INTERVIEW XLI covering 1960

DATE: August 1994

INTERVIEWEE: LADY BIRD JOHNSON

INTERVIEWER: Harry Middleton

PLACE: Martha's Vineyard

Tape 1 of 1, Side 1

M: When we left 1959, the Connallys were at the Ranch and they're still there. This must be either the first time, or one of the first times, you've seen them since the tragedy of their daughter.

J: But it was a topic that they, neither one, as I recall, referred to and somehow one didn't intrude. Until John wrote his book I don't remember any discussion about it. There's just the one statement, and I think that was at the time of her death when he said, rather gruffly, but with great hard-earned wisdom, I guess, "When they want to talk to you, you listen."

M: The chronology here shows that the President interviewed a man named Blackburn for a position of the ranch foreman. And the question is raised, was this for your Ranch or for another ranch, because wasn't Dale [Malechek] already foreman of your Ranch at that time?

J: I'm not sure exactly when Dale came in. That is something we would simply have to ask Jewell. Because we did ask this man, Henry Blackburn, to come and be interviewed. It was not, as far as I know, for any other ranch because we didn't have any other ranch that

was anything, just land as an investment, if any. And Henry Blackburn we liked, considered; as I remember it, he turned us down. And perhaps is was in January of 1960 that we did hire the Malecheks. I think they are enough of a part of our lives that we should go back and check the date of their coming.

M: The next thing that I see that I'd like to talk about, unless you find something in between, is the challenge to LBJ's leadership, which was easily defeated, but it was a challenge when he got back to Washington. It did not really mean much, but did those things bother him, do you think?

J: To some extent, yes. I remember that his relations with [Senator Joseph] Clark were not close. I do not think it disturbed his relations with [Senator Albert] Gore. Of course, he did run the Senate with a pretty dictatorial hand, just because he thought that was the only way to run it. He just hated that those long, long consumptions of time and those filibusters. And he hated to use [the practice of] keeping the Senate in session around the clock, for himself and for the old men in the Senate. But he was determined to make it get the work done, to crank out what it was supposed to crank out, and [in] a fairly timely fashion.

M: The political season is beginning to heat up early this year. In addition to Senator [Hubert] Humphrey, Senator [John] Kennedy announces his candidacy, and then on the Republican side, Vice President [Richard] Nixon announced his. Still no personal activity on the President's part, and you weren't aware of anything at this early stage of 1960 of his [plans]?

J: I can't really say, but the whole year, as I reflect on it, was just a sort of an inevitable getting onto a greased slide in which you were heading toward this race, and there was no

stopping. It would seem strange, and also it would not be believed, but it was a fact from my standpoint, and I do think to a very considerable degree to Lyndon, of not wanting to wind up in this race for the presidency. The big obstacles of the southerner being elected, the big obstacle of handling the job of the presidency if you got it, loomed very large for him. And he *really* believed that being a southerner was an obstacle that was divisive and might not be overcome. Not that it was fair or sensible, but it was there.

This was the year that Bill Moyers joined the staff. My memories of him, which I've already mentioned, [are of him] sitting in P-38 typing out imperturbably these wonderful memos and letters, with the confusion around him just cranked up to circus proportions, people coming, going, jostling for appointments, positions, being heard. And here he was, and he just drew a little circle around it and just worked away, beautiful work.

I do want to talk about the new building at KTBC. Does that come along later?

M: Yes it does. Here on the twenty-fourth of January you met with Max Brooks to talk about the new KTBC building.

J: Ever since we went on the air with the television station, in Thanksgiving Day of 1952, we had been living in crowded, inadequate, temporary quarters. As I said, the radio station began in 1943 on the second floor of a dingy, tawdry, second-rate building. The windows had not been washed since the building was constructed, it seemed to me. And we had made two or three moves. I don't remember quite where they all were. The Brown Building was one, the Driskill another. We just needed a home.

At the corner of 10th and Brazos there was a good, sturdy, ugly building, gray brick facing, I think, that had been used by either the YWCA or the YMCA for many

years, was at this point empty and for sale. And Max Brooks said, "Let's go have a look at it." We decided to buy it. It would have to be gutted, and I mean gutted. And then the whole radio station and television station--no, I think the radio station remained in an adjoining building, and the television station was put into this building. And the top floor, the fifth floor, was reserved for an apartment for us.

