INTERVIEWEE: TOINETTE BACHELDER

INTERVIEWER: DOROTHY PIERCE MC SWEENY

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M: This is an interview with Toinette Bachelder, who has been a secretarial assistant at the White House for some thirty-three years. Today is Tuesday, February 11, 1969, and we are in Miss Bachelder's apartment. It is approximately 2:30 in the afternoon.

Miss Bachelder, I'd like to just ask you a very broad question to start off and have you tell me what your duties have been primarily, coming from you, your own description of what they have been.

B: In the thirty-three years at the White House?

M: Yes.

B: I've primarily been a secretary, in mostly, the office of the special counsels to the President. I came to the White House in 1933 and worked chiefly for President Roosevelt in his private office. I was the swing shift, I guess you would call it. The President's secretary at that time, Missy LeHand, had a good many calls on her time, and his stenographer at that time, Grace Tully, also was kept busy in the day. And in the evenings and on Sunday and holidays it fell a good deal to my lot to go in and work with the President. And at that time I was associated with--oh, we worked on speeches, every kind of matter that the President is concerned with, and with Judge Rosenman and Bob Sherwood (sp), Harry Hopkins--I point them out because I eventually, after President Roosevelt's death, I turned into one of Judge Rosenman's secretaries, and he was the first special counsel to the President, and I've been associated with all the special counsel to the President since, except during the Eisenhower Administration. And in the Eisenhower Administration, I was in the

"disstaff" side of the business which was a fortunate thing for me because I'm a Democrat and I felt a little better not having to get mixed up with what I call the business of the running of the government which of course it is.

M: Would you describe to me what you call "disstaff"?

B: I was in charge of Mrs. Eisenhower's correspondence. In our office we handled all the letters that came to Mrs. Eisenhower as the First Lady, not her personal letters, and we undertook to answer them, take care of them, refer them if they had something to do with business and respond to them otherwise if we could, whenever we could, and as best we could, sometimes for her signature. At that time her secretary was both the social secretary and private secretary and press secretary. She combined all three, and most of the mail was for her signature, but a good deal of it was for Mrs. Eisenhower.

M: Would you continue this--let me have you back up a moment, who were you working for in the Truman Administration?

B: In the Truman Administration, well, Judge Rosenman became the special counsel to President Truman, and I worked for him until he resigned to go to New York to go into private practice of law. And--

M: How do you spell his name?

B: R-o-s-e-n-m-a-n. Samuel I. And when he left I went to work for one of the President's special assistants. He was an administrative assistant, Richmond B. Keech (sp) who became later judge of the district court for the District of Columbia. And when he left to be the judge in the court, I started to work for Charlie Murphy. And at that time Charlie Murphy was administrative assistant to the President. He came down from the Hill where he had been in the Senate legislative counsel's office. And he later became special counsel

to the President, and I went with him to that office. And then the Eisenhowers came along, and then when the Eisenhowers left and the Kennedys came in, I clamored to get back on the West side. I made my wants known and went to work about the 20th of February for Ted Sorensen who was special counsel to Kennedy. And after the Kennedy assassination, I worked for Bill Moyers before he became press secretary to President Johnson. And when he became press secretary, I had to bow out because I didn't care for press relations, press work. I didn't want to work in that office. And so I worked for Joe Califano. If you need any titles for any of these names, I can supply them, but I think in your work you have been, you are pretty familiar with the latter years anyway.

M: Miss Bachelder, did you have very many occasions to see the President, President Johnson I should say, while--

B: While he was President?

M: Right.

B: Would you like me to go back to the beginning of when I knew him or do you want to start now and work back?

M: Let's begin with the first time you met him.

B: Well, that was back in probably 1935 or 1936, I couldn't tell you the exact date, when he was a freshman Congressman from Texas and he had come in to see President Roosevelt. He wasn't in every day, of course, and I saw him very rarely during those years. In fact, I saw him very rarely until he became Vice President. But when he did come in, he was always very charming and pleasant and interested in the individuals, and I didn't see--he didn't sit on the corner of my desk as much as he sat on the corners of other peoples' desks waiting to see President Roosevelt. At that time, this was before we had a special counsel to the President, I worked for Marvin McIntyre who was the appointments

Secretary, and it was customary at that time, of course, and still is, for the appointments secretary's office to be the one that the people waiting to see the President sit in, and Congressman Johnson, Commander Johnson, I believe was his rank when he was in the Navy, he used to come in then in his handsome Navy uniform and perch on my desk, on Roberta Barrow's (sp) desk, mostly on hers--she was a little closer to what we called the throne. She sat in the office with Mr. McIntyre, and I was in the outer office.

And so I suppose at first other than seeing him casually like that in the office and having him know me, the first thing that I remember about him though, one Christmas he sent me a twenty-pound turkey. I think he had been sending all the girls in the office who--in the appointments office--I don't recall now checking on that, but here at Christmastime came this enormous turkey. We had a small apartment, and the turkey was entirely too big to fit in the oven. We roasted it in the oven, and its head stuck out part of the time, its neck, its tail stuck out the other part of the time. Then I had a blank about him. I didn't see him in any connection except what I read about him in the newspapers, and he was always interesting. When your life touches someone else's and his name appears in the paper, you have a special interest.

And until he became Vice President. And much to my great surprise he came marching in Ted Sorensen's office the first day and came over and said, "Well, Toi, how are you, it's so nice to see you again." And I was very much surprised because, after all, nearly twenty years had gone by by then, if not more, and to think that he would remember, but he did, and of course never came into the office without stopping to speak. And then he became President, and I was further amazed on--well, let me see, it's hard to remember back--President Kennedy I believe was assassinated on Friday, and they came back Saturday--

about Monday, I guess, President Johnson undertook to broadcast his Thanksgiving proclamation to the country. He at that time was still occupying a space over in the Executive Office Building, and he came over to the West Wing, to the Fish Room, to make this broadcast, and I gathered with several others in the hall to see him, hoping to hear what he had to say, and did, the door was open, you could hear the broadcast. And then after the broadcast was over and the President was ready to go back to EOB, I began to scurry to get out of his way because when a President walks along the hall, unless you have business there you make way for him, let him by. And so I squinched up in a doorway, and by golly, the President came right along there and spotted me and said, "Well, Toi, honey, how are you?" and we shook hands, and I said the few things that are obvious that one would say under those circumstances, and he went on. And then I was associated with him every time he came into Bill Moyers' office or Joe Califano's, which wasn't often. They usually went to him.

