

INTERVIEW XL covering 1959

DATE: August 1994

INTERVIEWEE: LADY BIRD JOHNSON

INTERVIEWER: HARRY MIDDLETON

PLACE: Martha's Vineyard

Tape 1 of 1, Side 1

M: This is side one of Lady Bird Johnson oral history interview [covering] 1959. . . .

 The year [1959] starts with [Fidel] Castro assuming power in Cuba. Do you remember anything of that?

J: Yes. I remember that he came to Washington, made a speech at the press club, was lionized. Everybody was talking about him, except I do not remember anything that Lyndon said. There was no alarm raised. What he turned out to be in our eyes, he certainly was not in the beginning.

M: When you went to Washington this time, in the company of Lynda and Luci, you all flew.

 Is that the first time they flew? It seems to me that they usually went by car.

J: Or by train. We often went by train and just loved it. I doubt if it was the first time. And frankly, I just don't remember.

 I do want to tell you about the public speaking course that I had with Hester Beall Provenson. It was one of those many things that my lively friend, [Virginia] Scooter Miller, got me in to. Scooter was just as adventurous and just as determined as Liz [Carpenter]. And I was crazy about her; so was nearly everybody else. She knew

Johnson -- XL -- 2

everybody from Texas and nearly everybody in Washington.

Mrs. Provenson had a class composed of wives of senators and congressmen, and a lot of diplomats, and some wives of cabinet [members]. She was a born teacher and she is one of the best things that ever happened to me. I was extremely shy about public speaking. I didn't even want to get up and say, "Thank you for inviting me to this barbecue." But she could make you think that there were people out there just like you, and look them straight in the eye. Try, and never, never begin with saying how you couldn't talk; they'd find that out soon enough. And always have things that would have warm public interest. She was an asset in my life, and I liked her as a person. She just retired this last year, and I did manage to get to see her and thank her for many things when I was up there to my so-called Jubilee in 1988, I think it was.

M: How long did that course go on?

J: It went on about once a week for about nine months.

M: And did she have you practice in front of people?

J: Oh yes, in front of the whole group of us. There were too many of us to make a talk every time. But a group of us had to make a talk supposedly not more than five minutes long, at quite several of the meetings. And then she would critique them, and others would critique them.

M: Did the President note the progress that you'd made in this?

J: (Laughter) I don't know. He was glad I was doing it. And he thought it was quite smart.

M: There must have been a marked difference between the time that you started and the time you ended.

J: I don't know, but I sure hope so. There was a difference in my confidence and in my

Johnson -- XL -- 3

sense that it didn't matter all that much if I had flubbed. So had many other people, and I could always do better next time. Liz used to say so irreverently, "Just look out there at them, and imagine that they came from Dime Box or Rosebud." Those were two of the most country towns in our beloved 10th District, or so we used to say.

M: Before that, I note here that you hosted a lunch for the wives of new senators. Was that a standard for you?

J: No. I had begun it some time when Lyndon--I think I did it early on in Lyndon's years as majority leader. It was a good way to get to know them, and it was sort of appropriate for the wife of the majority leader.

Now I had a very modest two-story, red brick, colonial house; we painted it white in the early days. And it was small, and there are about a hundred of them in every American city, all looking alike. But Lord, we did a lot of living in that house, and we stretched it just as far as it would go. We took the third floor and made it into a guest room for a changing band of young men and women who were secretaries to Lyndon, or during the war years, who were coming to get started in the service, or home on leave, and hotel rooms were scarce. I think I've already told you about the time I had Mrs. [Jacqueline] Kennedy there.

M: I don't believe so.

J: It was when she was a brand new Senate bride. As I recall, Senator [John] Kennedy had already been in the Senate one or two or three years when he got married. And their wedding was a great story in *Life* magazine. She was *absolutely* the essence of romance and beauty, and spoken of as the most outstanding debutante of the year. And she had had a job of candid photographer at the *Washington Times-Herald*, I believe it was. It

Johnson -- XL -- 4

was maybe sort of a "for-fun" job. But she was a photographer all the years that I knew her. And later on I saw some exquisite pictures of her children.

(Interruption)

She just came in like a butterfly among all of us wrens. (Laughter) And quite a lot of wrens we were, some sparkling, outstanding women. And she couldn't have been more gracious or nicer, but I was sort of aware that my converted garage, which had become a family room after I realized that we were never going to use a garage, was sort of mighty simple quarters for her.

But there we all were, coming from the different parts of the Union, and I liked all the efforts to get to know the wives of Lyndon's colleagues.

And of course, they were, as I have repeated over and over in this dialogue, in the Congressional Club, and the Senate Ladies Red Cross Tuesdays, and the Seventy-fifth and Eighty-first clubs, both of which I belonged to and attended with some regularity. There was quite a lot of comradeship, and "bonding" is the new word, among the wives of our colleagues.

An interesting thing, sometime after that little gathering where Mrs. Kennedy was, I got such a nice letter from Senator Kennedy thanking me. You know, nothing but a lunch. You didn't any more expect a letter from him than a visitation from Mars. But I thought it was very gracious and nice.

M: Did she hold her own among the Senate wives?

J: Goodness, she was quiet, sort of demure, I would say. And I think we all thought we were looking at a very lovely person. I think she went out of there with more friends than she came in [with]. I think many of us felt that she was different.

Johnson -- XL -- 5

M: Are you looking at the regular chronology?

J: I am looking at chronology page two, about [William] Proxmire, [John Foster] Dulles, and Hawaii.

M: I think that is the general chronology, isn't it?

J: It is, and there are many things on there that I certainly do not want us to miss.

(Interruption)

M: If you go down that chronology that we just talked about, and you see on one seven [January seventh], the Scripps-Howard newsman wrote a story about relatives on the payrolls of members of Congress. Was that ever a problem?

J: Well, as everybody knows, Sam Houston was a problem most of his life. And yes, Lyndon had to find a job for him, somewhere, most of his life. But that's not to say that he wasn't smart. And he was better at politics than anything else. I rather expect he was worth being on our payroll. But it was a thing that [was] likely to cause trouble and I expect did. Just [from] the fact that it is written down here, I am sure it did. Yes. Personally, I don't remember this particular episode. But Sam Houston was in and out of our home, sometimes staying as long as six months at a time. But the course of his marriage with Mary was pretty stable and certainly very good for him.

M: I don't know whether this is worth noting, but it is recorded here about your losing your dog for a couple of days.

J: Losing Beagle recurred often. (Laughter) I am sure that our neighbors around 4921 Thirtieth Place, N. W., would have liked to have sent a public protest to the sheriff, or whoever, about that dog. Because he would get out, and the typical beagle hunting hound--you would hear his voice reverberating for blocks and blocks away. And until

Johnson -- XL -- 6

well after the war years--I guess building started up again in 1948, certainly in the early fifties--we were backed up to a wooded area; there was a wooded area down the street at the Peruvian Embassy. They had vast grounds, and all woods till you got to the house. So the dog used to have the free play of the world, to our chagrin. And, oh, sometimes when we lost him for more than a few hours we--it would really be heart-wrenching, because we loved that little dog and he did us. And this time he was gone for two days, and he must have been injured by being hit by a car, and was found in a--of all places, how kind somebody must have been to pick him up and take him to the Takoma Park dog hospital. There'd been a story in the *Washington Post* about his getting lost.

