INTERVIEWEE: MRS. INDIA EDWARDS

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

February 4, 1969

F: Mrs. Edwards, to start, tell us a little bit about your background. For one thing, how did you happen to be named India?

E: Well, it's my mother's name--it's a family name. We don't really know where it came from except that my grandfather and my great-grandfather were in the tea and coffee importing business, and maybe they just liked the name India.

F: It seemed to me that for someone in the public service that it had been an advantage because it identifies you, whereas if it were Margaret or Katherine, or something, you might be more easily forgotten.

E: I disliked it intensely when I was a child. But later when I was grown and went into the newspaper business and then into politics, it was an asset in both professions.

F: Where are you from originally?

E: Tennessee--where I grew up, although I was born in Chicago.

F: Where?

E: Nashville.

F: And how did you happen to wind up at this moment in Washington?

E: That's kind of a long story. I went to Chicago when I was eighteen years old because my father wouldn't let me go to the School of Journalism at Columbia. In those days they had an undergraduate School of Journalism, and I had--why, I have no idea because I didn't know anybody in the newspaper business, no member of my family had ever been in, but I wanted

to go to Columbia and study journalism. And in those days, you didn't have college boards. You just went on your high school diploma and a letter from the principal of your high school. And I fully expected to go and it wasn't until I was ready to make all my plans that my father said no. "You can't go to New York--a girl alone."

F: It's a little bit bigger than Nashville.

E: And that I could go to college some place near home. So I went to Chicago and got a job on a newspaper. I lived in Chicago for quite a number of years.

F: Which paper?

E: Chicago Tribune, believe it or not. I was always a Democrat.

F: I was going to say--that was good training for a career Democratic girl.

E: And that's the only paper I ever worked for. I worked there for a great many years.

F: What did you do?

E: I started in as a reporter and then I became society editor and then I was woman's editor. I left for seven years during which I had two children because I stayed at home with them while they were little. The Tribune asked me to come back, and I did. And then I was divorced from the father of my children and eventually married Herbert Edwards who was with the State Department. That's how I happened to move to Washington in 1942. And I thought that my career days were over when I left the paper.

F: You came to Washington to be a housewife.

E: Just to be Mrs. Herbert Edwards, a housewife.

F: How did you happen to get into politics?

E: My only son, who was just nineteen, had gone into the Air Corps and was killed in December 1943.

F: In the States or overseas?

E: He was killed here out at Wendover Field, Utah. But he had already gotten his commission and was teaching--was an instructor out there. And I was very pleased that he was kept in this country. I found out later that they, at that time, tried not to send boys overseas until they were a little older. And at the time he got his commission he was eighteen.

F: Very young.

E: Yes. He enlisted on his eighteenth birthday. He was a bombardier, not a pilot, because by the time he went in they had set a height limit on pilots. They couldn't be above a certain height, and he was too tall to be a pilot. I think he could have been a pilot of a bomber, but he couldn't have been a fighter pilot. And, as he said, he didn't enlist to be a motorman, so he became a bombardier.

And then he was instructing out at Wendover Field, and two bombers, they said, "touched wings" in air, but all twenty-five boys aboard--. Both of them were killed.

After that, I decided that I really had to do something to occupy all my time and that I felt was worthwhile. And I was a great admirer of Franklin Roosevelt, and had been very strong for the New Deal. A friend of mine kept urging me to go down and volunteer to work for the Democrats. I kept putting it off, you know, by saying, "Well, I think I will, but I'll see." And that summer of 1944 the Republican convention was held in Chicago ahead of our convention, and Claire Booth Luce made a speech in which she presumed to speak for the boys who had been killed, to say that if they could come back they would say to vote against Roosevelt because he was responsible for their deaths.

F: I remember that.

E: So I was sitting in my living room listening to that on radio and I got up and paced the floor and I said, "Damn it, now I know what I'm going to do." And I was down at the Democratic headquarters in the Mayflower the next morning at nine o'clock and volunteered, and I worked very hard all during the '44 campaign. I went out to Chicago for the convention. I paid all my own expenses, and then they didn't even give me a ticket to get into the convention; and the only way I ever got to see it was when my ex-boss, Colonel McCormick, invited me to sit in his box.

F: I see. That's real sponsorship at a Democratic convention.

E: And then after the convention was over--in those days they used to move the headquarters to New York, and they moved up to the Biltmore. They called me and asked me if I would come up there and work and I said, "I can't afford to come to New York and pay all my expenses and live up there." So they said, "Well, if we give you a room at the Biltmore where the headquarters are, will you come?" So I said, "Yes," I would do that because my husband had to go to New York quite often on business anyway. I went up and I worked awfully hard all during that campaign, but it was the best thing in the world for me.

F: Did you know Mr. Truman prior to that, or was this when you met him?

E: I met him when he was nominated as Vice President in Chicago, but just met him to say, "How do you do." I only saw him once during the campaign. He came to New York and came up to the Biltmore. Most of my time in the '44 campaign, while I handled a lot of radio work, I also wrote a lot of speeches for other people, not for myself because I didn't give any speeches. And I always ended the speech,"Vote for Roosevelt and

Truman." And finally somebody said, "India, you don't have to say 'and Truman.' That's not necessary. You don't have to mention the Vice President." And I said, "Well, I certainly intend to go on mentioning the Vice President. I think that's the silliest thing I ever heard of. When you're electing a President, the Vice President is of tremendous importance." And particularly in view of the fact that anyone, by looking at Roosevelt, could tell he wasn't in very robust health. And so I said, "The person who gives the speech can use his or her own judgment, but I'm going to do it." So I did. I think somebody told President Truman that story because when I met him he said, "So you're the one who includes my name in all the speeches!" But that was the first time I really met him and I didn't get to know him then. I didn't get to know him until after he became President.

F: Now, you were in part victorious, or at least you shared the victory in part. What did you do once the election was over?

E: Came back home and settled down to again be a housewife. And then in March, I think it was, of 1945, the committee asked me to come in professionally as the second in the women's division. The vice chairman, Gladys Tillett, was the director of the women's division and they asked me to come in and work.

F: Was there a very strong women's push during this time, or was it more or less as it is now?

E: As it is now--they don't even know what it is now! All during the Roosevelt Administration, and all during the Truman Administration, we had a strong women's division, and they really did wonderful work, but if I may be perfectly frank, I will say that the entire committee fell to pieces when Jack Kennedy became President, and I'm afraid that my dearly beloved Lyndon Johnson continued the wrecking.

F: I want to get back to that in a minute. To bring the chronology up to date, you worked then second in command for the women from '45 until '48?

E: Until, yes, I think it was '48--the early part of '48. And then I became the director of the women's division.

F: And you saw affairs through that memorable campaign?

E: I planned all the women's activities for the convention of '48 and for the campaign--for the Truman campaign.

F: Then what did you do following Mr. Truman's election?

E: I continued to do just what I had been doing before. When the election was over, President Truman sent someone to see me--someone who had worked very closely in the campaign--who said, of course, how much he had appreciated all I had done; and he had told me himself. But this was with the idea that I should say what I would like in the way of a reward, and did I want some post in the government? And I said, "No, I don't want anything. All I am interested in is, I'd like to stay with the committee, if the President wants me to, because that's what I'm interested in--building up the organization. But," I said, "I want a lot of jobs for a lot of women," and we got them too.

F: During the late '40's and all through the '50's, your name appeared in wire stories in the New York Times and so forth with some frequency, speaking on various issues such as the Palestine-Syria problems, [The President's Health Plan and the Brannan Farm Plan]--we could list them at some length. Did you tend to do this as a party representative for the women, or did you do this as India Edwards personally?

E: I did it as the President's representative and the Director of the Women's Division of the Democratic National Committee. I may have appeared to be more free-wheeling than I actually was for I always followed the President's program in my speeches, etc. Sometimes he and the Chairman differed on policy matters and

and I always followed the President's instructions.

I resigned as director of the women's division after the Eisenhower election --well, I didn't resign until the next, I think, September or October. We left Washington, but I was still Vice Chairman of the National Committee, and I used to be asked to make speeches quite a lot. I used to go to Texas quite often, and nobody could go into Texas in those days without Mr. Sam's okay.

F: You were writing your own speeches, I presume.