So we were going to live over the store, so to speak. There was room for a little terrace; that part appealed to me. We would have a little garden out there. At that point it had lots of virtues because there was nothing between us and the capitol of Texas, straight in front of us, off of this little terrace, and the Governor's Mansion to our left, and the old Land Office building to our right. And a population of bats (laughter) and swallows from some surrounding buildings that flew around at night. It was an interesting possibility; it offered us more room than we had ever had before.

Max Brooks was a very able and creative architect, and Roy White, one of the most dear and congenial people that we have ever known. My memory is, though, in this event, Max did most of the work himself. To me it was important to see what the view would be like from this presumed apartment we were going to have. S o I climbed--Max climbed first, and me after him--a ladder, and it was a *little bit hairy* to look down on five floors of space below you with nothing but steel girders and narrow catwalks. It's amazing that we didn't hurt ourselves badly.

M: How did you get down?

J: We climbed up; we climbed down. (Laughter)

But we really did. We may have had a camera; we may have taken a picture. At any rate, we got a good eye view of what we would have from the living room windows,

from the big bedroom window, which was going to stretch across the whole bedroom. It was pleasing, and there was lots to be said for it. So we let a contract early in the year.

Actually, we moved in in October of that same year, at a time when our life was never more hectic. It was a crowded, crowded year, and I do not remember it as one of my favorite years at all. There was just a sort of sense that this is irretrievable; there's no getting off of this slide we're on. F or better or worse, here we go.

Also, there were many references to Genevieve Hendricks, and I'm not sure that that comes up later in the chronology, does it? If not, I do want to speak of it.

M: Let's do it now, in case it doesn't--

J: Genevieve Hendricks was a decorator in Washington, who had done a great deal since the mid- and late-forties to make our little house on 30th Place a bit more distinguished, handsome, attractive. And all during the fifties whenever we would sell some timber in Alabama, or whenever I would come into some money, from Aunt Effie, or my mother's estate, or anything, we would buy a good-looking dining-room table or chairs.

One of the family jokes, which was much resented by Luci, was that in trying to date a picture that appeared on the *Saturday Evening Post,* a family picture of Lyndon, me, and the two children and Beagle, I was looking at the children's relative ages, what we could guess at the age; we were doing an album, this was much later. And then we were looking at the couch. And I said, "Well, I think Luci came before the couch. Or did the couch come first?" (Laughter) Which always made Luci furious. (Laughter) I would hope she'd find it amusing. I'm not sure she ever did.

M: She probably would now.

In passing, you said something about get[ting] something from your mother's

estate. Hadn't your mother's estate been long since settled by now? Or was it still in the process?

J: No, no, no. It had been settled, but it just simply meant it was settled within a few years, say like two or three years, after Uncle Claud's death in the fall of 1941. But it still was cranking out--still I owned the timberlands from my mother, and my Aunt Effie, and my Uncle Claud in Alabama. I had a series of people managing it for me, just two or three people over the years from, say, 1943 or 1944 when it was finally settled, till the point at which we are now, the fall of 1960. Every now and then we'd sell a big lot of timber and I'd get quite a few thousand dollars. As for being really productive month in and month out, it certainly was not.

What's important about Genevieve Hendricks here was that I got her to come down and stay with me in the early part of this year, 1960, and plan the furnishings of this little apartment. She was a topnotch person. Why she took such a ticky job, I don't know. We had really become friends. I valued her. She would recognize the fact that I didn't have all that much money--a lot of her clients did--but that I aspired to better things, and she wanted to get me better things, to the extent I could pay for them. She raised my sights; she educated me as to furniture and the way a house should look. I consider her a part of my making and I am grateful to her.

M: There have been other decorators that have been somewhat influential with you, too: Bob Waldron?

J: Oh, after she died, which Bob Waldron inherited all of that obligation and affection. And I just turned to him to solve all my problems. But we had known him in such a different capacity. He had come to Washing--we had known him first as a secretary in

the law firm, which was Wirtz, Rauhut, and I can't remember what [Powell, Wirtz, Rauhut, and Gideon]. And then--well, he was a secretary. And then he'd come to Washington as secretary to Congressman Homer Thornberry, and had stayed there, although all his--he was a topnotch legal secretary; could take dictation lickety-split, and the fact that he was a man made him all right to be in Lyndon's bedroom at twelve, one, two, taking shorthand and, you know, avoid a lot of conversation that you didn't need to have on the part of opponents. And also you didn't feel so *bad* about overworking a girl [young man] as you did a young man [girl]. (Laughter)

Lyndon always had a most remarkable closeness to his staff, to almost all his staff. A few times there have been disaffections, almost not at all.

