

INTERVIEW I

DATE: April 21, 1971

INTERVIEWEE: MR. and MRS. TRUMAN FAWCETT (Truman and Wilma Green Fawcett)

INTERVIEWER: DAVID McCOMB

PLACE: The Fawcett home in Johnson City, Texas

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M: Let me start off by asking you, Mr. Fawcett, something about your background. When were you born, where, and where did you go to school?

TF: I was born in Johnson City on September 12, 1909. I went to school in Johnson City. At that time we had, I believe, eleven grades and the school wasn't accredited. So if you intended to go to college, you had to either take college entrance exams or you could go and graduate from an accredited school. I went to Brackenridge High School in San Antonio, graduated in 1926, just went there one year. I went one year at Baylor College of Pharmacy in Dallas and then they moved the University of Texas Pharmacy School to Austin. I transferred to Austin and finished the University in 1931 and passed the board in 1931.

M: Then you set up your drug store?

TF: My father was in the drug business and started in 1904 here in Johnson City. I came home and worked. Then I went to San Antonio and worked for Walgreen a few months in Beaumont during the Depression. Later I moved back to Johnson City and worked for my

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father until we went in partnership in the 1940s. He died in 1954 and I took over the store and just recently sold it.

M: Now you're retired?

TF: Yes, I guess you might say retired. (Laughter) I have a little ranch down eight miles from here and I take care of it.

WF: Semi-retired.

TF: When I say I'm semi-retired, I work some for the druggist I sold to and various other little things that I do.

M: So you spent then most of your life in this area?

TF: Oh, yes, all my life. In fact my mother was born in Johnson City. I've spent practically all my life here except when I was away at school and two or three years working away from here.

M: You were born about the same time Lyndon Johnson was.

TF: I suppose. Lyndon was born in 1908--I remember his birthday's in August, and mine's in September. He's just a little over a year older than I am.

M: Then did you grow up with him?

TF: Yes. The first I remember they moved next door to where I lived. He was about six years old then and I suppose I was about four. We lived next to each other for two or three years and then we moved to another house further away.

WF: The Fawcetts built a new home and moved away.

TF: We moved just a few blocks away from the old house.

WF: But Lyndon had lived out on the farm until he moved in at five years old, as he recalls. At times they would be in town and then they

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would move back to the farm.

M: So the Johnsons then would live part of the time in town and part of the time on the farm.

TF: No. He was born up there and then they moved here I'd say when he was five. They lived here for several years and then moved back up to the farm just for about a year or a year and a half. Then they moved back here.

He graduated here, but he was two years ahead of me. All the Johnson children--there was five of them, I believe--started school, I think, when they were five years old and they finished when they were fifteen.

M: Why did they move in and out of town?

TF: Well, they only did that one time. They moved, I suppose, to send the children to school; maybe, I don't know. And he [Sam Ealy Johnson] was elected to serve at the House of Representatives in Austin.

WF: For a short time.

I remember the children when I was quite young. I can even remember when I couldn't have been more than four or five that the younger ones were at my fifth birthday party.

My father and his brother had a merchandise store here; they also had a ranch up on the river and neither one of them liked to run the store. So one year my family moved in and ran the store and my uncle ran the ranch. The next year, we moved out to the ranch and he ran the store. Later we had a terrible drought during

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the war; it was a frightful drought. And it became hard to pay taxes and feed cattle, so my father went to Arizona and worked two years under an engineering friend of his there. When we came back, I was in the third grade and Josefa's family moved back then when she was in the fifth grade. So they were gone longer really. They weren't here when we came back and I lived here two years before they moved back, so they must have been gone more than a year and a half.

TF: They might have been. I just thought it was probably a couple of years.

M: Picking up background information, let me ask you a little bit about you, Mrs. Fawcett. Were you born here in Johnson City, too?

WF: I was born on a ranch about seven miles up the river.

M: So you grew up in this area also?