E: I did. I wrote my own speeches most of the time. Mr. Sam was always very, very nice about it. In fact I know of two or three times when he said, "India's the only woman I'll let go into Texas."

F: Let's talk very briefly about one episode in your life. You were once nominated for Vice President.

E: Oh well, that was just a silly gesture.

F: It's still a gesture.

E: Yes.

F: And a breakthrough.

E: Yes, that's quite true. In 1952, Mary Norton, who was dean of Congresswomen, Congresswoman from New Jersey--and I admired Mary very much and of course I was always urging other people to run for office and to get into the thick of the fight--Mary Norton came to see me one day. She was in the Congress then, and she came down--called up and made an appointment and came down to see me--and she said, "India we feel the time has come when we want to nominate a woman for Vice President. You're the one we have picked." "Well, I said, "that's ridiculous. If you are going to nominate a woman for Vice President, you ought to pick one of the Congresswomen." And she said, "No, because there is no one in the Congress who is known nationally." And then I said, "Well, pick--", and I

named two or three women who were in public service who had been appointed by President Truman. I said, "Name them." And she said, "They're not nationally known. You are the only one who has a national reputation, and so we feel that it's necessary to do it." I felt like a guinea pig. I really hated to have it done because I thought it was so silly. But, you know, Sarah Hughes was nominated too that year. The Business and Professional Women's Clubs promoted having her nominated. Anyway, I was glad she was nominated too, so I wasn't the only one to be so silly.

F: Didn't feel quite so conspicuous.

E: Yes. It was just a gesture, but the women worked very hard over it.

F: Did you set up a kind of convention headquarters?

E: I didn't do a thing, not a thing. But the women did. They had a committee--

F: They went through the whole forum of a serious candidacy.

E: Yes. And they made arrangements with Sam Rayburn who--

F: I was going to ask about his attitude in all of this.

E: The permanent chairman of that convention, as he was at others, they made arrangements with him that our names should be put into nomination. And one woman, a very naive, dear little woman, I've forgotten what state she came from, but anyway, she told me afterwards that she went up to him with tears in her eyes. She said, "Oh, Mr. Sam, they say that India is going to withdraw as soon as she is nominated. Tell me this isn't true. Is it?" And he said, "You're damn right it's true." He said, "I wouldn't have let them put her name in nomination if she hadn't agreed to do it." But they--Pearl Mesta, I remember, hired the band, and they had a parade, you know.

F: A regular demonstration. And then you withdrew. Mr. Sam, then, was back in charge.

E: But, you know, I'll tell you something interesting. Several of the men

were very worried at the amount of support I got.

F: Really.

E: Yes.

F: They were afraid something might get going they couldn't stop?

E: Yes.

F: Do you think that we've moved beyond the gesture stage now?

E: I wouldn't be surprised--I don't know. I don't know what to say. There isn't any reason in the world why a woman shouldn't be nominated.

F: Was there ever any serious consideration given to Eleanor Roosevelt, or was she too controversial?

E: I don't believe any serious consideration was ever given to nominating her, but I don't think she would have been in favor of it, because she would never run for office, you know.

F: You got very interested in the equal rights problems in the '50's.

E: I wasn't terribly interested in equal rights. Well, when you say equal rights, yes, I'm interested in equal rights, and I've always been, but not in the equal rights amendment as such.

F: But more in women's participation.

E: Yes.

F: You declared yourself in 1954 as being opposed to James Roosevelt running for Congress in California. Do you recall--?

E: Yes, indeed, I recall very well.

F: Now, on what basis did you get involved in that?

E: I knew Jimmy very well. I was then vice chairman of the committee, or I wouldn't have felt that I had a right to say anything. But Jimmy ran for Congress in this district which was a completely safe district for a Democrat, whoever ran was going to be elected. But he was in the middle of a

divorce suit and mixed up in more scandals than--you know, and it just seemed to me that a man ought to put his own house in order before he tried to go to the Congress. As it turned out, I think Jimmy was a very good Congresssman, and maybe I was wrong--maybe it didn't make any difference. It certainly didn't in that district, but I still think--.

F: That there was some danger that it would damage the position of the party?

E: Yes, I do think that it's too bad for--.

F: When did you first become aware that there was a Lyndon Johnson?

E: I was trying to think the other day whether I first knew him--whether he was a Representative or whether he was a Senator. I don't remember him except as a Senator, so if I knew him as a Representative, it was just very casual.

F: Do you recall his close squeak election in 1948? Did that make any impact on the times?

E: Yes, I heard about it, but it didn't--no. But of course I was in Texas with Truman, and I know I had met--I travelled all through Texas with President Truman.

F: Now then, after he came to the Senate, did you have any relationship with him in those early days as a Senator before he became Majority Leader?

E: Yes, I did. I think one of the most interesting things was when President--I was very anxious to get a woman on the Federal Trade Commission, and one of the commissioners died. Really, I hate to tell you how terrible I was, the way I used to read the death notices and rush into the President because that's the only way you could get a woman in. And so I rushed over to see President Truman as soon as this poor man died, whoever he was, and said that I felt that this was the time to put a woman in. And he said, "Well, if you come up with a qualified woman, I will give her

consideration." And so I suggested Sarah Hughes. And I called Sarah. As a matter of fact, she was in England at the time. She and her husband were on a trip. And I called her over there and I said, "Would you be interested in filling out this term?" And she said, "Yes," she would. So then, of course, I had to get clearance from the two Senators from Texas. And I went down to see Lyndon Johnson, and I had no trouble at all getting clearance from him. He thought that it was a fine idea, and he was delighted. And then I went to see Senator Connolly, and that was a different story. Senator Connolly said, "Miss India, I think you're trying to get a woman on every commission in the United States government." And I said, "You couldn't be more right. That's exactly what I'm trying to do." He refused. He wouldn't give her clearance. And so I was very discouraged. But I guess I wrote him a letter, and eventually he called me and said, "All right." I've sort of forgotten, it's so long ago. I think maybe I asked Lyndon Johnson to talk to him. That would have been the natural thing to have done because Senator Connolly did come around finally and gave clearance. Because I couldn't have gotten her in, you see, with two Democratic Senators, if they didn't both approve.

F: But she didn't get the position.

E: Well, she withdrew the day that her name was to go to the Senate. She called me and said she had been thinking it over and that inasmuch as it was just for three years or something of that sort, it wasn't a full term, that she wouldn't. I was so mad. If I had been close to her, I think I would have strangled her. And President Truman had a lot of names to send to the Senate that day, and he said, "Well, India, if you can come up with another woman--."

F: That's pretty quick.

E: Well, I found one in Missouri, a lawyer, and very capable, very good. And I can't remember whether we had any--I think we did have one Democratic Senator then in Missouri, and he endorsed her, but the national committeewomen wouldn't endorse her.

F: I see. So you lost on that one.

E: Nobody knows how hard it is to get a woman cleared.

F: There's always somebody to throw a roadblock.

E: They always have men they want to put in.

F: Do you find sometimes working with your national committeewomen that they tend to be, let's say, somewhat jealous of other women? So that in many instances they would prefer a man over a woman?

E: Oh, yes. The minute a woman gets a little bit higher than the others, her head's up and they begin taking potshots at her.

F: When she emerges, she is exposed.

E: It's too bad. A minute ago when we were talking about--you asked me if I thought I would ever see a woman nominated for Vice President. Actually, in spite of the number of women that President Johnson appointed to office--and he did a magnificent job on that, appointing a lot of women--and President Truman did a fine job, and of course President Roosevelt had started by appointing quite a few--. But I'll tell you--women today are at a lower ebb in the political life of this country than they have been at any time since I have been in politics. That's a long time. I think men are afraid. I think that's it. I really do.

F: Kind of a last stand reaction.

E: It takes a very mature man to be willing to compete with a woman on a level basis. And it also takes a mature woman to compete as an individual, not

using her femininity or anything like that. And so as I look over, for instance, all of these appointments that are being made by the new President, you see, there are no women. Three, I think, have been appointed, but in jobs that are not policy ones. Of course, President Johnson appointed the first woman assistant in the White House when he appointed Esther Peterson. She was the first one that has ever served as an assistant in the White House. No, she wasn't for Truman had Beth Short as press secretary for a brief time after her husband, Joe, died. and Eisenhower had Anne Wheaton as assistant press secretary for a brief time.