So the children are growing up, and my father is failing rapidly--no, not all that rapidly, but he is obviously failing. During 1959 and the early part of 1960, some of the best and most revealing visits that I ever had with my father take place, unhappily, and likely to be with him in a hospital bed. He would talk about his early arrival in Texas and what propelled him to come to Texas which, of course, was, "Go west, young man," to seek his fortune, as the phrase of his youth was. [There was] no doubt that his fortune lay somewhere. Every American youth was going to succeed if he worked hard enough.

But this was the year in which he really ceased to be a towering, powerful man we all looked to, and failed mentally and physically. I visited him, I guess, four or five or more times during the calendar year until he died during the campaign in October of 1960.

M: A dreadful time for you.

J: Yes, but it had been inevitable, foreseen. So, it came as an overwhelming final sadness,

but nothing of a surprise. In fact, you couldn't even be sorry, because he, if he were in full possession of his mental faculties, would have hated being anything but a dominating figure. He was certainly no longer a dominating figure in that hospital bed, finally having suffered the indignity of having a leg amputated, which is what happened to you, in those days, if you had what was called hardening of the arteries, a heart condition, I'm sure, a circulation condition.

M: You may see something else in here you'd like to comment on, but as I go through, it seems to me that the one that I want to ask you about is on March the fifth, George Reedy writes a memo to LBJ talking about the presidential nomination. And we've not talked about George Reedy. Throughout, it seems to me that I keep getting references not only to the fact that he was a representative in front of the press, but that he wrote political memos to the Senator.

J: He did. And he joined us I just can't remember exactly when. But Lyndon was very proud of him and was always referring to him as one of the "whiz kids." It seems that some years before on television or radio there were a number of young students who were just remarkably quick and knowledgeable, and appeared on programs. And anyhow, Lyndon was proud of him and referred to him in that way. There was a lot of affection between them, in my opinion, certainly on Lyndon's part, which made it sadder that their eventual separation of ways should have been the way it was.

M: What was your own feeling about George Reedy? Did you like him?

J: I liked him fine. I was never so overwhelmingly overboard as Lyndon was, because I wish he had been more disciplined than he was. But then, I wished Lyndon had been more disciplined than he was. Nobody could be more disciplined than Lyndon was for

the first year or two after his heart attack, but as danger recedes, discipline relaxes; that's just the history of countries and people. And George was sloppy fat and drank too much, but he did have a splendid mind, and wrote well. And Lyndon used to say, "And he never gave me bad guidance."

M: With George Reedy, Bill Moyers, Walter Jenkins, and Horace Busby, that's a powerful foursome that he had--

J: Wasn't it though? It was a marvelous team that we had around us. It was great that we had them, and we operated so effectively for so many years.

I do want to digress one moment and talk about that flight to South Carolina to the funeral of Mrs. Strom Thurmond. Strom was a very interesting character. He appeared to be--to reach a considerable old age--not age, but indeed, maturity. His first marriage took place--gee, he was up in his fifties, I'm sure, and had been going with Miss Peach Queen--(Laughter)--and Miss Apple Blossom Queen. But he had not married until he finally did marry a lovely--physically and mentally--woman named Jean [Crouch]. And I feel sure that she was either South Carolinian or [from] somewhere in the South, and very popular with all the Senate ladies. Then she got a brain tumor, which progressed fairly rapidly; she died in January of 1960. And a whole bunch of us, a whole planeload of senators and their wives, went down to her funeral, which was so impressive and sad.

Well, that whole year was just rushing along on roller skates. Nixon announced early and firmly his candidacy for the Republican presidential nomination, as indeed, did JFK and the ebullient Hubert Humphrey. Somewhere in there, so did [George] Smathers.

M: You, right in there, in January, attended a party given by the Newspaperwomen's Club,

with an array of the candidates. On the assumption that LBJ would not run, did you yourself have a preference for a candidate?

J: No, a personal preference, for Hubert but no strong feeling, no feeling that nationwide he could get it, or win it. I mean, get the nomination or win the election. Just a liking for him, as a human being, as a friend, and an appreciation of his heart and personality. He was a good force.

