

INTERVIEW I

DATE: February 15, 1977

INTERVIEWEE: LINDY BOGGS

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Representative Boggs' office, Washington, D.C.

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G: [What are your] earliest recollections of Lyndon Johnson?

B: Well, I suppose my earliest contact with the Johnsons was really through Lady Bird.

When my husband and I came to Congress about 1941, we were very young. He was twenty-six; I was three years younger, and I had two little children.

In those days we had "calling days." Tuesdays were the days when the House of Representatives members' wives went calling on other people and also received at home on those days. Nancy Kefauver and Pauline Gore and Lady Bird Johnson came to see me one of the first Tuesdays I was here. It was so delightful to see some young women, with whom I immediately set up a feeling of rapport and affection and mutual interest. So that's really my first recollection of a Johnson, an act, as usual, of kindness and friendliness and devotion to making the congressional family feel as one.

G: Did they give you any suggestions on how to get along in Washington?

B: Of course, in those days there were very strict rules of protocol, and I've never disagreed with that. I think when you have a city that's made up of people from every section of the

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country and from all parts of the world, each of whom has a different set of manners and customs, that you have to have some type of polite procedure that governs the city. They were very good about briefing me about what I should do and what I shouldn't do and what clubs I should join, some of the intellectual and artistic outlets that were available so that you wouldn't be completely and totally immersed just in the political scene, where to shop. We consulted about pediatricians and things of that sort. Of course, at that time, Lady Bird did not have children.

G: Do you remember your first impression of LBJ?

B: Of course: vigorous, friendly, articulate, seemed to know his way around. That was very impressive to me.

G: During the Second World War, he was gone to California and then in the Pacific for a while, and Mrs. Johnson worked in the office. Did you see much of her then?

B: No, I really didn't see much of anyone down at the Hill, because my children were quite small, and I was not very well. But I remember Mr. Sam being quite furious with Hale and some of the other young members of Congress who protested that since they had voted for war that perhaps they should volunteer to go into the armed forces. He immediately told them that it was bad enough to have to lose Lyndon and some of the others who were reserve officers and therefore were obliged to go, but that they would simply be flag-waving and would be leaving their districts unrepresented. I remember at the time thinking how fortunate it was that Lyndon Johnson didn't really have to leave his district unrepresented, because Lady Bird was at the office. Of course, that's been my lasting impression of their relationship from that time forward.

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G: In 1941, he ran for the Senate and lost. It was a tight election. Do you have any memories of that campaign?

B: No, but I have a very, very vivid memory of the 1948 campaign. All of us, of course, went off to war after that. Hale ran for re-election in 1946, came back to Congress in 1947, and I remember the 1948 campaign so well because the day of the election, we were on board a ship going to Europe in 1948. Oh, dear! I'm having a mental block on the senator from Texas, a dear and good friend.

G: Morris Sheppard.

B: No.

G: Oh, [Tom] Connally, I guess.

B: It was Connally. Well, Mrs. Connally was the liaison between those two; she was both Mrs. Sheppard and Mrs. Connally. The Connallys were aboard ship with us. I remember that, because radio communication was not as sophisticated as it is now, [so] Hale and the Senator spent a very long time up in the captain's quarters listening to the returns of that very tight election. Lucile Connally and I were very apprehensive the whole time that they were away from us, so that one I remember quite vividly.

G: Of course, LBJ went to the Senate. I was going to ask you if you ever had an opportunity to observe the relationship between Lyndon Johnson and Sam Rayburn.

B: Most frequently and most devotedly and for a very long period of time. They were very generous with Hale and me in their attentions and their love for us and their seeming desire to visit with us and to be with us. The President loved a certain kind of chicken that a cook of ours used to confect, and he could never, never get the recipe from her. It was years before we discovered that she was afraid that if she gave the true recipe, that he

would never come back to her kitchen to see her to get her chicken. We went through many ramifications of all sorts of *terrible* recipes that she would give to Zephyr [Wright] and to Lady Bird. At any rate, he liked to be with us, and he was crazy about Emma's chicken.