F: To come down to 1956, an election year, you worked with Mr. Truman, maybe not officially, but for Averell Harriman.

E: Yes. I worked for Averell Harriman. It really was not with President Truman because--.

F: He played it sort of canny.

E: He didn't do anything. I came out for Averell Harriman. I was co-chairman of his committee because I really felt that he was a fine governor of New York, and I thought he might get the nomination but I didn't think he could defeat Eisenhower. I didn't think any Democrat could defeat Eisenhower in 1956, but I thought Averell Harriman would be a great head of the Democratic Party. I thought to have the governor of New York at the head would be good. I have the greatest admiration for Averell Harriman, and I don't think there lives a finer American than he. But President Truman and I never had any communication on the subject whatsoever until maybe ten days before the convention opened when I went to see him in Independence to ask him if he would nominate Averell, and he refused. He said he would come out for him at the proper time, but the proper time wasn't quite early enough.

F: I see. You missed on that timing. Well, now then, your frontrunners, of course, were primarily Stevenson and Harriman, and you had that eternal

threat of a Southern revolt because of the civil rights stand and some of the Southerners were pushing Johnson as a kind of alternative.

E: I don't think Johnson had very much support though in '56.

F: It was just a threat, wasn't it?

E: As I remember, there was very little, and I was right in the middle of things there, and I would say that the talk about Johnson in '56 was very nebulous, wasn't very much.

F: More of a mutter. And so you never really worried about him as a serious threat?

E: Not in '56. No. Adlai Stevenson had it sewed up. I knew that after I had been in Chicago a short time. It would have been almost impossible for anybody else to have gotten it.

F: Mr. Johnson, then, was not a factor in '56.

E: I don't think he was.

F: You, the next year then, became the director of the Washington office of the New York State Commerce Department.

E: Yes. Averell Harriman appointed me to that. Senator Mead had been the director of that office here and he resigned--retired--and a friend of mine called me and I didn't know--in fact, I never had heard of the office. I didn't know they had such an office here, and a friend of mine called me up and said, "Why don't you get Governor Harriman to appoint you to that?" I actually needed a job at that time and needed the money, but I never had a desire to have a job that I didn't feel I could do. You know, a sinecure doesn't go with my nature. So I said, "I'll look into it."

So I wrote President Truman a letter, and I said that he probably

knew--because Jim Mead was a great friend of his--about that post; and I said, "If you think it's something that I could do, I wonder if you would write Governor Harriman and suggest it to him," because I certainly couldn't suggest to him that he name me to the post. But I said, "Only if you think it's something I can do." So my darling Harry Truman wrote Governor Harriman, and he sent me a copy of the letter, and I nearly died when I saw it. It went on to say how well he thought I had done and so on and so forth with the committee, and the last paragraph--he said he thought I could be of great help to the governor in this particular post--and then the last paragraph was, "India's a rough and tumble politician who knows almost all the answers." I said to my husband, "Well, I don't know whether Governor Harriman wants a rough and tumble politician." But I'm sure that that from President Truman was the highest compliment he could give. It was very cute. Governor Harriman didn't know that President Truman had sent me a copy of the letter, so it was all Governor Harriman's idea. He called me up and said, "I've been thinking that maybe this would be--." And it was a very interesting job. I enjoyed it very much.

F: How long were you on it?

E: Until Governor Harriman was defeated, and then of course I resigned. And I might say here that Governor Rockefeller sent one of his top men down to see me to see if I wouldn't continue on the job. I don't think it was because I was so brilliant or had done such a magnificent job, but he was then very strong after the Presidential nomination, and I would have been quite a feather in his cap if he could have had a former vice chairman of the [Democratic National Committee] working for him. And I said, no, that I was sorry, I just couldn't do it. I remember this man said, "Well, why

couldn't you do exactly the same for Governor Rockefeller that you have been doing for Governor Harriman for the last two years?" And I said, "No. Governor Harriman is a Democrat; I'm a Democrat. Governor Rockefeller is a Republican, and I couldn't possibly do the same things for him."

F: By this time, Lyndon Johnson had emerged as the Majority Leader in the Senate. And you were interested in bipartisanship and in international affairs and getting a domestic program through and so on. Did you see much of the Senator at this time?

E: No, I didn't see very much of him. I knew what he was doing all the time. I was aware of it because I was very interested in the whole legislative program. But I didn't ever see a great deal of him. It was really Sam Rayburn who got me working for Lyndon Johnson in 1960, but Sam didn't have any trouble getting me to do it because I had decided that Lyndon Johnson was the best equipped man--that he was the one that ought to get the nomination.

F: Now, you became co-chairman with Oscar Chapman?

E: Yes.

F: Of the Citizens for Johnson National Committee. Tell us how you came into that position.

E: Oscar called me and asked me if I was committed to anybody. And I said no, I was not. I forget now--let's see, Jack Kennedy was running, and who else was running?

F: Well, Stuart Symington was a good candidate.

E: Oh, heavens yes, how well I remember that!

F: And Mr. Truman, of course, would have had some interest in Mr. Symington.

E: Stuart Symington is one of the dearest friends I have in the world. I am sure that Stuart always expected that I would work for him, but I

had never said that I would. Jack Kennedy had sent David Lloyd to me very early, I would say it was in '59, to ask--I remember the exact words. This man said, "What could Jack Kennedy do that would make you get on his bandwagon--make you willing to work for him?" And I said, 'Absolutely nothing." I said, "Maybe in four years or eight years I might, but I see nothing in Jack Kennedy's past or his record in the Congress that makes me feel that he's equipped to be President of the United States." So I said, "There just is nothing. I'm sorry. You just tell them that I'm out." And I love Stuart Symington as a man and I think he's been a fine Senator, but I did not feel that he had the qualifications for--. And everyone who knows me knows I am absolutely straightforward and I say exactly what I think. Many times people don't like it, and I don't care. But I thought that Lyndon Johnson was the best qualified.

F: You had decided that Harriman's time had passed?

E: Oh, yes. He had been defeated for governor of New York, and his time was past to run for the Presidency. Oh, I'll tell you somebody else who was running then--Chester Bowles.

F: Yes.

E: Because people talked to me about coming out for Chet Bowles.

F: Mr. Truman mentioned him as an alternative when he said he did not want Kennedy because he was too immature, and then he listed a group of candidates that he could support.

E: I'd forgotten that.

F: And Bowles was one of them.

E: But I remember now because a group of people who were supporting Bowles had come and talked to me about him. But I felt that Lyndon Johnson was, as I say, the best qualified, the best equipped to be President.

F: Did Mr. Rayburn talk to you about it?

E: Yes. Oh, yes. Oscar first called me and said, "Are you committed to anybody?" And I said, "No, I'm not." And he said, "Then, will you come down and talk to Sam Rayburn about it? He would like you to work for Lyndon Johnson." And I said, "Yes, I'll be glad to." So I went down and talked to Sam, whom I knew very well and admired greatly--in fact, I loved him--and then I also talked to Lyndon Johnson.

F: In this talk with Johnson, did he give you much encouragement?

E: Well, now, what do you mean by encouragement?

F: In other interviews, I've gotten some complaints from people that he did not give them enough of a green light early enough to organize properly.

E: Oh, well, it was already too late. He was very encouraging in the talk when we talked, there was nothing discouraging about that. But I didn't know that he wasn't going to do one thing himself because nobody can get out and do all the work for a man. And according to the way I looked at it, he didn't do a thing in 1960 to help himself. Absolutely nothing. And when I was trying to get people to join the citizens group, I got a few prominent people, but I had, I guess, fifty turndowns for every one acceptance. Most people didn't even know him. You know, they didn't know anything about him. And I remember that I wrote him a couple of notes and said, "You have to get out and make a few speeches and become known," but he wouldn't do it. He never did it. You know, he didn't do a thing. And I talked to Sam about that. I said, "You can't put a man over--." I didn't do very well on getting people in the citizens committee. Neither did Oscar, I might add. Neither one of us--we couldn't get people to join. They just wouldn't come in. I got a few, some I was very pleased with, like Mrs. Nicholas Roosevelt and a few people like that. I wouldn't call

it a great success.