Diana was a part of our lives at that time, Diana Tschursin [the daughter of Mrs. Johnson's brother, Tony Taylor]. Lyndon used to, every now and then, make the suggestion that we hire Diana to work with us in either our political life or our business life back in Texas. He had a great respect for her. I myself always felt that dealing with family, with kinfolks, was a difficult thing. We already had enough of that with all of Lyndon's kinfolks. Diane was so smart, but also independent, and needed to run her own life, I thought.

I'm sure that not once, but many times, I have talked about the Senate Ladies' Red Cross. But early in the year of 1949 when Lyndon was first sworn in as a senator, right on up through this whole year of 1960, I was a devoted, interested member. Mrs. [Pat] Nixon, the wife of the Vice President, was the presiding officer, and she was the best one we ever had. And I was there, briefly, with the darling wife [Jane Hadley Barkley] of the Kentucky Senator, and later on Vice President, Alben Barkley--the dates I don't remember--Truman's [vice president]. I guess it was a part of--well, anyhow, she was the wife of the Vice President, which made her the presiding officer; and Mrs. Nixon; and then, I myself, beginning in 1961; and Muriel Humphrey beginning in late 1963. Well, Mrs. Nixon was the best of the lot of us.

M: Did you like when you were presiding? Did you like that job?

J: Never knew A from izzard about "Robert's Rules of Order;" never wanted to. But it was an easy enough thing to do. What you wanted to do was just keep encouraging those ladies to come to the meetings, do whatever little useful things we could for the Red Cross. But the whole purpose of the organization, as I saw it, was for the wives of the senators to get to know each other and have more of a--politics stopped at the door, but it is useful to know who you are dealing with, with their wives. We had fun together, and there was a lot of mutual comradeship and affection.

There was a great deal of learning in there, too, particularly from the wives of the old-timers, historical sort of learning, regional learning. I never thought I'd meet anybody who had lived in a mud house, but there was one old lady whose husband had been a senator long, long ago, from one of the Dakotas, I think it was. And as a little girl, when her family took this long trek westward, as so many families did, they lived for a few years in a dugout where winter was a serious matter and something to survive. And she told us about what it was like.

It was Mrs. Nixon who inaugurated the theme of besides eating our sandwich, or box lunch, or bringing some of our favorite goodies from our own state and sharing them, let us also exchange some experiences. If we'd been on a foreign trip, spend ten or fifteen minutes telling all of the others what we learned, saw, experienced. And she could be funny; I don't know that she ever got any credit for that. I remember her saying one time, describing those trips that she went on, about how hurried they were, and how it was airport after airport. And she smilingly said sometime she wanted to go back and see those places she'd seen.

M: You had a great deal of admiration for her, did you not . . . .

J: Yes, I did. Never any closeness. She did not--she was, in my opinion, sort of deeply shy. She did not invite closeness. It was the southerners who were the effusive, close ones. That's predictable.

M: Marvin Watson was on a trip with you in early February. I don't think his name has appeared in this chronicle before. What were the circumstances, if you remember them, of his entering your official lives?

J: He was an East Texan who worked for, as I recall, Gene Germany, a traditional, I won't say enemy, but opponent whose philosophy was different from Lyndon's and very ably expressed in elections. Somebody to respect, but not to regard as a fellow worker in the vineyard. Marvin--there was somebody very close to us who was close to him, and who asked him if he didn't want to go with us. I'm trying to remember who that was that brought him in. And I can't quite get it.

M: He worked for Lone Star Steel--

J: Lone Star Steel, and Gene Germany was the head of it.

We did a lot of traveling in those days, Lyndon especially, and I just often got taken along. People like Governor [Buford] Ellington and Bob Kerr, and Earle Clements of Kentucky, they were likely to get us to attend Democratic meetings in their different states of Tennessee and Oklahoma and Kentucky. We had a network of close friends.

M: While you're traveling you went then--after that trip to Tennessee, you went to Acapulco.

J: I cannot imagine how that happened--if this diary is correct, and I guess it is--why on earth we went down there for such a nothing of a stay. During those days Wesley West was generous beyond words with his plane. And also George Brown often sent along a

black man who worked for him, to just sort of take care of Lyndon, do his packing and unpacking and laying out of clothes, a job that I had had since we married, but now that I was able to do some other things that may have served the campaign, we often had some help from George.

