

INTERVIEW I

DATE: October 13, 1986
INTERVIEWEE: MAMIE ALLISON
INTERVIEWER: Christie L. Bourgeois
PLACE: Mrs. Allison's residence, Houston, Texas

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B: Okay, Mrs. Allison. I would like to start by asking you to tell me a little bit about yourself and your background, and how you are related to LBJ's immediate family.

A: Well, I'm a year older than Lyndon. We moved to Houston in 1923. My father had been here a year before. So that was my last year in high school, and I graduated from Central High School. Then I was admitted to Rice--Institute at that time--the next year, and then I went four years to Rice; and then I was interested in medical technology, and so I worked in the Hermann Hospital laboratory four years. Then I worked for some private doctors, and then I decided that I needed some security, and we all felt at that time that it would be better if I could get a job in the public school system. I think that was 1940, and Lyndon helped me get the job.

He and a Miss Stone, the secretary to Superintendent Oberholzer here, were good friends, so Lyndon wrote Miss Stone, and she managed to get an appointment for me to see him. I tell you, at that time, and I guess as it is now, too, it's whom you know. Then I had another friend that knew Congressman Albert Thomas, and so Congressman Thomas wrote a letter to the superintendent. I was substituting at that time, and--is this too long?

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B: No, no. Please continue.

A: Well, anyway, a little incident: I went up to see this school board member--his name was Jepperson--and told him that I had been trying to get on in the public schools. He said, "Well, I will just call"--at that time it was Dr. Moreland. So he called and said, "I want to know why Ms. Allison hasn't been called," and Dr. Moreland said, "Well, we have her on the list but just haven't gotten to it yet." He said, "Well, when do you think it's going to be?" And he said, "Well, we're waiting." He said, "Yes, we're waiting for the millennium, but we don't know when it's going to come. I want her put on that list." And I was called the next morning.

B: This is LBJ, who was calling [inaudible]?

A: Well, LBJ helped through his letter, but it was Congressman Thomas--

B: --who called and said, "Let's get moving on this?"

A: That's right. He called his friend Jepperson, who was on the school board.

B: So you got your job.

A: Yes. Then I went into the school system, and I was there thirty-four years. Seventeen years I was a counselor in junior high school, and then I taught the other years.

B: How are you related to LBJ?

A: LBJ's father, Sam Ealy Johnson, and my mother, Ava, were brother and sister. So Lyndon is my first cousin.

My father was a school teacher all his life. He was superintendent in Port Arthur for six years, and it seems that when my father had

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a job, he would get Uncle George in, and then when my father was out, well, Uncle George would get him in.

B: Help each other out.

A: Yes.

B: Well, when you were growing up, did you see a lot of LBJ?

A: No, I didn't see LBJ too much. It was only when we visited up at Stonewall. Aunt Frank and Uncle Clarence, now, they're the ones that owned the LBJ Ranch. That's the Ranch now. Lyndon bought it from Aunt Frank. We visited them, and I remember one little interesting incident. I guess it must have been at Christmas time, but Aunt Rebekah was training Ava Johnson--her name's Ava Cox now--for declamation, and it was a county affair, and so, of course, we were all so excited. They were going against Blanco and Dripping Springs and some of those little towns, and we just knew that Ava was going to win. Well, the judges selected the girl from Blanco, and Lyndon just started bawling like everything. Lyndon was always warm and emotional.

B: So he was really upset that she had lost?

A: Yes, he was upset. And I remember another little incident. I was visiting them. I guess that was in the summer time, and Uncle Sam told Lyndon that he must not take that car out of the garage. I guess he was about nine years old, and so, of course, Rebekah and I--that's Lyndon's sister--we saw Lyndon out there starting the car, so we just had to run and tell Aunt Rebekah that Lyndon was in the car, and Aunt Rebekah said, "Well, go tell your father downtown." Uncle Sam had his office down there. But I tell you Lyndon was more than Aunt Rebekah could--

B: Could handle at times.

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A: Yes. So we ran and told Uncle Sam, and he said, "You tell that boy he's going to get a whipping if he gets in that car," so he didn't back it out. He knew that we had told on him. He was some kid.

B: Do you remember any of his friends, what kind of things that they liked to do? What were the sorts of games that he liked to play?