F: Primarily it was not so much anti-Johnson but just the lack of a feeling that this was a bona fide candidate.

E: And they didn't know him, they didn't know anything about him except that he was the Majority Leader of the Senate.

F: Do you think this was any--?

E: Most of them had never seen him.

F: That makes it difficult, doesn't it?

E: And a lot of them, people I talked to, who said, "Well, I've been in Washington four times in the last year," or, "about three or four times every year for the last four or five years; I've never seen Senator Johnson." They didn't go around, you know, a lot socially, and he was attending to his job. But he apparently did not go around the country making speeches or anything of that sort. He never did anything to build himself up, which a candidate has to do.

F: Do you think there was a reluctance to stick his neck out? Do you think it's part of a kind of deep-seated, almost inscrutable strategy, or do you think he was just that busy?

E: Well, I just don't know what kind of inscrutable strategy it could be; I don't know how he could think that he was going to get the nomination. I personally never thought he really expected to get the nomination because he didn't act like a man who did.

F: So you and Oscar Chapman were, in fact, just working uphill?

E: Very definitely uphill. Then, what I did mostly was go out and talk to the various delegations, and <u>that</u> was some experience! I went and talked to the Northern delegations. I went, for instance, to Wisconsin, Michigan, Minnesota, New York.

F: You were in Minnesota the same time that John Kennedy was.

E: That was fun. That was great fun.

F: Tell us a little about that.

E: I would like to have gotten a clipping of the dinner. I got into Minneapolis; the plane was late; I was supposed to get in earlier in the afternoon. We were going to talk to the delegations on Sunday, and they were having this big dinner on Saturday night. I didn't get there until the dinner was well started. And so they wouldn't even give me time to go upstaris and change my dress or comb my hair or do anything. I just went in in my travelling clothes, as I was. And Jack Kennedy talked first, as I remember. And he was full of how it was just happenstance that his brother, Bobby, happened to be in Texas the week before and had been invited to talk to a group, and everything that--. All around the country, you know, it was just happenstance, all these things. It was really laughable.

I didn't have any speech because I hadn't expected to be called on at the dinner. I knew I was supposed to be there, but they hadn't said anything about my speaking or anything, so I just made some notes on a piece of paper, and I was rather proud of myself that night. For once I thought I rose to the occasion quite well. I got up and said how strange it was, I mean, these things are perfectly natural--that a man would just happen to be in Houston. And there was quite a cute article in the paper the next morning about it.

But when I would go to talk to the delegations, they laughed at me. They really did. In one of those delegations, and I can't remember whether it was Minnesota or Wisconsin, but one of them I talked to, when I began telling them that Lyndon Johnson would be a liberal President in the

Northern sense of the word, well, the delegates just put their heads back and screeched; it was the funniest thing they had ever heard. And one elderly man got up and he said, "I think we're being extremely rude to Mrs. Edwards. We all have known her a long time and we know the kind of person she is, and she would not be supporting Johnson if she didn't believe these things. I think at least we ought to do her the courtesy of listening to her." Well, I just don't believe that Lyndon Johnson could have ever had any idea of what it was like, trying to talk to these groups.

F: You didn't have any feeling that if the convention went into a second, third, or fourth ballot, that somewhere the delegations might go over to him?

E: No.

F: Did you see much of John Connally at this stage? Was he effectively organizing or trying to?

E: Well, I imagine so. After all, the only thing I saw of John was in the office when we both happened to be in the office. I know he was busy all the time, but I was the one who was going out to these, what I call, dog states.

F: Well, now, Paul Butler was the national chairman.

E: Yes.

F: Did you have the feeling that he sort of stacked things in one direction?

E: Very definitely. I thought he was for Johnson--there wasn't any question about it.

F: For Johnson?

E: No, I beg your pardon, for Kennedy. He had said so. He came out and made a statement that we had our candidate. And so, yes, I felt that

the national committee was not giving anybody else any play whatsoever. They felt that Kennedy had it, and that was it.

F: At the convention in Los Angeles, there was some charge that there was favoritism in seating.

E: Well, that I really don't know, didn't know anything about. But I wouldn't be surprised if there were.

F: Did Mr. Truman ever show any interest in Mr. Johnson at the '60 convention--I know Symington was his number one choice--but was he sufficiently dedicated to a "Stop Kennedy Movement" that he looked on Johnson as a viable alternative?

E: Well, I would say so, but, you know, he didn't come to the convention that year.

F: I know. He left it in doubt as to whether he was coming.

E: Yes, but he didn't come. And I was trying to remember whether I talked to him shortly before the convention. I don't think I did. I don't remember that I--in fact, I'm pretty sure I didn't. But he was very anxious to stop Kennedy, so I'm sure that he would have considered Johnson a viable candidate if Symington were completely out.

F: But you had no personal relationship with him?

E: No.

F: At the preconvention warmup, you had a bit of a hassle which you disavowed any participation in, I think pretty much led by John Connally, on the question of Kennedy's health.

E: I did not ever disavow any participation, because I was the one who said it. Definitely. What happened was this. I had been told by someone whose word I would have no reason to doubt, that he had been present at a governor's house when John Kennedy came there campaigning.

E: John Kennedy came there campaigning, and he had forgotten his cortisone and that they had to get a state trooper up in the middle of the night and that Kennedy went into a coma. Well, there's no disgrace in that. I mean, it's like a diabetic having to have insulin. And this kind of story was all over the place; that he had this adrenaline deficiency. Everybody knew that he had been a very ill man aside from the fact that he had been injured in the war, and I had talked to a couple of doctors about it. And so one day in Los Angeles, I should say about a week before the convention, John Connally and I were going to have a press conference. I don't know where you got the idea that I disavowed, because I never did. I always said that I--I mean, I was the one that said it. Well, anyway, John Connally and I were going to have a press conference, and John said, "Don't you think it's time if anybody, any reporter, asks anything about Johnson's health--" They were always asking about the heart attack.

F: The '55 heart attack was an issue?

E: Oh, yes, they were always bringing that up. And no matter how many times you said that he was perfectly sound, they were still bringing it up. And John said, "Don't you think it's time that we said something about Kennedy's health?" And I said, "Yes, I do." But I said, "John, let me do it, because I have no career ahead of me, and you have. You're a young man. It will cause a terrible stink. It won't matter to me."

And so, sure enough, somebody in the press conference did say something about Johnson, you know, not being able to be President because of his heart attack. So I said, "Well, what about Jack Kennedy's health? He's not what I would call a picture of the greatest health in the world. He has, as I understand it, Addison's Disease, and has to have cortizone all

the time or else he goes into a coma." "What!" And the lid was off. And stupidly, Bobby Kennedy held a press conference right that afternoon, and said that it was a lie, that it wasn't true. Whereas if he had done nothing about it, it probably would have been mentioned and that would have been the end of it. But I understand--Lyndon Johnson and I have never discussed this--but I understand that he [Johnson] was so angry! Oscar Chapman told me this.

F: You mean about bringing this out into the open?

E: Yes. I was the one who did it, but John knew I was going to do it. It was John Connally's decision as well as mine.

F: You didn't check this with Johnson? This was done between you and Connally?

E: Between Connally and me.

F: Why do you think Johnson would have objected?

E: I couldn't tell you. I can't imagine.

F: It seems to me it would have been in his favor.

E: Well, I was very interested, and I got this out today because I thought this would come up. I was very interested in Sorensen's book. Did you read it? Do you remember that part?

F: No.

E: [Theodore] Sorensen brings it out as absolutely true. Over here on page 38, he says, "For much of their first two years of married life, home to John Kennedy meant a sick bed. And through most of the years of his life with Jacqueline he suffered sharp, physical pain. The chief cause of his hospitalization and discomfort was his back. The cause of his near death in the fall of 1954 was the shock of a spinal operation upon his inadequate adrenal system. It was the same adrenal insufficiency that

gave rise to all the health rumors that plagued him for years." Then over on page 156, he tells about, "John Connally and India Edwards cast doubt on his physical fitness." Well, John Connally didn't do it; I did it. Then, over here, Sorensen again mentions it. He admits that Kennedy had had this trouble, and I had heard this, as I say, from doctors, so that I knew that we were on sound ground when we said it. And why Bobby felt it necessary to say it was a lie, I thought was the silliest thing, because then it blew it up into much more. But, of course, Bobby never forgave me for it.