It was somewhere along here that we went to lunch at the home of President [Miguel] Alemán, and I sort of got acquainted with the Mexican custom--it was then, or it could have even been after the presidency, because during the presidency we never went to Acapulco. We did not feel free to, I mean on a vacation-type of going. I mean we went down there at least once for an official purpose, but not these relaxed, for-fun adventures, at Alemán's home. But this Mexican custom I'm speaking of, is if a man has still a great deal of vitality and an interest in women, and his wife has grown older and had a nice supply of children, it became kind of the custom, not frowned on, of a man having both a home and a mistress, and--I mean two homes.

And we went to lunch in the home where Mrs. Alemán, the wife of his youth, the mother of his family of three or four children, maybe more; I think four. I think maybe she had even had a stroke by that time. At any rate, she was very dignified, quite--not necessarily elderly, but she just sort of sat in some prominent, conspicuous spot and everybody came up and spent five or ten minutes sitting on a chair right by her, and then they'd move aside and let somebody else come up and sit. So it was very clear that she was a person they wanted to honor and respect. But he also at the same time had a lady friend. And this is a little vague in my mind, whether--but sometime between 1960 and the later sixties, sometime between that six or eight years, our daughter, Lynda, became acquainted with the other side of the household, which was much younger and--well,

there would be young celebrities and screen stars, and youth dominated the picture.

Alemán was a very attractive man who did a lot to bring his country into the twentieth century, with roads and just sort of saying to the world, "Here we are. C ome see us; come look at us." And he encouraged foreign vacationers and businesses. And the main road between the Acapulco airport and the downtown Acapulco is the Alemán Highway.

(Interruption)

M: There was a civil rights bill apparently in the Senate at this period, and I'll have to confess that it's one that is unfamiliar to me. I am familiar with the 1957 bill and I'm familiar with the one that took place in late 1960. But I don't remember this one in early 1960. At any rate, this is the first time on record that I see that LBJ found it in his mind to say anything critical of Senator [Richard] Russell because of Russell's criticism of him. Do you remember anything about this at all?

J: Actually not. I just know the seeds of their eventual parting were sown perhaps in 1957, and the rift became more and more difficult to avoid, because Russell was going to be committed to the Old South until he drew his last breath. And Lyndon was going to love him and honor him until he drew each of their last breaths, but their roads were going to part over civil rights, and it was inevitable.

This was one of the many times when Sam Houston was hospitalized in an effort to get--

Tape 1 of 1, Side 2

M: Lady Bird Johnson oral history interview [regarding] 1960.

You said that the President visited his brother in the hospital because--what were

you saying about that?

J: Sheppard Pratt Hospital out in the outskirts of Baltimore, I believe, was one of the better-known places where you might get treated for alcoholism, and psychiatrists entered the picture, and maybe they could cure you. We tried that many times. This was a particularly painful one, and I think it came to an end--Sam Houston didn't want to go. Lyndon wanted him to; he wanted him to get loose from that. I think he practically made him go, and [it] fell my lot to physically drive him over there, to get him into it. And it gave you--a very hard--it was very, very hard to take him back and say goodbye at a certain point where you went into a place where the doors were locked and you were not allowed visitors, except accompanied by somebody in the hospital.

M: The current concept of alcoholism is that it is a genetic disorder, not a behavioral problem, but something actually genetic that is inherited. Does that square with your knowledge of the President's family? Were any of his ancestors--?

J: Yes, an uncle had had a severe problem. I never knew him, but I was told about it. But they just called it getting drunk in those days. And then Lyndon's own father had had problems, but he overcame his. His problems were caused by the very clear fact that he lost just about everything they had in a depression of--I don't know, 1923, 1924, something like that, when Lyndon was a young boy.

When he, Lyndon's father, realized that everybody was going into the production of cotton in that sparse, rocky land of the Hill Country--there would be a few little lush valleys, and everybody was putting their land in cotton. And you may even remember the wrecked cotton gins that were at Hye and at Luckenbach, skeletons to the past. Cotton was selling for forty cents a pound, and Lyndon's father, Mr. Sam Johnson, bought

and gave notes to a couple of members of his family, sisters I think, maybe one brother and some sisters, to buy their portion of their father's land in that area. And [he] hired several Mexican families and moved them all onto it, and stood good, as the word went, at the grocery store for their year's supply of food and necessities. And then the cotton market plummeted from forty cents to, I think, eight cents.

That was hard on *my* daddy. But my daddy was a tough, hard businessman, capable of having some other iron in the fire. He had a good line of credit; he survived, but it was real hard on him. Mr. Sam Johnson did not survive financially; it broke him.