Of course, Mr. Sam would get fatigued some times. What he really liked to do was, at the drop of a hat, to say, "I'd like to come by and have dinner tonight." What he really wanted to do was to come by, maybe have a couple of drinks, eat dinner, some good home-cooked dinner, and then leave. We shared several evenings over many years with the Johnsons and Mr. Sam, and of course, long and wonderful conversations, oftentimes Hale playing the devil's advocate to get them to talk and to argue.

Always children were allowed, and I keep feeling that the Johnson children, the Boggs children, and all the other children whose lives Mr. Sam and Lyndon Johnson touched were such fortunate children, because they really learned that there are many sides to every issue, and that great and good men who love and respect each other otherwise may differ on certain subjects, yet they are all imbued with a love of country and certainly a love for a better life for the next generation. What a great and marvelous lesson that was for our children and the Johnson children. I observed the *very* close relationship, of course, and I observed it in a political context as well.

G: Did you ever hear Sam Rayburn express his aspirations for Lyndon Johnson or what he felt that Lyndon Johnson could do or should do in terms of his political future?

B: Oh, of course. I can remember certain specific instances, of course. I know that he really wanted him to be president. In 1960, he wanted him to be the presidential candidate. He was very disappointed about the outcome of that race for the nomination.

I remember in January of 1960, Hale was away in the Far East. He was chairman of the Joint Economic Committee Foreign Economic Policy Subcommittee. I was named chairman of a presidential campaign kick-off dinner with the disagreeable job of paying off the \$900,000 we still owed from the 1956 campaign. Mr. Sam had always served as permanent chairman of the Democratic Convention. He made the decision in December, I guess it was, that he would not like to serve in that capacity, because he would like to devote the rest of the year to promoting the candidacy of Lyndon Johnson for president. He was kind enough to call me down to be with him at the press conference, because number one, I was having a difficult time selling tickets. The chairman of our party and the treasurer of our party were in some disagreement with each other, and some very splendid volunteers were sort of holding this dinner together. Mr. Sam used the occasion of his press conference to make this announcement and to also purchase his tickets to dinner from me so that it would give publicity to this need as well. I also always felt that it was putting the blessing on Hale in absentia to be the permanent chairman. That event, unfortunately, never occurred, but I'm sure he felt that if he were out working for Lyndon and if Hale were the permanent chairman, there was no way under the sun that Lyndon wasn't going to get the nomination. His deep interest from that time forward, of course, was in having Lyndon become president.

I'm quite sure you've heard the story from many different directions as to how Mr. Sam was persuaded to agree to the President's acceptance of the vice-presidential spot.

G: I would love to hear any insight that you can give.

B: I know you've probably talked with D. B. Hardeman, who also was with the speaker at that time. Hale did go into the speaker's room, and they did have a long, hard talk. I

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think that Hale finally persuaded the speaker that unless Lyndon accepted the second spot that Richard Nixon was going to be president. The speaker had an abiding distrust of Mr. Nixon. That was a very negative attitude, I suppose, but it did the trick, the final trick. Many people, of course, influenced him, but that was the final decision, and together they walked out to make the announcement. It was a deep disappointment to Mr. Sam that Lyndon was not the nominee.

G: Can you recall any instances where Lyndon Johnson and Representative Hale Boggs worked together on a legislative matter, something they fought for to get through the Congress that was important?

B: Well, of course, Hale was the majority whip when he was president, when. . . . It's nice, you know: now that he's gone, you can say "Lyndon" occasionally. It's one thing: you get back your friend when death takes a president away. They worked on all of the Great Society programs with their mutual interest and enthusiasms.

G: Is there anything that stands out in your memory as being something they were particularly committed to and worked together on?