But the first winter that he was President, January, it seemed to me that every time I turned around, every time I took a breath, the President was having some kind of a ceremony with the relation to FDR. He signed the Campobello Treaty in the Treaty Room over in the mansion. He had a picture of President Roosevelt which he hung in the Cabinet Room. At each occasion he invited me with others who were White House employees and who had been associated with FDR to these various affairs, which I thought was a very kind and very generous thing for him to do. And I guess that is about the extent of our contacts.

He was most generous to me when I retired. The day that I did actually retire he was out of the country in Mexico, but he knew that this affair was going to be held. Mr. Califano gave a party for me down in the White House mess

and invited all these people that I had worked with, and the President had left a letter and a picture. And the letter said something to the effect that, "You wait until I get out of the country and then you decide to leave the White House, it isn't fair," and so on and so forth. And then when he did come back, a couple of weeks later, he called me down to the White House and took me into the Cabinet Room and called in the press and had quite a few words to say about my length of service and how I had always been welcome at his table, I believe is the way he expressed it. And we had our pictures taken, and he gave me a medal and a book and was most gracious and lovely. Then since I left the White House I went back one time for an affair--well, I've been back--when did I leave--I guess I left in '65, and I went back at Christmastime of '65 and '66 and '67 for the reception and the President was always very gracious in speaking to me when he saw me at these affairs. One Christmas, I think it was the first one, he gave me a little medallion with the seal of the President of the United States on a bracelet. He had shaken hands with me when we went through the receiving line, and then came into the state dining room and sort of singled me out, came over to where I was and gave me this remembrance and chatted with me.

And the last time I saw him was at the Woman's National Democratic Club in this past--when was it--November after the election they gave a farewell party for him, and the President came late and rather unexpectedly. He was supposed to be there; Mrs. Johnson told me that he was not going to be able to make it, and then he did come. And I, in the crush, didn't get to speak to him, he didn't get to speak to me, but I held his hand as he came through I--you know, he was putting his hand out to shake everybody's hand, and I shook it, but he didn't see me, there was such a crowd of people. But he's always been very, very gracious and unnecessarily so.

M: Miss Bachelder, how did you happen to come to work at the White House to begin with?

B: Oh, my goodness, that's a long time ago. Well, I had polio when I was twelve years old, and I had gone to Warm Springs, Georgia, for treatment. At that time they handled only polio patients. It was a spa, a health spa that President Roosevelt, when he was just a plain citizen, had found and bought and was trying to run, with the help of medical people, to alleviate the after-effects of polio, and I knew him there before he was governor. And as a matter of fact, I was in Warm Springs in the Meriwether Inn, which was the old hotel there, the day or the evening, I don't remember now which, when President Roosevelt, Mr. Roosevelt, went down a long hall to the only telephone in the building and talked to Al Smith and agreed to accept the governorship, the nomination for governor. He spoke so loudly I heard him.

And I had known him all through the years there, and when he was nominated in Chicago I went down to see him and offered my services just out of high school. I had had a business course after high school, and offered my services during the campaign and he sent me a letter and I did work in Chicago during the--on the finance committee, during campaign. And then when he was elected, he sent me a letter through his secretary in June saying that at last "we have found a place for you on the White House staff." And with that I came to Washington with my face hanging out, my bag clutched in one hand and my face hanging out. I arrived here at 8:30 in the morning.

M: Where are you originally from?

B: Chicago. I went to the Mayflower Hotel until it would be a seemly time to telephone the White House, and I telephoned Miss LeHand, Missy, and she said, "come over at 10:30." I went over at 10:30 and I was sworn in and saw the

President very briefly. He welcomed me and said, "So glad you are here," and Missy said, "Do you have someplace to stay?" And I said, "Oh, no." I was quite green about it. So she said, "Well, I think you had better take the rest of the day off and find some place to live." I had a friend here whose brother helped me find a place. He drove me around in a car. She [his sister] had had polio down at Warm Springs, too, so he knew the problem of steps, etc., and he would do the running and finally he found the boarding house that he thought I would like. I went in and looked at it and then went to work the next day.

M: That's very interesting. Miss Bachelder, how, over the years, were you able to keep making the transition from administration to administration?

B: Golly, I don't know. I just was very much enthused with what I was doing and what was happening, and people seemed to think that I was capable of doing whatever they asked me to do and I didn't--I really didn't have to do anything. I just was there, and except when I came back to the West Wing from the East Wing where the first ladies handle their activities, it was the only time I had to try for anything. Each man, well, Mr. McIntyre died on me, so he couldn't very well suggest that I work for the next man. But at the time, you see, when I was working for Marvin McIntyre and Judge Rosenman during the Franklin Roosevelt days, they all knew that if the President wanted me to come in and work for him as his secretary or his assistant, if Grace Tully or any of the other girls were not available, that I was free to be called on, so the President always took me down to Warm Springs when he went to visit. He went down there usually twice a year, in the spring and then Thanksgiving time. And he always took me along. And so if the man I was working for didn't travel down there with the President, that was too bad. He had to stay behind and let me go, had to do without me. But I don't know how I made the transition except that I enjoyed

what I was doing, and I suppose they thought, Oh, well, we can't get rid of her. I just don't know. It was amazing to me when the Eisenhower Administration came along that they kept me on. I needed desperately to be kept because I needed the job, but it just worked out that way.

M: I'm sure it had a lot to do with your talent and your ability, Miss Bachelder. I was just wondering if it had ever struck you that you might not continue on.