F: Was there any refutation given to Bobby's press conference?

E: We dropped it. We didn't do any more about it.

F: But you didn't have any direct contact with Johnson afterwards and he told you to drop this issue?

E: No. Oscar Chapman was not in Los Angeles at that time, and Oscar called me that night and he said, "Oh, you have really raised the roof." I said, "Why?" And he said, "Well, LBJ is just furious." And I don't know why.

F: But he never mentioned it to you?

E: Never.

F: That's interesting. Did you have any inkling that Kennedy was going to offer the Vice Presidency to Johnson?

E: No, I did not. I did not have any inkling.

F: Were you surprised?

E: I was surprised at first. After I thought it over, it was the most sensible thing he could have done.

F: Did you talk to Mr. Sam about this?

E: No, not before it happened.

F: In my interviews, I get conflicting stories from the usual story with some

saying that Mr. Rayburn actually sought the Vice Presidential nomination for Mr. Johnson. Do you have any light on that at all?

E: I have no real light on it. A lot of things that happened in politics you have to have a hunch about. It is my own hunch that this is what he always expected to get. That he never--I don't see how a man could have expected to get the Presidential nomination and behave as he did before the convention.

F: Do you think that the Kennedys were impressed with the amount of delegate strength he showed even in a sort of non-campaign situation?

E: I've sort of forgotten how much strength he had.

F: He got four hundred-and-some-odd votes which was a fair showing for what he put out.

E: Yes. It was a better showing than he deserved when you consider what he put out. But I think that more than that, that Jack Kennedy was impressed with his knowledge of government and his--.

F: You mean from their being Senators together?

E: Yes. And, after all, remember he was Majority Leader, so Jack Kennedy had reason to know a great deal about his ability. And I think that--my own belief was that John Kennedy felt that he couldn't win without him, that he had to have him for the South. And I don't think he would have won without him.

F: Where were you at the time the decision was made?

E: Well, I don't know. It was in the morning, kind of early in the morning, and I think I had been downstairs to breakfast, and I was getting out of the elevator and I ran into Jim Rowe, and Jim told me about it. And he said, "What do you think about it?" And I said, "Well, he has to take it." And Jim said, "Well, that's not the advice he's getting from a lot

of people." And I said, "Well, he probably won't ask my advice, but if I were going to give it, I would say that when he is asked to take the Vice Presidency, he has to do it, because otherwise he's saying, 'Well, if I can't have the top spot, I'm going to pick up my marbles and go home.'" I said, "I don't think he could look at himself in the mirror again when he shaves if he did a thing like that." I said, "Because Jack Kennedy needs him, he has got to have him. He'll strengthen the ticket; there's nobody else." There was nobody else talked about that could possibly have given the strength to the ticket that Lyndon Johnson could give.

F: Did you see any evidence of the strong anti-Johnson feeling among some of the Kennedy adherents? Apparently there was an outrage.

E: No, because I didn't see any of the Kennedy adherents then. But I then went right to--I was on the same floor just a few doors from the Johnson suite--and so I went on down there to the Johnson suite, and I talked to Walter Jenkins and Bobby Baker. And I said, "I don't know who's talking to him about not taking it, but some of us who feel differently ought to get in there and talk to him because he has to take it." I just felt very strongly that this was necessary.

I was down there in the suite for some time, and Oscar Chapman came down, there were lots of people milling around. I did not go in and talk to Lyndon, but finally they announced that he would make an announcement at a certain time and would we all be there. And so we all gathered--all the people who were working intimately with the group--in the sitting room of his suite. Now, this will not bear out what I have read, but because it is the truth, I am going to put it in here. I was standing next to Bird, closer than I am to you, when Johnson said that the nominee,

the Presidential nominee, had asked him to take the Vice Presidential spot. And he said, "I have decided to do so." And Bird put both hands up like this on her face, and she said, "No, no, no!" Now, I have never seen--.

F: Do you think she was caught by surprise?

E: Now I feel quite certain that they must have talked it over earlier, but I don't think that she was definitely sure that he was going to take it. She couldn't have been. She and I were standing sort of in the back. Now, this is the only time I have ever said this because always in print it has been that, you know, he talked it over with her and she agreed and so on. Well, this can't be true because she said, "No, no, no!" just like that. But from the standpoint of history, I feel I ought to.

F: Right. Did you talk with her at all at this time?

E: No. And she was sort of crying.

F: In general, how was his little decision talk greeted by the people there? Were they mostly friends or were they also the press?

E: No, there were no press.

F: Strictly the intimates.

E: There were the people who were working with him--Price Daniel--. Now, Price Daniel, of course, had been trying to persuade him not to do it, not to take it; and it was my understanding, although I did not ever talk to Sam about it, Sam had started out by--. But I don't know about that. I mean, that is something I really have no actual knowledge of. But I know that--well, Jim Rowe, I don't know how Jim felt, but Jim said, when I said I felt he ought to do it earlier, "Well, you ought to get that word to him because there are a lot of people trying to keep him from it." And I did tell Walter and Bobby, who were the two closest people to him.

F: How did they seem to stand on the issue--Walter and Robert?

E: I sort of had the feeling they thought he ought to take it. Now, they didn't say so, but I said, for what it's worth, "If he is interested, well, you can tell him that I said that I thought he had to do it." He had no choice, unfortunately. It's one of those things--and I still feel that way. I feel that that was--.

F: It was the only thing he could do for the party.

E: Yes.

F: It's a realistic decision.

E: I think actually that he must have hated to make that decision because being Vice President is certainly not as good as being Majority Leader of the Senate. And for a man like Lyndon who likes power and all, I'm sure that he really didn't want that job in a way. But in another way, I of course think that Lyndon Johnson is, and he has said this himself many times, he's first of all a free man--he's an American. I think he's a great patriot, and I just think that he couldn't do anything else.

F: Okay. The irreparable step has been taken. What do you do now? After the convention?

E: Well, I came back here and Bird got ready to take a trip into Texas with a couple of the Kennedy girls, and she invited me to go along. Unfortunately I hadn't been feeling well. I really had worked awfully hard during--I don't think that we worked on that campaign over six weeks.

F: You started about the first of June, and the convention was over in mid-July.

E: Yes, I was going to say I really worked terribly hard, and I was feeling very badly the several weeks I was in Los Angeles. And I kept wondering why I had so many bruises all over my body. I kept having bruises on my

legs and on my arms, and I would think, "Well, what under the sun! I don't remember bumping into anything." I couldn't figure it out. And so when I got back here, and as I say, Bird planned this trip and asked me to go, and I was planning to go. But I thought, "Well, before I go, I had better go and see the doctor," because I really was feeling so badly, and I thought maybe he could give me some vitamins or something. And he put me right in the hospital, and I spent about four weeks in the hospital. And instead of bruises, I had little blood vessels that were bursting. It was an allergy from a medicine that I was taking. And so I didn't get to go on the Texas trip. But I did campaign with Johnson, maybe the last three or four weeks.

F: Where was this?

E: Oh, we went out West. To California and--.

F: What did you do?

E: Oh, I don't know. I just went along for the ride as far as I could see. I didn't do very much.

F: Moral support.

E: Idaho, Montana, you know.

F: How did they accept him in those areas? It's hard to push back--memory is short--but you still have to remember that a Southerner was looked upon as something apart.

E: He was accepted.

F: He was a Westerner, too,but--.

E: Yes, but he was accepted. Well, of course, I was trying to think if there were any big rallies that weren't very successful, but I don't think there were. I can't remember any. It seemed to me, because, of course, the people--the organization people--it was their job to get out crowds.

F: Were you on the Dixie swing he made from courthouse to courthouse?

E: I don't think so. I went with him to Oklahoma.

F: Do you think he touched a group that Kennedy might have missed?

E: I would feel that certainly in the South he did, yes. But I really only took part in the campaign, as I say, the last three or four weeks.

F: Did you work with Mrs. Johnson any in the campaign?

E: No, not at all. Well, she was on the trips that I went on.

F: Then, after the election, what became of you?

E: I retired, as I remember.

F: Came back to the house again.

E: You know, I've retired about seven times.

F: Right. You're like the farewell appearance of the Marx brothers.

E: Yes, sort of that.

