an episode, which is [based on] flawed memory. I just wondered if you ever had reason for concern that what we say when we are shooting off our mouth is not always quite what the facts sustain?

LC: Everybody toots their own horn; they do in books and they do in--they probably exaggerate their role. But it seems to me any good researchers would certainly be aware of that frailty in human beings and weigh that in. There is not one thing you can do about it except to have a very good archivist to do the oral history interviews. And we have had ones who did their homework. We started out with somebody who was just a good historian but then--and those were more loosely done, but I think Mike Gillete really studied up and read everything so that he could keep the point going, and he could, and I hope, correct things that slipped the memory of people. But I think the oral histories are valuable in that they are more likely to give flavor, the flavor of the man, the flavor of what was going on.

DC: That leads directly to the decision that was provoked by a court order, and a number of these things have been triggered by court orders. Apparently the court, even if it's not the Supreme Court, can issue an order and everybody dances to its tune. But this had to do with a case involving liable over, I believe, the assassination of JFK. And the courts suddenly ordered that the presidential libraries and other public institutions had to make available all transcripts of recorded conversations, or telephone conversations that had

anything to do with the assassination. And so Harry Middleton diligently got his archivists to search the records, and they did manage to come up with quite a number of telephone transcriptions which the new President, just arrived back, having--as he pointed out, your drafted statement that he issued at the airport when he landed in Washington--is heard in one phone conversation after another, touching on some aspect of his own evolution, and how to treat the assassination, with a presidential investigation or what. And he finally ends up, as you know, with the Warren Commission, in which the Chief Justice, against his own predilections, was persuaded to chair a commission. Senator Russell was wrestling like a hog on ice to avoid being a member of it, one reason being that he despised the Chief Justice. And so you get a real--talking about flavor--you get a real flavor.

LC: A tug of war.

DC: But you get also a highly abbreviated picture of LBJ at his telephonic best and worst. That is, he used the telephone as an extension of his arm, and his arm could either caress you or it could squash you. And he in the case, the particular one with Russell, finally after wooing him and using every form of persuasion, he says, "Damn it, Dick Russell you are going to serve on that commission whether you like it or not. And I'm going to announce it a half hour from now." And so Russell did, and we got the commission.

I cite that as background, because the release of transcripts of telephone conversations, and Harry has now collected every one that they can find in the Library, some of which he didn't even know were there; doesn't still fully know who gave them and why they got tucked away in some of the recesses of the Library. But it's quite a

number of them. And I've got the tapes themselves, or copies of them, of all the ones that he's been able to collect. And you listen to it and you think, well, an artist might look at this and say here is [Georges] Seurat, the famous painter in little dabs that create a larger picture by the number of dabs, the artist who did "A Sunday in the Park." And that's what you get with LBJ. You get once-over-lightly's of him, abbreviating arguments, citing facts in a highly abbreviated fashion--and sometimes a high opinionated fashion. A sober, muddleheaded scholar reading through this would think, "Jesus, is this the way presidential leadership exists or did exist? Is this the celebrated Johnson persuasion ability?" Because I can assure you, I don't know how many you've listened to, but there are portions of that that if somebody like the chap who did that with Truman, took just little excerpts of it and created a book, "the real LBJ because this is LBJ in his own words," you could do a lot of damage.

LC: Well, I don't think presidential libraries should be in the public relations business. I think they are there for you to know the man and to know how he operated, for better or worse. That was LBJ talking in staccato--shooting out figures at you, persuading, cajoling, so how can you argue that that's not a true picture?

DC: Because--let me answer that one. It leaves out completely what there is no record of, and that is when he sat in a room, as I saw him sit with Senator [George H.] Mahon for three hours--

LC: Congressman.

DC: Congressman Mahon, excuse me--trying to persuade him to allow even a token of funding to go through for the teacher corps and for the International Education Act. And

Mahon said, "*No*, if I let one dollar through the trough, it'll be the camel's nose in the tent." And yet Johnson used logic, persuasion, idealism, all of this, and at his best. We all saw Johnson in those modes. How do we get that into the darn picture that comes out of the Library?