B: Oh, yes, every four years, every time there was an election, one was frightened. This building is a cooperative building, and in 1948 in August my mother and I decided we had better move in, we would like to buy, and this was an election year, and we made our down payment in August and we had to settle and move in before election day in November and at that time money was scarcer than it is now by a long shot. People's incomes were smaller, and a thousand dollars was an awful lot of money. When we sat down and wrote out this thousand dollars check to show our good faith, in August and then by November we were writing a check for five thousand dollars, or I don't remember now the amount, but it was bunches of money, and I was scared to death. It turned out all right, I was able to stay on, and that was the reason I was so surprised that they kept me during the Eisenhower Administration. But after all, I realize that I know more about what--how the White House works than I could detail. It sort of exudes. I don't know I know it myself. Circumstances have to come up and then you find out. Oh, yes, that's the year that such and such happened, and I remember it. And I don't have the best memory in the world. I used to, but I've slipped in that regard.

M: What were your first impressions of Lyndon Johnson when you met him?

B: Oh, an enormous, handsome, wonderful man. He struck me as--oh, I didn't think he would ever be President. I didn't think the circumstances would ever happen.

I didn't think that a Senator would ever again be nominated and elected to the presidency. Of course, John Kennedy came along and knocked that idea. And of course President Johnson unfortunately came to his first ascendancy of the Presidency at a sad time through no concern or fault of his own. I think that the fact that he was reelected, or was elected I suppose is a better way to put it, was due to the grasp that he had.

His background and experience, too, I think were invaluable. His services as congressman, and then as senator, and majority whip, and majority leader, and then vice president, he was just made to order. And as I say, I didn't think at the time that I met him that he was presidential timber, but I want to tell you this, there is no President in modern memory who has tried harder than Lyndon Baines Johnson did to be a good President and to do for the country what he thought was right, and no President spent more hours. The Presidency takes forty-eight hours out of the twenty-four. There should be forty-eight hours in every day for a President to get around to all the things that he has to do, and a President is President whether he is asleep or awake, whether he is on vacation or not, and Johnson took fewer vacations, fewer days away from Washington, than I think any other President ever did, because he was so involved in trying to do what he thought was right. Regardless of your politics you would have to admit that, that his heart and soul were just deeply involved.

President Roosevelt I knew best, because of our early association, and he was a hard worker. He worked from the time he awoke, like any other President. When they wake up, the first thing they get is the newspaper or the dispatches. They can't even have breakfast like an ordinary soul, and he worked all day and would take time out for dinner and then he would work very often in the evenings. Not always. Sometimes he would work by himself in the evenings.

President Johnson didn't ever not work. The only times that you could say that he wasn't working was when he was, oh, at a reception or some big gathering in the mansion, and even then he was late more than half the time to it because he was busy working. He was on the telephone or talking to somebody or doing paperwork, and he honest and truly I think did more paperwork and more hour-by-hour, minute-by-minute work than any other President, although, as I said, they all have worked hard. President Truman was a hard worker, although I don't think that he spent as much time with papers as the other Presidents did, but I really don't know. He wasn't inclined to work at night. He wasn't inclined to have a staff in at night. He went home with Mrs. Truman and Margaret and spent a more or less normal evening other than the fact that he sat on one side of the table probably and she on the other and he read the dispatches and the reports that he had to become acquainted with. Now, President Eisenhower I don't know. I don't think he often worked at night, but President Johnson, my goodness, he never eats dinner until ten or eleven o'clock at night, generally most of the time.

M: Did you see changes in the man over the years from when you first met him until he became President?

B: Oh, yes. I suppose a maturity that you would expect from most anybody, not a basic change, nothing like having been studious and turning not studious or vice versa, nothing like that. It was just--the change that would come about by the fact that he was maturing, I guess, is the only way to say it. And becoming more embroiled with the affairs of the nation. You know, I've found that I never did a thing in my work that didn't help me at some future time. I don't care how menial it turned out to be or how uninteresting. I know that a President finds the same thing. And a man who has aims for the good of his

country couldn't help but run into--you get involved trying to help this man and you learn something and because you learn something then you are trying to help this organization and you learn something else. And that helps you to help your fellow congressman, senator, advisor, people that you are in contact with--cabinet officers, before you become president. And in that way he changed and grew, but basically he was interested in people and the good of the country and was just a charming man.

M: Miss Bachelder, thirty-three years is quite a long time, and so many many events happened, both surrounding the presidency and international occurrences. Are there some that just come to you that you were witness to or that you were particularly involved in or very strong in your mind?

B: Well, unfortunately, I guess, all the things that are the strongest in my mind are the tragic things--the death of President Roosevelt and the assassination of John Kennedy. I was in Warm Springs in 1945 when President Roosevelt died, and I was here in Washington when John Kennedy lost his life, but those things stand out more than anything else. Oh, when President Roosevelt invited the King and Queen of England to come to the United States, it was a great hoopla and furor over that, their stay in Washington, and I was fortunate enough to be one of the few of the staff invited up to Hyde Park to the Roosevelt home for the famous hot-dog party that Mrs. Roosevelt and the President gave for the King and the Queen of England. And President Roosevelt dictated to me portions of his--well, later it became called court packing, the Supreme Court packing message.

Oh, I remember after the Cuban crisis with John Kennedy, Vice President Johnson was involved in that and what a dreadful time that was and how horrifying. I didn't know for several days, weeks, or maybe longer, exactly what was going

on. I just knew that something dreadful was happening because Mr. Sorensen and Vice President Johnson were attending many meetings, and they looked awfully solemn and we couldn't find out what it was all about. And Sorensen would disappear every once in a while and get in a car and drive over to the State Department, and we always said he was out bowling, but not knowing what we were talking about.

The day that war was declared in 1941, December 7, I had just come back from Warm Springs. The President had gone down there for Thanksgiving, had stayed two days, and he had to come back to Washington on account of the Japs, and he told me that he wanted me to stay the rest of the week, a full week, and to come back at the end of that following week. So I did, and I arrived home on Sunday morning, December 7, and heard this horrible catastrophe over the radio, didn't have television then, and I didn't do anything about it. It sounds as though I could have stopped it, but I mean I didn't try to go to the office knowing that if they wanted me they would send for me, if they really needed me, and that I would only add to the confusion. I wouldn't know as much as I knew staying at home and listening to the radio. It was time enough to get rested and be ready for the next day.