M: A digression, but I'm going to ask it here. Who named your dogs? It might be said that--

J: There was a lack of imagination? (Laughter) Most decidedly. His name, when we acquired him, for reasons obscure, was Thomas Jefferson Beagle. And I think he was so registered. We thought we'd call him Jeff. Well, we never did; it was ridiculous.

And then much later, when there was an adorable litter of puppies that were delivered to one of his descendants in the White House, and brought upstairs by--I believe he was an engineer somewhere in the lower depths of the White House--in a great big basket, they were brought up and spread out on the floor of the Yellow Sitting Room upstairs. Most adorable little creatures we ever saw, and we gave all of them away except two. And then we'd just say, "Which one is that?" "That's him. Oh no, that's her." We never got around to naming them. They just went as Him and Her. Her's death occurred in her puppyhood. Him lived on for a long time.

M: In January the name Lewis Strauss comes up, because President [Dwight] Eisenhower

Johnson -- XL -- 7

nominated him to be secretary of commerce, and there was a strong opposition to Strauss in the Senate. Do you remember anything about that at all?

J: Yes. Just a flurry about it, nothing that deserves any reference here. However, there was something in January that happened before that, that does [bear] mention. There were always a series of parties given for Speaker Sam Rayburn, whose birthday was about January the sixth. The most important one was always Scooter Miller's and Dale's, which usually took place at the Women's Democratic Club.

However, we began having one for the children of the Speaker's friends, because he just made a point of always getting to know everybody's children, and trying to be an individual to them. He always noticed them, asked them questions, treated them like his friends, and sort of like adults. And Lynda just thought he was her friend, and she was annoyed when Lyndon wanted to monopolize the conversation with him, because she wanted to. (Laughter) I think it is the only time I ever saw Lyndon spank her, is when he was trying to get her to leave the room and let him talk to the Speaker about some important business--and she wouldn't, and she wouldn't. And he finally just took her out and spanked her, much to my horror and anger.

M: Did you ever spank the girls?

J: Goodness no. My father would have thought I had become a barbarian, because all you were--the few times that my father wanted me to do something and made it clear, well, there'd be no question of not doing it. He was a forceful man just from his looks. So could have Lyndon have been, in my opinion.

M: The next thing I see that seems to me important enough to raise was the gadfly attacks of Senator [William] Proxmire.

Johnson -- XL -- 8

J: Yes. He was just a sort of a chronic bother to Lyndon. They never hit it off together. They just didn't mesh. Not that it was anything important; it was mildly annoying.

There is one thing that comes to mind here in January, where Eloise [Thornberry] and I went to Austin to attend a ceremony at Bergstrom Air Force Base to christen the first B-52 to land here. There was a similar--and I don't know just quite when it was; perhaps I'll run across it in the year 1960 or 1961--but at one point, I joined Mary Martin in christening--I think it was the first big jet of a whole family of jets, at Dallas.

M: I think that will come up later in this year.

Do you see anything before March? I want to ask you about Hawaii joining the Union.

J: I certainly do want to talk about that.

The American Heart Association, because of the heart attack of President Eisenhower, and to a much less[er] extent, Lyndon's heart attack, was fueled to do greater activity along about this time. And every year there would be, in February, as close as convenient to Valentine's Day, there would be a heart luncheon, which was a fund-raising effort for the American Heart Association. And every woman in Washington would have a new hat, a new getting-around-to-be-Easter hat, always, in those days, heavily laden with flowers of every conceivable hue. And not to have had a new hat for Easter, for spring, and particularly for that luncheon, we would have been gravely deprived if it hadn't happened.

Once, President Eisenhower presented the American Heart Association Heart of the Year Award to LBJ. But this ceremony took place at the White House.

All right, just what do you see you think we should focus on--?

Johnson -- XL -- 9

M: I want to talk about Hawaii, but see if there is anything in there before we get to Hawaii, which is--

J: You are quite sure then that we have not come to the point yet about Kathleen's death?

M: I am reasonably sure--yes, that comes up in May.

J: Also, I want to mention Woody [Warren Woodward] becoming vice president of KTBC, and also about whenever the meeting took place between me, Mary Lasker, Florence Mahoney, and Lyndon.

M: They will also come up.

J: All right.

M: So, Hawaii. The Senate votes to admit Hawaii to the Union and the House passes it. This has been said, by some, to be important in LBJ's whole attitude toward the Pacific and toward civil rights. Walt Rostow, for one, makes a real point of the fact that the two were combined in LBJ's mind.

J: I expect it was the first time Lyndon's eyes had ever turned toward Asia, and in a way, Hawaii is the gateway toward Asia. It actually happened, as so many things do, by the personality of one person, in Lyndon's case, I mean. His persuasion was done by the delegate from Hawaii--that is what they called them in the early days--John Burns, a very able, good man. He became, by turns, governor of Hawaii, I think, senator from Hawaii; he was just a very--one of their finest sons. He spent hours with Lyndon, talking to him about Hawaii and what it meant to the United States, and how the citizens from all over--from Asian countries and Anglos who had settled there, how they had peacefully melded into what ought to be a state. [He was] a very persuasive man. You could not listen to him without weighing him strongly.

Johnson -- XL -- 10

He had a very sweet wife who was in a wheelchair. I remember one time, I think Lyndon was host--I am not sure; it could have been that Burns himself was host--of a barbecue for all the so-called western senators, and that would have been, of course, from California, Washington, Oregon, how far into the second layer or third of the West he went I've forgotten, and certainly included Lyndon. And I don't know why, since the whole Senate had to vote on it, why they were the guests. I guess you have to start somewhere. And they certainly had more proximity to Hawaii, particularly California.

Lyndon began against it. It was more natural somehow to admit Alaska, which was at least on the same continent, if separated by the vast stretches of Canada. I suppose we were looking to our future needs--I was not present at all those talks--our future needs as a nation, I mean, or our desire not to have somebody else take control of the territory. It was called a territory. And it had been our territory for how long? Do you know?

M: Since the 1870s, I think [1898].

J: At any rate, he was a part of our life for years, John Burns was, a much respected man.

We were seeing more and more of the big magazines, the big publishers at that time. I think the first family picture of us was used by *Saturday Evening Post*. And I believe it was this year, could have been in 1960--I think not; I think 1959--family consisting of, besides Lyndon and me, and Lynda and Luci, of course, Beagle.

M: How did the girls take to the celebrity of their father? Were they aware of the fact?

J: Oh, no. Not aware of it, not impressed by it. Just willing, not anxious to be in pictures if he asked.

M: That trip to New York when you met with *Time* and then *Newsweek*--theater again. You

Johnson -- XL -- 11

saw *The Music Man*--

J: Oh, and theater was a love of mine from the time I went to St. Mary's school in Dallas when I was fifteen years old, I was indoctrinated into the theater, and its lure has never waned, except for about four or five years when I felt that it left me, when it got to be a sort of a series of psychoanalyses and discussing all the troubles of the world. The theater left me for a while and then it came back.

M: While on that trip to New York you had dinner with the Stantons at 21 Club.