A: Well, he was on the baseball team. He was with the Crider boys, and he was always a close friend of the Crider family there. I have some old pictures of him when he was on the baseball team. It was with these Crider boys that he went to California.

B: [Inaudible]

A: And then he decided--his mother said that he decided that that road work wasn't for him. He'd better go to school. She'd been trying to get him over to San Marcos, so I think he decided that that was what he had better do.

B: Do you remember anything about LBJ's mother?

A: Oh, I loved Aunt Rebekah. She was a lovely, lovely person, and she and I had such a rapport. I don't know; she treated me like a grown-up person, and we would talk, oh, just for hours about different things, and she was always interested in everything that the kids were doing. And then, of course, I was real close to Rebekah--that's Lyndon's oldest sister. You know the Hampton family in Port Arthur?

B: Yes.

A: Well, you know George Hampton painted Rebekah Bobbitt's portrait. I played bridge with Georgia Hampton, and they lived here a couple of years. They're back in Port Arthur now. But he gave me a picture of

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this portrait of Rebekah. I'm sure Bobbitt has it in his apartment now.

But I thought that was interesting--

B: Since I'm from Port Arthur?

A: --since you're from Port Arthur.

B: That's right, and they're a very well-known family there, of course.

A: Yes, they have that furniture store. Oh, I loved George. We just had more fun. They had an apartment in The Hermitage, I think they call it here. We played bridge once a week.

B: What sort of things did Rebekah like to talk about? What were some of her interests?

A: Well, Rebekah--I don't know just exactly--I know she said one time that Lyndon loved to make out that they were so poor and she didn't like that at all. Rebekah was like her mother; she was aristocratic.

B: This was not when LBJ was growing up?

A: Oh, no, no.

B: This was when you'd talk about before this, right?

A: Right. But we both lived at Stonewall, I think, just about one year. My father--that was in 1919--he was teaching in Beaumont, and the war was ended. He wanted to buy the Johnson place, and he had already gotten Aunt Jessie to say she would sell her part and then if--I guess if you read [Robert] Caro's book it's how--and that was pretty much the way--

B: The way it happened?

A: --it was, yes. But Uncle Sam increased the price where my father couldn't pay, so Uncle Sam bought the old Johnson farm, and then my father went up near Stonewall and bought another farm. That year I went

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to school at Stonewall, and I guess Lyndon--I don't know where he went, but there was just about one year, and then I went to school in San Antonio a year, and then I went to school in Fredericksburg a year, and then we moved to Houston in 1923. There was only about a year that we were on the farm there when the Johnsons lived there.

B: During that time do you remember anything about LBJ's relationship with his mother?

A: Well, I tell you, he was more than she could handle most of the time in those early, early years, and then--

B: [Inaudible]

A: --of course, later on, well, he got sense. I remember asking Aunt Rebekah, I said, "Aunt Rebekah, did you ever think Lyndon would be where he is today?" And she said, "Yes, I did."

B: She always felt that he was going to go places?

A: Yes, that he was going to. He was a leader and a pusher, and I remember one time he was driving this old car--that was the year we were both living there at Stonewall--and he let me steer. I was sitting there next to him, and oh, I thought that was the most wonderful thing in the world. I think he was eating something, and he said, "Now, Mamie, you can steer it."

B: How about LBJ's father? Do you remember much about him or their relationship?

A: Well, I don't remember too much. I know Uncle Sam was very strict with Lyndon, and he did so many things to cause him to get whipped or spanked or punished, but Uncle Sam was the only one who could really control

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him. I can remember that. He later became a wonderful, wonderful boy, but he was wild when he was real young.

B: You mentioned to me that your father had something to do with building a cemetery in Stonewall where LBJ and many members of his family are buried. Would you tell me about that?

A: Yes. My mother and father hired a German man--I've forgotten his name, but he is a rock mason--and they brought that stone from the hill over there near Albert, and my mother and father went every day while he was building that wall around them. Mother said that that's one thing that she wanted, was to have a wall or that cemetery enclosed. It was much larger in the will, but my father says, "That's big enough to take care of the family and all the children for generations," and, of course, it was costing money. My husband brought those little decorative pieces on each end of the wall, and then I remember that I asked Aunt Rebekah if we could have those urns--she had them there in Johnson City--and she said, "Sure. Be glad." So my husband got those and cemented them down and then my mother planted the little arbor vitas.

B: It was a family affair.

