

INTERVIEW XXXII covering January - March 1953

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INTERVIEWEE: LADY BIRD JOHNSON

INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE

PLACE: LBJ Ranch, Stonewall, Texas

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G: We're going to begin 1953.

J: 1953 was of course a time of big change. The Republicans had won; [Dwight] Eisenhower was going to be inaugurated on January the twentieth. We had lost Senator [Ernest] McFarland in the election, and Lyndon, who had been McFarland's whip, or assistant, was elected minority leader of the Senate. At forty-four, the youngest man to ever hold that, in years and in seniority. One thing that gave him a lot of satisfaction was that he was nominated by [Richard] Russell of Georgia, to him the always top senator, and he was seconded by Theodore Francis Green of Rhode Island, an old patrician, delightful character, so far removed from Lyndon geographically and socially and in so many ways, but always very fond of Lyndon. And [he was] seconded also by [Dennis] Chavez of New Mexico. The fact that Chavez was Latin American and from the Southwest I think added to Lyndon's satisfaction. And Earle Clements of Kentucky was chosen the Democratic whip.

G: Do you know why Clements was chosen?

J: He was just so generally liked throughout the Senate, a thoroughly nice man. Long

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government service, governor of Kentucky, I think several times, and a stalwart in the Democratic Party during his whole career.

G: Was the selection actually LBJ's? I mean, do you think that it was his recommendation?

J: I rather expect it was. I don't believe it could have been anybody that he would have liked better.

And there we were, opposite numbers to that great Senator [Robert] Taft, the majority leader, who had Bill Knowland of California for his number-two man. But the shocking change was that the Speaker was no longer the speaker. Joe Martin of Massachusetts was the new speaker.

Congress opened on January 3. It always seemed to open earlier in those years than it does now. Price Daniel was our new senator from Texas, replacing big Tom Connally. This time there was a knife-edge Republican majority in the Senate of 48 to 47, and one Independent, Wayne Morse. In some ways it was the best time of Lyndon's life. It's much easier to ride herd on a group of men who are that closely matched. You have more of a feeling of the necessity of clinging together than of just fractionalizing out in every one of your varying political philosophies.

Arthur Perry joined us, from Tom Connally's staff, and Woody [Warren Woodward] left us to go back to Dallas to go into partnership with Harding Lawrence in public relations.

G: I wanted to ask you one thing about the very close difference between the minority and the majority. Do you think that--he had that experience for what, two years?--led him to count every vote later on and to really touch every base, so to speak?

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J: Oh, I'm sure it did. The necessity of being ever watchful and vigilant, yes, I'm sure it had a lot of effect on him. Another big job that he had was he was put in charge of the Democratic Steering Committee, or was it called the Democratic Policy Committee? I can't keep those committees straight.

G: Well, both, he was in charge of both of them.

J: Oh, yes, yes. He had two particular guidelines that stand out in my memory across the years. One was to loosen up the seniority rule enough to give every Democratic freshman at least one important committee assignment. He put Stu Symington on Armed Services, and Mike Mansfield and Hubert Humphrey on Foreign Relations, and John Kennedy on Labor and Public Welfare, and Henry Jackson on Interior. Morse was sort of hanging out loose looking for a committee assignment.

G: Let me ask you, do you have any idea where he got the idea to restructure those committees, or the seniority system, of giving the freshmen at least one good committee assignment? This was known as the "Johnson plan."

J: Well, in the first place, he carefully chose each one of those men, not only for what they asked for and were trying to get, and therefore earning their gratitude, but for their prior record of experience and work in that field and achievement. For instance, Symington, you know, had been secretary for air. Another thing, could he have been affected by his experience with [Albert] Thomas? I don't know. You know, where by just a mere two months and then by an extremely able operator, he himself failed to get on the [House] Appropriations Committee.

G: Do you recall, though, this idea coming to him and him deciding, "I'll do it this way," and

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then making that departure with the past?

J: Yes, I remember him talking about it a lot, and being real enthusiastic about it, and satisfied with it. I think he went through some kind of machinations to get some committees made larger in order to make room for them.

G: Did he have to do a selling job with the more senior members, too, people like Dick Russell, to get them to accept this new approach?

J: I just don't know about that. I know that he always treated the senior members with the greatest deference. He just had a natural deference for old people, and then, too, he was well aware of their power. He must have sold them on it. I know he wouldn't try to put anything over on them.