WF: Yes, I lived on this ranch until I was about four or five. Then we were on the ranch or in town. My father and his brother separated their businesses and my father bought a place closer into town, I suppose so that I could go to school. I was an only child then.

I was ten. But right after he bought this place a drought came and I guess I was six when they bought the place. Then we moved to Arizona for two years. It joined my grandfather's ranch and he fed our cattle and paid our taxes with money my father was able to send home. Then we moved back and I walked to school. And, like Truman, I had to prove my credits in San Marcos. I graduated from San Marcos [High School] and then went into college from there.

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M: Where did you go to college?

WF: San Marcos. I was a freshman at the same time Lyndon was a senior, I graduated from high school when I was fifteen, too, with his sister. She was in my class. But he had gone to California and had worked at various things and he had lost a few years there, so that when Josefa and I went into college, he was a senior and we were freshmen.

TF: One thing you might bring in that might be a little interesting about Lyndon in San Marcos in school. I had a friend who was a friend of Lyndon's also, Clarence Redford. Lyndon had a job in the president's office at Southwest Texas, and on Clarence's report card--Clarence showed it to me--there was "Hi, Clarence, from Lyndon."

(Laughter)

M: Lyndon must have been close to the power there.

TF: He must have been.

M: You first met Lyndon Johnson when you were about four or five years of age, then?

TF: Yes. We lived always in--

WF: I think what Truman's leaving out is that his mother was a Johnson and that they were distant cousins.

TF: His father and my mother were second cousins.

WF: The Johnson family was very close and everybody was Cousin so-and-so-- Cousin Frank and Cousin Melissa and Cousin So-and-so--even though you were second or third or forty-second [cousins].

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TF: In those days you wouldn't say Cousin Lyndon or Cousin Sam Houston or something like that, but my parents would call them Cousin Sam and Cousin Rebekah, and they'd call my parents Cousin Melissa and Cousin Oscar, though we were distant cousins.

WF: The parents, the older ones, said cousins.

M: Did this mean then that since you were blood relatives you had to be friends?

TF: No.

WF: No. Just like all relatives.

M: Did you play together when you were little?

TF: Oh, yes, we played together. Lyndon didn't play with us so much. He ran with the older boys, but he's been up with us at our house quite a bit. But later on he played with older boys. He was a pretty good politician in those days at school. In those days some of them had been kept out of school to work on farms and all. There may be someone in your class five years older than you were or six years older. There was a family I remember, real good friends of Lyndon's and they were of mine, too. They were the Crider family. Most of the boys were older because they had been held out of school to work on the farm and they kind of ran the school. In other words, we didn't have any coaches and they'd say who could play baseball and basketball and who couldn't. Lyndon got in with that bunch of boys.

M: Then did he more or less run the school?

TF: Well, he was one of them.

WF: He was one of the group.

TF: He was one of the group though he was quite a bit younger, you see.

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Well, he got in with the Crider boys and ran around with them.

M: What did he do when you played?

TF: The way I remember as far as Lyndon's athletic part [it] was more just scrimmaging in basketball and he played baseball. I think he played first base in baseball.

M: Was he any good?

TF: He was a pretty good baseball player. I don't believe he did so well in basketball. I played on the basketball team. I remember he gave me a little inspiration--I mean he bragged on me. I don't know whether I was any good or not, but he'd brag on me and I imagine that made me play a little bit harder.

M: Who did you all play against?

TF: We played all the surrounding towns. At that time basketball had county champions; in other words, in Blanco County, the only team that we played was Blanco. If we won from Blanco we'd go to the district meet in San Marcos which took in all the big schools in San Antonio--well, there's only two big high schools in San Antonio. They were in the same district and of course we didn't have a chance against those larger schools. The scores were all low in those days. I remember we went down there one year and the team from Waelder, Texas and beat us 11 to 4, I believe.

M: In basketball?

