INTERVIEWEE: HELEN GAHAGAN DOUGLAS (Tape #1)

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

NOVEMBER 10, 1969

F: This is an interview with Helen Gahagan Douglas in her apartment in New York on November 10, 1969. The interviewer is Joe B. Frantz.

Mrs. Douglas, briefly run over your career, at least get you up until you become involved in politics.

D: I was born in Bonton, New Jersey. A mistake really...the train was late. Mother and father had taken a house in Bonton for the summer. Mother was returning to New York City for the arrival of her third child--me. But as I say, the train was late. Father and mother came of pioneer stock. Mother was born in Lodi, Wisconsin; father in Troy, Ohio. My mother's name was Lillian Rose Mussen; my father's, Walter Hammer Gahagan. My grandmother, Hannah Gahagan, spent many of her last years tracing the Gahagan geneology. Much of what was known about the Gahagan's did not have to be traced in Ohio as Gahagan history was well-known.

My great, great grandfather, William Gahagan was of Scotch-Irish decent. His family came to this country and settled in Pennsylvania where he was born in 1773. When he was 18 years old, he was a dispatch bearer for Mad General Anthony Wayne. He was one of a party of 15 to settle the city of Dayton, Ohio, in 1796. He married Nancy Hammer, the daughter of one of the settlers. In 1805, William and Nancy Gahagan moved some twenty miles from Dayton to land which was granted to him December 1, 1809 by James Madison. (see attached material)

F: They turned around and came East. They reversed it.

D: Yes. Well, father was a civil contracting engineer. He graduated from Boston Tech. He built railroads--many of the eastern railroads. When he was but thirty years old, he built the foundations for the Williamsburg Bridge. That was, I think, the first time that mother and father, after they were married, came to New York.

I went to a private school here in the East, Berkely Institute in Brooklyn...and then to Barnard College two years. I did not graduate. I went into the theater at the end of my sophmore year; became a star practically overnight...then left the theater to become a singer. I sang in opera about two years after I started to study, in Europe and later a number of times in the United States.

In 1929, when in Europe singing, word came from my family that father was dying, but did not know it. He had terminal cancer. I cancelled my engagements and returned home. David Belasco had offered me the star part in a play, TONIGHT OR NEVER. I had turned it down before leaving New York for Europe. I cabled Belasco and said if the part was not filled, I was returning home and would accept it. The play was my excuse so that father would not know why I returned so unexpectedly. Melvyn was my leading man. We were married a year later--a few months after the death of my father. We went to live in California because of Melvyn's interest in pictures. We toured the world in 1932. The hostility of Japan toward China was inescapable.

On returning home, I gave birth to our first child. Our second child was born in 1938.

I returned only briefly to the dramatic theater. In 1937, I again went to Europe to sing. 1937 was a very critical year. My reaction to what was happening in Europe had a profound influence on me. It changed the course of my life. Before I left Europe in 1937, I became convinced that war was inevitable--that the world would be engulfed in war--that Hitler and the Germans were planning war--And that no one would stop them.

F: Despite the pleasantness of the singing you could feel things coming on.

D: Oh yes, very definitely...and the tensions. In Prague, the concert hall manager requested that I eliminate all German songs from my program. If not, he feared there might be a very disagreeable reaction from the audience. The Czechs were so violently suspicious of the German rearmament program, so fearful of what the Germans were going to do; they hated everything German. They were right.

At the end of my tour in 1937, I gave a concert in Salzburg at the Festival, where I signed a contract to sing at the Vienna Opera the following fall. The Intendent of the Festival was also the head of the Vienna Opera House.

Before leaving Salzburg, I was convinced that many German and Austrian musicians, great ones too, were bedazzled by Hitler's Pan-Germanic dream; that they rationalized the Nazi philosophy--all of it, including anti-Semitism. I knew when I left Salzburg, I would not come back, I could not work with musicians who accepted Hitler.

When I came back to this country I was so upset by what I was sure was going to happen that I cancelled at once my contract with the Vienna Opera House. I did not return to Europe. Had I returned, I should have been at the Opera when Hitler's army marched into Vienna.

Then it was that for the first time really in my life I began to look around me and see what was happening politically. There was plenty happening in California, where I was living. There was strong anti-Nazi feeling. A committee had been formed--the Anti-Nazi League. I joined; my first political action. I became aware of the agricultural migrants who were coming into California by the tens of thousands. Moved by their plight, I became involved in efforts to improve their living conditions. So, little by little, without my intention that it be so, the direction of prime interest was changing. Up to this time, my whole being had been concentratedly devoted to the art of the theatre, despite my father's strong objections. The last thing he wanted was for one of his daughters to become an actress.

Although I was brought up in a family that was very public-minded (a long line of liberal Republicans, by the way), I, myself, was never interested in what was happening politically.

F: You were not identified with any party then?

D: Oh yes, I was a Republican. We were all Republicans! Every election mother took each of us by the ear and saw to it that we voted the Republican ticket.

In 1937-8, because of what was happening in Europe...conviction of impending war; failure on the part of so many to reject Nazi brutality, I gradually became involved with politics, which led to my election as

Democratic National Committeewoman in 1940 for the state of California. The same year, I became State Vice-Chairman...you know, we have a 50-50 law in California. I don't think anyone else has ever held both positions at once. I was the political leader of the Democratic women in California for four years. With the help of the women I named to assist me in running the women's division, we organized and launched a vigorous educational program covering domestic and foreign issues. The bombing of Pearl Harbor changed our program, as it did everything else. War became our first concern, but the California women did not stop studying; questioning how it had happened; how we could avoid another such catastrophe.

I was elected to Congress in 1944. I ran for this office to permit Congressman Tom Ford to retire. He had served 12 years. He was a very conscientous Congressman; a very strong supporter of Franklin Roosevelt. President Roosevelt urged me to run for Tom Ford's seat. The Democrats did not want to lose this vote and they didn't think anyone else could hold the district.

Mrs. Roosevelt had been in California shortly before I agreed to run. We were friends. I visited often in the White House. Mrs. Roosevelt warned me: "Helen, don't you run, no matter how you are urged to do so, unless you are sure you can win. I think Franklin would just like to have you in Washington."

At the last minute, I decided to make the race, to the consternation of the press. You see, I did not live in Tom Ford's district. I was elected. Melvyn was at the time already overseas serving in the India, Burma, China Theatre of war. He heard of my election first when he read about it in the Army Newspaper.

In 1950, I ran for the Senate to save the reclamation program for the far West, which was under constant attack by our Democratic Senator Sheridan Downey. I did not challenge Sheridan Downey in the Democratic primary because I was desirous of being the U. S. Senator, but because of his opposition to the reclamation program of the Department of the Interior. I challenged him on this issue. He was as destructive in his opposition as Joe McCarthy was later to the State Department. No one would challenge Downey and so I took it on, though I was offered many inducements not to run against him. I suppose being the daughter of a distinguished engineer had something to do with it. Perhaps I understood the Reclamation Program better than some, saw what it already meant to the people of our state...and what it could mean in the future. The primary had scarcely begun when Downey withdrew from the race. Manchester Body, the owner and editor of the Los Angeles Daily News, my friend and supporter, was chosen by those who supported Downey, to make the race against me. We learned later that a poll showed that I would probably have beaten Downey in the primary. I defeated Body three to one. The sleeper in the campaign was the issue of Tidelands Oil. Who was to have control of the oil reserves off the Coast of California, Louisiana and Texas...the Federal Government or those three States? I was the only member of the California Delegation to support the President and Supreme Court on the issue of Federal Control and Leasing rights. Under Federal control monies derived from oil leases would have been spent in poorer states to equalize educational opportunity. I voted against the bill that would have given control to the States. In the early part of the following year it was learned that Manchester Body was deeply indebted to oil interests.

In the finals, Richard Nixon and I contested one another. He won the election and went on the Senate. In the finals, the Tideland Vote was again a major factor, although not openly discussed by my opponent. The oil men could not afford to let me go to the Senate. They supported Richard Nixon in the finals. Remember, the reason I challenged Sheridan Downey in the Democratic primary, the reason I ran for the Senate, was to save the Reclamation Program. I was aware of the coming population explosion. I was privileged to attend a small luncheon at the White House given by Mrs. Roosevelt in 1942, for population experts. What was said at that luncheon made a very deep impression on me and caused me to study papers on the coming world population explosion. I believed then and I believe now that the servation of land, water, energy is vital to the well-being of life on this globe.

As National Committee woman, I had visited all the great western reclamation projects. Even on my way to Washington in 1944 to be sworn into the Congress, I visited the David Lilienthals. He took me through the area of the Tennessee Valley Authority.

F: Most of the west was already having water problems.

D: Yes. Large areas out there are desert unless they have water. That land was going to be needed...and we couldn't afford to be wasteful. So, I took on Downey. And to the extent that the program was saved, I think it was a wise decision.

And I think that's about it. Anything else you want to know?

F: I think that's fine on that. I could discuss your career with you at some length because I have always been very intrigued by it. Also, I'm on the National Parks Board and also come from Texas, which has a similar water problem. So, I'm very much a congenial spirit with you on this thing.

D: Well, yes, you know the redwood---

F: Water is our first resource.

D: Yes, over the years I have been receiving pamphlets on "SAVE THE REDWOOD" ...very discouraging...how long it takes to obtain Congressional action and voter support to stop the despoiling of human and natural resources. Over 20 years ago, I introduced a bill to save the redwoods. Nothing came of it. It was a bill that would have required lumbermen to scientifically cut the forests surrounding the redwoods so that the forests would continue to be a wind-break, protecting the ancient redwoods. The plan had been worked out by Gov. Gifford Pinchot, one of our great conservationists. That was really the last contribution he made to conservation. Walter Ruether's Union, the United Automobile Workers Union, put up the money to make the necessary study...maps, etc. Gov. Pinchot's plan was worked out in the greatest detail. Walter Reuther was a labor statesman. His contribution in support of farsighted bills was consistent, intelligent and public spirited. The plan was in no way punitive for the lumbermen. Following it, they would be guaranteed a continuous harvest of lumber. Nevertheless, the lumbermen in the northern part of the state were opposed to the bill--very antagonistic towards me. They did not think the government had any right to tell them how to cut their trees. When I ran for the Senate and went into the northern part of California, where the famous Redwoods are, my welcome was very hostile. I was guarded by those who supported me. They were truly anxious lest someone take a potshot at me. You see, the lumbermen wanted to go on cutting as they had cut before. They wanted to be let alone.

F: Destroying 500 years of growth.

D: The trees are older than that. There was no need to oppose the bill because it did not prohibit cutting; it required only that the cutting be carried out on a scientific basis.