Meanwhile, on my home front, January always stood out as a rather bad month. The children did not like moving; children do not like change, although they are adaptable, and get used to it. But it was a month so crowded, so busy, so full. People's tempers were sort of frayed. Lynda Bird, approaching nine I think it was, was at Ben Murch [School]. Luci was taking dancing, and in those years of course it was L-U-C-Y, Lucy. She was still a very gentle, slim, fairylike little girl.

I went about my usual round of activities, like a tea honoring the new congressional wives, and Dale and Scooter Miller's birthday party for the Speaker, this time in their apartment at the Mayflower. I remember a long parade of those parties at first in their apartment at the Mayflower and then at the Women's National Democratic Club.

We always tried to pick each other up, and the fact that Lyndon had one of the,

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maybe *the* last, chauffeur-driven car made me aware of trying to do nice things with it. So I took my neighbor Eloise [Thornberry] and Jean Ikard and Ruth Burleson and Lera Thomas, who also lived close by. There was the 75th Club, an old favorite of mine. Ivo Sparkman opened up the season by having a luncheon for us. Luci and Lynda went to Beth Jenkins' birthday party. And [there was] the whole routine of parties for the Speaker, this time Jim Barnes had one. Usually they were stag, but I know I went to at least one, because I remember how elegant their house was, with a beige living room which they called a drawing room, sort of a beige velvet sofa. Stag parties were very much a part of the life of Washington in those years.

The Congressional Club opened up its doors with a big reception in honor of all the new members, and I received at the door. As the years passed and you achieved any seniority, or any position, you found yourself often pouring tea or "receiving," in quotes.

We resumed our canasta evenings with the Thornberrys and the Jenkins with a covered dish and salad and then getting right down to a good relaxing time. The children were--no, just Lynda--in Girl Scouts. She may have been a Brownie at that time. I guess it lasted four or five years, but for years I had at least two sizes of Brownie and Girl Scout uniforms hanging in my closet. We still had them, I think, at the time when we got to the White House, because I gave them, for some reason, to the Girl Scouts at that time I think.

For the inaugural, floods of people came, as can be expected, from all the states but especially from Texas. Eisenhower had a big following in Texas in spite of all of our best efforts. Mrs. Bernard Hanks of the Harte-Hanks newspapers--Mr. Hanks was dead,

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but she was very lively--she came and Mrs. Carroll, with her sister, Ms. Hacker. There was a round of entertainment for the visitors as the inaugural approached. Lyndon hosted a breakfast for Sid Richardson and the [Perry] Besses, along with the Speaker, I think, and then he got his new fellow senator, Price Daniel, and together they had open house for all visiting Texans, just not an invited group. I think he was in 231 Senate Office Building. We had an informal buffet dinner for special visitors, like the Cameron McElroys and Lawrence Marcuses and Ms. Carroll and Ms. Hacker, and Ag Stacy and the Perry Besses and the Jim Barnets. Then there was the big reception for the governors as part of the inaugural event. And then a very civilized, quiet evening at Abe and Carol Fortas', always one of my favorite homes to go to.

The Texas State Society naturally got in on the occasion and gave a big reception in the Senate Caucus Room, that noble old high-ceilinged chamber, which is where so many memorable things have happened.

On January the twentieth, Eisenhower was inaugurated, on the Capitol steps, with Nixon sworn in as vice president. There was general good humor all over the town, a sort of a--bitterness had seemed to stain the last couple of years of [Harry] Truman's time. Interesting to look back on in view of the warm and admiring light that now shines on him, to my great pleasure. But certainly in Texas we earned a lot of vocal hostility by being for Adlai Stevenson and against Eisenhower. There was never any question of doing anything else.

There was the usual--after the ceremony there was a big parade and everybody went to their own sort of luncheons. The Cavaliers up from San Antonio had one; the

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[George] Smathers had a cocktail buffet for everybody up from Florida.

By the twenty-second, we were back to the real world. Me, to study some more on Daddy's business, some of the T. J. Taylor notes and the interest and so forth, and also to work on some changes in that dear old house at 4921 Thirtieth Place. We parlayed that place up just about as far as it would go. This time we were doing over the kitchen and putting in some better sinks and tile, formica. Mrs. Hanks lingered a few days and I had a luncheon for her with some of the old faithfuls, Mrs. Harvey Young of the Texas State Society, and Liz Carpenter and some of my Senate friends, like Henrietta Hill and Norma McClellan and Mrs. [Walter] George, and of course including Lucille McElroy from Marshall. And some of our Amarillo friends came out for dinner, Jay Taylor and Wes Izzard, Judge [Marvin] Jones and the Gene Worleys.