A: Yes. That's right.

B: When was the wall built? Do you remember?

A: No, I--

B: About when?

A: --don't know, but Lyndon and I used to drive by, and we would look at it and talk about it. I remember one time I said, "Lyndon, you know, we've got to have a sprinkler system here," and he said, "Well, that's right. I just don't know what can be done," but he did--

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B: Get one?

A: --manage to bring the water up from the river, and he was proud of the cemetery.

B: It's a beautiful--

A: I can remember when there was only one grave, our Grandmother Bunton, and the story goes that--Philip Tanner said that his father said that the river got up when Grandmother Bunton died--her husband was buried in Stonewall, and is still there--but they couldn't get to Stonewall for the funeral, so they buried her there under the trees. But now my mother told me that Grandmother Bunton, my grandmother, said, "Please don't bury me up at Stonewall. I want to be buried near where you are." And that was the story my mother told me, and I remember that one grave, and it used to have just a little barbed wire fence around it.

B: I wonder when that was built. Well, it's a beautiful cemetery.

A: Isn't it? Well, those trees are so beautiful, and they've kept it up, too. That Park Service, I think, has done a beautiful job of keeping it up.

B: They have.

A: And protecting it.

B: Before we move on to the Houston years, is there anything that we haven't discussed about those early years or about the Johnson family?

A: Well, one thing I'd like to say, and it's about this book that Mr. Caro wrote, and he certainly does not have the right information about the Johnson family. He intimated--at least that's the way I understood by reading the book--that he thought that all the Johnson part of the family were sharecroppers and uneducated, and I just want him to know

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that every one of my mother's sisters and my mother was a teacher; my Aunt Mamie was a music teacher, Aunt Lucy was a music teacher, Aunt Kate and Aunt Jessie all went to college. Uncle George was a teacher, and Lyndon's father taught, I think, for a year--

B: Yes. He did.

A: --so it's a family of school teachers, and they certainly were educated and were educators. I just want that to go on record.

B: Good. And it wasn't so easy to get an education in those days.

A: That's right.

B: If there's nothing else about those years, I'd like to ask you to tell me about the circumstances of your family moving to the Hawthorne house in Houston.

A: Well, Uncle George was here in Houston, and my father was on the farm I think one year, and cotton was selling at a dollar a pound, and he had about a hundred bales of cotton in the yard there. Then in six months cotton went down to ten cents a pound, and so we had no money. So Uncle George was teaching here in Houston, and I guess that was in about 1921. Well, he called my father and said, "There's a position in Latin." Well, my father was a student of Latin and history and math; later on he became a math teacher entirely. But anyway, he came to Houston and stayed a year before he could bring the family down to Houston. So he was teaching at this Central High where Uncle George was and where Lyndon later taught, and where I went my last year in high school.

B: Sam Houston High, is it?

A: Yes. It was called Central High then, but it became Sam Houston. But anyway, my father was ready to bring his family, and so Mr. Wilson, who

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lived right down on Hawthorne--his family still lives there, his son--told my father that there was a house there for rent there on Hawthorne and Garrott, a great big house. So my father rented it, and then he brought all of us down. He and my brother came in the Model T Ford, and I think it took them three days to come to Houston, the mud was so bad. Then we went to Cain City and caught the train and came to Houston on the train, Mother and my sister and I. Four thirty-five Hawthorne has been the headquarters ever since 1923, and my sister still lives there. It was a great big old frame house with a lot of bedrooms and a big sleeping porch.

B: How many bedrooms did that house have, or does that house have?

A: Well, it had, I guess, four bedrooms, and then they had a big, long sleeping porch where any extras. . . . It was the place where everybody that didn't have a job could come, and I don't know how my mother--and then Aunt Jessie and Ruth came and lived there.

B: When did Uncle George come to live there? Soon after--

A: Uncle George lived there as soon as we moved in.

B: Is that right?

A: And my last year--I think this is so interesting--Uncle George, I think, felt so sorry for me. It was my last year in high school, sixteen years old, and I didn't know anyone, so Uncle George just took me over. He was my escort, and every Tuesday he'd take me to the Palace Theater. At that time, Clark Gable was here and Thelma Jackson, and then I remember that I didn't have any date. I didn't know anyone, and Uncle George took me to the senior prom. Can you imagine that?