LC: Well, unless that was a recorded conversation, that you release--

DC: It wasn't.

LC: You can't. And you're never going to get the complete man. I think some of those problems are not going to be solved. You are very dependent, again, upon the listener. And the farther we get away from the time Johnson served, the more you're going to be at risk. But you would hope that you could capture enough of him that it would send the researchers searching further, or understanding why Johnson talked in the manner that he was talking.

DC: I'm talking about researchers not yet born, who are doing the revisions of the revisionist historians. You lead right into my finale question and that is, obviously a presidential library should not be a publicity organ, with spin control and all the rest, for a particular president. On the other hand, one would hope that it will do something over the longer term to rectify the first impressions of the historians and those who write about public affairs, including the press.

Now LBJ is in the unhappy circumstance of [being] the only president I know whose esteem among historians and broader public opinions has gone down since the day he left office. Nixon--it went down of course, but it has had some signs of going back up again, although it may be that that will not be enduring. If you were trying to look at the

American experiment of government in the year 2050, half a century from now, more than a half, and you were trying to look back and figure what did it all mean as we went through the latter part of the twentieth century, and who were the movers and the shakers and who really made a mark on our times, to what extent do you think that is going to be possible in this assembly of information that constitutes the LBJ Library?

LC: I think that you don't get all your appreciation at one time. And I do think that Johnson, during the greedy years of the Reagan-Bush Republican years, went up as a decisive person who had heart and was for the folk. That will always be a seesaw, back and forth. You try to know the man the best you can, through the presidential library. But what you also need to know are the times. And that's why not just his papers, but the papers of what's going on in the country and of other people who are critics in parts of it are important to it.

I think, for instance--this is just a sidebar expression--but we have had a run of ten presidents who have been really shaped by World War II and by the Depression. Johnson was very much shaped by the Depression, particularly. And now we have for the first time a president and a vice president who were not shaped at all by the Depression, but who were endowed with superb educations, and who were shaped by the hatred of war because of the unpopular war of Vietnam, and were shaped by the environment. I think there is a whole new ball game. That is what libraries should strive to show, how each person--the forces that shaped them, to my mind, and there should certainly be one person, and the times they lived in would be a big part of that, as well as their own personal circumstances, the way they grew up. I mean, can you think of a greater contrast

than George Bush and Bill Clinton, or George Bush and Lyndon Johnson?

DC: A final question--or maybe semifinal--but how would you then answer the question that there have been, since Roosevelt left office, only two presidents who have survived the two full terms that they are now limited to by the Constitution, and walked out of that office with--

LC: Grace?

DC: With grace, right. And those two were Dwight D. Eisenhower and Ronald Reagan.

LC: How about Harry Truman?

DC: He did not have two full terms. And I was there, you were there: Harry Truman, when he left office, even though he had the surprise reelection--not reelection, election--of 1948, by the time 1952 had come even Adlai Stevenson would not acknowledge him as a person of consequence.

LC: Well, attention spans are shorter; elections are more difficult. I don't think presidential libraries have much to do with that. But I don't know, maybe you find that in the--

DC: In the American experiment, the American president is supposed to play, individually, a major role in the governing of our country. And you have to ask, is that on the decline?

LC: Yes, I think it is. I think you have a trigger happy press; I think you have hired guns who are running the political campaigns instead of the old constituents and staffs that had known the person. I think that we are at a terrible time in our country as far as elections are concerned, and in the spin doctors and all of the scandal hunters. I doubt if we are ever going to elect a president for, you know certainly--maybe for two terms, but I think they are all going to leave hunkered down. And it's a pity that we can't realize that you

are dealing with humans, and maybe the thing libraries could do best is to show that these are flawed men, as all people are flawed, and how they handled, to the best of their ability, this terribly difficult job.

DC: I will only conclude with one comment, and that is I never thought I would hear Liz Carpenter say, when she was talking about future presidents, "flawed men." I thought she might extend the gender.

LC: Well, the women will be less flawed.

(Laughter)

I don't know that I helped you a damn bit, but I did my best.

DC: You did more--

LC: But I am not an insider, really.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and End of Special Interview

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