Toward the end of the month, Uncle Tom Johnson died in Johnson City, and that was one of the sort of the loosening ties with the older generation. Lyndon flew to Texas for the funeral, just stayed, I think, just a couple of nights, long enough though to visit with his mother and comfort her. Poor dear, she was hovering in the wings worrying about Sam Houston, who, as I recall, was in one of the bad years of his life. He'd been staying with us. We finally got him in a hospital. I've forgotten whether this was one of the Baltimore episodes, or where it was. And Josefa was also in very bad shape. She did stay with us, and a lot of my month was consumed with taking her to the doctor. I'll always think back on her as a lost chance for me. I liked her very much. She was a warm, and friendly, and capable person, but somewhere, something went wrong, I don't know what, and she was bedeviled with drink and too much medication.

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I would get back to working on the house whenever I could with Genevieve Hendricks. In fact, we had the prettiest little powder room that I think I have ever had, on the first floor.

I took the children for their usual visit to dear Dr. John Washington. It was just a sort of a month of getting back in harness, paying all the bills, getting the desk clear, picking up all the strands of all the clubs and social life, and a little sparkle now and then with a foreign embassy reception.

But, of course, the big thing to us was this new role of Lyndon's as minority leader.

G: Did that change his schedule?

J: Well, actually, it subtracted one element of his life, and that was he was no longer chairman of the [Armed Services sub]committee on preparedness. But he was in a position to look out for that same problem from a different vantage point, and perhaps indeed a powerful vantage point. He was just as concerned about national defense and preparedness as he ever was.

Actually, there's one very important element I didn't state. I mentioned the decision on committee assignments for each of the young Democrat newly-elected senators was an important way he went about his business as minority leader. But there was another thing, he very quickly made a statement of philosophy on what he thought a minority party ought to do, and it was something like: the business of the opposition is not just to oppose. You see what the new leader, the new president does, proposes, what his program is for the country, and then you help him on it insofar as you think he is

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right. And if it violates your own belief and your party's deep-seated philosophy, then you oppose him. But he was pretty pleased with Eisenhower's State of the Union Message in which he quickly said he intended to have a bipartisan foreign policy and to consult with the Democrats on taking major steps. He and Eisenhower got off to a good start, and stayed that way. It was a good relationship. Eisenhower soon set up a system of inviting the congressional leaders, both majority and minority, to the White House to consult with him, and Lyndon made the most of his opportunities.

G: Did he study these new roles that he was taking on, like the head of the Policy Committee and Steering Committee? Did he have any way of planning and thinking out how he would use these additional tasks to do the most that he could in the job? Do you recall if there was a period here when he really tried to explore, say, what he could do with the Policy Committee?

J: You mean to read about it historically and to see what had been done?

G: Well, or talk to people, or any form of briefing himself?

J: In hindsight, I wish to goodness I had been more alive to studying that and observing and caring about it. I'm sorry to say I was probably trying to get three bids on the new tile in the kitchen, and deciding whether Lynda Bird--well, no, it wasn't time for her braces yet, but I mean the small duties of life rather than the big picture.

G: Did his attitude change now that he was in the leadership? Was it more exhilarating for him? Was he more keyed up? I mean, did you notice any of these--?

J: Yes, I think so. I think he liked the necessity, he liked the spur, he liked the razor edge and the need to try to lead his segment of the Senate, that is. He was always very

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interested in the machinery of government, the parliamentary side of it, the committee work, as well as the philosophy. One nice thing he did, and this was typical of him, too, he made a point to try to bring the new senator, Price Daniel, into every group, to help him, and open opportunities to him, and also, from the other party, Oveta Hobby, who had come from Houston, in the Eisenhower Administration. She was going to be appointed--gee, I can't remember. It wasn't yet HEW [Department of Health, Education, and Welfare].

G: No, I think it was the [Federal Security Administration].

J: It was something else. And she had already been head of WACS [Women's Army Corps]. But he took her under his wing, and he was introducing her to all the senators and escorting her to her confirmation hearings. She was an old friend, as indeed was Bob Anderson, who came up with Eisenhower. And once more, I don't know--oh, yes, he was secretary of the navy. Eisenhower picked a real business team: Charles Wilson to be secretary of defense, and Bob Anderson to be secretary of the navy, and Roger Stevens for the army, and Harold Talbott for the air force, I believe. He ran into a good deal of flak on Wilson, who was *such* a big stockholder in General Motors that the ghost of conflict of interest, whether it was called that or not I don't know in those days, but it was certainly raised. But he was approved, not too enthusiastically, on the tidal wave of Eisenhower's popularity. I guess he could have gotten anybody approved.