(Laughter)

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But he was so dear, and I guess he got some of the boys to dance with me, but Uncle George was my partner. He loved me, and I loved him. I remember we were downtown, and oh, I wanted a graduation book so bad, so he said, "Well, come on. Let's go over here and see what we can find." And so he bought me a real nice graduation book where they write all these mushy things about, "I love you," and--

(Laughter)

B: So he spoiled you a little bit.

A: Well, he was certainly good to me. He was a wonderful uncle.

B: Tell me a little bit more about Uncle George. I guess your father and Uncle George were close friends.

A: Very close, and both of them were very interested in politics. I can remember--now this is one thing when Lyndon came there--I remember after supper we would sit around that great big old round table, and they would discuss all the national news, and my mother and father both were just avid news people. They listened to the news even if it was on the radio and Mother didn't like for anybody to come when she was listening to her evening news.

B: So your mother and father and Uncle George and LBJ would talk a lot about politics?

A: Yes, they surely did, and Uncle George was always interested, and so was my father. So was my mother.

B: Could you describe any of them as being liberals or conservatives? Would you label them in any way along those lines?

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A: They were Democrats, and you know most Democrats have the liberal philosophy, and I can certainly say that, and I can say it about myself, too.

B: What were some of the issues that they would talk about during this time?

A: Well, at that time the economy, you know, was--

B: A big issue?

A: --so terrible, and I know my husband and I left and went to San Antonio, and he opened a Brunswick bowling alley in San Antonio. Well, we went broke there, and while we were there, what little money we had--the bank closed. I'd kept out some money some way, but it was all the money we had for a while, so that's when we moved back to Hawthorne, my husband and I, and Mother and Dad said. "Come on. You can have the best room up here." Of course, it wasn't long until I got a job, and I did this laboratory work, and then, of course, just as soon as we were able, we moved out, but 435 Hawthorne was the haven for everybody that needed a place to stay.

B: A good thing it was there.

A: Yes. That's right.

B: Do you remember LBJ talking politics at that time?

A: Oh, yes. LBJ had been talking politics from the time he was old enough. I remember one summer he was managing--I believe it's [Alvin] Wirtz [who] was running for state senator; Wirtz, I believe his name was--and Lyndon was his manager.

B: Was that Welly Hopkins? This was before LBJ became congressional secretary?

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A: Yes. Oh, yes.

B: Maybe it was Welly Hopkins. I think he was [inaudible].

A: Maybe it was. I've forgotten. But anyway, I remember Lyndon came up and he got Uncle Clarence. Now Uncle Clarence was known all over that country. He was a big lawyer. He was the one that defended Jim Ferguson in his impeachment trial, so Lyndon always looked up to Uncle Clarence. And they were having this barbecue and rally there at Hye, Texas. Have you ever heard of Hye, Texas?

B: Yes. H-Y-E.

A: Right. Well, that's where they had a big barbecue, and Lyndon got Uncle Clarence to speak for this--I thought it was Wirtz, but it might be Hopkins. I've forgotten. It's so long ago. But, at that time, when he was just a kid he was--

B: Already managing the campaign.

A: Into managing--right.

B: What sorts of things did he talk about? Did he talk about more national issues or local issues, local politics, or--?

A: Both. Both.

B: All of it?

A: State and national and--always. And the whole family; we were always interested in politics. I'm interested right now. I couldn't leave the television yesterday, Reagan and all of his--over in Iceland.

B: During that year did LBJ get involved in politics in an active way? Do you remember any of his involvements?

A: I don't think so. He was too interested in these boys; this L. E. Jones and Gene Latimer were the two that he coached, and he was busy writing

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the paper, and he was certainly successful in getting his name in what they were doing. They were creating more attention than the football team.

B: Before we get off the subject of politics, do you remember his going to Austin at some point on behalf of the Houston Teachers Association to lobby the Texas legislature to put a cigarette tax on to help raise teacher's salaries? Do you remember that?

A: No.

B: Okay.

A: I don't.

B: Okay. Tell me about his debate coaching; what do you remember about that? Was he really excited about [it]?

A: Oh, yes. He was very excited, and my sister said she went down to this old Taylor School here and listened to Jones and Latimer, and she said they were excellent. And of course Lyndon was thrilled to death, and he had his name in the paper nearly every week.

B: How did he do that?