After you have gone, I will probably think of seventeen million things that made big impressions on me, but at the moment I don't think of it. I've been thinking what I would say to you, naturally, since I knew you were coming, since I had the phone call, and I think I've covered everything I had thought of.

M: During your long service, were there very many occasions when you were called to the White House to come in and work on a project?

B: Well, no, there weren't very many unexpected calls. I would often be at work and have word at five or six o'clock that the President would like me to come

in that night at 9:30--President Roosevelt would do that. But it wasn't until the Kennedy Administration that strange hours of arrival at the White House became part of my life. Mr. Sorensen did work on all the messages and speeches for the President, and I've had a call at five o'clock in the morning, "Would you please come down. I have this speech ready to go now and need the first draft by eight o'clock?" And I have gotten up and traipsed down and bleary-eyedly tried to hit the typewriter. I did go with President Kennedy and Mr. Sorensen to the United Nations in '62, I guess it was, went up to Hyannis Port and we worked on the President's United Nations address there, and I started work--that work day started at ten o'clock at night and ended at six o'clock in the morning, and then that didn't mean one went to bed at six o'clock in the morning. That just meant one stayed on up. I went to Europe with President Kennedy in 1963 in June when he went to Germany, to Bonn, very much the same type of trip, covering the same ground that President Nixon is embarking on at the end of the month. We went to Bonn and then to England, stopped off to see--I can't remember the Prime Minister's name--it was after Churchill--

M: Of England, you mean?

B: Yes. I've tried for days. It's like his name was Maxmillan [Harold Macmillan] or something like that. We stopped off there for a day and the staff stayed at Brighton and the President stayed out at the Prime Minister's residence, and then we went to Ireland, and I got out of the hotel in Ireland just once. We were there four days, and most of my time, most of my nights were spent sitting in front of the typewriter beating on the speeches for him. And he made one tour of Ireland, to Cork and Wexford and Waterford and Kilarney and his home county where his ancestors came from, and during this time, that was

when I was sleeping, when he was helicoptering around. And that afternoon before he got back I did get out and I bought that glass, Waterford glasses, from one of the department stores. And I came back all cheery and bright-eyed and bushy-tailed to find that the President had liked very much the little speeches that we had for him, that we had prepared for him and he had taken along, and he'd like to have all this material for his speech that night at--he was dining with de Velara (President of Ireland) and had to make a toast. And unfortunately when the President came back from the helicopter trips, he had managed to lose all the material that we had provided for him that morning, it had been done on cards, little larger than 5x7 cards. Fortunately, I don't know why, I guess the good Lord was leading me by the hand, I had made carbon copies of these cards, and that's an unusual thing to do. Usually you don't, but I stuck in this tissue, and so I was able to provide him with all the material that he had had in the morning by that evening by nine o'clock when the toast occurred. But I had been up the whole previous night trying to get it into shape. As I say, it was quicker to do the second time around. We went over to Lake Como from Dublin and spent the night, and then went to Rome, where the President was received by the new Pope. We stayed in Como because the President didn't want to arrive on the day of the coronation of the new Pope, and we had a private audience with the Pope and I was very thrilled over that.

Unfortunately, I didn't do any travelling with President Johnson. I said unfortunately, I think it might have killed me because he was--he moved at a little faster pace than these other Presidents, and I think I might not have stood up under the--it was bad enough with Kennedy, the strain and the push of all this. But I think those are my highlights. As I say, I may think of some more when you've gone.

M: What about Truman and Eisenhower? Did you do any travelling with them?

B: I didn't do any travelling with Eisenhower. But with Truman the only travelling I did was in the campaign trip in 1951--is that when it was--'52, when President Eisenhower was elected. President Truman undertook to help elect Adlai Stevenson, and he covered the country just as hard as he would have had he been running himself, and I made that entire campaign except for the very first trip when he went from here to Detroit for the opening speech, Labor Day speech in Detroit. I did not make that trip. Other than that--by train, whistlestop, the last real whistlestop train trip. And I worked nearly as hard then as I did with Kennedy on his trips. And I went that time when Charlie Murphy was his special counsel and was doing the writing of the speeches--not writing them completely, but helping the President with them and doing the first drafts for him and working over the drafts, and he was in charge of the speech writing arrangements, day and night. I just loved train crowds. I thoroughly enjoyed it. Until then, I had never been west of Western Avenue in Chicago, and this took me out through San Francisco, and I enjoyed that very much. We were in San Francisco two or three days, and I got in one afternoon about three hours worth of sightseeing. The rest of the time, again, typewriter sitting on three bed pillows in a chair in front of a rickety table on which the typewriter was set.

M: Miss Bachelder, how do the Presidents that you have served compare in terms of, say, their staffing in travelling, or the arrangements they make, or their work procedures, their days?

B: Oh, my, well, I suppose they were pretty much all alike. I can't see that there was, other than the rapidity I suppose with which we travelled, I can't say there was much difference. They all did the best they

could for their staffs, and they made life as happy for us as they could. They were all very cordial and you were part of the family except in the case of President Truman, and President Truman is not--oh, I would say he was not a ladies man. He preferred the company of men. He was not at ease with women other than his wife, and I don't mean this to be disparaging of the other men who were happy in the company of other women. It was just his nature to be reserved, and his reserve was very great. With the others we weren't background, we were part of the operation.

President Johnson is no exception, although, as I said, I never travelled with him. I didn't work with him after hours, but I know from my observation, I know what other people encountered with him such as the girls in his office--President Johnson has more secretarial assistance in his office than any of the other Presidents had, but that's because of this business of starting at eight o'clock a.m. or seven and working right through until eleven p.m. and after. There had to be--the place had to be covered. And President Johnson is much more particular about keeping a record. He's meticulous about having records kept of what he did at every minute of the day and who came in and who was in the room when who came in. But from what everybody said, he made each one part of the operation. You were a friend. You weren't to be pushed aside. You amounted to something. Your opinion even was welcome! Some big men wouldn't want the opinion of a two-bit secretary.

