

INTERVIEW II

DATE: January 6, 1978
INTERVIEWEE: JANE ENGELHARD
INTERVIEWER: Michael Gillette
PLACE: Pamplémousse, Boca Grande, Florida

Tape 1 of 1

G: Let's start off with that visit that you made to Washington. You said you were having lunch with Mrs. Johnson in the White House. Is that right?

E: To discuss, I don't recall if it was a party or some new decoration or some new furniture that we were supposed to purchase for the White House. We had a quiet lunch, both of us upstairs in her small room off their bedroom, which they called the Blue Room. As I was leaving we got a call from the President's office from Kenny O'Donnell saying the President heard I was there and would like me to come down and see him, which of course I was glad to do.

[I] arrived there, and Kenny and I had a little chat. I said, "Isn't Mr. Meyer"--Mr. André Meyer, the famous banker--"coming this afternoon to see the President?" He said, "Yes. As a matter of fact, he's due any minute." I said, "I warn you, he does not like to be kept waiting. He's a very difficult gentleman. Could I go into another room so that I don't run into him going in to see the President?" He said, "Surely," so he put me in some little waiting room off to the side.

Then a few minutes later the President asked me to come in. He left his desk and he came and sat, and we had a cup of coffee and we talked about Mr. Meyer's visit and why he was coming to see him. I

Engelhard -- 2

explained to him that he was a very difficult man, he should not keep him waiting. But [I added] that he was probably the most brilliant banker in the world. He could be very helpful and constructive for the President in many ways and I was sure would devote time to this task if the President asked him to do so in advising him.

Then I think somehow we decided to talk about Luci's wedding and impending marriage and the fact that she had become a Catholic, that that had changed her character a great deal. That she seemed to be a very happy person, much happier than she was in the past, and that the staff felt--although some people were disturbed by her conversion to Catholicism--that she had gained a lot from it. I didn't know from a political point of view if this would hurt the President, but certainly from a personal point of view I thought Luci was very happy and the marriage would be a great success.

G: What did he say about that?

E: There was no question that the President always was interested in catholicism. I think Father [Wunibald W.] Schneider made a great impression on him because he was so kind and simple. I think the President had met with several important Catholics. The fact that I was a Catholic always impressed him. The fact that every time I went to the Ranch I insisted on going to early mass impressed him. The fact that Henry Ford had become a Catholic when he married impressed him. He said, "You don't think it ever hurt anybody?" I said, "How could it hurt you? You only gain a measure." I always had a feeling in the back of my mind that the President would have become a Catholic if he had lived longer.

Engelhard -- 3

G: Did he feel that Mrs. Johnson didn't share this view?

E: We all know that Mrs. Johnson had never been very keen about Catholics, although I've never asked her personally and she's always made it very easy for me to attend mass. But I remember the President calling me personally when he heard that Charlie had been converted here in our little chapel in Boca Grande, and said, "Good for Charlie. I'm sure he will be a happier man and a more peaceful man because of it." I think, I could not swear to it, but I think he indicated in some way that he was thinking about it himself.

G: With regard to André Meyer, did you also talk about other bankers?

E: He talked about forming this committee and asked my advice on several bankers. I told him what I thought about each one separately, the ones that I did know. The meeting went on for quite a long time--how often they would meet, who would take different roles, if Charlie would like to serve, although he was not officially known as a banker but as a businessman. I said I didn't think it made any difference. We talked about the possibility of Jean Monnet becoming part of this group.

G: What did he say about that?

E: We talked about [John] Connally--what did he say about Jean Monnet? He said that he had never met him; did I know him? I said yes and I'd be happy to be instrumental in organizing the next visit, that Mr. Monnet would come and see him, although he was quite an old man.

We talked about Mr. Connally.

G: What did he say about that?

E: Well, I think that the Connallys and the Johnsons had their political differences but as couples they were very friendly, because we were

Engelhard -- 4

taken to the state house, when Connally was governor, by the Johnsons.