A: He had a connection. I tell you, I just don't know who it was, and I think I told you I said, "Lyndon, you're so successful at getting this debating team in the paper, how about writing a piece about Dick's bowling alley?" And he sat down and scratched off something. I mailed it in. I've forgotten whether it was ever published or not.

B: That was your husband's bowling alley?

A: Yes.

B: So you don't know how he did it? Did he go and see the editors of these newspapers?

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A: He would know somebody that knew somebody. And let me tell you another little interesting story about Lyndon, and I'm sure no one else has ever said this because they wouldn't know anything about it. That was after he had gone to Washington, and I guess that he would call Dick and me and invite us to have dinner with him. On two occasions, he invited us down to George Brown's apartment in the Lamar Hotel here. And I remember Uncle George. He asked Uncle George and Dick and me down to have dinner, and the Brown servants served the dinner and everything. I remember the first time we had quite a few cocktails before dinner, and then later Uncle George got sick. I remember that. Then another time I remember going to the Brown apartment; that was interesting, I thought. Here he told me I could invite another couple, so I asked this friend and her husband, and oh, we were served the most beautiful steaks and baked potatoes and everything, and Mr. George Brown was there, and do you know what he was served?

B: What's that?

A: A little bowl of mixed fruit and cottage cheese.

B: Was he on a diet?

A: That's all he could eat. I think he had ulcers. But I told Lyndon, "Isn't that terrible with all that wonderful food, and then he had to eat that cottage cheese and fruit?" But we surely lapped it up.

B: I bet. During this year LBJ was pretty busy, I guess, with his debate team and all of that.

A: Yes.

B: Did he spend much time at home?

A: You mean there at Hawthorne?

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B: Yes.

A: I remember, it seems to me like nearly every night he and--I believe, Boody Johnston was teaching; he wasn't in the Houston school, but it seems to me like he was in Pasadena. Lyndon had some of these old cronies of his, and they'd come out to the bowling alley. I remember that, nearly every night, and they'd bowl a few games, and then I don't know what they did afterwards.

B: These were his old friends, many of them from San Marcos?

A: Right, from San Marcos.

B: Do you remember anyone else in particular that he used to [inaudible]?

A: Well, I remember this Ella Porter. Now she [has] become a supervisor here in the Houston schools, and I have seen her quite often. She's retired now, but she was a good friend of Lyndon's in San Marcos, and he always kept up. That's one thing about Lyndon, whenever he'd come to town, he would want us to have dinner with him. And I'll tell you another little interesting incident. I don't know whether this is the time to tell it or not, but the first time that he brought Lady Bird to visit--

B: Tell me about that.

A: Well, we never had met her, but we were so anxious to meet her, and he said that he was going to get married, and I remember that, oh, we all hugged and kissed her. The Johnson family and Lyndon--well, anyone that knows the Johnsons, we've always been a very warm and kissing family, I guess you'd call it. We were so proud to meet Lady Bird, and I remember later on she made the remark that she never saw so many kissing people as Lyndon had.

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B: How long had they been married when he brought her to Houston and you met her?

A: I don't know whether they were married then. It might be he just was going with her. I've forgotten when it was.

B: What was your first impression of Lady Bird Johnson?

A: Well, I liked her and certainly thought he was doing a mighty good job if he could get her because I heard that her father was well-to-do over in East Texas, and, at that time, everybody I knew was broke or didn't have enough money to find the next meal, hardly.

B: Did she strike you--was she shy, or was she--?

A: Yes, I remember that. She didn't have very much to say.

B: Meeting all these new people?

A: Right. Right, and her life, I'm sure, was so different from the Johnson family where we all loved and kissed and had warm, warm relations.

B: Did you ever meet her father?

A: No. No, I never did. I didn't know her family at all.

B: Do you remember LBJ's spending a lot of time when he was at home working on lesson plans or grading papers? Did he have a lot of that sort of work to do?

A: No.

B: You don't recall that?

A: No. No. My husband at that time had a little bowling alley, and he and these friends of his were out there nearly every night.

B: So you remember him spending more time socializing than--?

A: Well, I'm sure he did work, but he was a politician. I tell you from the time he--he was a good friend of the secretary to the superintendent

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at that time. His name was Dr. Oberholzer, and I forget the secretary's name, but Lyndon knew how to meet the right person and how to get what he wanted, and he knew how to get his name in the paper. I tell you every day there was something about that debating team, you know, that he was the head of, and this L. E. Jones and Gene Latimer. I think they went to Washington with Lyndon, and according to Mr. Caro, I think Lyndon worked the socks off of them, but they must have liked it because they stayed with him.