F: You get discouraged sometimes on short range, but I think you can see enough--. I mean, in the case of the redwoods, in twenty-years--that the attitudes have changed enough to sort of force among others Ronald Reagan to accept, if not exactly to embrace, the whole redwoods idea.

D: Yes. There's a difference now, though, that we don't have as much time as we had before to make mistakes. We don't have as much time to lag in the facing of problems as we have had in the past. We've destroyed too much of our heritage and there are too many people here now. Destruction is geometric.

F: Let's go back to your political career now. You came to Congress then in what--the 79th Congress originally?

D: Yes, I was elected in '44, came in '45, and served until the end of '50.

F: Were you pretty soon acquainted with Lyndon Johnson--Congressman Johnson?

D: At once. Lyndon and I both came to the Congress as supporters of President Roosevelt. We were brought together on this basis. Melvyn had campaigned for Lyndon.

F: You hadn't known him before..

D: No. But Melvyn had. Melvyn had campaigned for Lyndon when he first ran for Congress at the request of President Roosevelt.

F: He had gone to Texas and campaigned?

D: Yes, he went down to Texas and campaigned. Lyndon and I were supporters of the New Deal. There was a difference however. My interest was primarily foreign policy...I had been interested in domestic matters, of course, that was what led to my being elected to Congress. My first involvement in a domestic issue was in support of the Farm Security Agricultural Department program designed to help migratory farm labor. Because of my interest and my desire to know why tens of thousands of farm families had taken to the road with their few worldly goods on top of their cars, I did the logical thing...I began to study not only Farm Security work, but the total Roosevelt Farm Program as well. This led me on logically to the study of other departments and programs. My involvement in agriculture was the result of personal experience...actually visiting with the migrants, seeing how they lived on the ditchbanks, and seeing what it meant to be able to move into a U. S. Government Security Camp. With few exceptions, my interested support of programs in the following years was the result of first-hand observation. As State Vice-Chariman, I arranged tours as part of a program designed to educate women by seeing and experiencing for themselves the need for corrective action.

As a result of this kind of work, President Roosevelt appointed me to the National Advisory Committee of the WPA. My work brought me to the attention of Aubrey Williams, Director of the National Youth Administration, and to many of the regional NYA people. I kept closely in touch with the work of the NYA. Many of those friendships have lasted through the years.

But, my prime interest, because of my own experience and that of Melvyn's was foreign policy. You know, Melvyn was active in California politics sometime before I was. He led the way for the participation of stars in politics. He helped elect Gov. Culbert Olsen in 1938. It was the first time a Democratic governor was elected in some 30 years or more. Gov. Olsen appointed Melvyn to the California Welfare Board, under the Chairmanship of Archibald Young. Melvyn was a delegate to the Democratic Convention in 1940. In order, I believe, to make sure he attented, I was made an alternate delegate. It was at that Convention that I was elected National Committeewoman.

F: Were you caught up at all in this Japanese relocation in California?

D: Yes, because I was National Committeewoman and State Vice-chairman. Yes, indeed! Also, President Roosevelt had appointed me Co-chairman of Civilian Defense. In California, we had a man and a woman heading Civilian Defense; I was the woman. Community problems related to the war came into my office.

Lyndon and I became friends in the Congress, as other supporters of Roosevelt became friends. I think I was more intimate with the Roosevelt family than Lyndon, but our political background was similar ...Roosevelt. He was the man in politics that we admired the most--President Roosevelt. The day of his funeral, I remember, we were both very depressed. Lyndon asked me to come up to one of his offices. He had more than one office, you know. Typical.

F: Even then.

D: This was typical, yes. We sat very quietly during the time of the funeral reminiscing about our President. In this way we became friends. Mutual admiration of President Roosevelt.

F: President Johnson has suggested that maybe reporters have overplayed his closeness to Roosevelt, that he was not as intimate as some people have suggested.

D: I don't know about that. I know that President Roosevelt was Lyndon's inspiration, and probably...I think...his model.

F: Did you see much of Mr. Sam in those days?

D: Yes, but not intimately, not personally, as Lyndon Johnson did, but I saw him and we were good friends.

F: Was he a good man to work with a woman Congressman?

D: Yes.

F: He has always seemed to me to be such a sort of man's man in the sense of getting together after hours with a group of men and just sitting and so forth.

D: That's right. But I found this to be true. If members respected you, you were taken seriously. If not, male or female, you were brushed aside.

There was, of course, a kind of intimacy among the men that no woman could share. And no woman did...not even Mary Norton who had been in the House of Representatives the longest at the time that I served. She was the second woman, I think to be elected to the Congress.

In the years 1945 to 1951, no woman expected to join Sam Rayburn's private luncheons at the Capitol. On the other hand, Mary Norton held her own in the House of Representatives. She was the equal of any man and better than most when she shepherded through that body major labor bills. She was respected greatly. Male or female, respect had to be earned.

F: Did you ever in these days discuss with Congressman Johnson his problems of representation? There's some feeling that he took more conservative stances, particularly in matter of civil rights, because he didn't think that he could continue to be a Congressman and represent that district--that it was, to say the least, negative in the field of civil rights. I think he may have underestimated it.

D: You mean he may have underestimated what Texas would support?

F: Yes.

D: I don't think one could ever be sure. I never was sure whether some of Lyndon Johnson's votes were cast out of conviction or what he thought Texas politics required...or what he thought his position in the Democratic party required. It was hard to tell. He never gave any indication as to why he voted a certain way.

You know, there was an elite in the House of Representatives made up of committee chairmen and key members of committees--ranking members usually, Congressmen who made the wheels go around, men who had seniority. Lyndon Johnson didn't have very much seniority when I came to the Congress, but he too was one of the elite. He was very close to those who did have seniority. You knew that he knew what was happening and when it would happen and how it would happen, not because he talked. I think he was one of the most close-mouthed men I ever knew. But it was his manner, and his sureness, and above all his friendship with the Speaker.

His friendship with Sam Rayburn set him apart. He conferred with him, he ate luncheon with him in his private dining room, and there were small conferences with men, just as you suggest. He visited him in his

home. Sam Rayburn visited Lyndon Johnson's home. Their families were close. He traveled with him back and forth to Texas. And it was because of this friendship, I believe, that Lyndon Johnson was privy to legislative planning and to the problems that plagued the Administration and therefore the Speaker of the House, Sam Rayburn, and the means that Sam Rayburn took to solve those problems--so that very early it was kind of an apprenticeship that he was privileged to experience that prepared him for his work in the Senate as Majority Leader and prepared him for the Presidency above all, working with the Congress.

He had an exceptionally fine mind...Lyndon Johnson...quick intellect. He learned fast, and Sam Rayburn helped him to learn fast about the Congress.

F: He gave him a larger view than he would have ordinarily.

D: Yes. Their friendship with Sam Rayburn opened the big field. A newcomer to Congress is not allowed to play on it. Most freshmen Congressmen do not even know it is there.

F: As a quite noticeable new member of Congress, you must have attracted a fair amount of attention at that time. Did Congressman Johnson take any special pains to get to know you and enlist you on the side of what he considered right legislation?

D: No. He never did that, and I don't know that he did that with any other member in the House.

F: He was not a kind of a greeter and enlister of new Congressmen?

D: Yes. I'll try to give you my picture of how he behaved a little later on. Lyndon Johnson came to Congress a man of action, I'm sure, and in a

hurry--in a great, great hurry. Ambitious, he was aggressive; energetic with a Texas background and a Texas education; and a provincial orientation. I think this was his strength and his limitation.

F: Texans don't always enjoy the best reputation. Was he dismissed as a kind of Texas clown, or was he looked on as a man to be reckoned with?

D: He was not dismissed in the House of Representatives.

F: He might irritate you, but--

D: He wasn't dismissed. He was a man warmly responsive to people. He cared about people; was never callous, never indifferent to suffering. Even if you disagreed with certain of his votes, you felt that about him. There was a warmth about the man. It was quite extraordinary how, dispite some of his votes, that the liberals whom he often scoffed at--and I suppose still does--nevertheless forgave him when they wouldn't forgive someone else.

There were two LBJ's, I think--the one ambitious, driving, alert, careful, calculating, secretive, seemingly with inexhaustable energy, sensitive to criticism, vain, an explosive temper that could erupt over the smallest details, a natural talent for organization, a listener--not a reader, a legislative director, organizer--not a legislative designer, an activist--not a planner. LBJ perfected the plans of others. He was an operator, and I say that in the best sense, not a creator.

F: In other words, if you have a design you go see him and--

D: He'll see what's good in it, and he'll see the bugs in it. And if there's anything good in it, he will take it.

F: And he'll tell you how to get it through.

D: But what I want to point out is that this was true in domestic matters where he had his own yardstick of experience and his own sensitivity to guide him. It wasn't true in foreign policy.

F: You were on the Foreign Affairs Committee.

D: Yes, from the beginning.

F: You hardly crossed paths with him there, I gather.

D: No, not at all.

F: He had very little interest in that field.

D: At times, he was moody and withdrawn. On many important votes, as I said before, it was impossible to know why he had voted a certain way, whether it was from conviction or political considerations. He was willing to make (the) compromises necessary, I believe, to guarantee that he stayed in the Congress. In fact, he made fun of those who refused to bend at all to conditions stacked against them, tnd therefore were out of the running before they hardly got started in the Congress. He wanted to stay on top in Congress and to stay in politics. And he wanted to play an active role at the head of the majority, not at the head of the minority.

F: He didn't want to go down fighting for lost causes.

D: No, sir. He respected power and the powerful. Yet nothing was too small in detail to elicit his interest.

F: He always, I gather, did his homework before he came to any sort of committee meetings.

D: Yes.

F: He was prepared.

D: Yes, and he was sure--I think this exhausted him as President. It was one of the weaknesses...that he was never really sure that things would go right unless he was in control of everything--everything! He tried to run...and succeeded to a remarkable extent...in running his house, his office, the Congress and, when he became President, the governmental departments. And then he tried to run the world, to police the world. His speeches when campaigning for the Presidency...and speaking off the cuff...were very often overblown, sentimental, even grandiose. He exaggerated in order to drive home a point. He very often exaggerated in his conversation with people; especially a group of liberals. He tended to exaggerate in order to drive home a point. He very often exaggerated oblique usually to what he was actually saying.

F: This must have led him into an occasional contradictory quotation that he could be damned with.

D: Yes and no. Because there was so much honor behind it. You could never be sure that he wasn't fooling or, on the other hand, that he wasn't dead serious. There was always a kind of disparaging humorous jibing in dialogue with him. He protected himself in not being serious and having serious discussions. He could say, if need be, he was just kidding, though to my knowledge, he never did.