And from then on, his health and his pride suffered badly. He just had small jobs resulting from his years of having been in the Texas Legislature and having made a lot of friends, and they got him jobs. But he was just dealt a blow from which he did not recover. And I daresay that that was, to a considerable extent, Sam Houston's makeup.

I do not remember, either, this civil rights bill of early 1960, about Lyndon keeping the Senate in round-the-clock session. I just know it was one of the things that earned him a lot of respect and reputation from a lot of people, and a lot of anger from some of his fellow senators, lots of each.

M: While that was going on, there was a banquet given by the Texas Exes in early March, honoring you, on March the second. Do you remember anything about that?

J: No, but I'd lay a bet that Scooter Miller had a lot to do with it--(Laughter)--and that Liz Carpenter probably helped her. I was a very proud Texas Ex. And we did meet, always, on March the second. And somebody would get up and recite, in stentorian tones, that letter from William Barrett Travis, "to all the lovers of freedom in the world." The letter he--grandiloquent, marvelous phrases, brought tears to your eyes and a lump in the throat.

(Laughter) And on March the second, Texas Independence Day, we almost always had somebody who would get up and read that as a part of a program of, "Isn't it wonderful, having gone to the University of Texas and to be up here in this exciting city," and just a time of camaraderie. I guess they had--everything is based on selling tickets, I reckon. (Laughter) How they chose to honor me, I don't know. But I was properly impressed, I'm sure.

Lyndon's office played a big part in our lives. I just really cannot overemphasize how much Lyndon loved the Senate and being majority leader. And I know he could see in the changing situation--[Dwight] Eisenhower going out of office--who would the next president be? If it was a Democrat, he wouldn't have the same sort of--even if he was elected and could continue as majority leader, he wouldn't have the same role. *Vis-á-vis* an aging, somewhat ailing, Eisenhower, and that narrow, narrow margin in the Senate, it was a very powerful job, Senate majority leader was. But should it be a Democratic president, which Lyndon was committed always to trying to (inaudible). And we didn't realize then, I guess, that party loyalty was going out of fashion, out of history. Maybe it wasn't then. When did it happen? At any rate, it sure was a part of life in Lyndon's days in the Senate.

M: It is commonly accepted, I believe, by historians, that Lyndon Johnson was the most effective majority leader of the twentieth century, and perhaps in the history of the Senate. Were you aware that that reputation was in the making at the time that he was--?

J: Yes, I think I was, and it was the special circumstances. It was not only Lyndon's abilities, and drive, and willingness to work eighteen hours a day. It was also the makeup, the fact that there was an aging, ailing President of the opposite party, who was a

national hero, and for whom you have a lot of respect. He just never did believe that the job of the opposition party is always, day in-day out, to oppose, to gnaw, nibble, erode. But if the president is right, if his proposals are right for the country, support him. If they are wrong for the country, oppose him with all the strength you can. And the Speaker was of the same mind. So it was a great time to be majority leader, and the times and the man met.

And Lyndon always had a remarkable amount of vision, in my opinion, and he could see that that would no longer obtain if we got a Democratic president, particularly if he was a strong Democratic president. The job of the majority leader would be to implement whatever the president said. That's the way he conceived it.

It's not only did he aspire to be president, which I do not *really* think he did. I think he was deeply awed, deeply uncertain about his ability, his health, his being a southerner, whether that was a good thing for him to do. But that job just wasn't going to exist if we got a Democratic president, at least that's the way I looked at it, and think he did.

M: Permit me to jump forward, then, because I want to ask you, how do you think he regarded the Democratic majority leader in the Senate at the time he was president, who was Mike Mansfield?

J: Mike was an intellectual. Mike was a very able man and he had great respect for him, but he would never be tough. He would never be--he had no fire in him. I think maybe sadly, he was something of a disappointment to Lyndon.

M: I think so, too.

J: And yet you could only say that he was a good man, an able man, but he wasn't going to

ever knock heads together and force anything. They just didn't mesh in the way that he--Lyndon--and Kerr, and for so many years Russell, and Earle Clements [did]. They were just not cut from the same cloth.

M: I think that is an interesting point to make.

While this was still going on, the debate over the civil rights bill, you went to Newark, New Jersey, to attend the wedding of the daughter of Charles Engelhard. This is the first time that the Engelhards enter your life, that I know of. This was on March the twelfth. Do you remember your early encounter with them?