I could feel a great warmth between them, especially I would say between Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Connally, but certainly the President had a great respect for Governor Connally.

G: Did the President talk about Mr. Engelhard's weight problem, too?

E: We talked about his weight problem. He said, "You know we have a bet, and how are we doing on our bet?" I said, "Mr. President, I think you're winning." He said, "Well, that's good news. I like to win. But I like my friend Charlie and I wish he would take care of himself, and I don't think he is. Jane, you should use more influence." I said, "How much influence does Lady Bird have on you, Mr. President, may I ask?" He said, "You're a sassy lass, aren't you?" I said, "You know, sometimes nagging does more harm than good." And he said, "How right you are. It makes me so mad when they tell me I shouldn't have another Dr. Pepper or another whiskey and I should lose ten pounds. I seem to have less difficulty than Charlie has. But I know it's more important for him even than for me, although I have a heart problem." I think we discussed the Mayo [Clinic] at that time because he was the one who introduced Mayo into my life.

Time went on, we had another cup of coffee and I reminded him gently that Mr. Meyer was still outside waiting. It was then near close to five and he insisted I have a picture taken of me with him in the garden, the Rose Garden--it wasn't the Rose Garden, it was the garden in front of his office there. It's a picture which I will show you tonight when you come to Cragwood. So it must have been in the spring, because I'm wearing a spring coat. Then we went back in.

Engelhard -- 5

[He] said, "You go out and welcome and pacify your friend Mr. Meyer, because I have to see a couple of other people. I don't want him to turn me down when I ask him to serve on this committee." Which I did. I must say, Mr. Meyer was not in the best of humor. I offered to take him back on Charlie's plane to New York but he said, "No, I'm not going on anybody's private plane. I'm taking the shuttle back. I'm not used to being kept waiting, even by presidents of the United States."

G: Was he surprised to see that the President was in there talking to you?

E: I think he was not only surprised, I think he was quite shocked to see that he had been kept waiting for an hour because of an old friend who he didn't realize was there to explain who he was. Naturally I never disclosed any part of our conversation.

G: Anything else during that conversation that you want to talk about?

E: I think he at that point thanked me warmly for helping Mrs. Johnson and helping her in trying to be more outspoken, to give suggestions of people to be invited to the White House to state dinners, people from New York that they didn't know. Even if they were not Democrats, what difference did it make, if they were charming and important people? He was very grateful for any help I could give Mrs. Johnson, which of course came from the bottom of my heart.

G: I think the other episode that we're going to discuss is that last visit to Pamplémousse when Mr. Engelhard was still living and President Johnson and Senator [Mike] Mansfield were here.

E: As I recall, the President was no longer president.

G: That's right. This was February, 1971.

Engelhard -- 6

E: We had had a very tiring weekend. Senator Mansfield was here alone, and he arrived on Ash Wednesday as I remember. We were up every night. The President was in very good form, and every night we would sit outside on the Gulf and he would tell amusing stories. We tried to have different groups in every night for dinner. I think they were here three days, weren't they? On the Sunday night, I think it was Sunday night--it started out on a Monday night and Tuesday--Tuesday [morning] I had just gone to bed, and it must have been about three o'clock in the morning when I saw the lights flickering [on the telephone] near my bed. The President and Charlie stayed in the pool house where we had just finished seeing a movie, and if I'm correct, Dr. Fritz from Boca Grande was there with the two of them. They were both complaining about chest pains. The doctor was invited anyway to come see the movie, so he stayed on and was going to take their blood pressures and talk to them.

I thought it was an extraordinary time to call anybody. It was between three and four o'clock in the morning. So I picked up the telephone to hear Salpee [Sahagian]--who was Mansfield's administrative assistant--saying to him, "The President"--Nixon--"is sending a helicopter down to pick you up at some air base we have close by and bring you back to Washington immediately, because several bombs have exploded in the Capitol." It turned out it was really minor damage. There was a bomb planted in the barber shop of the Capitol. At that point they only knew the bombs had gone off in the Capitol and it was an emergency and the President wanted the Majority Leader to be there.