F: Or Sarah Bernhardt.

E: Yes. But I've always been very active in the Democratic party.

F: Were you active at the time of the assassination? Officially active?

E: I had no official connection with the committee or anything of that sort.

F: How soon did now-President Johnson get you back in the harness?

E: I was one of the first women he appointed to an office. And that, I am sure, was done--I had talked to Walter and told him I didn't want a job.

F: He named you a special--.

E: Special Consultant on Youth Employment to the Secretary of Labor.

F: What does that mean?

E: Well, nothing. Completely nothing. And when Walter told me that's what he would like to have me do, I said, "Well, what does it mean?" And Walter said, "Well, you'll have to talk to Bill Wirtz about it.

He'll tell you." Bill was an old friend of mine, and so I went down to see Bill, and I said, "Bill, what is there for me to do? I don't want a job just to have a place to go every day. Unless there is something for me to do." And Bill said, "Oh, there is a big job to be done here. And you will be a great help to me." And so on and so forth. Well, this is a laugh. There was nothing for me to do whatsoever. It was a big help in that in the '64 campaign, I had a springboard, and I made a great many speeches. I travelled all over the country in the '64 campaign. And I did a lot of travelling for the Labor Department, made a lot of speeches for the Labor Department. If I had been a younger woman and had wanted to build a career, yes, there would have been something for me to do there. But I didn't want it. I'm seventy-three years old.

F: Incredible--but I won't dwell on that now.

E: The first day I was at the Labor Department they gave me a lovely office with all the--as I found out later--perquisites that indicate status, you know, coffee table, sofa, lamps, all the things, and a secretary in an outer office; and a man came in to me and said, "How many assistants do you want?" And I said, "Assistants? I don't even know what I'm going to do. I don't want any assistants." Well, I never did have an assistant. There was nothing for an assistant to do. I helped where I could. It was a very inconsequential job.

F: It gave you, though, a certain vantage point to watch a President at work.

E: Yes.

F: How do you describe his success in holding the Kennedy Cabinet together? Ordinarily, you know, the members of a previous Administration drift out pretty quickly.

E: Yes.

F: But this one stayed on to a degree unparalleled in history, Wirtz being a prime example.

E: Well, he's [Johnson] a very persuasive man, I mean, if he tried to persuade somebody to do something. And so, I don't know whether it was a good thing. Maybe he would have been better off if he had let some of them go.

F: But you never felt that in the Cabinet or the immediate sub-Cabinet level there was any sort of a Kennedy faction hanging over into the Johnson Administration--that the loyalty to his Administration was unswerving?

E: The people with whom I came in contact, and I won't say that they were too numerous, I never felt had any loyalty except to Johnson. Now, I don't know about anything else. I'm certain that Bill Wirtz, people like that, were completely loyal to President Johnson.

F: Again, I think it's remarkable because Wirtz, McNamara, Udall, were all Kennedy appointees.

E: Yes.

F: And with few exceptions would probably have never been contacted by Johnson.

E: No. Well, they were good men, and I think it was very, very smart of Johnson to keep the ones that were good.

F: Were you ever in a position to observe any of the sort of disaffection between the President and Bobby Kennedy? Was it real?

E: I won't say I was in a position to observe it, no. To observe it would mean that I would have had to be with the two of them, and that I was not. But, yes, I'm sure it was real. And the things I heard, the things that used to happen, I know I was responsible for one man being fired from the national committee--dreadful human being who had been put in there by Kennedy. A state vice chairman came into town and went up to the committee, and she called me right after that in great distress. She said,

"India, what goes on?"

F: Who is she?

E: It was May Gurevich from New York. I can't even remember his name, but he was very close to Bobby Kennedy--and she said that she had been to see John Bailey, who was chairman, and Margaret Price, and she ran into this man, and he said, "Oh, you weren't coming to see me?" And she said, "Well, I hadn't gotten around to seeing you," or something of that sort. And he said, "Well, you had better come to see me because I am the works around here. Don't think for a minute that because Johnson is President that that's going to make any difference. Bobby is going to be in charge," and he went on at a great rate. And she was just horrified. She called me up and she said, "What kind of morale is there over there? Why are they keeping people like that?" And I said, "I'm sure I don't know, but would you wait while I get a pencil and paper, and will you, insofar as you can, dictate to me exactly what he said?" I don't take shorthand, so it was quite a chore to take it down, but I did.

F: I trust you have that somewhere.

E: No, I gave it to Walter Jenkins.

F: Oh, but it is preserved?

E: Well, I don't know whether he preserved it. It was Paul somebody, his name was. Oh, he was a slob! And so I just took it right over to the White House and gave it to Walter, and I said, "Now, here it is. I think you ought to know this kind of thing is going on." And the man was out of the committee the next day--to everybody's pleasure.

F: You mentioned earlier that the place of women in the national political scene, in the party particularly, began to go downhill with Kennedy and continued with Johnson.

E: It's very odd to say that, because Johnson did appoint so many women to office. But it is true, nonetheless, but it's the fault of--it's the fact that the Democratic committee was not functioning during all those years.

F: Was there a lack of communication between John Bailey and Johnson?

E: Lack of communication? My dear man, John Bailey was just a figurehead. I have known John Bailey ever since I have been in politics. I met him first in 1944, and I consider John Bailey one of the most able politicians in the United States. In fact, I tried to persuade Adlai Stevenson to appoint him chairman of the committee. Heaven knows, if he had been appointed instead of that idiot, Steve Mitchell, who knew nothing, Stevenson might have won.

But, and I've been close to the committee the last eight years particularly because Margaret Price, who was a great friend of mine, was vice chairman. And I did a lot of campaigning in all the campaigns. But I knew that Margaret was not treated with very much--well, they never consulted her, never acted as if she were on a par with anybody with any intelligence, and she was a very bright, very fine woman, a good politician. But I have always said that women get exactly the kind of treatment they will take, both from their husbands and the men with whom they do business. And if they will be doormats, then they'll be that. But I wouldn't be a doormat. But I wasn't, although I say I was close to the committee, I wasn't in it.

Margaret became very ill last January, and in May--I don't know when it was, maybe late April, something like that--I knew she had cancer and knew she was dying. John Bailey spoke to me and asked me if I would come in and make plans for the convention for the women. And I said

no, I wouldn't do it. And he said, "Well, we've got to have somebody." I found out later that he had been in Kansas the week before that and he was talking to a couple of women in Kansas and said to them that they had to get somebody in to do this work, and they said, "Why don't you get India?" They said, "She's right there in Washington, she's not doing anything professionally, and she has done it so many times." And he said, "Yes, that's all true, but, you know, she has a mind of her own." So he must have been pretty desperate to turn to me. Well, anyway, I said I wouldn't do it. I said, "John, you get somebody younger and I'd help if I could but I cannot take on the job."

But then Margaret sent for me. She was in the Harkness Pavilion in New York and said she would like to see me. And I went up to see her, and I naively thought it was just to see me, but what she wanted was to beg me to go into the committee and do this, and I couldn't say no to her. She said, "Well, I'll sleep tonight for the first time in many months without anxiety."

So I went in and John said would I write him a memo and tell him what I felt was necessary. There was no staff. There was nothing, and I looked around the committee and asked to see all the materials they had. They didn't have a thing. They didn't have a piece of material to distribute. And, as I say, practically no staff. And so I wrote John a memo of what I thought I needed which was, heaven knows, very little. He sent the memo back to me with "Okay" written on it.

I went ahead and hired a couple of people and put them on the payroll, and they didn't get on; nothing happened. So I then tried to see the treasurer--what's his name--John Criswell, and I called him and called him and called him, and he would make appointments with me and never would

keep them. And that went on for about two weeks.

And I finally thought, this is ridiculous; I can't operate like this. So I wrote President Johnson a note, and I said that I knew he had taken himself out of politics, so perhaps it was very wrong for me to even ask to see him to discuss a political matter, but I wondered if I could have an off-the-record appointment with him some time and discuss a few things with him about the committee. The next morning he got the note. The day he got the note, Jim Jones called me and said that if I would come at 5:30 that afternoon the President would see me. So I went over, and Jim Jones told me how many people were waiting to see the President, so I said, "Of course, I understand. I stay five minutes--is that it?" He said, "Well, make it as brief as you can."