B: I do think that they were southerners who were committed to the righting of the wrongs in the civil rights areas. I think they were those progressive southerners who finally helped to effect the civil rights laws and legislation by their own example, personal, political, and, in the president's case, executive. [I think] that they did a great deal to foster the movement. I also think that they had both known the poor times during the Depression in the South and that their feelings about poverty. . . . I remember the President saying that everybody was so poor when he was a kid that they didn't know there was such a word as "poverty." I think this was a great equalizing influence, that

they recognized that black or white, when the economy was dead, then no human movements could go forward. They were committed, the two of them, to a War Against Poverty. They really were enthusiastically for most of the Great Society programs in education and health and good job opportunities. These were the areas in which they had had experience as youngsters in the South.

G: What I'm really trying to ask here is to try to get you to recall a particular occasion on which they were planning strategy together, or any anecdote or incident here that points to Lyndon Johnson's mastery of the legislative process.

B: (Laughing) They are legion. It's difficult to select a special time. They met every week to plan stuff. The communication was total.

G: There must have been some great stories that you've carried through the years of particular occasions.

B: Of course, probably most of my stories that would be different from anybody else's would be personal and social and family-oriented stories. For instance, he trusted me to chaperone Lynda and George Hamilton when he was not terribly in favor of the romance. I found George to be a delightful, marvelous human being who did a great deal for Lynda, and, of course, she did a lot for him. He always called George "your fella," "your fella Hamilton," that type of thing. He did seem to feel more comfortable when they went off, and I was with them. We just adore those two girls. They were so fond of Hale as well as of me. Luci had Hale to read the epistle at her wedding, because he was one of her Roman Catholic friends. Her mother and daddy didn't have too many close friends who were. (Laughing) That was just a coincidence. I'm joking about that.

I have many lovely memories. My personal memory of the civil rights situation was when we were at the Ranch visiting, and he was reading over the final draft of the civil rights chapter in his book. He came up and asked me if I would come down and have breakfast with him and go over it with him. The beginning, when he talked about the trips back and forth in the car with the children and the black nurse and so on, of course we shared all those same experiences and came to the same affectionate conclusions and the same determinations to save other fine persons from that type of humiliation. I have a thousand lovely memories.

G: Your husband worked for Adlai Stevenson in 1956 as his campaign manager, I guess.

B: He was his southern campaign manager.

G: Did this create any problem with LBJ?

B: I don't think so. I'm laughing because in 1952, Hale had run for governor of Louisiana and had been unsuccessful, but his whole campaign was bringing people together. Along came the great movement of many friends in Louisiana who felt there should be a two-party system. They went to the Republican Convention and, of course, were successful in getting [Dwight] Eisenhower to run instead of [Robert] Taft. So many of the people who had supported Hale for governor were also supporting Eisenhower, so Hale was going to stay out of the Stevenson race. He, of course, was going to vote for him, of course was going to be a loyal Democrat, but he wasn't going to take an active part.

Adlai came through New Orleans and gave a speech. Hale was in a seersucker suit. Two days later, he asked me if I could please send him some winter clothes to Springfield. I think Lyndon understood that it was a personal commitment that had

engulfed Hale at that time, and it was a natural evolution that Hale would then be interested in the 1956 campaign. I worked in the 1956 campaign as well.

G: What about the 1960 campaign? Do you have any [recollections of that]?

B: Oh, of course. Yes, I was part of the advance team. That was a great thing that Lyndon did. I think that in saying this I should also say, as a woman politician and legislator, that we can't really forget the great leadership that he exerted in women's rights. Really, his insistence that we have at least fifty top women appointed to fifty top jobs immediately had a ripple effect, not only throughout government, but throughout the professions and business. It implemented the women's movement and all the commissions on the status of women then immediately began to be formed in the states where they had not yet implemented this. His real profound respect for Lady Bird, for his mother, for his daughters carried over into his respect for other women.

G: Did he ever talk to you about this women's rights or getting women into more good federal jobs?

B: Oh, of course.

G: How would he put it? Do you remember a conversation?