B: Yes. Did you ever meet either one of those--?

A: No. No.

B: --people?

A: I don't remember. My sister did. But I don't remember.

B: Did LBJ ever bring any of his students home to visit, to have dinner, or anything like that?

A: Not while I was there. But he certainly worked with them, and boy, they had their pictures in the paper, and there was more advertisements about that debating team than there was the superintendent's agenda.

B: Did you ever go to any of those debates when you worked there?

A: No. See, my husband had this bowling alley, and I was trying to help him, and then we moved to San Antonio.

B: Do you remember him talking much about his debate team or a big debate coming up or--?

A: Oh, yes.

B: Would he be nervous, or how would he--?

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A: Oh, he worked with them, and he was a past master, I tell you, at public speaking, and he was a past master at getting his name in the paper, too.

B: Do you remember when he took his teams to the state championship, and the girls' team lost before the finals, but the boys' team got all the way to the last debate and lost it?

A: No, I guess I had probably gone to San Antonio.

B: So you don't remember the debate?

A: I don't remember any of that. I remember Lyndon quitting here, so I guess we still were living here, but I remember talking to my father and Uncle George, and they were talking about whether he should take this job as secretary to [Richard] Kleberg.

B: Do you remember him being offered that job?

A: Yes, I remember it distinctly, and I remember the discussion around the supper table.

B: How did that happen [inaudible]? How was he asked to do it?

A: Uncle Sam heard about it and called and told Lyndon that he thought that he would have a good chance of getting that job.

B: So his father called him and told him that he was going to be offered the job?

A: Yes.

B: When he was at home? Do you remember that phone call?

A: Yes, and I remember their talking, whether he should do it or whether he should--he had been so successful here in the school, and he hadn't been here very long and oh, he had his name in the paper all the time and

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more than the superintendent of the schools. I remember distinctly their talking about it.

B: What were the pros and cons, do you remember?

A: Whether he should quit or whether he shouldn't.

B: What position did your father take and Uncle George? Did they think he should--?

A: They both thought he should go on. You know Uncle George lived with us off and on my whole life, and it seemed that when he had a job, well, he would get my father a job, and then Uncle George was here in Houston. Well, then he brought my father. After my father bought that farm, Lyndon's father bought the Johnson place. Well, my father bought a place up at Stonewall, and at that time cotton was a dollar a pound, and then by the time they got ready to sell it was down to ten cents a pound, so everybody was just broke, so my father had to start teaching again.

B: It's good that he was able to do that. [Inaudible]

A: Yes. Uncle George was here and he got him right in, and then Uncle George lived with us. I can't remember when Uncle George didn't live with us.

B: What did LBJ do on the weekends? Did he go back home a lot, or did he usually stay in Houston?

A: I don't remember. I was too busy thinking about my own problems then. My husband just put all the money he had in this bowling alley.

B: When LBJ used to go out to the bowling alley and go out with his friends, did he have a car to use? Did he have his own car?

A: Sure. Yes. He had a car.

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B: He owned a car.

A: Yes. Or else he used Uncle George's. I don't know which, but they had to have a car. The bowling alley was out here at Bellaire and Main Street, so they had to have a car.

B: Now, when LBJ got that job in Houston, he was teaching in Pearsall at the time. Do you remember Uncle George having any influence in getting him that job?

A: I'm pretty sure he did.

B: Do you recall him talking about--

A: No. No. I don't.

B: --that he was going to get LBJ a job?

A: No. I don't know, but I know he certainly--he and my father were always teaching together. One would help the other one.

B: So you think that they helped get him a job, but you don't recall the exact circumstances?

A: I'm pretty sure that that was it.

B: After LBJ decided to go ahead and take that job with Congressman Kleberg, do you remember when he left? Do you remember taking him to the train or any such thing?

A: No. [Inaudible]

B: You don't recall that?

A: No, I don't remember that, but I know it wasn't the end of school. It was during school. He had to resign, and my father and Uncle George both thought he should go on and take this job, that it was much better than staying in the school system.