J: The first two events, and they were preceding this, I think, were when Charles Engelhard and Jane flew down to visit us in Texas, and who it was that brought us together I cannot remember. Maybe if I think long enough and research some of the records, I can.

But there were two extraordinary parties held for us. One was a barbecue at the ranch home of a wealthy Texas oil man. Interesting, because Lyndon never stood very high with the oil men, except Sid Richardson and Wesley West. And I can recall this oil man's name a little later, because much later I served on the board of Texas Commerce [Bank] with one of his sons. But he was one of the fabulous, storied pack of Texas oil men. There were just more planes flying in there, just a great big pasture with a strip on it, could even have been a grass strip. And he had it catered by Neiman Marcus, by a marvelous woman there who could put on any kind of a banquet. And the Engelhards were our guests. (Laughter) They were very interested in all of this, not that they hadn't seen the same sort of thing, but not quite in that style.

And then the next day there was another such event, by another prominent Texan. Once more, I think I will supply his name later. That was at their home about fifteen or

twenty miles out from Austin on the way to San Antonio. And a much quieter crowd was there, but just as powerful a crowd. All of this was new to me, too, at this level and to this extent. It's too bad that I can't really tell you more about it. And I will at least supply the names.

M: Did you take to Jane Engelhard right away?

J: Yes; yes, I did, and I'll tell you one of the reasons I did. Not only was she a great, very interesting and beautiful and strong woman, at that time, but she raised dogs. Now I was never any great lover of dogs--(Laughter)--in spite of us having all those beagles. You always had to feed them, love them, and take them to the vet. I didn't want to be obligated to all those things except for children. (Laughter)

And I remember seeing her in our kitchen with those great big diamonds on her hand and a great big dishpan in front of her, and I think they had one or two of those dogs along, and she was determined to give us one. And she was mixing up the mash which they were fed. And she was in this material up to her elbows, just squashing it just right and putting whatever you put in it, and preparing it. She did raise prize-winning dogs and they were beautiful. I don't--I'm afraid it wasn't a successful--I think it was discussed and they decided of their own accord that living in two places, as we did, and not having the knowledgeable kind of help that would keep these dogs as they should be kept, I don't believe the gift took place. But those beautiful hands could engage in something manual, if desirable. Well, she was from another world, but she had had such an interesting life and she seemed to like me. And she did like Lyndon very much, and so did Charles.

And Charles was a financial genius, and Lyndon listened with intense interest, and even a measure of awe, to Charles. Charles at one time made an attempt to go into

politics himself. I think he was running for senator from New Jersey. It failed, because he was not one to get down on the circuit of whatever in New Jersey amounts to the courthouse square and the barbecue level. But for intellect and accomplishment, he was one of a kind.

M: Senator [Richard] Neuberger of Oregon died at this point, of cancer, and the President went out to Oregon to attend memorial services, but I think you did not go. Do you remember anything about that?

J: I don't remember, but his wife, I do think, succeeded him.

M: She did.

J: The both of them had a great and early interest in the environment, and particularly in getting billboards off of federally-paid-for highways. And I think that was my first sort of introduction to the fact that that--of interest in that. My real interest took place when we drove mile after mile after mile across the American countryside, and would see some of the glorious sights of this land and they would be obscured by these great big appeals to drink a certain kind of beer, or use a certain kind of motor oil, or whatever they suggested.

M: Luci and Lynda were hostesses at something called International Children's Day. Do you remember anything about that?

J: No, I don't. But I had made some of the usual attempts of mothers in Washington to get the children not only to participate in things that other children of congressmen, and particularly of Texas Delegation, provided for their children. But also there was a lady there named [?] Williams who had a charm school, and had their young students--it was a dancing class where you learned social graces and manners, and it may be a subject of

laughter to many, but yes, I did have Lynda going to that. And I think that may have been the thing at which some determined congressional wife trapped President Eisenhower into going out on the lawn and shaking the hand of all these youngsters, including my child, or children.

I think one of the most poignant expressions of growing up in Washington was Lynda's observation. She looked at me one time and said, "Mother, Washington may be a fine place for congressmen and their wives, but it isn't for their children." And I felt like I had not been a good mother, and that occurred quite a number of times, because Luci would so *vastly* have preferred to live in Texas and not to have been hustled backwards and forwards from one place to the other. Besides, Luci had an eye problem, which was not corrected until she was, I guess, thirteen years old. I took her to the best eye doctor that I could find, according to all the other wives that I knew that had children--"Who do you go to? Who's the best-known one?" I'd asked our own children's doctor.