But we were so glad to welcome those two Texans to the Washington roles they played. Both old friends. Lyndon made a point to be helpful to them in every way he could.

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He had Don Cook as director of the Democratic Policy Committee. And he put Walter Jenkins in it, too, and George Reedy and Pauline Moore and Willie Day [Taylor] and Dorothy Nichols and Gerry Siegel. In fact, he just kind of moved his team around and you could see that these two committees, Democratic Policy and the Steering Committee, were sort of becoming his new engines to drive. And Arthur Perry, old, old friend from the Dodge Hotel days, a longtime Washington figure, secretary to two senators. When Tom Connally left the Senate we inherited him happily. He took over the job of handling mail from constituents back home.

G: He had already been there about thirty years, hadn't he?

J: Every bit of it, I feel sure. He'd been in the Justice Department and with [Senator Morris] Sheppard for many years, and then been in some other thing.

So, as I was saying, Lyndon made a very clear statement, and I think maybe he told them the way he would handle it before he took the job, to make sure they really wanted him, that he didn't believe it was the business of the opposition party just to oppose, and that he was all for a bipartisan foreign policy, and if a bill or a program was for the best interest of America, even if it was a Republican bill, he wanted to help it. He was more pro-American than he was anti-Republican, although he never ceased to be a Democrat.

Doug Cater sort of entered our lives a little bit then. He was a reporter for, oh, some sort of intellectual, liberal magazine, I forget what, and he had an article on Lyndon and his achievements.

G: Did you get to know him then? He was from Alabama, wasn't he?

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J: Yes, he was. But no, I don't really remember him then. I just remember Lyndon talking about it and how pleased he was.

G: That was in the *Reporter*, I think.

J: Yes, I think so.

Lyndon's old friend, Altavene Clark--he used to have dates with her in his single days--got married and a lot of parties for her [were] sandwiched in between all of the inaugural affairs.

So that busy month drew to a close. There was an alchemy about Eisenhower's State of the Union. As I said, it sort of ushered in a time of good will and good feeling in the town. And Lyndon was quick to praise it.

One of the marks of a new year is the prayer breakfast, and it always honors a new president. This time it was hosted by Conrad Hilton.

The Preparedness Committee had its final meeting with Lyndon as chairman, but as I've already said, he continued watching and working on that from a different vantage point.

Governor [Allan] Shivers came to Washington, and Lyndon went out to meet him, as did Bob Anderson. And I'm sure all the reporters were kind of taking note of the date and listening to hear if Shivers was going to have anything to say about [whether he] might run against Lyndon in 1954. He didn't.

G: Did LBJ feel that Shivers might consider running? There was an awful lot of--

J: --talk about it. No, I don't think he ever did. But he was aware that the press was saying so.

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G: Now on this occasion, I think Shivers ended up presenting a plaque to LBJ at this luncheon.

J: I know that the Texas congressional delegation gave Lyndon a plaque. And I think that both Bob Anderson and Shivers were there. Gee, that's nice that he delivered it.

G: Yes. I've seen in the press, the Texas press, a picture of that. Do you think Shivers was set up to do that?

(Laughter)

Have you ever heard that story?

J: No, I haven't, but you know I bet you I know the picture you mean. It's when they're both looking at each other with more than one--(Laughter) They both would have made good actors. It really was such a funny picture.

Oh, and Lyndon was elected president of the Texas State Society. I believe that's where--or was it the Texas congressional delegation?--one or the other gave him the plaque.

Lyndon went to New York with the Speaker in the middle of the month, going up there on the train and coming back the late night train. Gosh, what hours they put in. He went up to give a speech at the Jefferson-Jackson Day dinner for the eastern states and went to a reception for Adlai Stevenson, given by Averell Harriman. Steve Mitchell had been made chairman of the Democratic National Committee, being Adlai's choice. It ushered in--well, they were never on the same wavelength. Not hostile, but just distant, I mean Mitchell and Lyndon.

Our old friend, Albert Jackson, of the *Dallas Times Herald* came up and we went

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down to the Mayflower with him, which was always a festive place to go. It was *the* place in the fifties, and we had many good dinners there, always to me--I liked to get dressed up and go out to dinner, and walk away from the house, and all the household chores.