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B: Uncle George died not too long after LBJ went to Congress, I think. I think Uncle George died in 1935. Do you remember that, and do you remember LBJ's reaction to that? I know he was close to Uncle George.

A: Oh, yes, he was very close. So was I.

B: Do you recall his reaction?

A: Who? LBJ's?

B: Yes.

A: No, I was too busy thinking about my own. Uncle George was so dear to all of us. At the time, he had taken my Aunt Jessie and Ruth. You, I think, met Ruth.

B: I've met her, yes.

A: Uncle George had bought this little home. Aunt Jessie had lost her husband, and so Uncle George took Aunt Jessie and Ruth, and they bought this little home on West Main. I remember when he had that heart attack, and I went over there in the middle of the night. I was working for a doctor at that time, and Aunt Jessie asked if I could get a doctor and I called Dr. Denton Kerr. [He] was a good friend of mine. Uncle George lasted about ten days. He had a very severe coronary.

B: So you remember that real well, but you don't remember LBJ coming down?

A: No, I don't remember.

B: After the year that he taught in Houston and he went to Washington, did you have contact with him after that when he would come back to Texas?

A: Oh, yes. Every time he came he would call, and he would take my husband and me to some nice dinner. A couple of times he took us up to this Brown apartment in the Lamar Hotel, and he was very sweet to share any good things that he had.

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B: Do you remember any particular stories from those times, those dinners?

A: Well, I remember he asked my husband and me and Uncle George up to George Brown's apartment, and we had a number of drinks and great big thick steaks. I remember that, and then I remember Uncle George getting sick, and we had to take him home. And then another time up at the Lamar Hotel, Lyndon called and asked my husband and me to come up and have dinner and asked if we would like to bring another couple. So I invited this friend and her husband, and we went up and that was the time that--oh, we had drinks and the beautiful food and the servants all waiting on us, and then, when we got to the table, Mr. George Brown had his little cup of cottage cheese and fruit there at his plate, and the rest of us sat around eating those beautiful steaks and baked potatoes and salad. But Lyndon loved to share.

B: Was this before he married Lady Bird?

A: Oh, no. He was married then.

B: Would she be there, too, when he invited you over?

A: Not very often. Most of these things--well, I guess she was in Washington taking care of the girls.

B: So this went on all through his years as congressman and senator? Sometimes he would come down and take you out to dinner?

A: That's right. Call and--then he bought Aunt Frank's place. That's the LBJ [Ranch]--the one that painted these pictures. Well, she lived where the LBJ house is now, and--I forgot what I was going to say.

B: Do you remember going up there?

A: Oh, yes. All the time.

B: After he became congressman or senator? Senator.

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A: Yes, and he was very generous always. He would call long distance here and invite us, my husband and me, to come up. And then later on, my husband had a stroke. But LBJ was so generous. Every Christmas--

B: Would this be for Christmas that you'd go up there or holidays?

A: Yes, Christmas and holidays.

B: What was Christmas like at the Ranch?

A: Well, I remember one Christmas that I was there at Cousin Oreole's. You know, she lived right down the road, and Cousin Oreole--and I was just like Cousin Oreole's daughter. Every time I was there, LBJ would come get me, and I remember one time we rode all over the country. He'd pick me up at Cousin Oreole's and we just talked and reminisced.

B: When was this? Was this when he was--?

A: I don't remember whether he had--it was before he was president, I remember that. He was either vice-president or--

B: Senator.

A: Yes, but--

B: And would you still visit there during the presidential years? Did you ever visit the Ranch [then]?

A: Yes, I was up there one time. That's, I guess, when my husband had had this stroke, but I was there alone, I remember. I was [at] Cousin Oreole's, and he came up and asked me to ride over in the helicopter to the LBJ--over there on the lake, and so it was the first time I had ever ridden in a helicopter. So we got over there and they were barbecuing steaks. We went out in the boat, and I remember he says, "Mamie, come on up here by me." He was--

B: Driving the boat?

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A: --running the boat, and, of course, they had the Secret Service over, but I sat right up by him the whole time, and then when we got through, we had big steaks, and we came back home.

B: Did he like to talk about the old days very much and reminisce?

A: Oh, yes.

B: What would he talk about?

A: Well, he was very, very fond of Uncle John Harvey, that's my father, and my mother, too, but especially my father. They had so much in common, and every Christmas he would bring Mother candy and he'd bring me candy, too, and bring my father a fifth of whiskey. He was, oh, such a generous person. Anybody that knows him will certainly say that. And a lovable, lovable warm person.