TF: Yes. Of course, each time you made two points you jumped center each time then. That's what slowed it down so.

M: What kind of basketball court did you have here?

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TF: We had an outdoor court. As a matter of fact, I remember even when I went to Brackenridge, they had an outdoor court. It was wooden platform, but it was outdoors.

M: This is at Brackenridge?

TF: Yes, in San Antonio.

M: What did you have here?

TF: Well, we just had an outdoor dirt court here.

WF: Caliche court.

TF: Of course, San Antonio had some places you could play indoors, but I mean the Brackenridge school itself just had an outdoor court. That was in 1926, I believe.

M: Were you in the same classroom with Lyndon Johnson?

TF: Lyndon was two years ahead of me. I started school when I was six and I remember him in school. I've been in the same study hall with him.

WF: Lyndon started at five up on the farm.

TF: He was two years ahead of me because he was two years older. Another thing you might not recall right now, we had a class that graduated that had only two and that class was one year ahead of Lyndon's, I believe. Let's see, Cecil Redford--that's a friend of Lyndon's now, he's an attorney in Corpus Christi--and one girl, I believe. So we had the class play. Each year they put on a class play.

WF: Senior play.

TF: Yes, senior play. And Lyndon had the leading role in this senior play. He was leading man in the play.

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WF: He was a junior then.

TF: He was a junior.

WF: Five people graduated with Lyndon, including Lyndon--two boys and three girls, I believe.

M: Strange thing about this--the Redford brothers all went on to college.

TF: Oh, yes.

WF: They were brilliant, they were Phi Beta Kappas.

TF: All three of them were.

M: Now this was a country school. Why did all these people go to college?

TF: Seemed like a bigger percentage went to college then than they do now.

WF: Not many people graduated. A lot of them fell out at the seventh and eighth grade level, you know.

M: I see.

WF: But those that went on generally went to college. Maybe they didn't get but one or two years and they taught; like myself, I didn't get all my degree at one time. I went back and finished later after I was married. Lyndon's cousin, Mrs. Cox, and his good friend, Mrs. Leonard, who was superintendent here, all went back and we got our degrees after our children were born. They didn't have enough teachers here that had certificates from college, and we were going to lose our accreditation during the war. But we did have certificates based on college so we went back to teaching, not really meaning to stay in the field. But as long as they never could

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replace us and we were going to lose our accreditation, we just went back and finished. We didn't lack so much.

M: Were the students that graduated from Johnson City encouraged to go do this?

WF: Yes, by their families.

TF: Yes, most of them were.

WF: There was nothing for young people here unless they had some education.

TF: Seemed like so many of them taught school in those days. Take the case of the Redford boys. Their mother was the postmistress here and their father was dead. Emmette, the oldest, went off to school for a year and then taught school maybe two years, I don't know exactly, maybe a year, and sent his next brother to school. Then Cecil would teach maybe a year or two and send Emmette and then they would both teach and send Clarence. They finished up. All of them have several degrees. I believe Clarence has a law degree as well as in business administration.

WF: Accounting.

TF: Accounting. Cecil is a corporation attorney in Corpus Christi and you may know who Dr. Emmette Redford is.

WF: Two of those boys were Phi Beta Kappas and the third one could easily have been. We used to kid him. We thought he was a professional student. He took accounting and then he went back and took law.

M: Did the Johnson family do this same sort of thing?

TF: Yes, well, now, I don't know about Sam Houston, whether he got a

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degree or not, but they moved to San Marcos and they all went to school. Lucia the youngest one, I believe, had her degree by the time she was eighteen. Had it from Southwest Texas.

WF: She went summer and winter, you know.

M: You were also well acquainted with the Johnson family. A lot of the stories that come out in the press about Johnson and elsewhere indicate that this was a poor family. Now is that true?

TF: No, that isn't true. I mean they were poor, but everyone was poor.

WF: We were all poor but not poverty stricken.