I was mentioning the stag dinners a while ago. There were just a whole routine of them. There were the radio correspondents and the White House correspondents and the Press Club, and then there were special friends of Speaker Sam Rayburn's. Sometimes when Lyndon would attend a stag dinner, I would invite all the women of his office or any women that I could think of whose husbands I knew were at these dinners. That old house of ours, with Zephyr [Wright] in charge of the kitchen, really did furnish a lot of good dinners.

The Jean [Frank] Ikards had a party for their one-time--gee, I guess they were still their constituents--the Bob Andersons, because Vernon is in Ikard's district.

It was, as I've mentioned, a bad and straining time for Lyndon in his efforts to help Josefa and Sam Houston.

G: Were both of them living with you at the time?

J: Well, they both were for a while, yes, and then Sam Houston was in the hospital. It was not easy to keep Josefa content staying with us, because she knew Lyndon was going to be watching her and that it was--and Mrs. Johnson was the main one that my sympathy went out to. There was no end to her love, devotion, hope, and patience in regard to them, and Lyndon sometimes felt no end to her willingness to ask for his help, often called "advice and counsel," but usually really meaning pay their bills and take them into

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your home and try to straighten them out. And always a frustrating thing because we loved Mrs. Johnson so much, and we could see how it was wearing her down. We were not at all sure we were really doing any good for either one of them, and yet they were so capable of contributing to life and enjoying life.

G: Did you yourself ever have any insight as to the cause of their problems?

J: Well, there was a strain of sibling rivalry in it, I feel sure, as between Lyndon and Sam Houston. I don't know why it should have extended to Josefa, but she was always on Sam Houston's side in everything. In fact, she was the saddest one of all to me, because she was generous and outgoing and gave, when she could, of herself, and pretty and capable, and star-crossed.

We saw a good deal of Bess and Paul Porter in those days. Bess is one of those who had ladies' teas, and being a Kentuckian through and through, she would serve beaten biscuits and very thin slices of ham. Speaking of that marvelous Kentucky ham, we would often go to dinner at the Earle Clements' and if he'd ever failed to have the ham, I would have been disappointed. He would usually make a ritual of serving a mint julep beforehand.

The Congressional Club had its annual reception for the President, this time enlivened by the fact that it was a new president, and everybody was eager and curious to see him up close. I went regularly to the Senate Ladies Tuesday Red Cross events, at the best from about 9:00 a.m. till 3:00. The most loyal people [were] there for that long. I was one of those who usually put in an appearance for about two or three hours, always taking my brown bag lunch or else signing up for hamburgers otherwise.

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General [Hoyt] Vandenberg had us to a party honoring the Talbotts. He was a handsome and interesting man to me. It wasn't too many years before he died; I've forgotten just when.

Another place where Lyndon introduced Mrs. [Oveta Culp] Hobby was at the dinner that the Texas State Society gave for her and for Bob Anderson. Mrs. Hobby's husband, the elderly former Governor, accompanied her up there and stayed for a while, and their two children, Bill--he was a teenager, not yet twenty. She was a lovely woman. Her daughter was Jessica, who must have been fifteen or sixteen. The Speaker was very courtly toward her, as he was toward most women, but it was quite easy to be courtly to her because she was such an elegant woman.

As we moved into the third month of Lyndon's being minority leader, two important things took place on the world front. One, [Joseph] Stalin died in early March with repercussions and uncertainties that concerned the whole world. And two, [there] began to be discussions about a truce in Korea, about exchange of prisoners. You felt there was movement; you felt it wouldn't last much longer.

This new position also meant that Lyndon began to turn outward, to some extent, in meeting foreign visitors. There's always a spate of them in the spring in Washington, not so many in the fifties as came later. But he went to a dinner given on the *Williamsburg* for the French Premier [Rene Mayer], and I guess the *Williamsburg* is also the *Sequoia*, and I really don't know when the name change took place. Do you know if it's really the same ship or not?

G: I'll check. [They are not the same presidential yacht.]

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J: Then Senator Taft, as majority leader, used to usually have a party at the Senate for the visiting chief of state.

Madame Chiang Kai-shek came to town. That triggered a series of entertainments. Senator [Styles] Bridges and Speaker [Joseph William, Jr.] Martin had a luncheon in the Senate for her, and then there was a dinner at the embassy to which I got to go. There were a group of people around Washington in those days who were generally referred to as old China hands, and they were lobbyists more or less who believed in the cause of mainland China, or rather, I mean to say of Chiang Kai-shek, who had recently quitted the mainland and was now established on Formosa. Senator Bridges was one of those, our dear friend Tom Corcoran, and the most colorful perhaps, Madame [Anna] Chennault, the widow of the great flier [Lieutenant General Claire Lee Chennault].