J: And oh, yes, my eyes were out on stems. I was always impressed by the names I had heard, all the big places. And I was so admiring, so fond, of Frank Stanton. Ruth, his wife, was not as easy to know, but a very nice woman.

I remember one time Frank Stanton came down to visit us at the Ranch. In driving around over the Ranch, we stopped in front of a bunch of gorgeous oaks on top of the hill, where we, just a year or two later, built the foreman's house that became the home to Dale Malechek and Jewell and their children. The house wasn't there then. The trees had been there for a couple of hundred years, and really gorgeous, and Frank Stanton looked at it and sighed, and he said, "When I leave my job, I want you to let me pitch my tent under those trees." (Laughter) He was a big part of our life, and I still miss him.

M: On May the first--there may be something in here that you want to comment on before May the first, but May the first is when you went back to Fort Worth to attend the funeral of John Connally's daughter.

J: The children were beginning to participate in various civic social activities in Washington involving the children of congressional families. I feel sure that it was Scooter who

Johnson -- XL -- 12

brought it about, Luci riding the Texas float in the Cherry Blossom Parade. She was at that point only twelve years old and a long time from being princess material--(Laughter) It was quite something, to be asked to ride the float.

(Long pause) No, I remember it was--I happened to be in Lyndon's office--it must have been the twenty-ninth or thirtieth of April--when we had a call from John Connally's brother--Wayne, I think--telling us that Kathleen had died of a gunshot wound. It was one of the most painful tragedies we ever were associated with up to that time.

Kathleen had been Lynda's best friend for years and years, although Kathleen was about a year or more older, and vastly older in sexual development and social interest than Lynda. Lynda was still wearing saddle shoes and wanting to be a little girl when Kathleen was having dates, and was beautiful, and had really reached a degree of maturity that was very noticeable to me and to all the adults. And I'm not at all sure it was to Lynda. Lynda may have thought she was still the same Kathleen that she'd always been.

Anyhow, we had not seen much of her for a year or two--a year, let me say. And she had been going with a young man, and apparently very much against her father's and mother's wishes, and it had progressed to the point where--she was just sixteen. Let me see how old Lynda would have been in the spring of 1959? Born in 1944, would she have been fifteen?

M: Fifteen.

J: Well, Kathleen was sixteen-plus. And she had run away and married this young man in a civil ceremony. They had gone to Florida. He had found a job in some sort of construction. I do not know what communications went on with them, between John, Nellie, and Kathleen. I know they were somewhere between angry and devastated.

Johnson -- XL -- 13

And then there came a time in the lives of these two young people when they had an argument. And just what happened we will never know. The boy reported that she reached for a gun, which was in their house because they were raised in a family that--in two families, apparently--that always hunted, always had guns. A gun was as likely to be in the house as a broom. He was trying to wrestle the gun away from her, but she shot and killed herself. And this was the message that Wayne Connally told us in the Majority Leader's office.

We were both stricken, for John, for Nellie, *for Kathleen* because she was--we had been around when she was born. We had known her every day of her life. She had lived in--we had a duplex [in Austin], 1901 Dillman, that we owned from--I don't know exactly when, I think it was from 1945 on, and sold it--I think we had just sold it a year or two before, but everybody we knew that worked for us had lived there at one time or another, in that duplex. The children had played in the backyard. It was incredible and hideous that she was dead.

And of course, we went to the funeral. It is unforgettable in my mind. They had a beautiful house in Fort Worth. John was working for Sid Richardson, and after Sid's death, I suppose for his estate and for Perry Bass; I'm not quite clear. And we got there, and we, in Lyndon's typical fashion, were an entourage: Mary Margaret Valenti, Warren Woodward, Lyndon and I. We decided not to take Lynda. I don't know quite why.

And Lynda had the strangest reaction to it. It was worrisome. She refused to believe it. Having told her once, she just sort of shut up and wouldn't talk about it, and didn't cry unless--I hoped she cried when she was away from me, because it would have been better to grieve, and I won't say "get it over with," because it takes a long time to do

Johnson -- XL -- 14

that, but at least exercise some of the pain.

We went to their house. It was somber; it was full of--oh, just years' and years' accumulation of mutual friends. It was a gathering of people that loved John and Nellie.

And then we went out to the funeral, and we were on one side of the grave, and the young husband and his family on the other side. And there was civility, but no closeness, as I remember. There is no recapturing those minutes in that last encounter and no need to try, because with death, that's an end of it.

And I remember something that John said, but I think it was not before or not right after the funeral; it was just to me and Lyndon, and Nellie--there was just a tiny group of us, and it was a brief statement something like this: "When they want to talk, you talk to them." As though he were admonishing us. I think it reminded me of *Romeo and Juliet*. You will remember the scene when she tried to get her mother and father to listen to her story about being in love with this young man of the wrong family, the Capulets, or whatever. And they said, "Run on, child, we have serious things to discuss." Apparently she had tried, felt rebuffed, because they didn't seem to understand or listen, at least, not enough for her. And I remember how--

Tape 1 of 2, Side 2

J: And somebody must have called out because she said in her lilting, natural voice, "It's Nellie," and came on in. And she was marvelously controlled, and beautiful, and devastated. And after her death, it took years--I don't know that we ever really talked about it, except for that one remark about when they want to talk, you talk to them. And I was very glad that in the recent book John did say that he never had talked about it, and he was, here and now, and not ever again.

Johnson -- XL -- 15

This I remember, which casts a little light on Lyndon's nature. When we left the cemetery, and were all in the car, and it was a limousine with room for three in the back, Lyndon and I and somebody else. I remember every seat was taken up. I presume a chauffeur was driving it; [I] don't remember for sure. And somebody said, "Where shall we tell him to go?" And I said, "I do not think we should go back by the house. We've been there, and we've said everything to them that we can." And Lyndon felt that we should. And he sort of erupted in saying something like this, "I'll tell y'all, if anything like this ever happens to me, I want every one"--what I said that prompted it was, "I think there comes a time when you want to be alone, when John and Nellie will just want to be together with their other children, possibly some of his family and hers." And Lyndon just kind of erupted and said, "I'll tell y'all that if anything like this ever happens to me, I want every one of y'all there and I want you to stay with me." He was a man that just did not want solitude. He wanted solace in suffering, and good friends by his side all the time.

Oddly enough, in the very last years of his life, I don't think that was so much so. I think he had passed into a kind of a . . . either serenity, or just stilling of the juices of life to where nothing much mattered. Well, at any rate, it was--

(Interruption)

M: When we last had this conversation going, you told about your memories of Kathleen Connally's death and funeral. And you had come to the end of that, and then we turned the tape off. After we turned the tape off, you made an observation about gun control in connection with that tragic incident. I'd like to ask you about that.

J: There were many deep impressions that that left on my mind, and one of them was, if that

Johnson -- XL -- 16

gun hadn't been so handy, she might be alive today. I do not think the anger, the fight they were having, was serious enough to have ended in her death, except for the emotion of the moment and the presence, real handy, of a gun. And that has repeated itself, sadly enough, in the family of yet another Texas governor [referring to the death of Price Daniel, Jr.]. So my feeling to control the availability of guns stems from many sources, and that's certainly a very important one.