I was there for quite a long time; I think it was about thirty minutes, but it wasn't because I stayed so long but because the President kept me, and I was wondering as I went in, "What am I going to say? You can't walk in and start complaining about the treasurer of the national committee. How am I going to get across my message?" But the President did it for me; it was wonderful. He thanked me for going back to the committee, and he said that "John Bailey tells me you have wonderful plans." He said, "How are things going for you?" And I said, "They're not going at all. They are at a complete standstill." And he said, "Why is that? John Bailey tells me that he has approved everything that you want to do." And I just looked at him, and I said, "Now, Mr. President, you know as well as I know that John Bailey's okay doesn't mean a thing--not the paper it is written on. Don't try to kid me." And he said, "Well, what's the trouble?" I said, "I can't buy a six-cent stamp without having it okayed by the treasurer. And he said,

"Are you having trouble getting the okay?" I said, "I have never seen him. I've made appointment with him after appointment; he makes the appointment and then he never shows up. I haven't been able to get anything. I just want to tell you that there is no need for me to be there." I was working as a volunteer. That was the only condition on which my husband would let me go back, was to work as a volunteer. And I said, "But there's no need for me to be there at all unless I can do a job." And I went on and talked to him about what I wanted to do. And so we had a wonderful conversation, and every time I sort of got up and started leaving, he would say, "Now, wait a minute, tell me this, tell me that." Then at the end he called Jim Jones and he said, "Send word to Arthur Krim and John Criswell and John Bailey that India Edwards is to have whatever she feels she needs." So from then on, I didn't have any more problems.

F: What do you think the problem was in--what had been the problem in the party in the kind of dismantling of the party machinery? Do you think there has been too much personal direction from the top?

E: Oh yes, of course. But also, you have to take into consideration the temperaments of the men. John Kennedy came from a state where they don't really have a strong organization. Every man has his own organization. And this I don't mean in a derogatory sense because I have the greatest admiration for Lyndon Johnson, but Lyndon Johnson doesn't understand national politics. He never really understood the need for a national committee. John Bailey told me that Johnson said to him one day, "What do you need a staff for at the national committee? I could run the national committee with one secretary." He never did understand exactly what it was all about. And when Truman was in the White House and when Roosevelt was in the White House, we always had strong national committees.

And of course, when you are out of power, you need it even more than when you are in power. But I, of course, at the convention--all the work that I did on the convention was completely wasted because of the way the convention turned out. It was such a mess.

F: How did Criswell get in the position of--it seems to me if there were a seat of power in the committee, it was with him.

E: He was running the committee; there wasn't any question about that. I asked John Bailey after I had been there a few weeks, I said, "John, I wish you would tell me something. Why did you abdicate as chairman?" And he said, "Well,"--he looked a little startled, "I either had to do it or I had to get out. And so I decided just to ride along and let things go." I said, "Well, you did yourself and the party a great disservice because you had a fine reputation around the country. Now people don't think as much of you."

F: He just gave up.

E: He just gave up. And I said, "To have a man running the committee who knows absolutely nothing about politics!" Now, John Criswell is a very nice young man, but I'll tell you, he doesn't know anything about politics, absolutely nothing.

F: Is this a Johnson appointee?

E: Yes, but you know when I talked to the President he told me that he had been trying to get John Criswell out of the committee by accepting an appointment to a commission. So, there you are.

F: What's he going to have to do--go back and start a grassroots rebuilding?

E: Yes, that's what we need, and I hope Fred Harris--. Personally I don't approve of a Senator being chairman; I think that either job is a full-time job, particularly in the year 1969, either to be chairman or a Senator. But if he has a good staff, maybe he can do it. But I don't

know how well Fred Harris understands national politics. He may just be an Oklahoma boy with a lot of ambition.

F: Do you think that a different type of man from Bailey could have seen this thing through and have kept the organization intact? Or do you think this was a period--?

E: I don't know. It apparently takes, or would have taken, a tremendously strong man to stand up to Lyndon Johnson. Now, whether anybody could do it or not--you know, the poverty program, the greatest thing that was ever conceived on the domestic front, even greater than social security--. (End of tape #1)

INTERVIEWEE: INDIA EDWARDS (Tape #2)

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

E: I campaigned in '64 I can't tell you how many speeches I made about the poverty program. It was before it had been started, you know. To me, it was the most exciting thing! It has just been heartbreaking to me to see the way it has developed and how little has been accomplished. That has been--this is my analysis of it--and I know this to be a fact because the President was always demanding numbers, numbers, numbers. How many thousands are you going to be able to help by such and such a date? How many hundreds of thousands? And nobody apparently, among the people with whom he was dealing, mainly Sargent Shriver--but there were others too, Cabinet officers--ever told him it couldn't be done this way. Now, I have noticed that since he was out of office--I think it was since he was out of office--he said that kooks and so on ruined the program. There were a lot of people brought in--there were a lot of people in that program that were simply impossible. I mean, they had Ph.D.'s, 26-year olds who didn't have one ounce of common sense.

F: Attracted everybody who had ever sat around a coffee table and had an idea.

E: And getting big salaries. But the main thing was--and I know this because I was very intimately associated with it all the time I was at the Labor Department--they were feeding the President, he was demanding these things, they were feeding him things that were completely untrue. They were feeding him projections instead of any accomplished facts. Every speech that Sargent Shriver ever made was full of projections, but not given as a projection, given as though it were an accomplished fact. So if

the taxpayers knew really how much money had been wasted on that program, it would be hard to get a lot of other things done. And yet it was such a great program.

F: What is this basically--an attempt to solidify your own position with the President rather than to get a proper job done? This brings up this problem that is always eternal--where does the President get the truth?

E: That's the point. I just wondered if any of them ever had the nerve to stand up to him and say, "You can't build a program like this, you can't build a program up here this big and come down; you've got to start here and build up to it." That was the way to do it. And I don't think anybody ever did. I'm sure they didn't. Well, for one thing, I think that Sargent Shriver's own people fed him things that were not true. I know that to be a fact because I know things that were given to him which he undoubtedly passed on to the President that were just not true. And so I suppose I never had enough occasion to differ with President Johnson; that is, we haven't been in daily contact so I don't know. Maybe he is a hard man to disagree with.

F: From what you could see, did he and Shriver work well together?

E: I don't know; I suppose they must have.

F: They continued together.

E: Yes.

F: Did you see any evidence in '68, as is sometimes charged, that the President really thought it would be a good idea if Nixon were elected?

E: No, I would say that the one conversation I had with him the day I was at the White House and we talked at great length--I was absolutely convinced that he wanted Hubert Humphrey to win, but that he wasn't going to do anything about it. I mean, you know, that he was really out of it.

I don't hold at all with the people who say that he really wanted Nixon to win. I don't believe that's true. I think that he probably felt that if Nixon did win, that he hoped he would be a good President, as do we all.

F: Yes. To go back to '64, did you go with Mrs. Johnson on the Dixie train?

E: No, I was out campaigning in Illinois and various other places.

F: Did you tend to campaign in places of strength, or did you go into the definitely unfriendly, more conservative areas and try to trim off support there? What would normally be--?

E: I would not decide where I would go. I would go where the national committee asked me to go. They were usually border areas. For instance, I went into Ohio quite a number of times, and Ohio was a--.

F: Difficult state.

E: Yes. And the same with Illinois. I went into Illinois and campaigned all up and down the State. Jane Wirtz and I went out together. In those days, Jane wouldn't make a speech. She was, you know, the Cabinet wife. It was wonderful having her there, but I had to make the speeches. Sometimes I would make seven and eight speeches a day.

F: To women's groups mainly?

E: No, men and women both. And then I went to California several times.

E: Was the national committee still a fairly strong committee in '64?

E: Well, it was stronger than it was afterwards. At least they had a good speaker's bureau then. I don't think in '68 they did anything, as far as I can recall. See, I didn't have anything to do with this campaign in '68. I left the day after the convention. I only made two speeches during the '68 campaign, two that I had agreed to do some time before.

F: You didn't have anything at all to do with the final gearing up of the '68 campaign when it came to a close?

E: No, nothing at all.

F: Did you sense back in '64 any really strong personal concern on Mr. Johnson's part that Mr. Goldwater might take the election?