And then Anthony Eden came to the British Embassy. He was to me a very romantic figure. I felt sorry that he didn't last longer on the national scene. Lyndon went to a stag luncheon at the White House for him, and then on to the British Embassy for a larger affair.

A sort of a funny bombshell was when Senator [Wayne] Morse requested that his seat be moved from the Republican side to the Democratic side. Now, just what did that mean? We, with rather quiet wisdom I think, decided that that was a housekeeping matter, and certainly if he wanted his seat over there, that was all right with the Democrats, so Lyndon felt and said. But as for any further relation with the Democrats, that was a matter [that] should be referred to the Rules Committee, or some such. In

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other words, he treated it gingerly. He had an interesting relationship, first and last, with Morse, a sort of a love-hate, but essentially a lot of respect on Lyndon's part. He used to tell me, and perhaps I've told you this already to boredom, but as mad as he used to get at him sometimes, his intractable, wild ways, that still on certain matters--I think maybe they were labor and education, but there were some matters that he could just always depend on Morse to listen, understand and vote with him. Besides, he thought that state had a right to have Morse, no matter what kind of a Senate.

G: Was he trying to lure Morse away from the Republicans?

J: I do not think so. Oh, no, he was too much of a prickly subject. (Laughter)

On the national scene, an interesting development was that Mrs. Hobby's post, Federal Security, was finally being molded into a real, new cabinet job, secretary of health, education, and welfare. Final touches were put on it, and she was sworn in, I think, along about the end of March or early April.

We had visitors. Ed Weisl came down. I remember a lot of summer dinners on our tiny terrace at Thirtieth Place. He was a very wise man, a friend with the most far-ranging network of friends who believed in him, sought his counsel. I still hear--and it always strikes a chord of warmth with me--some people say, "Ed Weisl said--" or, "Ed Weisl did--" or, "That's one of the things Ed Weisl tried to bring about." We used to go to New York sometimes, and my visits to his apartment were very special. He lived high in the Hampshire House in an apartment with great views right over Central Park. It was a glittering scene at night. I really thought country girl has come to town when I was there.

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Happy little things were happening with the children. Luci was in the Founders Day program at the Congressional Club. That was a style show, and she had a pretty, stiff organdy dress with a big sash and her hair all curled and a flower in it. She was teamed up with Price Daniel's young son, called Brother John, and a cute pair they made as they came down the stairs to the descriptions of their clothes. Luci rather liked it; I don't know about Lynda Bird so much. She was asked to do small things, too, and she appeared on a TV program. I don't know whether she had quite the pleasure in it that Luci did.

Senator [Joseph] McCarthy was raising his voice once more. He had sent two people who worked for him--[Roy] Cohn and [David] Schine--on a highly publicized European tour, looking into the International Information Administration Library to see every book, every piece of information that they gave out. My recollection is that he found a lot of them didn't suit him. He was also probably at the bottom of the objection to Chip [Charles] Bohlen, whom Eisenhower nominated as our ambassador to Russia. Lyndon made a speech, on the floor, in favor of Bohlen, the gist of it being that a president should be surrounded by the men he believes in and trusts. [He said,] "I think Eisenhower is entitled to Chip Bohlen. Objections are being raised against him, but they are shrouded in mist. We're just confronted with accusations that have no specified backers and no evidence whatsoever. It's just kind of a whispering campaign." So Bohlen was confirmed, but not unanimously, not until after Senator McCarthy had spread enough poison to get a number of Republicans to vote against him. Oddly enough, none of this ever rubbed off on Eisenhower, as far as I could observe. He remained the father

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figure above it all. In fact, McCarthy kept on interposing himself into the State Department. [John Foster] Dulles was firm and stood up to him.

Part of the grist for the mill was always delegations from home. A familiar one, the Brazos Electric Co-op, with thirty members, came to town. Lyndon gave them a tour and a lunch and introduced them to Washington. A wool delegation came. There were always some sentimental things to do, like Congressman Paul Kilday's daughter wanted to conduct a model Senate as part of her class program in the Old Supreme Court Chamber. Lyndon went down to it and made a little talk to the girls.