TF: I mean, you know, according to standards of today. Then you could get by with so much less, it sounds like you were really poor if you said what they were worth and what my family was worth. Now it wouldn't last for a year.

WF: This is a poor county. It's not a rich county and you can't wring much money from poor land. Now land is inflated so much.

TF: In fact, they were as well off as anyone in town.

WF: The standard of living was lower here than it was in other towns.

TF: Of course, maybe some people were extremely poor, but there wasn't anyone starving to death. And they weren't extremely poor.

WF: But some families had more culture and more education than others, you know. Even my father's family had some college education and other families did, too. They were poor, but they had what their standard of culture called for.

M: My understanding is that Mrs. Johnson, Lyndon's mother, had a great deal to do with his education.

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TF: I think she did.

WF: I think his father's role has been greatly underplayed, I really [do].

TF: Yes, he was a likable man, Sam Johnson was. Everyone liked him and he'd do anything for you.

M: What kind of man was he? Was he easygoing or was he friendly or what?

TF: He was pretty easygoing.

WF: He was easygoing and he was a man of great compassion. He was a good neighbor and good friend. In fact, he was I believe more involved with other people perhaps than so much involved with his own family. She was more involved with her family and he was more involved with other people, not saying that he neglected his family. He was one of my favorite characters.

M: Was he strict with the children?

WF: Well, this is the part that I don't think they'd appreciate very much, but it is true. He, Mr. Sam, had a good sense of humor and his wife never whipped the children. She always said, "Just wait till your father comes home and I'll tell." He was supposed to whip them, you know. And I always just had a suspicion that a lot of Lyndon's whippings that he was supposed to have gotten out in the smokehouse weren't really as hard as Lyndon let on they were. Mr. Sam, as we always called him, I don't think whipped him near as hard as-- they had a little collusion there, you know, because the next night Lyndon would probably do the same thing. He was supposed to come home and milk the cow before dark and he seldom got in before dark.

M: So he'd get a whipping for that.

WF: Yes, he did. He was supposed to have gotten them, but I really think if he had gotten whipped, that is, on the same basis that I got spanked at home, he would have been home and had the cow milked.
(Laughter)

But there was lots of humor there. They all had a good sense of humor.

TF: You might add that everyone had a cow at that time; you know, each family owned one. Of course, that's been years and years ago. There's hardly anyone that has one now.

M: Was it the children's job then to milk the cow?

TF: Well, sometimes.

WF: It was Lyndon's job. I don't ever remember it being anybody else's.

TF: Oh, I remember it being some of the younger ones--I don't remember it [being] Lyndon's.

WF: Well, Sam, I think, finally was supposed to.

TF: Sam Houston did.

WF: It was never the girls.

TF: It was my job at home to do the same thing.

M: Did the children work quite a bit like that?

WF: Well, yes, not too much, but then they used to stay out at our house and chop corn and cotton. We played around. We had a big creek and we fed everybody in town. You know, you'd come in town in the truck and get thirty kids with their hoes. They'd come out and you'd get it chopped in two or three days, and mother and somebody cooked up

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lots of food. It was not so much a hard thing as it was a lot of [fun]. Of course we did chop cotton and corn, but we played a lot and we went in swimming an awful lot at noon.

M: And the kids all in town would get in on it?

WF: Oh, yes, it was just more of a [treat]. We looked forward to it. Even cotton picking was just a lot of fun. We got together and tried to see who could pick the most cotton and then we ended up in cotton boll fights. And my father'd bring candy home. Then we'd go to other people's, you know. It really wasn't a hard thing, it just really wasn't.

TF: Now I know, like shining shoes, Sam Houston shined shoes and they say Lyndon did too, which I imagine he did, I just don't recall it myself, but I'm sure he did. Because he was always in town and my father owned the store and he was in there quite a bit. Well, in fact, just that little one block area was the whole town in those days.