M: Do you think it had any bearing on Governor Connally's subsequent feelings about gun control?

J: I do not know. I do not know exactly what his feelings were. I would think he probably, like most Texans of his age, with his background of hunting and of individual protection of your own premises, I think he would probably not want any government telling him anything about gun control. And I don't know what his feelings were.

M: President Johnson, in the latter part of his administration, proposed a gun control bill; it was quite modest, and eventually it passed. I think it did perhaps come as a surprise to some people that he did propose it, not only proposed it, but he fought for it very hard. Do you think that his feelings about gun control stemmed in any way from this incident?

J: It very likely could have, but I think it was really more a process of maturing and being willing to go against the tide of the feelings of Texans and even his countrymen. I do not remember when that bill was passed. If it was late, very late in his administration, he did not need to follow the dictates--

M: Well, it was. It was 1968.

J: He did not need, at that point, to follow the dictates of his constituents with absolute accuracy. He could try to lead a little more freely, because he had begun to feel that he

Johnson -- XL -- 17

didn't care what happened personally in regard to elections.

M: After you returned to Washington, you then went to Boston to attend a diamond jubilee birthday dinner for President [Harry] Truman on the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday. In that rather intense election year, or pending, Senator Kennedy introduced Senator Johnson at the dinner and called him "Mr. Democrat," which I'm sure caused a lot of speculation. Do you remember anything about that occasion?

J: I'm sorry, I can't give you anything interesting on that.

M: The Texas house [of representatives] passed an election bill called the "Johnson bill." And then there was a bank directors' meeting at Johnson City, and dinner in Memphis, the testimonial dinner in honor of Dorsey Hardeman's father on his eighty-fifth birthday, and many--if anything occurs to you about that, let's talk about it. Otherwise, it seems to me that the next big item was the death of Secretary of State Dulles.

J: I do want to say that the so-called Johnson bill made it possible for Lyndon to--in case he *were* to run for senator, and were to run for the presidency, and get defeated, he would still be able to serve out--in other words, he would not have to resign to run. And argue all they want to about the fairness of such a thing, it sort of makes me grin to think of the very group of stout Texans who put that through, and heading the list would have been Dorsey Hardeman, a tough western senator, extreme conservative, not a lifelong friend, but a recent and devoted--and a didn't-give-a-damn senator about the feelings of anybody; if he believed in something and wanted to get it done, [if] it was going to cost him, he just went right ahead and did it. He and Lyndon were great friends, despite lots of conflicts in their philosophies. And there were other good friends who were against it.

So, Lyndon had just become interested in everything about our little home area.

Johnson -- XL -- 18

And yes, we did--he was a bank director at the little bank at Johnson City, which was in an interesting old stone building called, in its earlier days, the Opera House, which was a highfalutin' name that appears rather frequently across Texas, buildings in which, I daresay, an opera never performed. But many local plays did, the high school plays, the recitals, any kind of a public event of that sort. And Mrs. Sam Johnson, Lyndon's mother, used to direct all such things. So it was a handsome old building known to us; at one time, we actually owned the building. That is long since in the past, and I don't remember the exact dates.

Yes. And I do remember going to Dorsey Hardeman's father's funeral. It is--

M: I think it was not his funeral. It was--

J: I beg your pardon. Let me strike that out. To a testimonial dinner honoring his father, who was eighty-five. And that was testifying to a devotion of friends was one of the strong streaks in Lyndon. And Dorsey did something very helpful to Lyndon and he just wanted to say, "I care for you, my friend."

Now as far as Secretary Dulles' funeral, Lyndon had always regarded him with a respect but at a distance, a formal relationship. They were not comrades. He had cancer for some time, so we all knew it was coming.

M: How about your own recollections of the Secretary? Were you in his company at all?

J: Only at White House dinners where I occasionally sat by him or close to him. By that time, he was getting old, and I think he probably had cancer the last two or three times I was around him, and it had--his physical condition and his spirits did not allow him to be a sparkling companion. So I can't say I know much about Dulles.

I do remember going with Lyndon and Grace Tully, and Mary Margaret Wiley, to

Johnson -- XL -- 19

Hyde Park, and it was April or May when they always had a memorial service in the rose garden at FDR's graveside. And he had been asked to make a speech at that time.

I have been taken through that old house by two people: once by Grace Tully, once by Mrs. FDR herself; rare occasions with so many asides about, "This is what we did in this room, and we remember this room" for such and such a reason. I remember one of those two ladies pointed out the very attractive chintz coverings of the sofa and a couple of chairs in the main living room, and said, "Those were done over on the occasion of the visit of the King and Queen of England." They were there, and they served them hot dogs at lunch. I think they had an outdoor picnic lunch with just a whole lot of the neighbors and had hot dogs. (Laughter) Those were the first, I expect, for the King and Queen.

M: What was the occasion of Mrs. Roosevelt showing you through? She died before you got in the White House, so it must have been much earlier than that.

J: Well, you see we are still in 1959 and she lived until we had been in the vice presidency for at least a while, because I remember her coming to The Elms.

I asked her to come to lunch and talk to a group of young women about things women could do in government service, and about social work, and about putting their brains and their heart and their muscles into something that was not just entertaining or not trivial, but was of service. And I think it was the only time I was ever around her in sort of one-on-one basis. Alas, she was always working, right up until the very end. And that was not too long before her death, that visit to our house at The Elms. But this was several years away from her death.

M: And on the occasion of her showing you through the house at Hyde Park, did you get a

Johnson -- XL -- 20

feeling that she had any particular personal interest in the house? Any sense of her own place in that house? It's often been said that this was really her mother-in-law's house.

J: I know. I've heard that. I sort of felt the old lady's presence, which had been long removed, as a matter of fact; a good while removed by death.

(Interruption)

I do want to say here that from that trip to Hyde Park, we went on to New York, and had dinner with the Weisls. This is Eddie Weisl, a Washington lawyer of consummate skill who was our good friend, whose picture hangs on the wall at the Ranch house now. I always go there and smile to myself, and I'm always delighted when somebody walks down the hall, as not too long ago Lew Wasserman did, and looked up and said, "Ah, you have Ed Weisl up there; good."

He was a very wise, and farsighted, and able person, who took an interest in Lyndon. Lyndon was often in his life the object of a fatherly relationship, a caring relationship, from talented people, men and women. I would trace dozens of the good friends that we came to have back to an introduction by Ed Weisl, a word from Ed Weisl.

He--I'm trying to get some memories of him straight, and I'm sorry to pause for a moment. He was lawyer to Paramount, among other things.

He was also kind to me. He arranged for me to have a private trip, just me and whoever I wanted, two or three other people, through the home of one of his good friends, Bobbie Lehman, a banking firm in New York that was absolutely tops in the forties, fifties, for years and years. I think the name L-E-H-M-A-N will ring a bell in both politics and banking to many, many people in New York.

Anyhow, Bobbie was a great art collector. He had a big old house full of art. As

Johnson -- XL -- 21

I recall, at the moment I'm going to try to tell about, it was not long after his death; his wife was dead also. He had arranged beforehand to give it to the Metropolitan Museum.

