

## INTERVIEW WITH MARJORIE DELAFIELD

PB: This is November 9, 1968. We are in the home of Miss Marjorie Anne Delafield. Miss Delafield, tell us something about your profession.

MD: Well, I have a typing and duplicating service. We type a great deal for the students of the University plus businessmen and then for other students, at St. Edwards, and other schools in the area.

PB: In connection with your professional work, I understand that you had contacts with the President's mother, Mrs. Rebecca Baines Johnson. Can you tell us how that acquaintance developed and how it came about?

MD: Yes, after meeting and becoming acquainted with Mrs. Minnie Lee Hammett and learning she had what they called the "canteen" in the basement of the City Hall, I started stamping the matchbook covers for the canteen. Being in the City Hall frequently, I met Mrs. Bess Beeman, who was at that time a receptionist at City Hall. She came to the canteen often for coffee and she had a need to have some typing done for the Austin Professional Women's Club and I got to know her even better doing business for her. She was the one who mentioned my service to Mrs. Johnson.

It was at that time that Mrs. Johnson contacted me in regard to some typing she wanted done.

PB: What was the typing that Mrs. Johnson wanted you to do?

MD: It consisted of geneological studies of the Johnson family and of course we did various members of the family at different times when she would want to have ..... rather give them as a birthday gift to one particular part of the family. I would type them and bind them and get them ready for giving.

PB: A geneological study of that particular person's family tree, in other words.

MD: Yes. Then it developed into going further into the whole tree. We went on and on until we traced it far back.

PB: Let me be certain that I have this clear. Your work for Mrs. Johnson and with Mrs. Johnson consisted of making family trees for the various members of the Johnson family. How far back did you go in this family tree business?

MD: Well, we finally had a very large chart in the end which traced it back to Winston Churchill.

PB: You didn't go back far enough to get to William the Conqueror, did you?

MD: No! I don't think we went that far back, as well as I recall.

PB: And then after you had started ..... by the way, do you recall about when you started this work for Mrs. Johnson?

MD: It was over a period of time. I typed for her for several years until just a few days before ..... actually not very long before her death. So it was just over an intermittent period - several years.

PB: When did it start?

MD: It was in 1955 or 1956, I believe. It could have been a little earlier, and of course it went on until she passed away.

PB: Well, now, did Mrs. Johnson dictate to you or did she bring her handwritten .....

MD: No sir, she would call me and we would go out to her house and pick up the various pieces of work and then return them to her, because she was working constantly on her material and so we would just make a trip out to her house.

PB: What kind of person would you say Mrs. Johnson was?

MD: She was a lovely, very kind person to work with and she was very considerate. We always went over things together and she would call me in between visits. It was a very

enjoyable experience to deal with her. We had many long and pleasant talks in between our "business" visits.

PB: About what?

MD: Mainly about President Johnson and about her hopes of the future for him. Of course, we were wishing for him to become President of the United States.

PB: At that time he was a United States Senator?

MD: Yes, at the beginning of our relationship he was.

PB: That was her ambition for him, was it? For him to become President some day?

MD: Yes. Yes, it was.

PB: Of course, I believe, Mrs. Johnson passed on before Mr. Johnson became President.

MD: Yes, but I believe she was at the Inauguration when he became Vice President, wasn't she?

PB: I'm not at all sure.

MD: I remember at the time I wondered if she would be able to be there and I recall seeing her picture in the papers and I believe she was, however, I may be mistaken.

PB: What else did you and she talk about?

MD: Well, she would call me many times just to chat. Of course, her main concern was to finish the work she had

started--to get everything down on paper--the whole family tree brought up to date--and complete. Then we would talk about the typing business, she would ask how I could type so many hours a day and if it weren't a tiring job, and then on to some personal things that people talk about when they know each other well.

PB: Did Mrs. Johnson ever talk to you about her children--tell you stories about them or anything like that?

MD: Yes, she told me about many of the members of her family. I don't recall any outstanding story at the moment. When we would do one piece of work about one particular branch of the family, she always had a certain amount of humor in her stories and would explain various things about the person, and that made it very interesting.

PB: Now, Miss Delafield, during this period when you were working as ..... secretary, I would call it, for Mrs. Johnson, you say she talked about all of her children. Do you think that possibly Lyndon Johnson was her favorite among all those children or not? He was the eldest, and perhaps that was .....

MD: Yes, I think that possibly he was, at least she indicated that ..... I know she was always overjoyed when he was coming to Texas, here, to see her. And she would always

tell me when he left or when he was coming. I feel sure he was her favorite from her attitude--the way she talked about him.

PB: Miss Delafield, how long did this relationship between you and Mrs. Johnson extend?

MD: Well, from about the time it began in 1955, until her death.

PB: Were you aware that she had been ill?

MD: No. I knew, or rather felt, that she didn't look well right toward the end, but she would always come out to the car to bring her material and talk to me about it and she seemed very ..... she had so much stamina and she never complained about feeling bad, so I had no idea that she was that ill, really.

PB: When you and Mrs. Johnson talked about Mr. Johnson, and she expressed her hope that he would be President someday, do you recall how she put it? What kind of a man she described him as? Why he should be President or anything of that sort?

MD: Yes, the hope that her son would someday become President of the United States was a great aspiration with her. She felt his tremendous devotion to his country was the main thing that would qualify him for the job, and many times during that period of time she would say to me, "I feel

certain that someday he will be President." I, too, during that time, was quite optimistic that he would become President, and we talked about the possibility quite often. She was quite certain about it.