I think that those extemporaneous speeches of the President, the ones he made in Asia, the ones he made at home, are worth studying because I think they do tell something about him. I'm sure historians will study them.

On the other hand, his actions were always considered, cautious, and conservative, even though his goals sometimes were very large--

as they were when he became President. The way he approached those goals was very considered, very cautious, very conservative.

One of his thoughts that he expressed in one of his important speeches--it was a carefully considered speech--I think revealed something about his thinking and about his character that prepared the tragedy of Viet Nam. You'll remember in one of his speeches--I wasn't able to put my fingers on it or I'd give you the exact quote, but it is easy enough to find-- --when he, talking of our country and what we were able to do, said that we were richer and more powerful than any empire in the history of the world and that we could carry out whatever we had to do in foreign affairs and, at the same time, do what was needed at home. Well, this led him, you see, to believe we could carry on the Viet Nam war and go on with the building of the Great Society at home. It showed where his response to power and his response to the capacity of power to drive through enormous difficulties played him false. There's a limit to what power can do. There's a limit to what wealth can accomplish. I think that speech was very revealing.

Lyndon Johnson, as you know, was publicity minded. He saw to it that everything he did was publicized...reported.

F: Even back there in those days he was reported?

D: Oh yes. As far as he was able, it would be reported the way he wanted it reported. He enjoyed letting others know how good he was. Justice [Wm.] O. Douglas has said recently of Lyndon Johnson--and he was one of his close friends, certainly at that time when he was in the House of Representatives--that he was a sentimental patriot--a gambler. He said

this when he was talking about Viet Nam with a gathering of scholars. Certainly I don't think that Lyndon was a gambler.

F: Almost an old-fashioned sort of patriotism, wasn't it?

D: Yes. Uncritical. He was certainly not one to examine the motives of the United States' foreign policy too critically. He suffered, I think, from the national malaise, the belief that we are the good people, that anything we do is prompted by the highest of motives. If eternal vigilance is the price we must pay for retaining our liberty, certainly eternal self-examination is the price we must pay if we are to remain a good people; the kind of people we believe we are...at <u>all times</u> and under <u>all circumstances</u>.

In the past we have thought of ourselves as a just nation...proud of the fact that we have been a beacon to struggling peoples. Now, I wonder! Did the bomb change us! Are we unable to live in the nuclear age and retain our virtue? We have the power of the sun in our hands... but wisdom lags far behind. If we, the "good people" dropped the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, how can we trust anyone ever again? Is that it? Franklin Roosevelt warned us we had "nothing to fear but fear itself." How true today. Our leaders starting with President Harry S. Truman and Dean Acheson thought we could police and run the world. It all began in Greece and Turkey when we betrayed the United Nations and ourselves. Fear was deliberately used by the Administration, by the Congress, at that time to generate the peoples' support. Senator Arthur Vandenberg put it bluntly to Truman when he advised him "to scare Hell out of the American people."

In the succeeding years, "fear" has been the motivating factor. Apparently, there is no limit to the "arrogance of power." Anyway, I don't think we can take for granted that we're always a good people ...not any more...not after the tragedy in South East Asia.

The other side of Lyndon Johnson...he was every man's friend... congenial, willing to go out of his way to be helpful to new members of Congress, to his friends. He was objective and understanding of dissent. He liked his colleagues. He wanted his colleagues to like him--and they did. He never seemed to be mean, small, ugly, angry. He used sharp, joking sarcasm, as I said, to get his points across. This was part of the keenness of his mind. And he worked this way... obliquely. He learned how to manipulate his peers...and he did. That's the way he worked in the Congress.

F: I judge he could be devilishly charming in those days.

D: Yes. And in the process he devoted infinite pains and attention and time to the details of trivial matters, as well as important ones. He didn't become one of the greatest figures ever to work in the Congress of the United States accidentally. It was his entire life.

Lyndon Johnson was not one of those Congressmen, when important bills came to the floor, who wasn't there. He never left the Congress to make speeches, as most of the other members did. He was not somewhere in the country when he was needed there in the House of Representatives, or in the Senate of the United States. Congress was his field of operation, month-in and month-out; day and night it was his field of operation.

He never spoke in the House, you know, except on rare, rare occasions. He didn't spend much time listening to others in the House. He usually voted and then left the chamber, loping off the floor with that great stride of his as though he was on some Texas plain. If he did remain, he looked the picture of boredom, slumped in his chair with his eyes half-closed. Then suddenly he'd jump to his feet and--

F: You'd swear he wasn't listening.

D: That's right. Then suddenly he'd jump to his feet, nervous. He had nervous energy, though he wasn't nervous...but restless, as if he couldn't bear it another minute. He might stop to speak to some member on the floor of the House or to the Speaker, if the Speaker was in the chair, or if we were not in the committee of the whole, to the chairman. Then he'd leave. He always gave the impression of someone in a hurry.

And yet he was a good listener. He learned by listening. Experts were his friends, and he sent for them regularly when he wanted to know something about any given topic or issue that was coming up before the Congress. If he wanted to know about Social Security, for instance, he's send for Elizabeth Wickenden (sp), a friend of both of ours--a very close friend.

I was invited to visit and study the organization of Congressman Johnson's office when I first came to Congress. I was having a little trouble with the woman I had chosen to head my office, and was about to make a change. So he said, "Well, come up and see how my office is run." That was shortly after I came to Congress. Which again shows his thoughtfulness and the extent...

F: It also shows his confidence in the way he's running his office.

D: Yes confidence and he was proud of the way he ran his office. There wasn't any office like it in the Congress, I'm sure. It was an office that was unbelievably efficient, industrious--well, there were other industrious offices--but the efficiency of this office and the extent that they went to reach, under his direction, the lives of his constituents in an intimate way was something that utterly fascinated me, and I think is worth remembering. For instance, every birth, every graduation was noted, and some card--some recognition of that came from the Congressman to them. I'm not sure that every marriage and every death wasn't noted also. I've forgotten, but I do remember that births and graduations were remembered. Now, imagine! Throughout his whole district! That was one little activity of his office; he loved it. He'd show you pictures of children, children named after him. He liked that, too. I was struck by the fact that this relationship between the Congressman and his constituents was paternalistic, and that he welcomed the affection that paternalism won for him. He seemed to need it.

F: A little bit of the great white father.

D: Yes. He needed to feel close to the people. He needed to feel their affection. And I think that was part of his burden and his tragedy when he came to the White House and became so involved in the war in Viet Nam to the exclusion of everything else that it separated him from the people.

F: He couldn't stay close to 200,000,000 constituents.

D: No, but he would have tried to if it had not been for the war. There's no question in my mind that he would have tried and would have remarkably succeeded. I think he did reach the people right at the first of his Administration in a very fatherly way.

After Nagasaki and Hiroshima security became the issue--how to achieve it. That was and still is the question, and that's the challenge. And it was the challenge then. Taxpayers have been asked to contribute one trillion dollars since the end of the war for military hardward, but we don't have any security today. We have less security than we had fift fifteen years ago. The atomic bomb, the first bomb, made war obsolete as the instrument of foreign policy, and yet we and others go on making weapons that, if they're ever used in nuclear war, will wipe life off the planet. It's the arms themselves, as Philip Noel-Baker, the Nobel Peac Prize winner said, that creates the daners against which we're supposed to arm. All the nations have agreed that disarmament is not only desirable, but essential if man is ever again to feel safe in this world. The United Nations has passed resolutions supporting general and complete world disarmament. Heads of government the world over have agreed that only in a disarmed world has man any right to believe in his survival. In 1962 the two most powerful nuclear powers, as you'll remember, the United States and the Soviet Union, submitted to the Committee of Eighteen at Geneva draft treaties on general and complete disarmament, and there the matter rests. We go on pouring our resources into the arms race, guaranteeing the inevitable end.

The Arms Race is dehumanizing. The containment policy spawned the Arms Race. The Arms Race led to the Cold War in Europe and the Hot War in Southeast Asia. I believe that the war in Southeast Asia is the greatest tragedy our country has ever suffered.

Lyndon Johnson in the House of Representatives was not a leader in foreign affairs. It is important to remember that, although he almost always supported post-war administration programs, I do not remember his discussing foreign policy very often. I do remember how proudly he talked about his support of certain military measures at the beginning of the war.

F: You were very active at the close of the war in trying to work out some sort of viable arrangement on this new-found atomic knowledge and the utilization of atomic energy, and trying to cool the cold war before it developed.

D: It is important to remember, I think, that Lyndon Johnson did not play a leading role in the immediate post-war years in foreign affairs.

F: Congressman Johnson never really talked with you on this at this stage?

D: Yes, of course...but he gave no indication that the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki had ushered in a new age...that atomic power had so changed the nature of war as to make it obsolete, non-productive.

Lyndon Johnson's orientation in the House was military. He was a key figure on the Naval Affairs Committee, under the chairmanship of Carl Vinson. When the two committees, the Naval Affairs Committee and the Military Affairs Committee, were joined in 1947, (I think it was), he served on that combined committee. He was a power on that committee.

I wonder, did his work on military matters condition and influence his thinking as President? In a crisis, did he depend on his own best judgment or was he guided by the advice of the Pentagon? Was he ever in command of foreign policy? What ddd he think would best protect the United States? Arms or peace? On what did he think the future well-being

of the people of the United States depended? World cooperation or United States domination of the world? What group did he seek out when undecided, perplexed? Was it always the military; always the powerful with vested interests around the world? I don't know. I think these are questions worth asking.

F: This is a question I'd like to hear your comment on, and that is it seemed to me that the people on the Military Affairs Committee tend to be pro-military; the people, for instance, on such committees as the House Un-American Affairs Committee are very much the super-patriots etc. etc. Does committee work attract the kind of person who is going in that direction, or is there kind of an educational process from serving on a committee that makes a person orient himself toward a sort of majority feeling? In other words, does he become a captive of the committee?

D: Both, I think. When a Congressman goes to Washington, he requests certain committees, so there is some preference expressed. I was put on the Foreign Affairs Committee because I asked to be on the Committee. My family, the Gahagans, supported the League of Nations (supported the U.N) and believed the cooperation of nations was essential for the maintenance of peace. I was widely traveled, even as a child. In 1932, Melvyn and I went around the world, it took us almost a year. In the pre-war days, Melvyn was very active as a member of the William Allen White Co. and the Fight for Freedom Co. I, too, though not as active, was a member of the Fight for Freedom Co. We closely followed world affairs and were interested in the art and social patterns of other peoples.