B: Do you think your father had influenced LBJ in any way?

A: I don't see how he could help it because he certainly never forgot him, and he came to see him all the time. You see, my father had retired from teaching. He taught here--oh, I don't know how many years, thirty-five years--and then he moved to Stonewall. Lyndon always came to see him. Even after he had that first heart attack he and Lady Bird came, and I remember Lady Bird. . . .

B: So he came to see your father and--

A: Mother, yes.

B: He and Lady Bird?

A: Yes, and I think that was when he had his first coronary, and Lady Bird was--oh, she was very concerned. Lyndon said, "Mamie, go fix us all a drink." He always brought this good liquor, and, of course, my mother and father would have a little bit. They didn't drink very much. But

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anyway, I was in the kitchen fixing the drinks, and Lady Bird came in and said, "Now, listen, Mamie. Don't put but just a little bit in there. He's not supposed to have it." I said, "Now, I wouldn't do anything that the doctor didn't want done. I think an awful lot of Lyndon myself."

B: And so you made him a weak one?

A: Yes.

B: She was looking out for his--

A: His health. She was very concerned and a mighty fine wife.

One thing that we hadn't mentioned was his different campaigns, and I was very active in the campaign when he ran against Goldwater. I was with the--well, nearly every day--the headquarters here. I remember that after he was elected--it was a landslide--well, we were all entertained up at--I've forgotten what hotel. I believe it was the Warwick Hotel. They placed Dorothy, my sister, and me right at the head table; that we thought was mighty nice.

B: Was he there?

A: No, he wasn't there, but it was all the workers, and it was a beautiful, beautiful luncheon. I heard from Lady Bird all the time, you know. I'd write her and give her reports on how things were going here.

B: Oh, you did? During that campaign?

A: Yes.

B: So you'd just sort of be their eyes and ears here and find out what was happening and report back.

A: That's right.

B: And you reported to Lady Bird?

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A: Yes. I don't know whether I saved any of those letters or not. Isn't it a shame how you will discard? I have a lot of interesting letters though, from--especially Lyndon up at Stonewall.

B: What else do you remember about that campaign? Anything else? Did he come down here?

A: Yes, he came down here, and my principal let me out of school.

B: Did you go out on the campaign trail with him?

A: Well, no. I was here in Houston. I was working, though, nearly every afternoon.

B: I mean just when he came down to Houston that time. Did you go around with him, around the city with him?

A: No, he was--let me see. Who is this singer that's so popular? She was here, I remember, great big eyes. What's her name?

B: Carol Channing.

A: Carol Channing was up on the stage with him, and my principal had let me out of school. I'd been working, you know, after school and then on Saturdays. Then that day, well, it was right at the end, and I remember Carol Channing singing, "Hello, Lyndon."

B: Is that right?

A: "Hello, Lyndon!"

B: Did he like that, or was he--?

A: Oh, yes. He loved it.

B: Did he?

A: Yes. Well, he was a past master, I tell you [inaudible]--

B: Did you work on any of the other campaigns?

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A: No, that was the one that I was really involved in. I went every afternoon after school and stayed down in that booth and passed out literature, and they really appreciated all the help they could get. I had become really friendly with--Mila Peterson [?] was her name then. She's married now to a doctor here. I forget his--but she and I became really good friends.

B: Do you remember anything about the 1960 campaign when he was campaigning with Kennedy--when he was running for vice president?

A: I don't remember too much. I remember I was up there at the Ranch, and he had been nominated as vice president, and he said, "Now, Mamie, that isn't too bad, is it?" I said, "I think it's wonderful!" We were sitting out there on the lawn by the house.

B: So he seemed to be in a pretty good frame of mind about it then?

A: Yes, but it seemed to me like he was a little apologetic. I don't know whether it was my imagination or not, but he said, "Now, you know, that's not too bad." I said, "Too bad, nothing! I think it's wonderful!" Oh, he was a warm, warm, sweet, dear person. He was a loving, loving person. I remember Lady Bird saying when--I believe the first time he ever brought her to meet the family here (that was before they were married)--"I never saw a family that kissed so much!" But we do. I tell you, we've always been a kissing family.

B: Kissing cousins.

A: Yes.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I

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