They didn't, however, remove it from the house at once; [it] took a while to get set up to display it properly. And there were still in the house some old retainers, butler, cook, two or three people, so I don't think Ed Weisl was with me. He may have sent somebody. But I got to go through this great old house in company with masterpieces from so many schools, so many European--*centuries* of art, it was just *overwhelming*. Later a great deal of it showed up in the Metropolitan, and I think there is a Robert Lehman wing or series of rooms. And then they had a feast set out for me and my small party of three or four that would have fed a lot of starving people. But it was a great adventure, much savored, much appreciated by me.

And they had a lovely apartment that looked out over the park, the great Central Park. We went there a good many times for dinner. I'm happy to say that when Lyndon became president not too much later on, he sure did remember them and had them to the White House a number of times.

M: We are--let's go back to Austin, and talk about Warren Woodward, who became a member of the staff of KTBC, as vice president.

J: Yes. It was always in our mind that Jesse Kellam, whom we loved and who we wanted to run the station as long as he lived or as long as he was able, ought to have one or two young people under him whom he could train and raise up. Warren Woodward was one of our attempts. It was not easy. Jesse, one of the finest men I've ever known, had something of the "old bull-young bull" attitude. I think it's just born to most important, able men. And Woody was such a natural for the job, I thought.

Johnson -- XL -- 22

Woody had entered our lives back in--I am trying to remember whether it was 1948 or 1949. Somewhere along there, probably 1949. He and [Horace] Busby had come at the same time, to join the senatorial staff, and I think it was 1949. Anyhow, Luci was still drinking a bottle, and Luci was born July the second of 1948. I would get up early to warm her bottle on the stove, and to put out something for Lynda for her breakfast, and to be fixing Lyndon's coffee.

And of course, Zephyr came on, and Zephyr--there is a small span of years there, a few years, where Zephyr had married someone in the military service and gotten a divorce and gone to work for somebody else. But we got her back. And this may have been while she was gone.

At any rate, I was in the kitchen, I remember, and I spent a lot of pleasant mornings around the kitchen table with Woody, and he stayed at our house. There was a long procession of people who stayed at our house on the third floor, as I have mentioned over and over. So this was a logical and good thing to do. We gave him a great big party to introduce him to as much of Austin as we could. And then, Mrs. Kellam must have had a tea for his wife; his wife then was Mary Ellen.

M: How long, do you think, did Woody stay as vice president?

J: I think two years, could be just less than that. It was hard; we tried again later on with a stronger man, Tom Johnson, but we all knew from the beginning that Tom was destined for bigger things.

M: I think he experienced some of that "old bull-young bull"--

J: He certainly did; he certainly did, although he respected Jesse, and I hoped he loved him some. But there were at least three such attempts in our life.

Johnson -- XL -- 23

M: When Woody left KTBC, though, he certainly did not leave the Johnson orbit.

J: No, no. He never left the Johnson orbit.

Somewhere along this time Mary Lasker entered our lives. She was warm and open-armed to me as well as to Lyndon. It was a natural. She wanted to educate Lyndon and use him in all of her health--let us promote health; let us get the Congress on the right track to supporting it. Because her husband had told her one time--she said this to me--he said, "Mary, you can collect any amount of money you can get from our rich friends. You can give them everything I leave you. But the fight against killer diseases can never be sufficiently supplied by private means. The government has got to put its shoulder to the wheel. And you can get them to, maybe; anyhow, you can try." She was beginning to do that, a dauntless warrior.

At that time, Florence Mahoney was one of her Washington chiefs. Florence had a great old house in Georgetown. I think they used it for a movie called *The Exorcist*; I'm almost sure they did. Many dinner parties were held there, in which the senators on medical committees were the quarry. And much faded [grandeur], but anyhow, they got some of the most cogent, gently-applied arguments for fighting killer diseases, as well as some of the most elegant dinners and interesting evenings.

M: Mary Lasker remained a confederate of the President's all through his life, but she also became a close associate of yours.

J: Absolutely, because she had many interests in her life. Health held most of her heart, but she always--she was touched by, yearned for, wanted to spread widely, beauty. She was the first person to plant flowers on major streets for New York, and to try to get the merchants along the street to support them. She was a big believer in "seed money."

Johnson -- XL -- 24

getting things started, spreading the gospel, getting others to take it up. But this is a later story, that begins about in 1964. But anyhow, she was very dear to me.

M: In March, that is the time that you were thinking about earlier when you were with Mary Martin on the occasion of welcoming a jetliner.

J: Yes, and I think we had big bottles of champagne and christened it, Mary Martin and I. That's the way I remember it. And I'm sure it was the work of--C. R. Smith had something to do with it.

M: The notes here say that the President and Walter Jenkins, and Woody, were looking at a plane that the President was considering buying for the LBJ Company. But I don't think a plane actually entered your life this early, did it?

J: It certainly entered it by 1960, and may have in 1959. Lyndon jokingly said that he couldn't live sixty-three miles out in the country without breaking the speed limit coming and going into town, so he had to get a plane.

And believe me, he did drive awfully fast. He was a skillful driver with very fast reflexes, but *scared* the life out of me. And he never seemed to realize how much it scared me, because I don't think he would have--if he knew how much mental anguish it caused me, I don't believe he would have done it. He would say, "Now, it's all right. Don't get scared. I'm watching what I'm doing. It's just as safe as can be." I said, "I don't like it anyway. Please slow down." I didn't have very much effect, though.

M: Did he ever have an accident?

J: No.

But we finally got to building that airstrip, in either 1959 or 1960, and I'm sure I have it somewhere. And the person who did it was, of course, our old friend, Melvin

Johnson -- XL -- 25

Winters, who was a road contractor and had great big machinery. And those caliche hills--alas, the good soil was thin. You got right down to the caliche awful quick, and caliche is very hard and makes a good airstrip. I guess we had the caliche strip before we paved it. And I think we celebrated the paving of it by Easter of the next year.

M: I see [in the chronology] this is the year that the LBJ Company leases the plane. But before that, [Nikita] Khrushchev came to the United States, and you went to a dinner for him in the White House. Do you have any memory of that leader of the Soviet Union?

J: Nothing that's worth recording, just of the pomp and display of a White House dinner, and of seeing him. But my association was just going down the line and shaking hands.

M: There may be something before this that you want to comment on that strikes a chord in your memory, but I see that in late September and early October the President attended two funeral services, one for Jimmie Allred and one for Sid Richardson. He really did not like to go to funerals very much, did he?

J: Well, they affected him deeply. But he would have liked himself less well if he hadn't been to the funeral of a good friend, and Jimmie Allred was certainly a good friend, entwined with our very earliest memories of getting into politics. All sorts of little things. When Jimmie was governor--and he was that unusual thing in Texas, a liberal governor, and he was also very handsome. Lyndon went into their office to get his advice on running. This was way back in 1937. He ran after the death of--it was the special election after the death of a congressman who the first dam is named after.

M: [J. P.] Buchanan.