But President Johnson--President Roosevelt, when we were down in Georgia in 1936, President Roosevelt undertook to purge Senator George of Georgia from the Democratic Party. He didn't think that he belonged, and Senator George was running for reelection--I think it was '36. President Roosevelt came back from Florida by train. All his travel before the war years was by

train, and he came through Senator George's city in the state. He stopped and made a speech, and he and Steve Early (sp) were working on a speech, and I was sitting there with my pencil and pad in case there were any changes to be made. And the first thing President Roosevelt did was to read the speech to Steve, his final draft, whatever draft it was. And he said in the beginning, "It may not be good politics" and went on to say "for me to come to your state and tell you who to vote for and what kind of a representative you want in the Senate." And I took it upon myself to interrupt, and I said, "Wouldn't it be better to say, 'It would not seem politic for me to do this,'" and Mr. Mr. Early went like this at me, and the President adopted my suggestion which made me very proud.

There weren't many cases like that that I had anything to offer that was worthwhile, but none of them, other than President Truman, and I had really no close contact with President Truman. My contact consisted of standing up when he came into a room, which of course is the way you handle Presidents, and he would go right--he was very pleasant, but he would just go right on by. His secretary, Rose Conway, I would suppose that until this day, is Miss Conway to him, not Rose. And in the Roosevelt days and the Johnson days and in the Kennedy days, everybody was on a first name basis. President Kennedy didn't call his secretary, Evelyn Lincoln, by her first name; I think she was always Mrs. Lincoln to him, but she, I believe, was a little older than he was, and he had that New England reticence that would keep him from--but, so far as I know, I was Toi to him. And to President Truman I wasn't Toi, I guess it was Miss Bachelder. To President Johnson and President Roosevlet, I was Toi. But, where did we start here? What was the question?

M: Comparing Presidents.

B: Comparing Presidents.

M: Let me just ask you what have been your observations in the changes in the presidency from Mr. Roosevelt's day?

B: Oh, gosh, they have just increased in intensity until it's more than any human being should be asked to undertake. I think--I'm glad we have them, but I think any man who runs for the Presidency ought to have his head examined. But we have to have one. It's a job that has to be done, and it would be dreadful if none of them would accept, and I hope the day never comes when we can't find a candidate. But the responsibilities are just so awesome, and I'm sure they started with President Roosevelt. He was the first man in a good long time who had excited the imagination of the people and he certainly saved the country from destruction with his forward-looking ideas. And that's where it started. And then as the years have gone on, it has mushroomed and grown until--well, there isn't any subject under the sun that doesn't fall upon the President's desk to be solved.

There's no question that deals with the people--and it's the kind of increase in activity that just can't be helped. It's like Topsy; it just grows. They had to encompass more and more. I don't think we could ever go back to the Calvin Coolidge type of government. It's just incredible. It's partly--well, I think it's mostly due to the fact that people are aware of the problems of the presidency. The communications media has opened up so people wrote and now they hear on radio and see and hear on television and they take part. And so they sit down and write, and when you write, Presidents find out what the problems of people are, if they don't already know, if by their own observations, by their own activities they haven't found out, then they get, you know--then you get ten thousand letters that are obviously not part of the campaign.

Each letter doesn't say exactly the same thing. But when you get a hundred thousand letters--ten thousand is nothing--all veering on the same problem, then you know that there is something wrong someplace, and so a President finds out that, well, he better do something about coal miners, more obscure things than that, of course, because coal mining, the mines that burn and cave in, those receive national attention, and you would be stupid if you didn't know anything about those. But there must be--oh, what about the grapes in California. You find out about that in the mail. Of course, the Congressmen and the Senators from out there in California are going to come and tell you the same thing, or are going to talk about it on the floor of the House or the Senate, but people have learned that they can turn to a President and get some action, and they are going to do it, they are going to turn to them from here on.

M: Having worked with Mr. Johnson on his staff with his people, Miss Bachelder, how would you describe his temperament in his relation to his staff?

B: Well, that's a difficult question to answer because it would--it couldn't be first hand. As far as anything I overheard, President Johnson was--well, he was frank, certainly. If he had any complaint to make, he made it. He didn't withhold anything, and I heard some of the men that I was associated with say, "well, he certainly had it in for Henry, Joe, Charlie, whoever, today, or he gave him a hard time." But I never saw it take place, so I would be a very poor--I don't think you can pass along hearsay successfully because your mind is colored possibly in one direction and the person who is telling it to you is colored in another, and you get all fouled up. I understand, I was reading that article by Eric Goldman which I think is a terrible thing to foist on the public. Even if it is true, I think it is terrible to make such a statement, make such things public. But if you believe him, the President had quite a violent--

not temper, because temper means that just for no reason at all you fly off the handle, and I'm sure that when he lost his temper, when he was trying to make a point, trying to get something over, trying to accomplish something, that he was--the reasoning behind it was logical and necessary.

M: Did you ever hear it described, you know, as you would any boss, this is a good day or a bad day, you know, he is in a good frame of mind?

B: No, no. I heard that about President Roosevelt, but he never had what you might say violent outbursts. He just--you know, this is the day he won't say yes to anything, that kind, that's a bad day. But, no, I don't think I ever heard them say President Johnson had a good day or a bad day.

M: There was one President that--his staff used to take notice when he wore a dark suit or something like that. I'm not sure which one it is now, and I was wondering if there was any, just signals among the staff people?

B: Not that I was aware of. I think maybe that might have been true of President Eisenhower. He had rather--I was never the recipient or even on the edge of any of his outbursts, the kind of anger that flares up and flares down again. I don't think he had any abiding angers, and I don't think President Johnson had. How could he be as successful with the people he dealt with as he was if he, if they were dragged on, if he hung on to his discomfort over the situation. None of us is perfect and I'm sure President Johnson had times when he was just so exasperated with everybody and everything that was going on, he couldn't get it to work the way he wanted it to that he was a little more explosive in his choice of words.

M: There have been many things written about Mr. Johnson's persuasive talents, too. I think it's been called "The Johnson Treatment." Did you ever see that or be a part of it?