PB: She had no doubts about it?

MD: Oh, no, she had no doubts at all.

PB: I imagine, Miss Delafield, that the relationship that you had with Mrs. Johnson became quite personal after a time, with your frequent visits to her house. Did she ever indicate to you that you were the one that she wanted to deal with?

MD: Yes. One time during a period when I was very, very busy, she had some work to be done that she needed very quickly. I asked one of the typists who worked for me to go out to her house and pick up the material and type it and return it to her. She called me in a day or two and told me that if I personally couldn't do it, she would rather that I just wait until I could do the work. The lady had made some mistakes on the material and the way I had always worked with her, if there was anything wrong we always corrected it and returned it to her. Also I had become so accustomed to the kind of typing we were doing that it was a little easier for me than somebody else who was not used to it. She was very gracious

about the matter and said she would prefer to wait and have it done later by me.

PB: Mrs. Johnson did not type herself, then? Was the material she gave you in handwritten form?

MD: Sometimes it was and then occasionally it was from a carbon copy. Some member of her family did some typing. It was sort of a rough draft, I guess you might say. So some of the material was typed. But Mrs. Johnson was very particular about any erasures, as she should have been, because these went to members of her family or to certain other people, and she wanted it done in good style--in good form. And she had a certain form that we followed exactly. It was a little different from some of the usual genealogical forms. Naturally, I tried my best to do this work as she wanted it.

PB: Did you ever get around to talking about anything like her philosophy of life?

MD: Well, she was a very determined, hard working person. Her main interest at the time I knew her, was to finish this work. I'm sure she was aware that her illness might put a time limit on her and she felt she had to get this done before something happened to prevent her finishing. She wrote letters constantly to obtain the information and to be sure that it was correct and then she would



check and recheck and spent many long and hard hours to get it just exactly right. She was dedicated to this and determined to get it finished.

PB: Would you be able to give us a physical description of Mrs. Johnson?

MD: Yes, I think so. Mrs. Johnson was a rather tall person, very strong looking with strong features. Her hair had just a tinge of reddish tone in it, although it was grayish. She was well built, a real lady, and she always moved with great agility and speed. She had a very aristocratic bearing. Her voice and manner were at all times kind and considerate. She would always get to the business at hand first--get it out of the way--then after this was completed we had many friendly chats--sort of off-the-record, you might say. She knew exactly what and how she wanted things done and they had to be accurate and precise.

PB: During this period, when she would report to you on the comings and going of Mr. Johnson, who was either a representative or a senator; I guess he was a senator during the entire period when you had contact with Mrs. Johnson, did you ever have an opportunity to meet him?

MD: No sir, I never did. I felt like I knew him from all of our many conversations about him, but I never did meet him.

PB: Did she ever say to you that he was a good boy or a smart boy?

MD: Oh, yes.

PB: He always came to see her when he came to Austin, didn't he?

MD: Yes, oh yes.

PB: And then she would tell you about it?

MD: That's right. These visits were a very high point in her life at that time and sometimes she would just call to tell me that he had been here, and she was very happy when he came to see her.

PB: She sort of used you as a confidante, to talk about those things.

MD: I'm sure she had many close friends, but since she knew that I'd done the typing about the family and knew so much about the family, I guess she felt that she could talk freely to me. She was such a wonderful woman and I enjoyed talking to her very much.

PB: Did you ever talk to her about your troubles?

MD: Yes, I talked to her about many things. She was very surprised to find out I was in a wheelchair the first time I typed for her. I frankly forget I am in a wheelchair and I had forgotten to mention that.

PB: Well, it's not necessary for you to mention it.

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MD: No, but I did ..... well, sometimes I would say I was kind of tired from typing or something like that-- just minor problems.

PB: This family tree work that you did for Mrs. Johnson-- I believe the various information that you worked with her on was made into a small book, is that correct?

MD: It was, yes, later on. What we did for her was made into a number of different volumes, I guess you would call them. Then she had a great deal of loose material that she was going to go through and revise. She did have some unfinished revisions right there at the end. Especially on the large family tree. We had one that traced it ..... we had a huge sheet of paper and that was where the Winston Churchill branch came in. And that was what we were going into next, when it ended.

PB: Miss Delafield, did you ever have any differences with Mrs. Johnson when you were working with her? Did she ever scold you for getting things wrong?

MD: No, not any at all. She was so considerate and if she wanted something done differently we would do it over. But she was always so pleasant and so considerate in our work. But then, she was always considerate in this way--if I had a great deal of work on hand to get done, she would try to give me more time. However, when a

birthday was coming up for one of the members of the family we had to get it ready for the birthday gift, you know, and so at that time we'd speed it up and have it ready when she wanted it. But she never said anything at all if we needed more time. She was a most pleasant person to work for.

PB: But she did have to have it exactly right.

MD: Yes. That's understandable. The dates had to be exactly right, the spelling of names--sometimes the copy that we would get might be a little wrong, perhaps, sometimes we'd make a little error and we always corrected it for her. She proofread it very well and we would go out and get it and go over it again. I always enjoyed my trips over there to see her because it gave me a little outing away from the typewriter and then I enjoyed just going back to see her. She was quite an inspiration to me.

PB: Thank you, Miss Delafield, you've been very helpful.

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By Marjorie Anne Delafield

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Marjorie Anne Delafield

Date

January 13, 1969

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April 7, 1969