March 2, the day of Texas Independence, the [University of] Texas Exes, having gotten together every year forever and ever, this time had a real celebration to honor Oveta and Bob Anderson. We were pretty faithful members of all the Texas-rooted things, the Texas State Society, the Texas Exes.

Each new administration sees a round of parties honoring cabinet people or the holders of top posts in the House and the Senate, or the newly-elected members, or their wives. There's always a tea honoring the wives of the new senators. To me, a recipe for a Washington party is first, catch your lions, some nice big names that everybody will come to see. Then it's always desirable to put it in an interesting house. Dumbarton House, where one of the teas for the new senators' wives was, I would have gone to see the house if not just the Senate wives. And the Sulgrave Club, where the Bridges and the [Charles] Hallecks had a reception, was another choice place. Dolores Bridges, the wife of Senator Bridges, was a tall, statuesque blonde, a very aggressive, able woman. Lyndon had an interesting relation with Bridges, couldn't find a more conservative person

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in the world I expect, and also a staunch Republican. But he and Lyndon backed off and looked at each other and respected each other, and had lots to talk about.

G: Do you think the fact that they were personal friends may have cemented their political compatibility, or do you think that. . . . ?

J: Well, it's a very wide range of issues that come up. He would never cease being a staunch Republican, and the same for Lyndon as a Democrat. But there are often meeting grounds and Lyndon didn't carry his hostilities into the personal arena, hardly ever. Sometimes. I remember the Bridges came down to see us one fall and said that they found so much in architecture and the looks of this land that reminded them of their own New England, and left us a pretty piece of pottery, which I still use in the fall to put pecans in on the table.

Even the Johnsons were planning a party. We were going to have one at the old Carlton Hotel in April for Oveta and Bob.

Among the visitors were some of our Marshall friends, and we had a little cocktail party for them: Millard Cope of the newspaper; and Ray Roberts, who used to work for us in NYA [National Youth Administration]; Cameron McElroy, who headed up every Democratic political campaign; Gordon Boone, and Franklin Young, and Ruby and Jack Blalock. Wright Patman had everybody in tow.

Lynda's ninth birthday. She had written in my datebook in her writing, which was never very good, "a big party." That, I'm sure, is what she ordered. As I look back, I think I never did use much imagination. Oh, dear, for lost chances. Rodney was there. It was still a time when Josefa--I'm pretty sure Rodney and Josefa were both living with us.

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They did off and on, for six months at a time, and then gone and then back. Molly and David Thornberry and Patty Nichols, and our neighbor, Hunter Minnix, Beth and Walter Jenkins, and some friends from Ben Murch, whose names I can't even remember any longer.

Word came to us that Amon Carter, in Fort Worth, had had a heart attack, but [it] was absolutely secret. [He] didn't want anybody to know about it, talk about it. Lyndon had lost Amon, as I'm sure I've already told you, because Lyndon supported Stevenson for president. But he lost no occasion to try to bring back old friends. I don't know that he ever did it all, but anyhow, he wrote him a cautiously-worded letter about he'd heard that he'd been going too hard and wasn't feeling very well. I thought it was both kind, and practical, and wise, to always try to bring back people whose friendship you have lost.

And so, as the spring went on, Lyndon was digging into his job, learning a lot. I can't remember quite when it was, and it was pretty soon, it was in the first three or four or five months, that he came up against Taft like a brick wall. Do you remember? I mean, there was a legislative matter, a parliamentary matter actually, that Lyndon tried to get something done and Taft smartly slapped him down. I mean, Lyndon had not studied his lessons enough to know that you couldn't do it that way. Taft was the old master. Do you know what I'm talking about?

G: I vaguely remember the issue. I can't recall which one it was.

J: I certainly remember Lyndon's reaction to it.

G: What was it?

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J: That never again will I be caught ignorant. I may lose many battles, but not because I haven't studied the situation enough. I may not be strong enough to win them, but I'm going to plan them better than I did this one.

G: The story is, I think, that he had Senator Russell move his chair nearby so that he could seek advice from him readily on parliamentary matters or something like that. Do you recall anything of this nature?

J: No, I don't. I just know that it was a parliamentary matter, and that Lyndon lost completely and that he profited from it. He had, from beginning to end, great respect for Taft. I think that's all for now.