F: Your viewpoint was international.

D: Yes. And that was my preference.

Now, Lyndon was very proud of the fact that he served in World War II for a short time, but then any male might be proud of that. But it wasn't something that he took for granted.

The work of every committee is connected with some Department of government. A member comes to know those in a given Department with whom they are closely associated in the work of the Committee...more intimately than departments with whom they have no regular contact. Friendships are made that may well effect the thinking of a given member. For instance, the Military Affairs Committee is better acquainted with those in the Pentagon than someone on the Agriculture Committee. The thinking of members is often influenced by that fact. This has been especially true of those on the Military Affairs Committee both in the House and in the Senate. In these post-World War II years. The members of Congress have not had the research capacity needed to question the requests of the military. The result has been a positive response to every Pentagon request.

Everyone in the military, of course, wasn't in favor of the military involvement in Vietnam. Some of our key military figures strongly advised against it. Others objected to the way the war was conducted. Some, as the war dragged on, thought we ought to cut our losses and get out of Vietnam. All military men don't think alike. Among the military there are differences.

Was it faith in the military, in the wisdom of the Pentagon, that led Lyndon to continue support of the outmoded "containment policy"?

Was he so preoccupied with military affairs that it prevented him from becoming aware of the changes and devopments throughout the world in the last twenty years? I don't know.

F: These are unanswerable questions.

D: Was it faith in the military that led him to intervene in Vietnam, in a civil war. I personally think so. A war that was against everything that he did and believed in at home. I often imagine the scene he might have had with military leaders...He was vain of his ability to get things done; scornful of those who couldn't get things done; boggled things. That's why he was so impatient whenever minor things went wrong. And when be became President, it was the same. He wanted to be a great President. In fact, maybe he wanted to be the greatest President that ever sat in the White House. He certainly worked at it. It wasn't that he wanted to be a great President and then didn't do anything about it. He worked at it all the time. Why did he so misjudge what we could and could not do in Southeast Asia?

I wonder, did he oversimplify U. S. involvement in Southeast Asia? Was it just another messy problem that could be cleared up quickly if properly handled? Did he call in his friends in the military and demand: "What's going on in Vietnam? You've got experts out there. Why don't you clean up this mess? How many more Administrations will it take for you to finish the job? Have these poor miserable little people, running around with no shoes on their feet, backed the U. S. military in a corner? You've got the weapons, the manpower; you've got everything you've asked for. Why don't you finish this little backyard skirmish in Vietnam?

I wonder, did Lyndon Johnson's questioning follow some such line?

And I can just imagine the military replying: "Well, Mr. President, we have the manpower and weapons, but we don't have them in Vietnam. We have not been given the authority to run this war...and the South Vietnamese can't. We can do nothing until we have men in Vietnam and the authority to take over."

Well, all right, now you have the authority! How long is it going to take you?

Some simplistic approach such as that may have been the beginning of the trap that closed around him. It's as Senator Fulbright says... "he "arrogance of power." Power has limits. It cannot do everything in the world. So, I ask myself: did he become intoxicated with the pwoer of the United States when he became President.

He was not indifferent to the suffering of the Vietnamese people, but he could not relate to them as he did to his own people. He was sincere in his desire for peace in Southeast Asia, but he went about it the wrong way. I don't think he really trusted the United Nations, though I don't remember his ever saying so.

I think he wanted to end successfully U. S. military involvement in Asia; wanted to show that he could do something the other Presidents couldn't do...get it over with; clean it up; get it out of the way. And that pushed aside proper concern and proper study of the U. S. military goals in Asia of the two previous administrations; prevented him from understanding the people of Southeast Asia. Lyndon couldn't have failed so at home. One only has to study his speeches of the American people in the first two years that he was in office after the death of Kennedy when he stated again and again what is needed to make a good society. Just the opposite of those conditions in Vietnam that

lead to a civil war...just exactly the opposite.

But he wasn't thinking in human terms...next-door neighbor terms. He was thinking in military terms. He was thinking of cleaning up a bad, possibly explosive, situation. This nagging business in Vietnam had to be ended...quickly and ended our way. The military could do it easily.

F: This was just a stump that was in the way of the plow.

D: Yes, it was just one of the things he had to do; one of the things he had to do. And then, there was his own image to think about. He was the man who could get things done and he was going to end this affair in Vietnam, painful as it would be. I suppose his paternalistic way of thinking of little people helped him rationalize the suffering he must have known his decision to send combat troops to Vietnam would cause. He knew what was best fo them...he knew what was needed. He never doubted the capacity of the United States military to end the war in Vietnam... to clean it up...get it over with. After it was all over, he would make things right with the people of Vietnam. The Texas boy's paternalism and grandiose approach to life was evident even in the darkest days of his administration. He sent experts to Southeast Asia and to Vietnam to see what project would be needed to help the farmers when the war was over. He planned great reclamation projects...

F: The Mekong Delta was going to be another Tennessee Valley.

D: That's it. After the war was over, he planned to repair and rebuild Vietnam; raise the living standards of the people, not only in Vietnam, but in all of Southeast Asia. You must remember one of his speeches he made to this effect. Surely this was one of his overblown statements suggesting ambition gone wild. But, on the other hand, it did show what he really wanted to do. And, I suspect, thought he could to some extent succeed in doing.

A trust in the military rather than reasoned diplomacy showed up in Lyndon's Asian policy. He was going to use force to straighten things out in Vietnam. He was going to end the trouble there. We had the power to do it. Do you remember that in one of his speeches he told us that the United States was more powerful than any empire that had ever been in the world? Well, what do you do with your power, let it set around on a shelf? Decay? Or do you set things right in the world.

In the United States in designing domestic plans, his personal experience and first-hand knowledge of conditions served him well as a yardstick. When he listened to advise and recommendations of experts on domestic matters, he was able to weigh what was said and make wise decisions.

In foreign policy it was another matter. He didn't have his own yardstick. He didn't have first-hand experience. A few trips to foreign countries did not give him the knowledge required for wise foreign policy decisions when he became President...and bringing home a camel-driver doesn't help.

He wasn't well read; he wasn't conversant with the lives of other people. This hadn't been his field. And you don't acquire such knowledge by voting for a new foreign bills.

On the other hand, after the tragic murder of President Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson of Texas showed his metal. He was magnificent in that hour of tragedy. We were in California at the time. Melvyn was making a picture there. We have many close friends in California. A nmmber came to us at once on hearing of the tragedy. We sat in silence around the television set, watching picture after terrible picture of our national tragedy. Someone asked me, "What's going to happen now?"

"Of one thing I am sure," I replied, "We have heard the last frank press conference."

Lyndon Johnson will have no frank press conferences." He was incapable of opening himself to the press; incapable because he didn't trust what they would do with what he said, or that they would understand what he was saying. And, he wouldn't want to say it all. He was just constitutionally incapable of opening up and being as frank as apparently Kennedy was.

But in those first hours he was fully in control. Remarkable, remarkable! It showed the extraordinary quality of this man. And, as you look back, [it] heightened the tragedy that he wasn't able to finish out the years that were rightfully his in the Presidency of the United States, to do what he should have been able to do for the country, and I would have hoped for peace. He restored confidence in those hours, and you know it might have been a time of panic throughout the country as well as around the world. He helped ease the national pain and the national distress. He was throughtful, solicitous, courteous. And Lady Bird is no less deserving of appreciation, of praise for her response to the personal tragedy of the Kennedys and her awareness of the national confusion and despair.

In the next two years--everything seemed to go right, didn't it! Just everything seemed to go right.

F: It must have been intoxicating years to have been there at the center.

D: It must have been. And, you know, everywhere you went the ready phrase on so many lips was, "He's going to be a great President. He's

going to be a great President." It was an extraordinary expression in the way that it was given. It almost said, "I didn't think he would, I never really liked him, but by golly, he has got it. He's a man and he's tremendous!" And so I think the disappointment was all the more acute. I know those who were friends of Lyndon Johnson couldn't believe what was happening in Viet Nam; couldn't believe that he wouldn't stop it; couldn't believe that he wouldn't get out right up to almost the last year and a half. He had to see it! He would see it. And I think that's the question for the historians -- why he didn't; why he couldn't.

In 1964 I believe the President when he said we shouldn't send American boys to fight in Asia, to do the work that Asian boys ought to do for themselves. The question has been asked over and over again, "Did he deliberately lie to the voters, or did he believe what he said." I don't know. It's impossible for one to know, for anybody to know, I think, except Lyndon Johnson--not even Lady Bird perhaps. And it's possible Lyndon Johnson doesn't know any more. It's possible he so talked himself into the necessity for him to do what he did in Viet Nam that he doesn't understand any more why he went in it the first place.

The Congressional Record of October 13--just now this year--carries a statement of Senator Gore's. Did you see it?

F: No.

D: Do you mind if I just read it into this?

F: No.

D: This is a recounting of his visit to Lyndon Johnson before Lyndon Johnson sent U. S. troops to Viet Nam. It took place in a discussion on Viet Nam on the floor of the Congress, as I say, this October.

"I suggest to the able Senator that the credibility of our whole Democratic system is being put to a severe test. Mr. Lyndon Johnson was elected President of the United States under commitment to the American people, a promise, that American boys would not be sent into a land war in Asia to do what Asian boys should do for themselves. Shortly after his election I learned that plans were underway to send combat forces to View Nam. I went to the White House in an effort to dissuade President Johnson from committing ground troops to a land war in Asia. He reviewed the war with me. To make it brief, he said that President Eisenhower had sent advisers, that President Kennedy had sent advisers, technicians, and aides, but that this was not enough, and that he, President Johnson, must either withdraw advisers, technicians, and aides, or send in combat troops. And then he made a very pointed remark to me, which I quote: 'I am not going to be the first President to run.' I did not think that should be the question. I thought the question was the adoption of a wise policy for the United States under these conditions."

And then Senator Gore goes on to compare what the present President is saying, Richard Nixon, and he quotes him as saying:

"I am not going to be the first American President to preside over a defeat."

And Senator Gore concludes with:

"That should not now be the question either. But after these two commitments to the American people (showing that President Nixon also said that he would stop the war in Asia), President Nixon is now pursuing the same policy and making the same defense for policies and failures as did President Johnson."

Then Senator Gore asks the question:

"What are the American people to do?"

And I think that's where President Johnson left us, with that question, "What are the American people to do." His answer was a noble one. He said, "I am not going to run again, so you can choose somebody else." Now, there were many reasons, I'm sure, that went into his thinking, beside the ones he gave in his address to the American people for not running again. But he withdrew He withdrew to let the American people then decide what they were going to do.