J: Buchanan, Congressman Buchanan. And Jimmie said, "Well, the first thing you're going to have to do, you've got to get rid of that hat you're wearing." Lyndon was wearing the

Johnson -- XL -- 26

sort of hat that a young man with a Washington job would wear, not a white Stetson. And he took his own hat off; my memory is that the Governor gave Lyndon his own hat. At any rate, he told him to go get one of that type. And they liked each other from the beginning, and it wasn't that trivial an association. It was sort of a meeting of two politicians who had similar philosophies.

All this time there was something very painful happening in my life. My brother, Tommy Taylor, who had been our county man, Marion County, and any statewide campaign, who had been our dear friend, was sick. What was his trouble was diagnosed--and not immediately, but I don't suppose it would have made any difference if it had been--as cancer of the pancreas. I came to know that disease is the most fearful thing that can happen to you. As soon as I heard over the phone what the doctors there in Jefferson said, and then in Shreveport, where he had been taken to the hospital, I called Jim Cain in [the] Mayo [Clinic]. And in his very loving, but serious, way he let me know that the chances of recovery were very, very slim indeed, if that was the real disease, and the symptoms did sound like it had to be.

It was one of the rare occasions that I was alone at the Ranch when I made that call. And so I began to cry, and I went outdoors and climbed up on a fence around the old barn--much has been changed there--and I cried and cried and cried. Nobody there to observe, and I did not feel that I had to restrain myself in any way, and I went in the house and I cried and cried and cried. And I really don't know whether I have ever cried since.

And yes, Lyndon was deeply affected by funerals, but he was also very dutiful about going to them, and there were three that fall. Sid Richardson's was the other one and that took place in October. And that was the end of a very colorful character in

Johnson -- XL -- 27

Texas history. As we've mentioned, Sid had no wife, no children, but a very close relationship with his sister's children, particularly Perry Bass. I wouldn't be surprised if it was he, Sid, who sent Perry to Yale; I do not know. But anyhow, he was close to Perry and to his wife, and as they came along, to his four sons. I do not know how many had been born by this time.

And we had Joe Mashman, who had participated in the campaign of 1941 [1948], flying Lyndon in a helicopter all over Texas. That, to my thinking, was the best run, most colorful campaign I have ever been associated with. John Connally managed it; it was a wonderful campaign. We lost it, however--(Laughter)--by the very narrowest margin, as you will remember. That's been dealt with long ago, but Joe Mashman was an adventurous part of our past. So he came out to talk about an airstrip. He was a helicopter man. I really don't quite understand why Lyndon got him out there except that he liked him, and he liked his old friends. And he just came for a visit.

And so also did Price Daniel and Mrs. Daniel, and this was in October. And for some reason, Price had things happening, that he didn't announce to the press that he was coming out to visit Lyndon. I think he would have preferred--I know he would have preferred that it not be known, but forces of nature intervened. He was going to spend the night, and in the middle of the night, *heavy* rains put the Pedernales [River] on a big rise. And there was no high-water bridge over the river at that time; it was a slab across the river, and it was impossible to cross it. And the water was--this was--the saying, as I remember, was "black night," and I'm not sure whether it was the night of the third or early morning of the fourth; I think late night of the third. And Lyndon could just imagine all of those great big expensive irrigation pipes that were stacked down too close

Johnson -- XL -- 28

to the water being washed away or banged up into tangled wrecks. So he simply asked all his men guests--the Governor, Dale Miller, a newspaperman by the name Allen Duckworth, to come help him. And I'm sure we also had Dale Malechek, and if we could find anybody else on the Ranch, they were moving pipes. Those things are fairly heavy. Rain was slashing down. The earth was just as muddy, slippery--you were just bogging up every step you took. And it really was a funny scene. The women remained in a car and somewhat higher up on a road that was safe, but we were watching the excitement. And so I think in the course of all that it became inevitable that the Governor's presence was noted by the press, his absence from Austin and where was he last seen and so forth. (Laughter) It had its amusing moments.

And then, by early daylight we surveyed the damage, and the river was still rising, so they decided that it would be a good idea if Mr. Mashman, in his helicopter--you never know when something is going to come in handy--should rescue, or offer to rescue, a few people who were actually in danger, if the river kept on rising. And there have been deaths on that river.

Well anyhow, Lyndon and Mashman, just two of them in the helicopter, and I think it could seat four, took out a few people up to our house or to some higher and drier and safe place. And one old lady refused to go without her dog. And so Lyndon, not very happily because the dog was not friendly, agreed to take the dog, and he picked him up and got him in the helicopter, and the dog bit him. (Laughter) It was a painful bite; a little blood flowing, but no major thing.

But very soon after that I went to Karnack.

Tape 2 of 2, Side 1

Johnson -- XL -- 29

M: This is side three, oral history interview, Lady Bird Johnson, [covering] 1959.

You made several trips to Shreveport to visit your brother.

J: And then, Lyndon did at one time too. He was very fond of Tommy. Tommy was one of the genuinely good people I have ever known, and I'm awfully lucky to have had him as long as I did. It was only after we were grown, though, that we became close, because he was eleven years older than I was, and in my childhood he was always off at school. Mother sent him and Tony to New York to school. Well he went to lots of schools, but Mother, I'm afraid--if she'd only lived longer many, many things would've been different. But she didn't make him--she died before he was through college, and I think he finally just got a degree from the college of Marshall, which was right there at home and a small Baptist college. It does not rank at the top scholastically.

It was the year when Lyndon's fortunes were obviously going up in the eyes of many people and a lot of talk about him being nominated for the president. But the most dramatic thing that happened to us that fall was a visit by President Lopez Mateos of Mexico. When first we met him in October at the White House, well, the President, still [Dwight] Eisenhower, had a dinner in honor of him. Lyndon was--the articles in big papers and magazines about him were getting about, I guess, 1958, all through 1959, and he was on some of the big time television shows. But television was never his friend. Oh, in a business way, yes. But I mean as him using it as a tool to express himself, I cannot say that he ever mastered it; he didn't like it. He liked talking from the courthouse steps. He liked to see the eyes of the crowd out there in front of him. He liked small groups and one on one. That great big instrument was never his.

M: Do you think he recognized that?

Johnson -- XL -- 30

J: Oh, I think he recognized it, lamented it, just couldn't conquer it.

M: Do you remember the time in the White House when he was extremely effective, and it had to do with his using a lavalier--

J: --and walking around. Yes.

M: --walking around. And *all* of us on the staff wrote him, that we must have a fat file of letters from all over, saying how effective it was, but he never did it again.

J: I cannot imagine why, and I just wish he had adopted it as his own tool.

M: Well the fervor of the Johnson-for-President sentiment certainly got a boost when Speaker [Sam] Rayburn announced that he start an LBJ-for-President--

J: Yes. Always and unremittingly, he had the confidence of Sam Rayburn and I think that is the thing that finally propelled him into it. Speaker Rayburn and John Connally. John Connally was mad at him from time to time when he wouldn't take the challenge and run with it. I just think Lyndon had a little knowledge of just how hard the presidency is, and could he give it what it deserved. And could he or any other southerner be elected President? Not that that's a fair thing, but it was a very real thing, at that time, at any rate, I think.

Well certainly the most glittering thing, the most romantic thing, that happened to us was the visit of Lopez Mateos and his family, his wife and his daughter and a sizeable number of his top people. Our ambassador at the time, I think, was Tom Mann. Right? [Robert Hill was ambassador to Mexico in October of 1959.]