(Interruption)

There was one thing, in the middle of March, that made a deep impression on Lyndon, and that is that the first atomic tests ever televised, he viewed it with Senator [Leverett] Saltonstall and Margaret Chase Smith. One of the most impressive pictures we have in our whole galaxy of pictures is the expression on these three people's faces standing against a map of the world and viewing that screen. What thoughts were they thinking? Certainly of the awesome power that now existed in the world, and of how you were going to harness it. But, gee, it would have been interesting to have looked inside their minds. I know he came home, talking about it and shaken by it, and having long, long thoughts.

G: Anything in particular that he said that you recall?

J: Unfortunately, no, just that he recognized the beginning of something new, frightening, awesome. Of course, he had lived through the end of the war, the two blasts in

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Hiroshima and Nagasaki or whatever they were, but he'd been X thousand miles away, and he hadn't seen what it looked like, and he hadn't realized that it was still going on. I mean, this really showed the progress and changes and power and opened up the possibilities. I guess a lot of people just hoped that that was a one-time deal and wouldn't exist to haunt them forever. Did we?

G: I don't know.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview XXXII]

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LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON LIBRARY

Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interviews of

CLAUDIA TAYLOR JOHNSON

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, I, Claudia Taylor Johnson of Austin, Texas, do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title and interest in the tape recordings and transcripts of the personal interviews conducted with me and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. A list of the interviews is attached.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

- (1) The transcripts shall be available to all researchers.
- (2) The tape recordings shall be available to all researchers.
- (3) I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcripts and tapes.
- (4) Copies of the transcripts and tape recordings may be provided by the library to researchers upon request.
- (5) Copies of the transcripts and tape recordings may be deposited in or loaned to other institutions.

Claudia Taylor Johnson 6/20/02
Claudia Taylor Johnson Date

Sharon Everett 5-10-2011
Archivist of the United States Date

Assistant Archivist
For Presidential Libraries

Appendix A

Attached to and forming part of the instrument of gift of oral history interviews, executed by Claudia Taylor Johnson, and accepted by the ~~Archivist of the United States~~ on 5-10-2011.

Mrs. Johnson's Oral History Interviews:

**Assistant Archivist
For Presidential Libraries**

May 26, 1975, with Merle Miller
June 25, 1976, with Merle Miller
June 29, 1976, with Merle Miller
January 30, 1977, with Merle Miller
February 14, 1977, with Merle Miller
August 12, 1977, with Michael Gillette
August 13, 1977, with Michael Gillette
August 14, 1977, with Michael Gillette
February 4, 1978, with Michael Gillette
April 1, 1978, with Michael Gillette
August 6, 1978, with Michael Gillette
October 9, 1978, with Michael Gillette
January 23, 1979, with Michael Gillette
January 24, 1979, with Michael Gillette
January 25-26, 1979, with Michael Gillette
February 27-28, 1979, with Michael Gillette
August 19, 1979, with Michael Gillette
September 2-3, 1979, with Michael Gillette
September 9, 1979, with Michael Gillette
November 13, 1979, with Anthony Champagne
January 4-5, 1980, with Michael Gillette
January 29-30, with Michael Gillette
September 20, 1980, with Michael Gillette
September 26-27, 1980, with Michael Gillette
February 6-7, 1981, with Michael Gillette
February 20-21, 1981, with Michael Gillette
August 10, 1981, with Michael Gillette
August 23, 1981, with Michael Gillette
September 5, 1981, with Michael Gillette
November 15, 1981, with Michael Gillette
January 2-3, 1982, with Michael Gillette
January 10, 1982, with Michael Gillette
January 30, 1982, with Michael Gillette
March 15, 1982, with Michael Gillette
March 19-20, 1982, with Michael Gillette
March 22, 1982, with Michael Gillette

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March 29, 1982, with Michael Gillette
August 3-4, 1982, with Michael Gillette
September 4, 1983, with Michael Gillette
December 30, 1984, video and audio interview with Michael Gillette
January 4, 1985, video and audio interview with Michael Gillette
February 23, 1991, with Michael Gillette
March 4, 1991, with W. C. Trueheart
March 8, 1991, with Michael Gillette
August 1994, with Harry Middleton (six interviews)
November 5, 1994, with Harry Middleton
January 23, 1987, with Nancy Smith
August 18, 1987, with Lou Rudolph, Jim Henderson, and John and Sandy Brice
August 19, 1987, with Lou Rudolph, Jim Henderson, and John and Sandy Brice
August 20, 1987, with Lou Rudolph, and John and Sandy Brice
August 1994, with S. Douglass Cater
March 22, 1985, with Louis S. Gomolak
July 16, 1996, with Jan Jarboe Russell
July 17, 1996, with Jan Jarboe Russell