B: I'm saying that, and then I'm going to tell you that he at one time asked me to be treasurer of the United States. When I told him I couldn't do it, and he was so provoked with me, I said, "Hmm. You wouldn't be that provoked unless you were asking me because I would be acceptable to everybody, and you have two other people who are competing for it, and the powerful politicians who must be behind them." I said this, you know, just to appease his being provoked with me, and he roared laughing. He said, "Well, of course!"

(Laughing) He wasn't above using us politically, either, but I felt that that was even more of a compliment than his asking me to take on the job, that he knew I could do.

Then in the 1960 campaign, he went to see Mr. [Harry] Truman when he was going to have a whistle-stop. Mr. Truman was elated. There was a wonderful gentleman named Mr. Long who had been the person who had chartered the route of the Truman whistle-stop, so, of course, he was involved in this one. Mr. Truman said that what you really needed to do and what he would suggest was that you get somebody such as Mr. Long to map the course, because they knew in a practical way where the tracks were, what the situations were, and so on. And of course, you use the tracks of many different railroads. It's a post of great diplomatic skill that was thrust upon Mr. Long.

Mr. Truman felt that you really had to have people that, by the time 1960 came along, we called advance men, to go ahead and to pave the way for the proper reception by the local officials, and so on. Lyndon came back with that knowledge, and then he started thinking about the route we were going to take. There were several officials that were not exactly happy about his running with Jack Kennedy or about being for a Catholic or about being somebody . . . that was concerned about the black vote, et cetera. He decided that he should have an all-woman advance team, and that there was no southern gentleman who would not receive a southern lady. So there was a group of us who went down ahead of the train as advance people. We set up committees everywhere we went. We hoped that in showing them how to set up a committee to get a great crowd down to the train that they would stay organized and get people to the polls on election day in the same fashion. It was grand experience, and I must say that he was so right, because people who were not thinking about being for Lyndon Johnson received

us. Pictures, of course, were in every paper and television shows and everything, and suddenly they were committed to the Kennedy- Johnson ticket and very receptive to making sure that their stop was the best stop of all.

We even went into Alabama, where we Democrats weren't even on the ticket, but then, we couldn't be rude enough not to go into Alabama on our way South.

It was a marvelous team: Carrie Davis, who was the wife of the congressman from Tennessee and who was a great and wonderful organizer, was with us. And Mary Love Bailey, who was the vice presidential nominee's physician's wife--because he had had a heart attack, and we had to have his physician's wife along to say that, of course, she wouldn't be promoting his candidacy unless he were well. We had Bea Barclay, who was the wife of his minister, who said it was all right for him to be running with that Catholic; and darling little Judy Moyers, who was a young and lovely young person; and Lorraine Gibbons, who was Junior League and symphony orchestra, and all those sorts of things. So we had a great team, and it was marvelous.

G: Where do you think your persuasion was most effective on this advance work? Can you recall a particular southern personality?

B: Oh, goodness, there were so many. We started out in Virginia, and that was not very difficult, because, of course, we had many contacts in Virginia, and we were able to set up organizations along the route.

Then we went into North Carolina, and the governor's wife was very receptive and very charming to us and had a meeting for us with some other ladies. The governor was really uncommitted, but by the time the train came through, he was there and rode with the train all the way through and at every stop.

G: Do you think his wife worked on him?

B: I think that the enthusiasm that was engendered made him feel that it was not a lost cause. Maybe it was just the little push that he needed to feel sure that perhaps he could be successful. I don't know, but I do know that that made a difference.

G: How about South Carolina?

B: South Carolina. Oh, *dear*. I remember in 1964 I was co-chairman of the Lady Bird Special. I got the wife of the governor of South Carolina to be co-chairman with me, and that was a lovely experience.

I do remember that we had a little bit of difficulty in South Carolina at first, but again, there was a fairly well organized women's group in Columbia, the state capital. They turned out in great force. So it had the good effect--this all women's team--of making the women proud that the vice-presidential candidate had chosen women to advance, had honored us with this real responsibility, and had chosen women as the ones who really could effect a success. They were very helpful in this regard. They were enthusiastic about our assignment and felt they couldn't let us down and couldn't let his opinion of women down. So it did have that effect.