F: The decision wasn't very successful.

D: No, the decision was not.

I think I'd like to say a word about the Presidency, as I see it and judge it. The daily pressures there are unremitting, intensely exhausting. There's no way to escape daily events at home or around the world. A President is under constant danger of being manipulated by events unless he's on solid ground. In order to hew to his own course, he must have a design and a conviction strong enough to keep him on course.

I believe that President Johnson insisted on his policy in Southeast Asia perhaps against all and every opposition because he thought he was hewing to his course. In reality, I think events

were manipulating him. I think he was trapped in Viet Nam because of his ignorance of what was happening around the world. Had he really understood I think he would have behaved quite differently. All the failures of the post-war period, and there were many--domestic and foreign...they hatched on the doorstep of Lyndon Johnson's Administration. I think he took those failures and wove them into a cloak...he threw around his own shoulders...they suffocated him.

As the tragedy of Viet Nam grew in size, as the importance of his Asian policy turned against him, as the country became more and more divided, as there was less and less money, as time ran out in which to build the Great Society, Lyndon Johnson, the President, became more and more isolated from the people he loved and the people whose love he had to have. And yet, he relentlessly pursued his Asian policy, even sacrificing his second term of office and all that it might have meant for himself, for the country, and perhaps even for peace. Historians no doubt, and psychologists, will try to understand why this man, with his fine brain and his instinctive decency, could not face the facts in Viet Nam, could not admit that he had been wrong.

F: You've given us something to ponder over there.

D: There was a conflict in Southeast Asia for the 36th President which he could not resolve. He wanted to be remembered as a great President, one who could get things done, and above all, one who's administration showed how much he cared for the well-being of people.

And so, there was a point beyond which, being the man he was, he could not authorize greater military force, because of what that would mean for the helpless, homeless, men, women and children who had become victims of the war he had unleashed.

He had come to a dead end! I believe the war in Southeast Asia, for Lyndon Johnson, came to be mental and emotional torture. He was trapped and his incompacity to admit that his policy had failed would not allow him to break free.

F: That was a very eloquent summation of Johnson and the war. Let's turn back now to some of your personal relationships and other incidents dealing with Mrs. Johnson on the home scene.

D: One incident I remember--I had traveled to New York...I've forgotten why.. with the Johnsons for some occasion, some dinner or something.

F: This is while you were in Congress?

D: While I was still in Congress, yes...and before Melvyn and I had our apartment in New York. Melvyn was still overseas. We (the Johnsons and I) were staying at the same hotel. We went up to the Johnson suite first. It wasn't the suite that Lyndon had arranged for.

He got on the phone to the manager and shouted his disapproval. His sudden display of temper (you will remember I spoke of his temper earlier) was, to me, so unexpected, so unlike anything I would have thought him capable. I remember I was absolutely shocked for days afterwards. I could not believe anybody could get that angry because an accomodation wasn't right...wasn't what was ordered.

I think the Johnson temper people talked about when he was in the White House came from the fact that very often he was truly exhausted. I remember talking to Philip Noel-Baker in Europe just after Johnson was elected.

He said: "I hope you will tell the President that one of the serious mistakes of some of the great men in Europe (and he believed Lyndon Johnson was a great man...would make a great President) was that they didn't rest enough. They didn't take time to get off and think about what they were doing...what the really big issues were. They were so driven by the day-to-day routine problems that they never lived up to their potentialities."

I think Lyndon's temper was not so much an expression of character that busted wide open now and then as it was an indication of the man's fatigue that didn't ordinarily show. There wasn't any way of telling that he was fatigued, when he was fatigued, completely exhausted.

F: Because he never admitted it.

D: He never admitted it and he behaved the same whether well rested or not. As you know, he would collapse at the end of campaigns. He would go full steam ahead until he couldn't go any more.

F: I've been interested. I don't believe he ever had a campaign that he didn't get sick during it.

D: No. He drove himself to the end of his capacity. And you know he may have driven himself by the end of his term in office to the end... to the limit of his capacity; may have driven himself so hard as he pursued an illusive victory in Southeast Asia that, finally, he could no more. That's possible, too.

There's an incident that is revealing of his character and of the way he behaved in Congress and of our friendship as well. John Rankin of Mississippi and I locked horns every now and then. In fact, I was the only member of the House of Representatives who dared lock horns with Rankin. I'm sure that it was not courage, but recklessness.

F: It wasn't your lifelong profession either.

D: In any case, this particular day Rankin was making a speech and waving his hand at a group of freshmen Congressmen seated in the same area. It happened to be my class. I was president of the class. This was the first year I was in Congress; the first term. I was president of the Congressmen who were elected in 1944. Most of us were liberals. Rankin was waving his hand at us and saying: "These Communists; these Communists!" I have an Irish temper that explodes every now and then -- not from fatigue, but from outrage. I suddenly stood up and said: "I demand to know, Mr. Chairman, if the gentlemen from Mississippi is addressing me!" Rankin stopped short, but refused to answer...and went on with his speech. Then there aas a lot of movement in the chamber. I saw the man to my left pushed out of his seat by Wright Patman, who sat down beside me. There was a scuffling of feet outside. I kept repeating, "I demand to know, Mr. Chairman, if the gentlemen from Mississippi is addressing me!" I couldn't say "is addressing us." I had to make it a personal matter.

We were in Committee of the Whole. Someone went to get the Speaker because I had raised a point of order. If a point of order is raised, then the Speaker must be in the chair. The Speaker came in. We were now in the Committee of the Whole. The Speaker was no sooner seated that Lyndon's tall frame was seen running through the door and up the three steps where the Speaker sat at his desk. He leaned down and whispered to him. Wright Patman was whispering to me. "Stand still, Helen. Don't say a word, Helen. He has to answer you, Helen. Just don't say any more. Just stand where you are."

I really felt at that moment that I was right in supposing that Texas ran the Congress. The Speaker banged his gavel and said: "You will answer the gentlewoman from California." Rankin didn't answer. "You will answer the gentlewoman from California." Now, he had to answer me. Under the rules of the House, you are not allowed to impugn the integrity of a member. The Speaker said again: "You will answer the gentlewoman from California." And so, finally, the gentlemen from Mississippi responded. He had to say, "No, I was not addressing the gentlewoman from California."

Well, afterwards Lyndon told me that he had been drinking coffee in the lunchroom and someone came downstairs and said, "Douglas is at it with Rankin on the floor of the House and it's going to be a donnybrook." So, he ran upstairs and talked to his friend, Sam Rayburn. What he said to Sam Rayburn is interesting and amusing. "Who's running this Congress?" he asked Sam. Everybody was afraid of Rankin -- afraid of his power, afraid of his tongue and afraid of his ruthlessness. And yet I must say Rankin was quite marvelous on reclamation. I always found myself working hand-in-glove with him on reclamation.

F: You could get in that situation.

D: That's right. I was appointed by President Truman as an alternate delegate to the Assembly of the United Nations. At the end of that session, I had been invited to give a number of lectures on the structure of the United Nations. It was a very scholarly and dull lecture, may I say. I accepted because I thought it was important to get word of the United Nations around the country. One of the states that had invited me to come to them was Texas. The League of Women Voters invited me to address them in Dallas and the teachers invited me to address them

in Austin. You remember that?

F: I remember that. I was there.

D: Well, then, you know the story. Just before I came...remember the fracas that developed? The state legislature was considering a bill to increase the pay of the teachers. The League of Women Voters had been supporting that bill. They (the Legislature) told the teachers that if they had me come and speak to them, they would not pass the bill. They were opposed to me because of my leadership in the field of civil rights. The same problem was raised for the League of Women Voters. They had worked hard for many years for an increase in the teacher's pay.

Well, to make a long story short, I said, "There is no problem. I won't come. I won't come to Texas at all." And they said, "Oh, but you must come, because we must not give in this way to the legislature. You must come. We will only change sponsorship of the lectures that you will give. But you must come."

Lyndon heard I was going to Texas. He took great pains to contact his people there; his closest friends in Dallas to look after me and to give me any help that was needed. He must have had a warning that something might happen in his State of Texas. In any case, the League of Women Voters did not present me in Dallas. My dear friend with whom I had gone to college, Minnie Mae Fleming, was supposedly the hostess. But, in fact, it was the League of Women Voters. The dinner was held in a big hotel. The ballroom was jam-packed, the guests were bored to death, I am sure, with my lecture. It just couldn't have been duller.

Then I had to go to Austin for my next lecture. What was the name of the preacher there? The reactionary preacher there in Austin? He was known throughout the country.

F: It was Criswell up in Dallas.

D: No, no, in Austin. He had something to do with a strike-breaking at the Ford plant in Detroit. He was supposed to have sent in strike breakers.

F: I don't recall.

D: He was a national figure. His name escapes me. In any case, the teachers could not sponsor me. They turned to the Democratic Party. The Democratic Party welcomed the opportunity to sponsor the lecture. But again, I suppose because of the Legislature, there appeared to be no available place for me to speak in Austin, Whereupon the strike-breaking preacher offered his church to the Democrats. You see, I believe in freedom of speech." And with that, it was reported that he left town. The preacher's church wasn't at all like a church. It was a great hall, enormous, ugly. It held an overflow audience that night. People stood two and three deep, packed against the sides of the walls. My visit to Texas had become for the liberals in the Democratic Party a democratic issue. They came to Austin in busses from all over the state.

Lyndon's friends were fearful that something would happen to me because of the tension and antagonism that had been built up. They drove me to Austin. They went with me everywhere in Austin. That night they stationed men around the sides of the walls, watching the audience,

to guard against any overt action. I gave my dull speech. All went very peacefully. The minute the speech was over, the questions began. They were the hottest, most loaded questions ever put to me. But I weathered that eveing nicely. I even enjoyed it.

I relate this incident as illustrative of Lyndon's thoughtfulness ...and the response of friends to Lyndon Johnson.

I became acquainted on that visit to Texas, as at following times, with the fact [that] there is a strong liberal wing in the Texas Democratic Party. The majority of Texas Democrats, of course, are conservative. Liberals are in the the minority, but they are strong. In Texas, Democrats argue with one another, work against one another and, sometimes, even refine one another. One hopes always for the best.

In 1958 Melvyn was playing in Washington and I was with him. I was thinking about the next convention and wondering what Lyndon Johnson was thinking about and if he was considering himself as a possible candidate for the Presidency. The Arms Race was hotting up and time was running out. Somebody had to break through old patterns and habits that had led to past conflicts, working through and with the United Nations. It seemed to me that Lyndon Johnson was the strongest candidate the Democrats had to offer if he understood the issue, if he understood what the world needed...not just the people of the United States, but the world...was peace. I certainly thought that this was big enough issue, even for him...because the human family was in danger.