WF: We always had a lot of watermelons and in the morning before we started chopping cotton, we carried watermelons and cantaloupes down and threw them in the creek so that they'd be very cool, you know. Then we swam at dinnertime and along about three-thirty we went down and ate watermelons and came back. You can't say it was a poverty-stricken area. It was just something everybody did.

M: Were there favorite places to swim?

WF: Our place was. In fact, we girls were pretty bitter about it. The boys, if they got there first, went in swimming without

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bathing suits and we couldn't go in swimming. And we quite often took their clothes off and tied them in knots because we were mad. (Laughter) One of the girls had to go down in her bathing suit and get in first in order to hold [the place]. Many a time everybody carried down watermelons, we girls did, and then a bunch of boys would come out from town in a car and beat us to the hole. You know, and they'd have our watermelons and our hole and they'd be down there without any clothes on, and we couldn't go.

M: And you didn't dare go down there.

WF: No. No, that was taboo.

TF: There were few what we call swimming pools. They weren't like they are today. [It was] just in a creek or the Pedernales.

M: Do you recall where those were?

TF: Oh, yes. One was down just below this bridge across the Highway 81 and just a few hundred yards below that was the swimming pool. Then further down the Pedernales there was one. And the one she was talking about--we called it Flat Creek--was just a mile west of here.

M: What else did children do to have fun?

WF: The girls played baseball, too. (Laughter)

TF: They had marbles, I remember playing marbles, I remember Lyndon playing marbles. Let's see, we had certain seasons; well, they still do as far as that goes, like spinning tops and--

WF: And they wrestled out in the ice pit. They had an ice pit out here that was dug down in the street--seemed like it was, wasn't it,

Truman? Or off to the side of the street, I can't remember--but it was full of sawdust. They wrestled a lot out there. The girls used to stand around and watch the boys. One time Sam Houston broke his leg. I guess that was the beginning of when we knew Sam's bones were very brittle. He was wrestling with John Stevenson, the postmaster now. They were in the same grade, and John hadn't thrown Sam; some way he got off balance, and he slung his hand around. He hit Sam on the head, and Sam staggered backwards and broke his leg. We just couldn't figure how Sam could have broken his leg so easily. That seemed to begin a long series of things that happened to Sam Houston's leg.

TF: We did about what they do now around here, just like they do most everywhere now--flying kites in the kite season, playing marbles. You usually have a month or two, they'll play marbles and then a month to two they'll play ball. Then of course they had the sports, the basketball and football and all that now. But at the time that Lyndon was in school they didn't have football.

WF: One of the things that we did and took great interest in was interscholastic league. Down here at the three points where you come into town, where the highway comes this way and goes out that way was part of the Fawcett farm, Truman's father's farm, and we had a big relay track out there with baseball rounds. It was under under the auspices of the school. Both boys and girls ran track and relay and played ball. Then we had the one act plays and we had lots of poetry reading and declamation. Also, we had what we

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called the Friday afternoon literary society at which we debated and debated. And oftentimes, in order to train the younger ones, a senior would pick a seventh grader to declaim with him. That helped the younger ones coming up.

M: Did the Johnsons get in on this?

WF: Oh, yes, they were great debaters.

TF: Lyndon was a good debater himself.

WF: Lyndon's mother taught what was called elocution in those days.

Later I took from a lady who came out of Austin on a bus. I know I've lost all of that art now. They called it expression. (Laughter) Later when I went to college they called it speech. But I took elocution from Mrs. Johnson, and I went to San Marcos several times under her direction. One time if I had done as she had asked me to, I think I would have won even over Alamo Heights. I came in second, and I thought that was pretty good for Johnson City. But a girl before me--we had to go up against the big schools in San Antonio and other places--and she had said a very dramatic speech and I decided that my poem wasn't quite dramatic enough and so I just read it not naturally as I had been told to, but I put a little too much drama in it. I came in second, but I think one of the criticisms--you know, afterwards they criticize--was that I had used my voice in too great a volume. She was good.