And let me diverge here to say that he is one of the blessings of our lives. His name was John Washington. I met him early on. He took care of the children from the time they were infants until Lynda got so big and grown up. (Laughter)

A very funny thing happened. Luci was the patient; we had to take her to Dr. John Washington's office. Lynda was about twelve and Luci about eight, I reckon. Lynda was a very--she had her full growth by the time she was twelve. And I had to run an errand, and this was one of the times we had to wait in the doctor's office a long time. I said, "Lynda, honey, you wait here with Luci, and you take her in to see Dr. Washington and tell him these symptoms: one, two three. And I'll be back in about forty-five

minutes or an hour." Well, the nurse, a new nurse, at one point turned to Lynda and said, "Are you this child's mother?" (Laughter) And that's where Lynda, in high dudgeon said, "Mother, you are going to get me another doctor." But he was one of those marvelous men that if you called him up at twelve o'clock at night and said, "This child has fever of a hundred and two; what shall I do?" And he would tell me, no doubt, to put an ice pack on her forehead, make her drink a lot of water, and he'd see me in the morning. But he himself came, several times, I think one time one of their fevers went up to a hundred and four. But when you needed him most, he would come. Bless his heart forever.

M: Did he stay in your life after he no longer was the children's doctor?

J: Yes. And I'm pretty sure that he lived into our presidency for a while, and that we got to ask him to the White House. I made a strong point of trying to collect, sooner or later, everybody who had been so good to us. And believe me, they were legion. And I think we had a lot of them. But that is what Lyndon would call rabbit chasing; and you were asking about entirely other things.

M: Those are good rabbit chases, though, because they will add to . . . .

J: [Stuart] Symington announced that he was a candidate. Now, Symington was just the handsomest man in the Senate. I was crazy about him; every female was crazy about him. There was a time when he was one of the most important men in our lives during the--when was the time when he--when the Berlin--when he conducted, not as senator, but as secretary of the air force--

M: During the Truman Administration.

J: The fly--

M: --the blockade of Berlin--

J: --the blockade of Berlin, and we fed them by plane. I think he was the principle architect of that. He and Smathers and Paul Porter were often our visitors at that much-used old house on 30th Place.

M: We are about to go into a discussion, if you remember it, of a rather unpleasant situation that took place in Marshall, Texas, which is over near your home, and also Bill Moyers'.

J: Absolutely.

M: And this is right in the middle of the civil rights debate in the Senate. And this involved, perhaps--I can't tell from this whether the President went over to Marshall or discussed going over to Marshall. But at any rate, do you remember any of this situation at all?

J: It is absolutely so integral, and I ought to, and I don't. As a background, our cook Zephyr--at different times she was named Zephyr Black and Zephyr Wright. We had gotten her from Wiley College, where she had been highly recommended by the president, whom Lyndon had come to know when he, Lyndon, was head of the NYA [National Youth Administration] and he had made quiet, determined efforts to get to know every black college president in the state and to bring them in to whatever the NYA had to distribute. J obs to keep students in college, paid twenty-five cents an hour, but they managed to keep a lot of students in college, or help in any way the NYA could. And he stood well with the college presidents.

And I do not remember this, but I know it must have been--Marshall is just the kind of place where the citizens would have done this. It was just built for a confrontation. Oh goodness, I wish I could remember it.

And it so happened that when Lyndon became president and was looking for distinguished people to invite to state dinners that were from all segments of our society, I

think at the very first dinner there was a college president or a high achiever among the students--well, if it was a state dinner it would have been the president; for other events it would have been the high-achieving black student. Because I wanted Marshall and East Texas to participate in whatever we had that was exciting. I wanted them to feel a sense of closeness and pride in Lyndon. But this bad time in late March of 1960, I don't remember.

I think I'll try to dig up my 1960 calendar and see if there's anything that triggers me. And Bill Moyers, who later did that wonderful documentary, *Marshall, Texas: Marshall, Texas*, meaning two cities in the same locality, blacks and whites, and the separate lives they led. And a large percentage of blacks. A nd why can't you and I remember what this civil rights bill was, or much about it?

M: Well, here it is. I think--

This ends this side two. We'll resume with the year 1960 back in Austin.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview XLI

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

by Patti Howell
Allison 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~~ Assistant Archivist For Presidential Libraries on 5-10-2011.

Mrs. Johnson's Oral History Interviews:

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

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