So I contacted Lyndon. It was arranged for me to have breakfast with the Johnsons. His car came for me early in the morning. We sat down at breakfast at something like half past seven...and then there was conversation about the coffee, the eggs, the bacon and the toast. We chit-chatted; there was no opportunity to talk about peace." There was no talk about the Presidency; the coming convention.

On the way back to Washington (the Johnsons lived out a ways from the main part of the city), I drove back with Lyndon and I thought, "now, I'll be able to discuss these questions." We no sooner got into the car and closed the door than Lyndon had the phone that was in his car off the hook and he was giving orders to his office...now, this could not have been later than eight o'clock in the morning...telling them what to do. There was something coming up in which Senator Russell was involved. He was sending a message to Russell. So, in between these calls to his office and his instructions to various people around the Senate, I said to him: "Lyndon, are you thinking about offering yourself as a possible candidate for Presidency?"

And he said: "I was born at the wrong place at the wrong time." This was his usual reply to the question.

I said, "Well, I don't believe you were born at the wrong place at the wrong time if you recognize 'the issue' that confronts the human race today; the issue of peace."

Well, his response was not negative; it was nothing. I didn't feel that there was any understanding of what I was saying either because he was too tired or too preoccupied. But, anyway, I was very discouraged. I was convinced that he had the capabilities that were essential, that he might be the one man to break through this...

F: It was really kind of a wall.

D: A wall of habits in the world that was getting higher and higher and higher, dooming humanity. Before the convention, India Edwards called me...a few months later...what was it, a half year later or eight months later...something like that--and she said, "I just talked to Lyndon and he's going to offer himself as a candidate, and I've agreed to head a woman's group in support of him. He would like you to work with me."

I said, "I can't do it."

She said, "You can't do it! Why can't you do it?"

I said, "Because I have never lied to the voters. Whatever my value has been in politics, I have only said what I thought true. I may have been mistaken at times, but I thought it true at the time. I don't know where Lyndon Johnson stands on the Arms Race. I don't know where Lyndon Johnson stands on the issue of our time...PEACE. Does he consider peace THE ISSUE before everything else? Please tell him I cannot. I will not. If he is nominated, I will do what I can to support him, yes...because I think he is eminently qualified, better than anyone we have, but I don't know how he stands on Peace. Everything will go wrong if this issue isn't put first.

I didn't work. Johnson was not chosen by the convention as the Democratic candidate for the Presidency, John Kennedy was, and he named Lyndon as his running mate. I campaigned in the election, as I had in every election since 1940. I campaigned mostly on the Eastern Shore that time. I didn't cover the whole country. I don't know if Lyndon ever knew that I campaigned for him, but I did campaign.

F: You didn't see him at all in the campaign. You didn't cross paths?

D: I don't think in that election I did. But what was interesting--I didn't know Kennedy personally. And as I went around I found myself campaigning (and) explaining Lyndon Johnson because though people didn't know Kennedy either, they still weren't as opposed to him as they were to Lyndon in the eastern section of the country. I would say what I knew to be true about him. Because I had been one of the leaders in the whole area of civil rights 'way back from the time of the migrants...it wasn't a new issue for me in Congress...I was accepted by minority groups. I would say what I knew about Lyndon as a person.

They'd say, "But his votes."

And I'd say, "When the pressures are on, it's the kind of man you're electing that matters. And I am telling you this man does not have prejudices." I don't believe Lyndon Johnson does have prejudices in the ordinary accepted sense. I think he has the prejudice of a man who puts too much faith in power--people who don't have power aren't worth very much consideration in terms of their judgment value. It was interesting that people responded to that. The minority groups were able to understand that it is a man's character more than just his votes which might indicate what he would do if elected.

The next time...I've made a note here so that I don't forget some of the points I think important...oh yes, Lyndon was talking at a luncheon in New York and I went to hear him with my brother, Walter Gahagan, and my close friend, Helen Fuller, managing editor of the "New Republic." Helen Fuller was a long-time friend of the President's. She was visiting me at the time in New York. She lives in Washington, D. C. Halfway through

the speech, Lyndon saw us. It was just a quick look of his eye.

F: You could feel when he did.

D: Yes. And so at the end, when there were some questions to his speech, suddenly one of his aides came up and tapped me on the shoulder and said, "The Vice-President would like to see you afterwards. He'd like for you to go back to his hotel with him."

I said, "Tell the Vice-President that I can't because I have a number of people here with me."

Then the aide came back shortly afterwards and said, "You're all to come to his hotel." I only mention this because of his impetuosity, which is a very real part of his character, and shows how it worked again and again.

So, we went in the car, met him at the hotel. He went in another car, as I remember. He may have been in the car with us, I've forgotten. But in any case, we went to the hotel and went up to his suite of rooms. He seemed to be lonesome and miserable. The two times I saw him as Vice-President, it struck me that he was utterly miserable. He wasn't running it. Yet, he was behaving well, you know.

F: I always thought that probably was the period of his greatest discipline.

D: Yes. When we arrived at the apartment in his hotel, Lyndon was distressed to find that the aides weren't there. He was back sooner than they were. He began to fret. Ladybird was coming in from Washington in about an hour...alone. She would have to carry her dress over her arm. You know, details like that. Why did they upset him so? Would one be disturbed by such details if not very tired or upset over something quite different? But then, I must quickly add, that Lyndon was given to worry over details ...the way things ran.

While he was Vice-President, I was invited to come to Washington, stay at their home and attend a formal State dinner that was to be given at the State Department, the new building. Vice-President Johnson and Lady Bird were the hosts of that dinner. Before the dinner, we waited for the cars to come and we conversed awhile. The Vice-President seemed very moody--again, the same lonesome feeling he seemed to convey...and moreso. Then we went to the dinner. The minute he saw the people, he was charm itself--buoyant, outgoing, loving!

F: Just flipped a switch.

D: Just flipped a switch. And then when we got in the car coming home, that veiled despondency descended on him again. I jibed him a little bit about something that was happening in the Congress and the way he had organized it before he left. Usually, he would come back, but there was no response whatsoever. I thought afterwards, well, maybe I had gone a little bit too far, with the chauffeur in the front seat.

In the late fifties and also the sixties, I was doing considerable lecturing at colleges and universities. Shortly after the Alliance for Progress program was initiated...I decided to make a study tour of South America in 1962, of course at my own expense. I thought the Alliance program made sense and I wanted to see for myself how it was working. I wanted to see what the Peace Corp, AID, the Rockefellers, C.A.R.E., certain religious groups were doing throughout South America. It was a remarkably well-organized tour, thanks to the help I was given. Again, the Vice-President assisted with those few contacts that he had.

On returning to the States, I reported to the various organizations and government departments that had made it possible for me to study

conditions in the countries of South America and to see what our government and various U. S. organizations and foundations were doing in South America. It was a very rich experience.

The overriding impression I received from the study tour was that the Alliance for Progress, scheduled to bring about a social revolution in ten years, was going to take a lot longer. In the meantime, in those countries where people were living under miserable conditions, there would be inevitable erruptions...miserable people don't wait for planned future developments...with the result that people would think that the Alliance for Progress could not work.

F: You have to have a long range optimism to get through in South America.

D: Yes. Then when Lyndon Johnson became the thirty-sixth President, I was the first woman to be appointed by him. I was his representative at the fifth inauguration of President Tubman in Liberia. There was an interesting letter that I was asked to deliver as head of the delegation. The last letter that President Kennedy wrote was written to President Tubman. Because, you see, I went to Liberia shortly after the assassination. In delivering it to Tubman, we asked for a special audience before the festivities of the inauguration began. We were given it. As I gave Tubman the Kennedy letter, I said that President Johnson--a southerner--sent him a message; that a southerner was concerned too about Africa and civil rights. And Tubman cried. And there's a tape, which is now in the University of Oklahoma, of Tubman's address. He incorporated in his speech-ad libbed at the last minute--his description of the presentation and what it meant to him to hear from President Johnson. I remember, it was a very touching episode, this trip to Liberia. I campaigned, of

course, for the President when he ran in 1964 and I saw him then in the campaign--just passed him once when he was campaigning. I went to hear him when he was in New York.

F: How did he seem to go over here?

D: Oh, they adored him. It was at the big old Madison Square Garden. It seemed he would never end his speech. He went on interminably because he so loved the warmth of the response of the audience. He kept putting out his hands as though he would embrace them. When he left, people wanted to touch him, and he was just, oh, just loving every bit of it!...every bit of it! I think one has to have that picture of him to realize that it meant in that last year when he couldn't appear in public. He didn't dare appear in public. He had to give his speeches at naval and army bases. His distress over this must have been very, very great.

I went to the Soviet Union in an exchange program. The Soviet Union had sent to the United States a delegation of women that met with U. S. women at Bryn Mawr. They came over under the auspices of Mrs. Roosevelt, the International League for Peace and Freedom (that's the old Jane Adams organization) and Mrs. Eugene Myer (of the Washington Post) and Marian Anderson. And this was a return visit to the Soviet Union. It had taken a year and a half to prepare the agenda. It was now under the auspices only of the International League for Peace and Freedom, and I was invited to go along as one of twenty-five women. The Soviets had been very unhappy in their visit here because our women were so well prepared, such top-drawer women. They could answer any questions that we had prepared for them in that first conference. So, in this conference, they picked their top-drawer women. They were

scientists or governmental people, people from the University, plus two young women, very smart and very alert, who, I am sure, were part of the political appartatus. We had as translators the men who translated for Khrushchev when he went abroad. It was all arranged at the top We met Mrs. Khrushchev; we met the heads of government.

I was briefed before I went to Russia by the Disarmament Agency in Washington. They went over my notes very carefully. The conference was on world tensions and my papers was on disarmament. So, I needed a list of the President's disarmament proposals. President Johnson had made some proposals that made good sense in those early days; the Soviets had refused to consider them.

On arriving in Moscow, I said, "You know, when I go to a foreign country, I always contact the American Embassy." That isn't true; I'm not in the habit of always contacting American Embassies, but I did want to do so in the Soviet Union. They must have known of my friendship with President Johnson and the Roosevelts. They seemed to give me special attention. They promptly agreed that it could be arranged...and it was. This was not easy because we had a very tight schedule.