M: He was ambassador later during your administration. Was he during the Eisenhower Administration? I don't know that.

J: I am not sure. I thought so. At any rate, came the big day, which was October the

Johnson -- XL -- 31

eighteenth. And I have some *marvelous* pictures! Predictably there was a barbeque in a grove of trees, down a little bit east of the Ranch house along the Pedernales [River].

We had a marvelous group of important guests: former President [Harry] Truman, Speaker Sam Rayburn, Secretary of the Treasury Bob Anderson, who was President Eisenhower's friend and cabinet member, and had been our friend since the days of the National Youth Administration when he had been on the citizen board that Lyndon had gotten put together to ask him for advice on how to run that agency.

M: Was this the first occasion for President Truman visiting the Ranch?

J: No, I don't think so. Could've been. But I think he was there two or three times. I'm not sure.

M: There was no Bess Abell in your life at this time. Who helped you arrange big events like this during the Senate years?

J: I'm sure that Warren Woodward was very helpful and that Walter Jenkins was. And I cannot honestly answer that. We had a lot of just ranchers and plain friends and people who had had a relation with Mexico.

I remember a couple of little incidents, quite a few in fact. Well to begin with, let me say this: Lopez Mateos was a very handsome man. Also, he knew that he was important in a way that many Texas politicians, American politicians, did not look upon themselves as being; I mean a kind of monarchical attitude. I don't know, we better get rid of that word, but I mean, Truman or Lyndon would never have had that sort of feeling.

So we did our best to make it as classy a barbeque as he might ever see. And of course we had mariachi bands. We should have had, looking back on it, some Texas western singers and fiddlers. We may have had them in addition. But we loved mariachis just

Johnson -- XL -- 32

as much as they ever did in Mexico.

I remember, though, there was a Mexican man who worked on the Ranch at that time, and still does, and Lyndon thought the world of him. And we were walking along from the gathering and about to enter the house, Lyndon with the President, I following with his wife and daughter, and there was Lupe, just doing some of his work around the house. And Lyndon said, "Lupe, come over here. I want you to meet the president of your country! At least the president of your country before you came over here to be with us."

Well, you know, if you have antennae at all, you can tell you've done something very out of keeping with your guests? (Laughter) Not that Lyndon cared a hoot! That was a good man, Lupe was, and he should've been proud to meet his president. His president should've been proud to meet him! Because he put a good face on Mexico as far as skill and industry and being an employee you could be proud of. It wasn't quite in tune with the President though.

At that time the Ranch house had three bedrooms on the east wing, served by one bath. And I thought to myself, "Well, I'll give the President and his wife the biggest one, and I will give their daughter the next one, and then I will give his secretary the smallest one. And I will tell the Secretary that would he kindly go down the hall and use the bath which was in the west wing. And so the three of them will have a bath." (Laughter). After that visit I then did set my sights to add two new baths and dressing rooms to that east wing, and that was the genesis of that. (Laughter)

I believe he was the President that gave us that big--no maybe that was [Gustavo] Díaz Ordaz later. I was thinking of the saddle. He did give us a painting that we

Johnson -- XL -- 33

treasure very much to this day. It was a primitive by a contemporary, I think--if not, he hadn't been long departed--Mexican painter named. . . . Oh, I'll think of it and put it in later [Horacio Rentería].

M: You don't mean the Diego Rivera?

J: No, because it was a primitive.

It turned out that his wife had a very interesting program, which she told me about with a good deal of pride. I really took my hat off to her. This was to furnish big trucks, vans, with reading material and--I may have to really do a little research on that. I do not remember whether it also had food on it--to go around to all of the rural areas of Mexico where it was needed. And believe me, it was needed. And she asked all of the Governor's wives, and I think at that time there were twenty-seven states in Mexico, and she kind of put the bee on them to sponsor, get the money for, get started such a program in their own state, and she did it on a national basis. And I was very much impressed and took my hat off to her. Her daughter had a project of collecting the various indigenous costumes: the ceremonial, the wedding-type, the festival-type costumes of Mexican women in all of their varied twenty-seven states.

M: What was the occasion for--?

J: Such a gathering?

M: --well, and for his visiting a senator?

J: Frankly, I can't tell. Could it be that this was a possible future president of the United States? Could it be that--I know Lyndon wanted to further relationships with Mexico. He was very interested in Mexico: its potential, its closeness to us, and he just plain liked Mexico. And it was a gesture of let's know each other better, let's work together

Johnson -- XL -- 34

for our mutual benefit, on his part. What the State Department thought of it, I can't answer that question. I'm sure that there are plenty of people more knowledgeable who could. I looked at it from the domestic viewpoint of enlarging the house afterwards for possible future encounters. (Laughter) Well it was a merry, happy day and night and we just loved it.

I do remember, it was a spend-the-night and the next day it was planned for us to go into San Antonio and Lyndon thought, "Ah, that's a Catholic country. Bishop [Robert] Lucey is a *good* friend of mine. I will just put him on the guest list, and we'll all go in and hear him preach in the cathedral the next day."

Well, we came to find out there was a fact we didn't know about Mexico. That as an outcropping of that long, long revolution that began with putting Porfirio Diaz out in about 1910, and it lasted until 1932, I think. It was just a series of fighting and new presidents, and out they would go, and then another president. It was a turbulent, bad time in Mexico. One of the things that Mexican politicians did is sever their relationship with the Catholic Church except for ceremonial purposes. They were married in the Church, they were buried in the Church, and their wives dutifully and pretty consistently attended church regularly. But as far as going every Sunday, or showing up, or having much public affiliation with a church, they didn't. (Laughter) Which was real funny.

We did go to Cathedral the next day in company with all of the women. I am not sure whether any of the men went with us. And in considerable haste, something else was planned for the men. So I can't say that it was a great social triumph as far as the skill with which we did it, but oh, it was a wonderfully bright, convivial time in my memory. Lots of Texans enjoyed it very much. And it must at least have enlarged the

Johnson -- XL -- 35

understanding of some of the Mexicans.

It was followed very quickly afterward for me by going back to Shreveport to visit once more with my brother, Tommy, and it was obvious that he was very close to death. Actually, he died ten days later, and I went back once more to be with all the family.

Lyndon had been touring the state for a week, making talks.

I guess all of this was what everybody would say was the build up to running for the presidency. We were also in the throes of trying to plan a new building for KTBC. It had had so many makeshift homes. And we had a twenty-fifth wedding anniversary! The Ray Lees, Kathleen and Ray, were very front and center in putting it on. He was a long time helper of ours, and they were a very attractive, able, nice family. She had been a member of a Hill Country family, the Burnets. The Kellams, of course, were much a part of it, and the Birdwells, Sherman Birdwell had been Lyndon's first secretary. [The] Mac DeGuerins, the Bill Deasons. The Bill Deasons were always in everything with us from first to last.

And we had the party at 1901 Dillman and then went on to El Mat [Matt's El Rancho?] restaurant. They all chipped in together and gave us a silver tea and coffee service, a tray and a coffee pot and a tea pot and a sugar bowl and a cream pitcher. It is still one of my loved possessions.