B: No, unless I got the Johnson treatment all the time.

M: Through the various Presidents, did they have good relations with their staffs?

B: Oh, yes. Always. At least I always felt so. I don't know of any real discrepancies in anybody's--you know, that people couldn't take the buck, they got out of the kitchen like President Truman said to do. You know, if basically a man disagreed with the President so strenuously that he couldn't follow out the policies that the President laid down, then they get out, and it's just as simple as that, if the man really has any integrity, I think.

M: Did the various Presidents issue and delegate different degrees of authority to their staff people?

B: The staff members never were interposed themselves, or were suppose to interpose themselves between the President and a Cabinet officer or anyone who was supposed to have a direct line to him, and I don't think that any of them would, with the possible exception of President Eisenhower because of his military background, his idea that he was there and all these other people made decisions that they could and if they couldn't make them themselves, then they would come to him, whereas other Presidents felt they were the ones to make the decisions and would insist on having the problem that had to have the major decision made brought right to their desks. Now, not just, "here it is," but "This is what I think, this is what Joe Dokes thinks, what Henry Smith thinks, this is what the Budget Bureau thinks, this is what State has to say about it, this is what Army has to say about it. Now I think, what do you think." And then the Presidents make up their minds, or the President makes up his mind in each instance.

M: Did the various Presidents have different reactions to any publicity that their staff received or any information that came up at the wrong time through staff members?

B: Oh, I don't think to any great degree, no. If somebody leaked something, as it were, it would depend upon how major a problem it was, how much chastising he would get, and of course the chastising--it isn't necessary to chastise a man who made a mistake because he knows it soon enough, and if you have any kind of conscience at all, and I don't know of an assistant to a President who didn't have a conscience, who wasn't trying to do for the man he was serving the very best he could. In other words, the men at the White House normally don't have a personal axe to grind. They have what President Roosevelt required of the administrative assistants, a passion for anonymity. And that anonymity expresses itself in various ways. Sometimes they, in order to follow out the President's wishes, they have to be a name. You just don't let it ride always just as a White House spokesman. Off the record you have to take some of the responsibility for some of the things you do if you are a good assistant to the President, advisor. But you don't look for personal aggrandizement. In other words, a cabinet officer might have his eye on the Senate or a governorship, an elective office someplace, whereas very few staff assistants, secretaries to Presidents, and special consultants, very few of them have that kind of an axe to grind.

M: Did you ever yourself feel at different times more concern for being careful about what you said in public?

B: Oh, yes, during the war especially. I was not a good conversationalist because I was so afraid that something that I might know that I didn't realize I knew I might drop, might tell somebody, and I never was able to talk about my work. It wasn't all that secret. It wasn't like the CIA where you don't even admit that that's where you are employed, and I was a very, very small cog and what I had to say didn't amount to a hill of beans. Just the same, I was very careful

not to say anything that would throw a wrong light on anything that the President was trying to do. For instance, I never would have admitted on a stack of Bibles that I had anything to do with that Supreme Court packing message. At the time we weren't at war then, but that kind of thing you just don't talk about if you have any integrity at all, and I think most people with any sense have integrity to the point where they--well, you run into people who suffer from "I" trouble, I guess, all the time, and they are the ones who would be spreading what they knew and what they thought they knew around.

M: What about with the other Presidents? Did you particularly take care about what you said in public?

B: Yes, and by public I mean just among my own friends. Yes, I'm not inclined to tell anything that I thought would be derogatory to any of the Presidents or to their families or their wives--wives are part of their families, to their staffs. It's just decency of living, and after all, it's a wonderful thing to work at the White House. It's an exciting place to be. You are right in the hub, and you know things before the public knows them. And it has an effect on everyone, great, small, the little fellow or the big fellow.

M: Do you recall what might have been some of your most surprised moments working in the White House?

B: No, I don't. Maybe I don't know what you would call a surprised moment.

M: Oh, I think not expecting something to happen that did.

B: Oh, no, I don't, because I--

M: I guess you always have to cope with the unexpected.

B: Yes, yes, every day. That's what makes it so exciting, I think, is that you don't know what is going to come each day, every day is different, and you get over one crisis, and bingo you are right in another one without realizing it.

Perhaps wiser heads could see farther than I, and would know if you are going to have trouble with the steel workers, or there is going to be a copper strike, or something like that.

M: How would you--how do you think of the various Presidents that you have worked for? What have been your feelings about their personalities?

B: Well, of course, my very favorite man was President Roosevelt, again, because I had known him so long. President Truman I had great respect for, and President Eisenhower I had respect for. I really can't count him as one of my Presidents, in a way, because I really didn't work for him. And President Kennedy I had great admiration for. He was a very dynamic person, got things beginning. Now that was an especially exciting three years. And for President Johnson I had great respect and admiration, and I had more personal feeling toward President Johnson than any of the others except Roosevelt, closer just because, bless him, he remembered me when he came back into my scope. During the years, you see, when he came to the White House to see President Eisenhower, I was over in the East Wing, and I would have no opportunity to see him. If I had, I'm sure he would have been just as gracious and lovely as he was later. And I wouldn't have been so surprised.

M: Did you, during this time, you've mentioned some of the campaigning, for instance, the Truman tour that you were on for Mr. Stevenson. What other campaigns or conventions, really sort of presidential politicking were you involved in?