The night before leaving the Soviet Union, we attended a banquet that was arranged for us by the Soviet women to which our Ambassador was invited. The following day, we flew out of the Soviet Union. The co-chairman of the Soviet delegation, a young woman highly educated, who had been in the Foreign Service (and probably still was); (a friend of the Khrushchevs and supposedly a personal friend of Mrs. Khrushchev), came to me just before we left and said, "I hope you will get word to your President that Mr. Khrushchev wants very much to strengthen Soviet relations with the

West. He is in trouble here."...and then details followed in that conversation about his getting on in years and that his time was short. The minute I got onto the plane, I transcribed this conversation verbatim. I was flying to London. When there, I went to the Embassy and had my notes of the conversation typed. I wrote a report of the conference describing what I thought was happening in the Soviet Union, what I thought their reoccupations were at that moment, what they wrre afraid of...namely, China...and what they hoped for.

I sent to the President a report of the conference and a transcript of that last conversation. The gist of the conversation was that Khrushchev had to produce something in the way of success with the West if he was going to hold his political position. The military were opposed to him. He wasn't getting anywhere diplomatically, and he just had to have some success in disarmament negotiations with the West.

I did not hear the President. I think he must have received the letter, although I cannot be absolutely sure. I only bring this up because you asked me why I didn't go and see the President about Vietnam. I felt it was hopeless. It would only have added to the burden. I couldn't listen. It would have been just another harrassment for him, you know.

A few months after the conference in the Soviet Union, Nikita Khrushchev was removed from office.

Before the trip to the Soviet Union...just after Lyndon Johnson became President and Lady Bird First Lady, I was invited to be one of the guests of honor at a dinner given by the Women's Press Corp in Washington, D. C. The President and Lady Bird attended that dinner.

They were late. We were already seated when they arrived. As they passed my chair on the podium, we greeted one another. Lyndon whispered, "Helen, come over to the White House and spend the night right after this thing is over." Well, against my better judgment, I did go to the White House, although I had to leave the next day for the Northwest where I was scheduled to give a lecture. The Johnson's did not return to the White House until very late. I didn't see them that night. The next morning, I had an early telephone call from the President....a very early telephone call from the President asking me to fly to New York with him where he was to give an address. He was very proud of the fact that he had appointed a number of women to offices in his Administration and seemed to want to talk about it. Women in public office had been one of the reasons for the dinner the night before.

F: We are getting near the end of the tape.

D: He was very proud of the fact he had appointed a number of women, and also proud of the fact that he had given order.....

INTERVIEWEE: HELEN GAHAGAN DOUGLAS (Tape #2)

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

November 10, 1969

F: You talked to him on the phone.

D: Yes. We discussed his recent authorization of minor military cuts. The President was very proud, even boasted, of the fact that he was cleaning up the military. He was getting rid of old bases, cutting them out of the military budget. And I said, "Oh, Lyndon, when will you really begin to cut the meat out of the military? It is just the fat you are trimming away. Those bases should have been closed up long ago. That naval base in Brooklyn, for heaven's sake, hasn't been needed for years. This is not the real thing at all. Eliminating the Brooklyn base is not cutting back on the Arms Race."

He exaggerated the importance of these military cuts...just as he exaggerated what he was doing to bring women into government. Both were token gestures. However, he seemed satisfied and proud. It was as though he was asking "isn't this fine? Isn't this just fine?" It seemed to me that his eye was on the public reaction and he wanted my approval.

He seemed to need popular praise and approval. In the beginning of his Presidency, he played at getting it. And enjoyed the play. Cutting bases was a play...rather than an indication of his understanding of the universal need to check the Arms Race...to work for the amelioration of world tensions.

Did his appointment of a few women indicate a belief in the worth of women in public life? It seemed to me he was thinking primarily of the impression he wanted to give of himself.

F: Just a kind of window dressing.

D: Window dressing, yes. As I said, he wanted me to fly with him to New York so we could go on talking about the appointments and bases. "Sorry, I can't, Mr. President," I said, "Unfortunately, I am on my way to the Northwest."

I had breakfast that morning with Lady Bird. We discussed general subjects relating to the White House and the Presidency. I listed what I thought were Lyndon's opportunities; what was needed in the world. The contribution he could make. I remember her saying something to the effect, "If he just gets through."...and my replying, "There's no possibility of just getting through. Events won't allow him to do that. He has to face these challenges. The world is moving at such a pace that no one can just get through the Presidency. It's no longer possible." But I understood, of course, Lady Bird's concern; the White House is a terrifying place in which to live these days.

F: It's his wife's statement in that case.

D: That's right.

F: Rather than the First Lady's.

D: Right.

F: Did you observe her in action as a Congressman's wife or a Senator's wife?

D: Yes.

F: Or was she just sort of in the shadows?

D: She was greatly admired by everyone in Washington, including the Press. They are very aware of who is doing what; the kind of person one is. When the Kennedys were in the White House, the Press thought more highly of Lady Bird than they did of the First Lady, tho Mrs. Kennedy was more glamorous than Mrs. Johnson.

F: Better news.

D: Better news. But in terms of the worth of the person, of responsible behavior, it was Mrs. Johnson whom they respected. You heard this at every hand, and she was a charming hostess: gentle, loving. I don't think Lyndon Johnson was easy to live with or work for. So, I don't imagine she had an easy life, but she gave no indication ever that it wasn't easy. Her whole life was devoted to her family helping them in any way she could. I don't think she was a partner to Lyndon in the sense Eleanor Roosevelt was. I shouldn't say that...though..rather there seemed to be no indication that she was.

F: She wasn't a League of Women Voters type.

D: No, but was she a partner of Lyndon's in the sense that they discussed legislation? I don't really know. Lyndon had respect for women up to a point, but I don't know where that point was. I don't know. He may have thought he respected women completely...believed that a woman could do anything, but I don't think he did. I don't think he trusted he judgment of women on vital issues.

He like liberals. Many of his friends were liberals, you know... Bill Douglas, Abe Fortas, Paul Porter, Thurman Arnold...a long list of others. But just the same, he always made little snide remarks about liberals. He didn't think they were cautious enough. They wanted the whole of anything. They were unrealistic. That's it, I'm sure...he thought women were unrealistic too.

You never heard Lady Bird...I never heard, I should say...(I did not see as much of Lady Bird, of course, as I did of Lyndon)...talk about issues except in the most general way. She didn't strike me as one who thought independently about political questions.

However, when she was First Lady, I thought the speeches she gave were very, very good. Of course, her speeches always supported the President's program and she had expert advice in writing them. I remember very well the very first one she gave in New York City. There was a gathering of women...Democratic women...who had come from all over the state to hear her. I would say that more than half of them were prejudiced against her before she rose to speak. At my table, there were women who had worked very hard for years in support of the Democratic Party ...outstanding, generous women...and yet one of them, who seemed to voice the sentiments of the others, said, "I just can't bear now to hear that Southern accent." "If you are afraid she is going to give you a 'southern speech'," I said, "she won't. I think her southern accent may sound very sweet when you hear what she has to say." And it did. I knew we could rely on Bird's decency and common sense. Those at my table were captivated. In fact, she captivated everyone in the room. She had a grace and a naturalness that was irresistible. She didn't try to be or to do anything. She just was. And she made good sense. I made a point of reporting her success to the White House.

I must say, too, about the President...his manner never changed. He had the same manner in the House of Representatives as in the Senate and as President of the United States. He never got a swelled head. If he was withdrawn, it was because of the pressure of events. If he didn't have the time to see someone, it was not that he couldn't be approached, but that the pressure of his schedule and events did not permit it. He didn't change as a person. This was true also of

Lady Bird. She was the same the day she walked out of the White House, I should think, as on the day she came first to Washington. There were only the changes maturity brings.

F: When he ran for the Senate in '48 and squeaked in by eighty-seven votes, did either you or your husband take any part in the campaign?

D: No. I never went to Texas to campaign for Lyndon and he never came to California to campaign for me. However, he supported me in the '50 campaign. All the Democrats of name supported me, from President Truman on down.

F: By supporting, they just merely said, "She's a good girl and she ought to be Senator."

D: No, they made endorsements and records and some came to California. Averell Harriman campaigned the State for me as did Joseph F. Donahue, the former Special Assistant to the U. S. Attorney General, who had this to say in his background which was used in press releases and in introducing him, "On October 17, 1950, I resigned my appointment as a Special Assistant to the Attorney General for the purpose of being able to speak as a private citizen for which purpose I have come to California."

F: Did you have any opportunity to observe Johnson's and Nixon's relationship in those days? From the time Nixon first came to Washington until he became a Senator?

D: Nixon and Johnson were not friends. Nixon had few friends among the Democratic Congressmen.

F: Until he found the pumpkin?

D: Until he found the pumpkin, he was relatively unknown.

F: You were embattled in those days, as so many people were--anybody who seemed to want to move on had charges hurled against them. Did Johnson ever stick his neck out on this sort of an issue. I'm thinking about things from--I know you introduced a bill or two to eliminate the exemption of Constitution Hall from taxation because of what it had done to Marian Anderson and to other people, and anything in the field of civil rights, or in the field of disarmament, or world peace, were suspect to at least some vocal people in the country.

D: I don't remember. As I say, Lyndon supported most of the Democratic Administration's programs in the post-war period. In the pre-war period, he supported almost everything Roosevelt asked for. I don't now remember those votes of Lyndon's that seemed at the time enexplicable except on the basis of the most crass political maneuvering. I cannot be sure at all, but he may have voted for the Mundt-Nixon and later the McCarran bill, and then to override the President's veto of them. If so, those votes would seem to me to be shortsighted and basely political. But, as I say, I don't remember...it's easy enough to check this record at the Library.

F: He did vote very strongly for the Taft-Hartley Bill.

D: Yes, but the Taft-Hartley Bill was a bill with which he could have agreed. He couldn't possibly have agreed with the McCarran Bill or the Mundt-Nixon Bill. His friends...he had distinguished lawyers, you know, as friends...he often discussed issues with them...it would have been impossible to go wrong on those bills; not to have understood what their

passage would mean. I'll never forget what happened just after the vote in the House on the McCarran Bill. The bill was voted on just after my successful primary Senate race in California in 1950. California congressmen begged me not to vote against it. They warned, "Helen, Nixon will beat your brains in if you give him a vote against this bill. You won't be able to get around the state fast enough to counteract his campaign. Please, please, don't vote against it." And, I said, "Look, I defeated our own Democratic Senator Downey in the primary because he didn't support the Administration's program on reclamation. Am I now, in order to get to the Senate, to compromise the Bill of Rights? Am I to betray the voters in order to get to the Senate?" I voted against the bill.