G: That was brilliant strategy.

B: Wasn't it? He was a brilliant strategist.

G: When you mentioned the 1964 campaign, I was going to ask you about Mrs. Johnson's trip on the train through Dixie. On several occasions I am sure she encountered hostile audiences, or at least some people in there who were hecklers. I'm wondering if you have any recollection of the way she handled these incidents.

B: I have many recollections of the way she handled the instances. We had many security problems along the route, as you can imagine. We had a little engine that went ahead of the train. I was so amused because in the enthusiasm of the trip, one of the young people who was with us. . . . I had so much experience by then, you see. I had done one train; I knew how to do another one. I had also learned that what I needed to do in the advance work was to leave a person who went with me in each state. Before then, I had just assigned a state to one person in the team who would phone back as we went along the route. The second time around, I left a coordinator in each state. Then she was the representative of Mrs. Johnson, and all factions could talk to her.

I had a committee of young people because we went through some college towns. One of the enthusiastic young people said, "You know that engine that goes in front of the train? It has that whole open car behind it. Don't you think it would be marvelous if we put everybody in their little LBJ costumes, and as we went into a college town, we could all be on there and get off." Nobody, of course, realized that it was a security measure to have the engine in front of us.

We had many security problems. By that time, of course, we had the Secret Service and the various agencies of the government in all of the different states who were responsible. When we went over water--we had a bomb threat, so we went over a causeway from Florida into Alabama. Mrs. Johnson was always alerted to the problems and always very calm about it, very certain that they would be taken care of.

There was a group that started out in Columbia, South Carolina. It was a right-wing group, and the head of them, the leader, was an older gentleman with a crutch. He would give signals to these young people with his crutch, when to begin to chant, and so

on. Lady Bird took it very well. The men along the route got horribly upset! They were defending their lady. I think perhaps if they had left it to the ladies that it would have been better.

I remember getting into Charleston, and they were quite raucous there. I was so pleased that whoever had been the chairman of the stop at the previous large city was otherwise engaged, because he had become so upset, and that Hale was going to be chairman, I *knew* he wouldn't get upset, that he was accustomed to hecklers. And he got totally infuriated! Lady Bird always handled it properly and well. She finally very gingerly called everybody in and suggested that the best way to handle this was either to ignore it or to let her say, "Now you've had your say. Now allow me to have mine. Then when I'm finished, you may have yours again." It worked perfectly.

G: Quite disarming, wasn't she?

B: Right.

G: Did you get a very good impression of LBJ on the campaign trail in either one of these elections?

B: Oh, of course. He was a masterful campaigner.

G: What was his style?

B: Well, he knew how to get the attention of an audience. He always immediately established some rapport with them. Wherever they were under whatever circumstances, he could make them feel that part of his experiences was part of their experience.

Going into New Orleans at the end of the 1964 Lady Bird Special train, he was very exuberant, because going into New Orleans at the end of the 1960 train, he joined us and came into New Orleans. He had heard rumors that there was infighting in the

factions and that there wasn't going to be a sufficient crowd. Instead, there was just a marvelous, wonderful parade out of season. Of course, it's always the season for a parade in New Orleans, but we had a real Mardi Gras parade, with floats and everything representing all the southern states, and an enormous crowd. We had the southern states, and we ended up with a statue of [Simon] Bolivar to show his connection with Latin America, and all of this. He was so amazed that his advance information had been different than what the situation truly was that, going into New Orleans in the 1964 campaign trail on the train, he reached over and took my hand and said, "Don't worry. My attitude is different this time."

G: That's great. Thank you so much.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I

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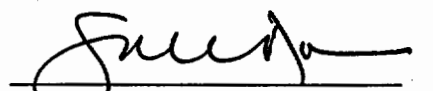
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