E: No.

F: You were working from confidence most of the time?

E: Oh, yes. I don't think any of us were worried at all about Goldwater.

F: Did Mr. Johnson and Mr. Bailey work harmoniously?

E: As far as I know they did. I don't think they ever did anything. I don't think Johnson allowed him to do anything. I'm sure that he didn't. Bailey used to come down here and spend a few days, had a nice car and chauffeur, but I don't think he did anything.

F: Quit at that time.

E: Well, this is the story that you got from all over the country. My telephone used to ring just constantly from people calling me from all the States just because they happened to know me; and in this '68 campaign it was just pathetic the telephone calls I was getting from people out in the States begging for material and this and that. They couldn't get anything from the committee.

F: I was in Tommy Corcoran's office maybe the first of October, and he was beginning to get some figures together, apparently the first thing they had to hand out showing what the Democrats had done in the various States.

After Mr. Johnson became President, he gave you this--he made this appointment to the Labor Department. Did he urge you then to get back into active national committee work?

E: No, I never had any conversations with him about it at all.

F: Did you work with Mrs. Johnson at all in her campaign efforts in '64?

E: Yes, off and on, I worked with her. I can't tell you how I admire her;

I think she is one of the great women of all time.

F: In your experience, do we have another President's wife who has looked upon herself to this extent as a sort of campaign adjunct?

E: Full-time partner; Eleanor Roosevelt did, and I always felt that--Bird Johnson was here during the Roosevelt Administration, and I know she admired Eleanor Roosevelt tremendously. And I always thought that she sort of took her as her model that she would try and--. But I think that Bird Johnson did much more because she not only carried on her own campaign of beautification and then she was interested in Head Start, but she did everything else that she needed to do. She's a remarkable woman. Really! If she has a fault, I don't know what it is. She must have, everybody does have. But she is just a wonderful person, and what an asset to him!

F: A good person to work behind the scenes.

E: A really great asset.

F: Did you see any evidence of the press being more than just an ordinary critical press toward Mr. Johnson? That is, of any sort of a real press effort to trim him down to size after reelection in '64?

E: It didn't seem to me, no--at least I didn't have that feeling. Of course, I must admit that I'm always pretty sympathetic to the press, having been a member of it for so many years, but I didn't have that feeling. I always felt that it was too bad that somebody couldn't help Lyndon Johnson handle the press better.

F: This is an interesting fundamental question. I think it's one place that his relationship broke down. What did he need that he didn't have? Let's take Lyndon Johnson as he is. Did he need something different in the way of a press secretary, did he need a different style, or what?

E: Oh, I don't know that he needed anything different in the way of a press secretary. But I think the press, at least the ones I know, the men and women--he would be so friendly with certain ones, and the others would feel kind of left out. And then suddenly somebody would write something that he didn't like, maybe one line, and then he was not friendly at all. You can't treat the press like that. It's better to be a little standoffish all the time, not be too pally, unless they are your really old friends. Now, Jack Kennedy had some very close friends in the press. I don't believe that Lyndon Johnson had any close friends in the press unless it would be Bill White. I don't believe that there would be anyone else that you could really consider an old close friend of his. But Jack Kennedy did have quite a number of them. It's just in the nature of a person, I guess, either one way or the other, or else get a woman like me who has a mind of her own and that's dreadful.

F: Mrs. Edwards, what did you do in preparation for the 1968 convention in Chicago?

E: Well, in addition to planning some meetings and luncheons for the women, we prepared this material, and all of this material was done by volunteers because we had no staff. But I got experts in every line, and they did it. The format was the same, what the Republicans had done from 1953 to 1960, and what the Democrats had done from 1961 to 1968. And in almost every case, whatever the Republicans had done had been passed by a Democratic Congress.

F: You made mention of that?

E: Yes. We did one on conservation; rural America, which of course, included agriculture, consumer protection, education, equal opportunity, health and

social services, housing and urban development and safe communities.

F: Let me ask one question. Since the women are the big consumers in this country, as far as you can tell, did they give an enthusiastic response to Mr. Johnson's concern with the consumer?

E: Yes, I think so.

F: This has been a realistic women's activity?

E: Yes, and I think that President Nixon is going to find himself in real trouble if he doesn't continue it--youth, and I think senior citizens on the other side; food power and population control. Then we did a six-page thing on Democrats and world cooperation.

F: Well, now, I was at the convention and I didn't see one of these packets. What happened?

E: I don't know. Then we had this brief history of the Democratic party.

F: You had this done?

E: Yes. And they were all distributed in Chicago.

F: How many of these did you have?

E: Ten thousand of each. Then I had given several sets of them to people at the Humphrey headquarters and said that if they wanted--I had instructed the printer to hold the plates--and if they wanted to get something out in a hurry, my idea was that they could take one of these flyers and put it on legal size paper and then put Humphrey-Muskie at the top, you see. And that's why we didn't include any names in these. We thought it was better to have--if they were going to be used. Well, the Humphrey people had it reprinted, but how many do you think they had!

F: I don't know.

E: Another ten thousand.

F: For the whole country?

E: For fifty States.

F: That's the reason it didn't get around then.

E: And not only that, but so late! In fact, all their material was so late in getting out. I talked to somebody down there trying to get some material for some of the Western states who had called me, who asked me if there wasn't anything I could do to get them some material. They had nothing. They had no buttons, no bumper stickers, nothing on the Humphrey record--nothing!

F: Were you involved at all in the convention's going to Chicago?

E: Indeed I was not! If I had been, it wouldn't have been there. I think that was a grave mistake.

F: Well, then, another question along that line. There has been some feeling that holding a convention that near to the first of September doesn't give enough time to organize a campaign.

E: Well, of course, the time of the convention was set when it was supposed that President Johnson was going to run again.

F: So that there was no no retooling.

E: Yes. They wouldn't have had it so late, I'm sure, otherwise. But when I talked to somebody down at the national headquarters in October about trying to get some material, as I say, for these Western states, they told me that they had sent some out a couple of days before. And I said, "How did you send it--air express?" "Oh, no, regular mail." I said, "Well, then you might as well have dumped it in the Potomac River. It won't get there until after the election."

I had the feeling that they didn't have any people around who knew anything about running a campaign because it doesn't do any good to have

material get there on November 6. As a matter of fact, I think that Hubert Humphrey did magnificently to get as many votes as he did, everything considered, because he didn't start his campaign until two weeks after the convention ended. Nothing was done the first two weeks. And I suppose they were short of money all the time, but then that isn't the most important thing in a campaign.

F: No, the surprise there is that the thing started as if the candidate were a complete surprise instead of one who was the front runner from the time he announced.

E: Do you know that that's what I asked somebody at the national committee about the middle of October! I said, "Tell me something--were you all surprised that Hubert Humphrey got the nomination?" And she said, "Why no, of course not, we always expected him to." And I said, "Well, then, why in heaven's name weren't you prepared!"

F: By September 1, you thought they would have the whole skeleton.

E: Everything ready to go. I don't know. But I do think that he did exceedingly well, everything considered.

F: How long are you going to stay retired this time?

E: I'm really retired this time. Really retired.

F: Thank you, Mrs. Edwards.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

By India Edwards

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, India Edwards, hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America for eventual deposit in the proposed 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. The donor retains to himself for a period of ten years all literary property rights in the material donated to the United States of America by the terms of the instrument. After the expiration of this ten year period, the aforesaid literary property rights will pass to the United States of America.

2. It is the donor's wish to make the material donated to the United States of America by the terms of the instrument available for research in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. At the same time, it is his wish to guard against the possibility of its contents being used to embarrass, damage, injure, or harass anyone. Therefore, in pursuance of this objective, and in accordance with the provisions of Sec. 507 (f) (3) of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) this material shall not be available for a period of five years until after the publication of my book of memoirs except with my permission; and for a period of five years after the donor's death if that should occur before publication of the book of memoirs.

This restriction shall not apply to employees and officers of the General Services Administration (including the National Archives and Records Service and the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library) engaged in performing normal archival work processes.

3. A revision of this stipulation governing access to the material for research may be entered into between the donor and the Archivist of the United States, or his designee, if it appears desirable.

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

Signed _____

Date July 19, 1971

Accepted _____
Archivist of the United States

Date March 11, 1975