B: Well, only in the case of Roosevelt. I went on a part--one or two trips of each one of President Roosevelt's. Oh, one time I went with him to Cleveland in 1940, I suppose, because he was going to Cleveland and I had been born in Cleveland, and I had never been back, and I asked if I might go along. They were always looking for somebody to sit up all night and work, and so I went

on that trip, and then always at election night, election eve, President Roosevelt went up to Hyde Park for election eve, and I always went along. But I didn't make many campaign trips with him. He always thought they were too hard on me, both of us having had polio, he had a compassion for me that others haven't. Other Presidents have forgotten, do forget, as many of my friends tell me they forget, that I'm any different from anybody else. They realize, of course, that I'm not going to run, but they have never held back, and never said, "Well, that's too hard for you to do. You'll wear yourself out." They've never done that. President Roosevelt wasn't hardhearted in that respect, quite the opposite, and yet he didn't make me feel too much of an invalid. But with him any place he could go I could go too because the ramps off trains, they always had to have a ramp up into a hotel if there were a lot of steps, and then I could follow along, they were slow in moving him, he didn't walk very much the places that he went. I did, but they were slow with him so that I could keep up. But other Presidents go a mile a minute. And as I say they have never said, "Well, that's too hard a trip for her," or "We can't ask Toi to do that because she's not strong enough." President Roosevelt thought the campaign trips were too strenuous for me, so I didn't make very many of them. I disagreed with him, but that didn't do any good.

M: You had, it sounds like, a very close access or easy access to President Roosevelt. Did you have this with the other Presidents?

B: No, not with any of the others.

M: Did you get to know the First Ladies well?

B: I didn't know Mrs. Truman at all. I knew Mrs. Roosevelt, of course, and was on a Toi basis with her. Mrs. Eisenhower, of course, I knew quite well, as well as you could, you were not part of her actual personal staff although I

was considered on her personal staff. But I didn't have the daily contact with her; it was mostly by phone although she was very gracious and included me and the rest of the social office staff in many of the parties Mrs. Eisenhower gave for--that involved people outside their close personal friends. One time Mrs. Eisenhower had a party on her birthday, the fourteenth of November, and she had it in the mansion on the living quarters floor and invited me, and I had a wonderful time because many of her friends turned out to be people that I had known during the Roosevelt Administration. A lady from Georgia, from Atlanta, Georgia, turned out to be the sister-in-law of a very close friend of Mrs. Eisenhower, and I saw her at this party. And I just had a marvelous time. The President was there, and the President and Mrs. Eisenhower just stand out with their graciousness. They never made you feel but what you were the one and only person they were interested in talking to. This was particularly noticeable to me at this time because here they were surrounded by their friends, their Army friends and they had a myriad of them, and they were all close friends, sort of kissing cousin type of friends, and both the President and Mrs. Eisenhower were walking around separately and together, talking to people. You'd stop here--I stopped and talked to them for a few minutes and they kept their eyes right on me. They didn't go like this--and go on. I knew I was the focus of their attention, and it's a wonderful attribute to make people in a crowd like that feel that they are the important person, they are the important people, you are the important person.

And I have never seen that in any other, not even in Mrs. Johnson as lovely as she is, I would see her eyes stray a minute to speak to someone else, and then she would come back. And Mrs. Johnson is very lovely. She is as gracious in her way as Mrs. Eisenhower was, but there was just that little difference.

And Mrs. Eisenhower would never call me anything but Miss Bachelder, but Mrs. Johnson was more "democratic," and she didn't know me until she came to the White House. I remember the first Christmas that they were living in the White House and being one of the oldest "inhabitants," they signaled me out, and several of the others who had worked there longer than I to have our pictures taken with Mrs. Johnson and presumably to be received by the President first. This was not Christmastime--it was after Christmas because the Johnsons didn't think it was seemly to have a party so soon after President Kennedy's death. So it was after Christmas, after they came back from the ranch. But anyway, we were singled out, and Mrs. Johnson came over to me and said, "Now, how did you first meet my husband? I understand that you have known him a long time." And I told her what I've told you. And so I've been Toi ever since to her.

And Mrs. Kennedy I met very briefly. I worked in the social office for just a month from the time that the Eisenhowers left until I went to join Ted Sorensen the twentieth of February. And Mrs. Kennedy came in to be introduced to the staff and have the staff introduced to her. And that was the only time that I saw her. Because when we were invited to a Christmas party or reception or anything, they did away with the thing that the Nixons have brought back, the formal receiving line. And as a result everyone was lost in the crowd practically. Mrs. Kennedy and the President would walk around and spend enough time, but there is something about celebrities, people are drawn to them, and some people won't get away. They hang on. They stand and they monopolize, whereas in a case like that you should spend as few minutes as possible for it to be polite and friendly and cordial, but then you should move on to give somebody else a chance, but it doesn't work that way. And the receiving line

is your only method of overcoming that. There you get the chance to shake the hand and look in the face of and have them look at you. Whether they remember you again or not, at least you could go around and say, "Look, he shook my hand. I'm not going to wash it all week."

M: Miss Bachelder, if you think back, what would be some of your most favorite remembrances from the White House?

B: All of them, every day.

M: Are there any that really stand out in your mind?

B: Oh, no, I don't think so. I think I'll just stand by my first statement--every day--because it was just wonderful, just wonderful to be at the center of the universe. When I was still in high school, my mother went to a numerologist, and she took along--of course, she knew my name, she knew my birth date, but she told this woman my name and my birthdate and what the woman needed to know about me and the woman sat down with a blackboard and she scribbled a lot of figures and she asked and multiplied and subtracted and divided and did all the things that numerologists do. And then she proceeded to tell my mother about me, and she described my character, my outward appearance. My mother's the type, you know, who wouldn't give an inch. She wouldn't say, "Oh, yes, she is," or give any idea that the woman had hit anything on the head. And the woman kept saying, "She's had a shock, a nervous shock," and my mother didn't say a word, the shock being the polio. And the woman saw me among desks, and then she said, "She's going to be in the highest place in the world." Well, my mother came home, fit to be tied, mad as hops, didn't learn anything, just didn't amount to a hill of beans. She'd been able to tell my mother about me, what I was like, but that was the extent of it. And she told me about this, and well my thought was, "Well, I'm not smart enough

to be the head of a corporation." She thought that maybe I was going to pilot a plane. And three or four years later I landed in the White House, and I defy you to find a place that is any higher. We just misinterpreted what she said.

M: Miss Bachelder, there has been a lot of talk about people comparing Mr. Johnson and Mr. Roosevelt. What do you think about that? I think it comes in part because of the great amount of domestic legislation that they passed. Of course, they are both Democrats and very aggressive workers and as Presidents, very strong. What is your opinion of that?