Everybody we could locate who worked for us was there: the [Paul] Boltons and Mary Rather and the [Horace] Busbys and of course, Mildred Stegall. I cannot remember whether Glynn was still alive or not. Mildred, of course, is still a part of my life. And Jake Pickle.

There was a long, long period there--Jake had been married to [Ella Nora] Sugar

Johnson -- XL -- 36

Critz. Sugar was a nickname. Sugar was not meant for death. She was one of the funniest, liveliest, most delightful women I've known. She did get cancer, and she did die, and I can't remember just when [1952]. But a proper length of time after her death, all the Texas delegation--all the women, I mean--moved in to select a wife for Jake! No, at that moment--I beg your pardon--it wouldn't have been the Texas delegation. It would've been the wives of all of his friends, who were our same set of friends. I wish I could remember when Sugar did die. But at any rate, Jake definitely appointed it and finally chose his own wife and made an excellent choice. The Woodward, the Walter Jenkins, the [Charles F. and Doris] Herrings were there, and then Billy Bailey and sweet Mary Love.

M: You mentioned the Busbys were there. Buzz had been a member of LBJ's staff for perhaps ten years by this time.

J: He came in practically by the same plane, and at the same time, with Warren Woodward, 1948 or 1949, it'd be worth looking up. Possibly it was in January of 1949. We assembled quite a staff at that time, which I think I must've chronicled long, long ago in this narrative, headed by John Connally who only came promising to stay a year. But we were going to look to Woodward and Busby for a much longer stay, and they did.

M: Soon after that, there was a visit to the Ranch by Bobby Kennedy. Do you remember anything about that visit?

J: Yes, it was not the most successful, warm event of our lives. There was always a prickly condition between the two of them, and why, I don't know. Just something in their personalities, because it was never the case with Senator Kennedy. He and Lyndon got along fine. Bobby, no. I guess this was an attempt on Lyndon's part to make it

Johnson -- XL -- 37

different, to open up a warmer relationship. At any rate, it didn't work. Bobby did not take to hunting there. I don't know how much he liked our ranching neighbors. At any rate, it wasn't one of the happiest of the series of visits that we had that fall, which were numerous! We just had a whole lots of folks come; it was kind of like a revolving door.

M: There couldn't have been too many occasions for Senator Johnson and Bobby Kennedy to get together. Bobby was the counsel on a committee that I don't think LBJ was on. But however sparse their encounters, they just were not simpatico.

J: Exactly, not simpatico just bristly. But on the other side of the spectrum, there couldn't have been anything more fun, more warm, more affectionate than a visit from Hubert and Muriel Humphrey. They, by that time, had been to see us at the Ranch at least twice, I think. They were there several times and at one time, he asked us for a copy of the plans of the guest house. But have I told you this?

M: You did, and he said he was going to go back and have one made.

J: Yes. And Lyndon continued to spend a good deal of the time November-December traveling around over Texas making speeches.

My birthdays were a very much neglected part of my life because being born on December the twenty-second is most thoughtless. (Laughter) It's too close to Christmas.

Christmas in my infant childhood, in my mother's lifetime, Christmas was a big day. Much plan, much [to] look forward for. Full of an aura of magic. I can remember several Christmases early on in my life. And after Aunt Effie came, also, it was much celebrated.

Birthdays, for some reason, not. Scarcely noticed. However, as I have mentioned, Lyndon thought very highly of birthdays, especially his own! (Laughter) So

Johnson -- XL -- 38

he wanted to do just as well by me. And he gave me in the course of time some glittering, wonderful, beautiful, memorable, glowing birthdays. This one was at the Ranch, and we had some special friends of mine, but also the usual crowd. Liz Odum, Mrs. Will Edward Odum, and Will himself, were two of my good friends, and I always sort of planned in the back of my mind that when we come back to Texas to live, I had three or four women picked out as people I just wanted to see lots and lots of. Life does not always cooperate. At least three of those women died before we really got home. But Cousin Oreole, [it] would not be right to leave her out of anything that offered some warmth and contact with the world of pleasure. The Jenkins and the [J. C.] Kellams and Dr. Billy Bailey [?] and Mary Love and the Deasons always, and the Woodward and the [A. W.] Moursunds. I am just sure there were lots more than that. I cannot imagine this taking place without the [Wesley] Wests unless they were just too busy with their own life, which they could've been. But anyhow, we had a happy birthday at the Ranch.

M: And the next day, the Johnson-for-President headquarters formally opened.

J: Yes, and it took place in the Littlefield building, which had been important in our lives. I think his first race for Congress had headquarters in the Littlefield Building. I know that the National Youth Administration was there, and I cannot emphasize too much how dear to us was that period of our lives--the National Youth Administration--short though it was. If you were to count it, it'd be in months, not years. I'd say it was about July or August of 1935 to February of 1937, or March, whenever he resigned in order to really formally announce for Congress.

Larry Blackmon was the executive director of that movement. I do not remember Jake Jacobsen having been in there at that time. He entered our real life, as I recall,

Johnson -- XL -- 39

when we were in the presidency and he was John Connally's man, and he agreed to come up and work as an assistant, saying he would stay two years. And he did, to the day, and was very good: smooth and capable, hardworking. Byron Skelton was chairman of the executive committee.

And Christmas came, the first one without Mrs. Johnson. Wait a minute, was it the first one?

M: It'd be the second one, I think.

J: No, this was the second one. My memory is that I invited all his three sisters and their husbands to the Ranch. The [Birge] Alexanders were there and my niece, Susan Taylor, the daughter of Tommy, came a couple of days later, and one of Sam Houston's children, Sammy. Later on, between Texas [Christmas?] and New Year's, John Connally and his family. We were reaching a sort of an--what shall I call it? A point of no return, a certain defining of pathways at this point--at the end of 1959.

M: In what way?

J: So many signs kept on pointing to the fact that Lyndon was going to be a candidate. Hubert Humphrey did announce as a candidate.

M: Do you remember any reaction of your own to the Humphrey announcement?

J: Oh, no, except that I was from first to last crazy about Hubert, sometimes wishing, as Lyndon did, that he wouldn't talk so much. (Laughter) I mean that he would stop talking earlier, when he had it made. He was a rare man, a good, warm, lover of mankind and the world was richer for having him in it.

1956, the last of 1955 and 1956, there was a greater buoyancy in my life--and the first half of 1957, perhaps I'd say. It was left over from this high peak that you reach

Johnson -- XL -- 40

psychologically when you've had a close brush with death and have survived and have returned to health, or when someone very close to you has done so. Those were good, good years. 1958 and 1959 were not personally my most joyous years.

M: You saw the presidency loom closer as a possibility. You've alluded to this before, but I'm sure your own reactions were somewhat mixed as you saw this coming.

J: Quite.

I have not in any of these years seen any references to [Konrad] Adenauer. And I know that Adenauer came to visit Texas. I remember a parade down Congress Avenue with us sitting with the Governor and welcoming. I remember him coming to the Ranch and us having a barbeque for him. Perhaps that would show up in 1960.

M: I should think. Let's see if it won't. Alright, this ends 1959, and there is nothing on the other side of this tape.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview XL

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION
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 Fawcett 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

CTJ Appendix A -- 2

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