M: Did the young people date and court in those days?

TF: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

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M: Where would you go on a date?

TF: We had parties of course. Also once a week we had a movie to go to, a silent movie. This was then over the bank building.

WF: It was called the old opera house then.

TF: Opera house--and they had plays. Now that was something else--Lyndon was in plays quite often. We had quite a few plays, and his mother directed some of them.

WF: Lots of them.

TF: Yes. We'd take them off to other towns to raise money. We'd take a play from here to Burnet to Blanco and give them ten per cent or something like that.

WF: Twenty-five.

TF: And they'd do the same thing, bring a play over here, just to raise money for various things in the school or the chamber of commerce or something like that--not the chamber of commerce because it wasn't even organized then.

WF: That accounted for a lot of our social life. Josefa, his sister, and I were left out of all that. We were only fifteen when we graduated so we weren't allowed to go to the dances or anything. At that time, the Baptists here put people out of church if they danced, so all the social life that Lyndon and Truman had I know nothing about, because we certainly didn't get in on any of it.

M: You were a Baptist?

WF: Yes. Mrs. Johnson was a Baptist and all of the other children joined the Baptist Church except Mr. Johnson and Lyndon. Well, I can see why

Lyndon joined another church. In those days we didn't really have enough ministers for every church, so a minister had four churches in different towns. One Sunday he'd come to one church; [the next to another town]. They'd take time about in the summer having summer revivals and this certain year that Lyndon joined was the Christian Church's time to have the revival. His favorite cousin, Margaret, was a member of the Christian Church. He joined, too. But he would have had to be rebaptized in order to get into the Baptist Church. This really hurt his mother, I think. She would have liked to have had him in the Baptist Church. But he was baptized by a Christian minister and unfortunately the Baptists were rather narrow about baptism. You had to be rebaptized by an ordained Baptist minister. They wouldn't accept baptism by other ministers. This happened to my little sister, also. She did the same thing. She joined with her friends and when she came to go in the Baptist Church, she had to be rebaptized.

M: Did Lyndon refuse to be rebaptized?

WF: Well, I don't know whether he ever did or not. I just had an idea that he just decided, well, after all, most of his friends were in that church and he'd just stay there. I never heard a word about it.

TF: No, I didn't either. But most of the younger group at the time were joining the Christian church.

M: I suppose there'd be church picnics and things like that.

TF: Yes.

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- WF: Dinner on the grounds is one of the things that we had. When our minister came once a month, we always took food. But it was real nice, like when the Methodists had their minister, all the Baptist and the Christians went over to the Methodist church. So we all worshipped together, you might say, regardless. We went to our own Sunday school when it was our turn, but we all worshipped together. And to this day we all miss that.
- M: Did Lyndon Johnson, do you know, have a girl friend?
- TF: Oh, yes. He had girl friends from the time he was twelve or thirteen years old. He was very popular with the girls.
- M: Was there anybody in particular he went around with?
- WF: No.
- TF: I think Kittie Clyde Leonard was his first girl friend. I believe that's true.
- WF: Then they became friends.
- TF: But he had dates all the time and he had boys coming up to stay all night with him. I remember that.
- WF: He brought girls home from college when he was in school before they moved to San Marcos. I remember he would bring girls home from San Marcos that he was currently interested in. But he did really fall in love with some girl that was two or three years older than he, so they said, I don't know. She was a very pretty girl. We had always had an alumni banquet up here every year at graduation time and he brought her up to one and she sang. Mrs. Johnson was in charge of the program and of course we, naturally, profited by it:

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Josefa and I had a part on the program. It was the year we were graduating. But anyway, she had his girl sing and she had a beautiful voice, but I've forgotten what her name was.