B: I think they make a good "pair" to compare. They both have the welfare of the country, the little man, most definitely in view, the welfare of the masses, one because he was well-to-do and of a family--they call it an aristocratic family. What's that? It's just a family that has all--each member of it has had a good education and has the mental capacity to achieve something. President Johnson came from the other end of the spectrum, from a poor family. He pulled himself up by his boot straps. He got his education. He found his interests were in people, young people, and he taught school. And then he had the opportunity to come to Washington with, who was it, with Kleberg, as secretary, and he got a taste of what was possible to accomplish for people in the halls of Congress and worked up the enthusiasm to become a Congressman, run for the Congress and be elected. And then he just sort of grew like that, and went into the Senate and always with the good of the small, the little fellow, in the back of his mind. And I don't think anything he's done--they make so much to-do about this Vietnam business. I'm sure that every inch of his stature, and he's pretty statuesque, is just heartsick over the fact that he had to send boys over to Vietnam and so many of them have lost their lives and it's

senseless, but I personally don't see how he could have done anything but what he did. I don't have very good sense maybe, but I think he just had to do it, and I think he's equally as great as Franklin Roosevelt and I'm very biased about Franklin Roosevelt.

M: Did you ever see any friction between the Kennedys and the Johnsons staff?

B: Well, that is something that happens. Fortunately, I went through it before. When President Roosevelt died, the Truman staff came along, and at first everybody resented the fact that here was this man trying to take Franklin Roosevelt's place. Well, what else could he do? He had to. And we resented him, we resented him--but it didn't amount to anything. It's a resentment that you feel--it is a selfish, picayunish kind of resentment. You know better. And the staff members are in the same boat. They are in the habit of doing things one way for Roosevelt, and here a new bunch of people have come in and have put them out of my job, and, well, it's a senseless thing. The same thing happened when President Kennedy died. I found myself resenting President Johnson briefly, momentarily, for a day or so, to think that he was--he had come in and was sitting in that office and his people were there--which was absolutely ridiculous. Half of you is heartbroken, most of you is heartbroken, especially after an assassination. But after Roosevelt's death we were heartbroken, and these people seemed to be coming in. They had every right to. They couldn't have done otherwise.

And when you throw the cold light of reason on it, I'm sure now that any Kennedy staff member, and I mean the men who surrounded him, who thought that he had been insulted by the new people coming in, I'm sure now in the cold light of reason, they understand that they were being selfish. They were so concerned over their own grief that they didn't--they weren't using their heads. I never have been able to believe the stories about Bobby Kennedy

and President Johnson having the set-to that they are supposed to have had. I just don't believe it. And if it did happen, it's just because of the grief that Bobby Kennedy was having, going through, experiencing at the time, that he just didn't realize what he was saying or doing.

But the Kennedy people were no more to blame than Roosevelt people were to blame. In the case of the Roosevelt people, and the Trumans, one man who came in with President Truman went into the office of the First Lady, the social office, and stood in the doorway and put his hands on his hips and he said, "So, this is my day." "My Day" was the name of a column that Mrs. Roosevelt wrote. It was, I believe, a daily column. And naturally the stenographic force in the social office who worked for Mrs. Roosevelt on occasion had--well, they were involved in this "My Day" column, although Mrs. Roosevelt wrote it herself. She rented a typewriter, or her secretary, Malvina Thompson, took dictation or wrote it on the typewriter. They weren't really involved in the "My Day" except that it brought in letters from people to Mrs. Roosevelt and the staff had to open those letters and very often it had something to do with the White House or the government and they could be answered there. And this man came in, as I say, and said, "This is 'My Day.' Well, you are all fired." And he fired the whole shooting match.

Well, Mrs. Truman heard about it, and she went to her husband, and she laid down the law, and her husband got up right behind her and helped her, and all those people were taken back. Mrs. Truman was not as active a person as Mrs. Roosevelt, and she didn't need anything like all that staff, and since she didn't need them, those people were assigned other places, other jobs. They weren't fired. Some of them went back to their own departments, some of them came over to the West Wing to work. They made use of them, and it was just in

the--there was nothing like that in the transition from the Kennedys to the Johnsons. And I think all this is a lot of malarkey. But the time, and maybe other things came along to irritate some of those men and they have not been able to separate what was irritating them after the death, after the transition, with what happened right at the time. That I wouldn't know. It's normal, it's natural. Your grief is so great that you think time ought to stand still, but it doesn't. It moves on. Therefore the new people who come in have to do their job. Their allegiance is to the man they come with. That's the way life works, and there is no room for disagreement and bitterness. You have it and you get over it and you know it was the time.

M: Miss Bachelder, what would you say or attribute to Mr. Johnson's unpopularity that he has gone through at the end of his presidency?

B: Unfortunately, I think that he just didn't get through. He couldn't sell himself to the people. He couldn't sell his personality. It didn't come through on television. That was the way most of the people got it. Unfortunately, I think his speeches, his tone of voice--the content was there, but his delivery was poor, and it sort of drones you know, like this, you feel wound up, it's just going to go on and on. I felt that way. I felt disloyal because I thought that, which of course I wasn't. But it just didn't seem right that his speeches bored me but they did. In person you feel his personal spontaneity and his dedication and his innate goodness and decency and niceness, but somehow or other it didn't come over, and I think the media had a lot to do with it. He made enemies of the working press whether he meant to or not. I'm sure he didn't mean to. And I think that helped to color people's reaction.

M: Miss Bachelder, I don't have any further questions. Do you have any further comment on anything we've talked about?

B: I don't think so. As I say, I'll probably think about them after you've gone, and say, "Oh, dear, I wish I had told her that. or I wish I had said this."

M: Do you have any favorite stories or anecdotes you recall?

B: No, I don't think so.

M: Well, we'll close it with that. Thank you very much.

B: I've enjoyed it.

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By Toinette Bachelder

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

In accordance with Sec. 507 of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) and regulations issued thereunder (41 CFR 101-10), I, Toinette Marya Bachelder, hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America for eventual deposit in the proposed Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a tape and transcript of a personal statement approved by me and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

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