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Biographical information:

Navigator, Army-Air Force

Interviewer \_\_\_\_\_

Position or relationship to narrator \_\_\_\_\_

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General topic of interview:

The forced landing of the "Swoose" with Lyndon Johnson aboard

Date	1964	Place	White House	Length	Tape 1 - 6 pages

Tape index:

Page or estimated  
time on tape

Subject(s) covered

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| 1   | Meeting with Congressman Johnson                                |
| 2   | Magnetizing of all navigation instruments;<br>Wrong information |
| 3-4 | Landing of the plane  |
| 5   | Contact with Johnson in Galveston                               |

This is an interview recorded at the White House in 1964. The interviewee is Harry Schreiber of Galveston, Texas, who was the navigator on the Army Air Force Bomber, the Swoose, which made a forced landing in Australia in 1942 with Lieutenant Commander Lyndon Johnson aboard.

Mr. Schreiber is being interviewed about his memories of that day which was, he believed, about the 9th or 10th of June, 1942.

["S" is Schreiber. "I" is Interviewer.]

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I: This was in June of 1942. So, if you start at the beginning as best you can and tell us how you came to meet the Congressman and what transpired after you met him.

S: Well, I can remember we were lost and the Congressman was up in front helping me navigate. We were talking about Texas and he took our picture up there together. Two Texans away from home.

I: How did he find out you were from Texas?

S: He knew somehow...He just came and asked me where I was from and I said, "Galveston, Texas," and he sat there and we kidded just awhile and etc. And then, we took our radio bearing from Cloncurry, and they gave us the wrong heading...see, they were taking the bearing on us.

I: I see. What was the purpose of this flight...do you remember where you were going?

S: We were coming back from Moresby...I can't remember whether we were coming back from Darwin or Moresby. I filed all my logs on it, too. From Moresby we were going to Townsville, from Townsville to Frankirk(?). I don't think it was that flight. I think it was from Darwin, which is in the northwest corner of Australia. It's like Washington state is to Texas and our flight was to a small field for refueling in the middle of Australia and I don't know the name of that. I think it was Cloncurry,



but I'm not sure. But we took our bearings from there, and they gave us reciprocal bearings instead of the true bearings, so we went out on the wrong leg...

I: How far out were you before you knew you were lost?

S: We had been flying for about seven hours, before asking for a bearing.

I: And how did you first know that you were lost?

S: Well, we were taking the "VIP" on an inspection. We flew mostly out in the Pacific Ocean. It happened that all of this equipment that these VIPs had brought in, had turned the headings on the navigation instruments and the compasses; and it also magnetized all of the instruments we had so we didn't know actually where we were heading. (inaudible)  
About forty minutes from our E.T.A, we got a radio bearing; the radio bearing was from this station which was off to our right, presumably; that's where we figured it was. They gave us the heading as if they were off to our right and told us to turn right, and so we turned and we kept getting further and further away. Finally, after about thirty minutes we decided that we were wrong. We asked them again to give us bearings and headings, and they gave it to us again. We told them, "you are giving us reciprocal headings, you're giving us 180 degree off; we want the heading to your station."

I: What was the scene on the plane when it was discovered that you were getting the wrong information?

S: Actually, everyone seemed to be in a jovial mood. They asked, "Well, how much gas is left?" I said, "Oh, we have about two hour's worth of gas left." Well, what are we going to do? We're just going to pick

out a patch, sit her down and have a little party. The crew was all jovial about it, and no one seemed to be worried about it; it was still daylight and I guess we had about 1-1/2 or 2 hours left before we decided that maybe we had better set it down and pick a nice spot while we still had control of the situation. And that's when the pilot told us to go to the rear of the plane, because of the load that we had on board. I went on back, and the crew chief, the radio operator, and the two gunners. We all went back and sat on a little cracker box in the back. This would bring the tail down for a short field landing. All the rest of the people were sitting in the radio compartment. The pilot, Frank Kurtz, sat the Swoose down just like it was a little old kite, down on just a beautiful spot. It just so happened that when we landed, and we checked in with Cloncurry, we found out we were only 20 miles from a little town.

I: Was Wyndham the town?

S: I think that's where it was, Wyndham.

I: Yes, Wyndham, I believe.

S: Yes, that's right.

I: Lyndon mentioned the town in his diary.

S: Yes. I think that's right.

I: How did you find out that you were near a town? Did somebody see you?

S: Actually, I think what happened--we had circled around in that area, and that's the only place we saw. They sent a jeep out when they saw us land there. They found out who was there, and they took all the "VIPs" to town, where they stayed that evening. The crew stayed with the airplane. In the morning, they sent out gasoline and we took off the next day.



- I: The "wheels" or VIPs you mention, were a group which included Congressman Johnson, were on an inspection trip--or what was the purpose of their being on the flight?
- S: They went along on the flight. General Royce was the commanding general ...He wasn't the commanding general of the Air Force--General Scanlon was. General Royce was his next in command and was in command of the bombers. He was the one who had this flight, and the air vice marshal went along with Johnson, I think, to be with him. I think Congressman Johnson went up there to see the situation. I think he went on a mission with one of the boys, and that's the one on which they got pretty well clobbered a little bit, and came back. I think he flew with Harold Pease. Did he say who he flew with...was it Pease?
- I: I don't remember. Can you remember any of his reactions, or conversation on his part, what frame of mind he seemed to be in.
- S: Oh, he was in a terrific frame of mind, very jovial and easy and seemed to be well pleased with everything and the reaction of having another Texan there and everything. It just seemed like old home week.
- I: I see.
- S: It was quite a situation.
- I: Well, after the forced landing and, after you went into this other little city, what happened...how did the episode end?
- S: Well, we just loaded up with gasoline and took off with them the next day and headed for a destination which I don't even remember. I don't recall whether it was Melbourne or Sydney.
- I: And did you drop Congressman Johnson there or did you have the occasion of seeing him again?

S: Didn't see him after that. That was it.

I: When was your next contact with him...was it years later?

S: I certainly think I did see him at one time--oh, maybe 15 years ago at Galveston at a function which both he and Lady Bird attended and we just went through the receiving line. I think I remember that as we (my wife and I) came by and he saw me, he said to Lady Bird, "There's the guy who got me lost in Australia."

I: Well, now, how did you happen to keep the picture that was taken?

S: I have several pictures of him that were taken on this flight. We took our own pictures; as well as the pictures that the Air Force took.

I: And you knew at the time he was a Congressman traveling...?

S: No, I just knew he was a Lieutenant Commander.

I: I see.

S: I knew he was a Congressman, too, but I thought he was on active duty as a serviceman and I didn't know he was traveling as a Congressman.

I: I see. Well, after you met him at the reception in Galveston, is this the last time you've seen him since then?

S: Yes, except on TV. Also, I've heard him speak, but had no personal contact at all whatsoever. This was sort of a bolt-out-of-the-blue when he said come see him.

I: Well, we're certainly glad you could come. I wonder if we could borrow this picture. Did he keep it?

S: Yes, the photographer asked me if they could have it and I said yes--if he would give us some copies of it. He said he was going to photograph it and give us some copies.



I: Sure, well, we will take care of that; also get any other pictures that we can of this meeting yesterday.

S: I sure would like to see them because nobody is going to believe it.

I: Well, we certainly appreciate this. This will be a big help.

Thank you.

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By HARRY SCHREIBER

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