So I got up, redressed, put a pot of coffee on the stove and went over to see if I could help Senator Mansfield pack. I remember saying

Engelhard -- 7

to him, "What are we going to do about the President?" He said, "I think we probably should tell him." I said, "No, for goodness' sakes. Let's not wake him up again. He and Charlie have just gone to bed." So he said, "Well, you know him better than I do, in many ways, so I leave it to you to tell him." I said, "Yes, you can count on me." He said, "I would like to say goodbye to Charlie, and I will come up to the house in a few minutes as soon as I'm dressed and packed and had my cup of coffee." We could hear that there was a television going on in his [Charles Engelhard's] room, although we were out in the dining room. He said, "Let me go in and say goodbye to Charlie. I have a funny feeling I will never see him again." It was something that rather struck me as being a funny remark to make. He came [in], "Charlie, take care of yourself. You know you only have one life. What are you watching?" He said, "Your Capitol has just been bombed." And he said, "Yes, that's why I'm leaving." The Senator was in a hurry so I took him to the gate and the car went off.

Next morning I wrote a little note immediately after the Senator left, and the note said, "My dear Mr. President: Shortly after you went to bed and your lights were all out I discovered that Senator Mansfield had been called away by President Nixon because the Capitol had been bombed. We decided, should you be awakened and informed of this incident or should we let you go on with your needed sleep? If you were not informed it's my fault so I am the one who is at fault. I have heard from Mike since then that it is not serious and to put your mind at rest." The little note was accompanied by a little rose in a small little vase on his tray. Five minutes after his tray had reached his

Engelhard -- 8

room he opened the door to the porch on the courtyard and the hollering was so strong that in spite of the fact that my bedroom faces the Gulf, I could hear him screaming at me.

G: What did he say?

E: He said, "How dare you take responsibilities like that? I was president of the United States and, goddamn it, I still am president of the United States! Once president you always are. I have to know things like that! It's not up to you to decide that. Mike should have told me. President Nixon should have had the decency to call me." Anyway, he was outraged with the whole thing. My husband, of course, was very upset because he could hear the hollering; so [could] all the other guests of the house. But there was nothing we could do, and I think Lady Bird did pacify him. So the incident blew over.

G: You feel that this was an indication that he really missed being in the White House?

E: I do. That was one of the many incidents where I felt that he missed not being in command.

G: Are there any others that you recall?

E: I can't think of one now, but he often used the present when he spoke about the presidency, not "if I was president." He would say, "I should be doing this" or "He should be doing this," as if he was still running the country. There's no doubt in my mind that he regretted very much having decided not to run, and he did it for Mrs. Johnson. But I'm sure she was right. It prolonged his life by a few months anyway, for the good of all.

G: Anything else here?

Engelhard -- 9

E: Not that I can think of right now.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON LIBRARY

Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interviews of
JANE ENGELHARD

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, Jane Engelhard of Far Hills, New Jersey, do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title and interest in the tape recordings and transcripts of the personal interviews conducted on February 19 and 20, 1977, and January 6, 1978, and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

- (1) During my lifetime, the transcripts shall be available only to those researchers who have secured my written authorization. Thereafter, the transcripts shall be available to all researchers.
- (2) During my lifetime, the tape recordings shall be available only to those researchers who have secured my written permission. Thereafter, the tape recordings shall be available to all researchers.
- (3) I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcript and tape.
- (4) During my lifetime, copies of neither the transcripts nor the tape recordings may be provided by the library to researchers except upon my written authorization. Thereafter, copies of the transcripts and tape recordings may be provided by the library to researchers upon request.
- (5) During my lifetime, copies of the transcripts and tape recordings may not be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. Thereafter, copies of the transcripts and tape recordings may be deposited in or loaned to other institutions.

Donor Jane Engelhard
Date 18 April 1995
Archivist of the United States John W. Carl
Date 9-5-95