After the vote, I went downstairs to have a cup of coffee in the private dining room reserved for Congressmen. I went over to John McCormack's table in the corner, where he and group of Congressmen were sitting. As I came up to the table, they stood and one of them said, "Helen, how does it feel to be a dead statesman. It feels just fine to be a live politician." So, you see, many Congressmen who voted for the Mundt-Nixon and the McCarran bills knew exactly what they were doing. Many of the votes cast at that time affecting civil rights were not cast out of conviction. They were cast out of fear that in the atmosphere of the day, their votes, back home, would be misconstrued. They voted for themselves; not for the people.

F: It came as no surprise to you then when Johnson was sort of chief engineer for the '57 Civil Rights Act?

D: No. I would have expected it, definitely would have expected it. In fact, he went further, I think, than some others might have gone, who had been in the forefront of this question.

F: Always a very pragmatic approach on what you could get.

D: Yes.

F: You were involved in working up your own DEMOCRATIC CREDO at one time.

D: Yes. It followed the confrontation with Congressman Rankin I talked about earlier on the tape. I was so disturbed that he called or implied that liberals were communists or communistically inclined that I thought, "Well, I'll at least get my position down on a piece of paper and put it in the record." And so, I worked on what I called MY DEMOCRATIC CREDO.

I was finishing it one Sunday, working with Lorena Hickok, a former newspaper woman, who lived at the White House. She had been a friend of Mrs. Roosevelt since the first Presidential campaign of Franklin D. Roosevelt. I met Lorena Hickok through Mrs. Roosevelt on one of my first visits to the White House. We, too, became friends. Whenever I would stay at the White House, Mrs. Roosevelt would put me in the Lincoln Room, next to the bedroom of Lorena Hickok. We'd have breakfast together in the morning with Mrs. Roosevelt. I called on Hick's assistance a number of times to work with me on special projects too burdensome for my staff at the Capitol.

On that particular Sunday morning, we were working at my home on the last draft of MY DEMOCRATIC CREDO. Lyndon Johnson stopped by about eleven o'clock. (He often called on friends Sunday mornings.) I think Lady Bird was in Texas. In any case, she wasn't in Washington. Lyndon

was always interested in what one was doing. He approved very much of what I say saying--or seemed to--without ever saying he approved, you know. "That's right...that's right...and what you mean is this and this?" he'd say. He could put himself into another person's situation and improvise perfectly what they wanted to say. And he enjoyed it. He helped many freshmen Congressmen.

F: Did you have opportunities to observe Johnson's presumed insecurity--or to gather impressions?

D: I think those who have known the President wonder if it was insecurity or pride that made it impossible for him to admit his mistake in continuing and enlarging the war in Viet Nam. On the other hand, he may have believed almost up to the end of his Administration that he was making no mistake; that he was right; that those who opposed the war were wrong. He may have felt at times uncertain; there's no way of telling. He may have felt insecure at times; he may have had a sense of insecurity (foreign to him in domestic affairs) when talking to his advisors about matters in Southeast Asia. As I said before, he certainly was on sure ground when domestic issues were before him, no matter how complex. He had a yardstick of personal experience by which to judge conditions and advice. He had no such yardstick in judging the needs of the people of Viet Nam--of Southeast Asia.

Had he been a student of foreign policy who had learned by digging out the facts for himself rather than depending on advisors and judging the varying advice given, he might have come to see that the war was a disaster for the United States and for the people of Southeast Asia.

It could be that Lyndon Johnson was always somewhat insecure. It may have been the reason for his secretiveness. Despite his manner, which excluded confidence, he may have been more insecure than people realized. Perhaps that is why he spoke so seldom in the House of Representatives. Or, was it just caution? Just that he didn't want to have a lot of his words come back at him--a more cautious way of working in the Congress than that of many others. Does that indicate a kind of insecurity? I don't know.

F: Right. Did you ever work with him on any reclamation projects?

D: Oh, we talked about reclamation a great deal. No, I didn't specifically work with him.

F: You were simpatico on this?

D: Oh, yes. Very. We agreed on so many of the big issues. He basically agreed with the liberals. But when particular measures were up before the House, that was something else. But basically, there wasn't a difference. Basically, he was a New Dealer. We were cut from the same piece of cloth--the Roosevelt cloth.

F: Without editorializing, it's conceded that Mr. Nixon ran a particularly visceral campaign against you at a time when that sort of thing really paid off. Did Senator Johnson ever indicate any disappointment with the results or any regrets over losing you to the Congress?

D: Oh yes, oh yes. I remember two incidents--one with Rayburn; one with Lyndon. When I came back to the Congress after my successful primary and attended my first session, I went up to greet the Speaker, Sam Rayburn, who was in the chair. He congratulated me on winning the primary. Nixon was sitting down in front of us and Rayburn said, "Helen, don't fail in the finals. He has the meanest face of anyone who ever sat in front of me in this chamber."

Shortly after Kennedy and Johnson won the 1961 election, the Vice President told me the first time I saw him that one of the reasons he accepted the Vice Presidential nomination was to help defeat Nixon...to pay him back for the '50 campaign. On the face of it, an exaggeration...and overblown Johnson remark--yet, revealing of his capacity for devoted friendships.

Yes, there was wide-spread disappointment among Democrats over my defeat in 1950. You see, I was a strong Administration supporter--a hard-working member of Congress.

The only major bill I voted against was the Greek-Turkish bill. I could not vote for that bill. I thought then and I think today it indicated a radical change in our foreign policy. The bill was labeled Greek-Turkish Aid. I approved of that. We should have done something for the Greeks and the Turks at that time, but not the way we went about it.

F: It set off a policy that-----

D: It set off a policy of policemanship. It was the beginning of a policy that was to by-pass the United Nations. We would take it upon ourselves to judge the behavior of nations. We would guard the Free World. We would decide what ought to be done in this regard. We, the United States were going to guard the peace. We would make ourselves responsible for the solution of world problems. It was the beginning of a United States foreign policy that bypassed the United Nations.

In Greece, we overlooked the incompetence and the corruption of the Greek government. We sent arms to help that government suppress a rebellion of the people; a people who had suffered severely in the war and who were still suffering after it was over. We settled the issue in Greece in terms of what we believed power politics necessitated; not in terms of what the Greek people needed, or what was just. We have spent billions of dollars in Greece. Result: today we support a dictatorship there! Lives have been lost; the people still suffer. People are locked up without trial; dissent is not permitted. All this, we thought we were preventing.

In debate on the Greek-Turkish bill, I predicted where this change in policy would lead us--a policy that was prepared to support any government...even dictatorship...if the United States could be reasonably sure it would oppose communism.

Intervention in Viet Nam is a result of that mistaken approach to peace...a peace based on the big stick rather than justice.

In conclusion, those first years the Johnsons were in Washington, I was invited many times to the White House. Unfortunately I was not able to go there very often. When the invitations arrived, we were either in Europe or I was lecturing.

The last time I did go to the White House, my opposition to the war in Viet Nam was well known. I attended a reception given in memory of Mrs. Roosevelt. Her portrait was to be hung in the White House. As I went through the receiving line and shook the President's hand, he looked at me with a glassy stare. I was with Tex Goldschmidt (Ambassador Arthur Goldschmidt) a friend of the President's; a close friend of mine. I

heard Tex say, "It isn't possible!" A little later, Tex and I visited with Lady Bird. The three of us went off into one of the other rooms away from the crowd and sat down and talked. "It's impossible," Tex whispered to me on the way, "that the President didn't recognize you."

Well, of course, he did not want to recognize me. There could be no communication. He was a bruised man, and I had joined those who disapproved. He was so sad. One could feel his very great distress, his strain. There was no longer any buoyancy. Pursuing the United States/ Vietnamese policy established by former presidents, had separated him from the people whom he loved, isolated him. He was suffering. We, the American people, were suffering, the people of Southeast Asia were bitterly suffering.

The few minutes we spent with Lady Bird confirmed this impression. She spoke of the President's torment and unhappiness over the war... and of what solace the friendship of Abe and Carol Fortas had been to him and to her. And so, we left...left an unhappy President and a worried First Lady...and unhappy White House.

F: Thank you, Mrs. Douglas.

THE END OF TAPE INTERVIEW

OCTOBER 1972

I spoke to President Johnson again, shortly before his death to tell him of the death of our mutual friend, Helen Fuller, and asked that he send a telegram to be read at the memorial service to be given for her in Washington, Virginia. Helen had gone there to live permanently after the New Republic magazine was sold. She had been the magazine's managing editor for twenty-five years.

It was difficult for me to call Lyndon Johnson...that period of opposition to him had been such an unhappy one for me...our conversation went something like this:

"Lyndon, how are you?"

"Just as bad as can be. I'm under an oxygen tank right now."

"Oh, Lyndon...I didn't know...Is Lady Bird there?"

"No, she's not here."

How could I tell him of Helen's death...was he himself very ill? Then, I knew I had to ask...it would mean so much to the people of Washington, Virginia...to Helen.

"Lyndon, Helen died last night."

"Oh..."

"Lyndon, will you send a telegram to the Little Rappahannock Library where the memorial service is to be held? It would mean so much to the people of Washington, Virginia, who love and admire you. It would mean so much to Helen's friends."

"Of course, Helen. I'll put you on to my secretary and I will talk to you tomorrow."

I then had a conversation with his secretary giving her the information she would need. The next day, she called me and said that President Johnson had wanted me to read the telegram before sending it to see if I approved of what he had said. I could scarely keep from weeping...the secretary then informed me that the President wanted the telegram sent directly to me and a copy sent to the Rappahannock Library.

Shortly after, the 36th President of the United States, Lyndon Baines Johnson died.

Telegram from President Johnson

"Born before her time, Helen Fuller was an advance trumpet heralding us to awareness and compassion for all people. We join you in honoring her memory." (signed) Lady Bird and Lyndon Johnson

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

By Helen Gahagan Douglas

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

In accordance with Sec. 507 of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) and regulations issued thereunder (41 CFR 101-10), I, Helen Gahagan Douglas, hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a tape and transcript of a personal statement approved by me and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. Title to the material transferred hereunder will pass to the United States as of the date of the delivery of this material into the physical custody of the Archivist of the United States.

2. It is the donor's wish to make the material donated to the United States of America by terms of this instrument available for research as soon as it has been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

3. The material donated to the United States pursuant to the foregoing shall be kept intact permanently in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

4. The donor retains to herself during her lifetime all literary property rights in the material donated to the United States of America by the terms of this instrument. After the death of the donor, the aforesaid literary property rights will pass to the United States of America.

Signed Helen Gahagan Douglas

Date May 20th 1974

Accepted Harry J. Middleton for
Archivist of the United States

Date June 4, 1974