TF: In those days we usually hitchhiked--what we call hitchhike, I don't know whether they call it that anymore or not. In other words, I'd hitchhike to the University and Lyndon would hitchhike to San Marcos; he'd go through Austin usually. I remember Clarence Redford and I caught a ride to Austin and we got about three-fourths of the way to Austin and there was Lyndon right out in the middle of the road. He didn't stand on the side and thumb a ride--he was standing out in the middle, just thumbing a ride. We told that fellow we knew him and he stopped to pick Lyndon up. I suppose Lyndon then caught the ride on from Austin on to San Marcos. But you might say he was a good hitchhiker too. He knew how it was done.

WF: Lyndon was very, very politic quite young. This was a political town. I can't remember when men didn't get together and argue politics. Quite a lot of them chewed tobacco, unfortunately. We had two fireplaces and the Johnsons had two fireplaces, and I've seen many a time when I thought some of the men were going to put the fire out, they'd get so heated with their arguments. Lyndon listened to a lot of this. But he was real good about going around and shaking hands with the older men and calling them by their names.

TF: He actually was. The older people he treated [well]. When they

were sick, I've heard them say that he'd come by and see them.

WF: And he'd ask their opinion whether he really needed it or not. He was like Benjamin Franklin there. He learned to know that people naturally took an interest in people that they had had an opportunity to help. You know the story of Benjamin Franklin and the book. Well, I think he must have read it because he really had a knack of going around and where young children or young boys are more or less concerned with their group, he would lead the group and go over and shake hands with Mr. So-and-So, Mr. Wolf, and so and so and speak to them, you know, and talk to them five, ten or fifteen minutes before he'd rejoin the group. He learned that real early. I don't think it was anything that his parents particularly taught him except that his father was, as I said, a very compassionate man.

M: The older people seemed to appreciate this?

TF: Yes, they did.

WF: They did, yes.

M: What did the younger people think about it?

TF: Well, Lyndon was liked--

WF: Well, I don't know. I think actually when you're growing up in a small town you always have some people that don't like you and some people that do.

M: Did he have any enemies?

TF: No, I don't recall any.

WF: Well, I didn't belong to the group that were his enemies. I'm sure

that he did have some that he irritated. We all do. But I didn't know them because I wasn't in that group. I was scared to death of Lyndon when I was a little girl because he came home and bossed the younger ones around, but they weren't afraid of him. I didn't have a brother. I only had one little sister and I didn't know how to cope with a boy. I just stayed out of his way. And he didn't bother much with me. I later learned that he was just asserting his authority and they didn't pay any attention to him either.

(Laughter)

M: I've also read stories that the boys around here would play a lot of poker for entertainment. Is that true?

TF: I don't think there was very much of it. I don't recall very much of it.

WF: The Crider boys might have played some poker, but I don't remember anything about it.

TF: There wasn't much poker playing in those days.

WF: Dancing and a little bootleg liquor was about all that I can recall that went on in those days, and we were too young for that. But they had dances at this old opera house, this old bank building down here [which] was built by Truman's grandfather, James Polk Johnson, as a courthouse when they moved the courthouse from Blanco. He settled this part of the country and took the county seat away from Blanco and brought it over here. That was the

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courthouse for a long time till they built a new one. Then they called that the opera house because it had a stage on it and that's where they put on all those plays. They had dances up there. It was back in prohibition days because I know we always tried to go to Sunday School by the way of the opera house. We'd get out and walk across that way because quite often we found money, so I'm sure that the boys got pretty loaded and took out their money and lost it. Quite often we found enough to eat ice cream cones in the afternoon if we got out and walked across.

M: Well, after going through high school, did you have much contact with Lyndon Johnson after that, Mr. Fawcett?

TF: No, I actually didn't. Just would see him coming home, and of course we would get to talk to him and all. Let's see, he taught a couple of years in Houston, and he'd just be home some in the summer. Then he got to be head of the NYA, I believe they called it, the National Youth Administration.

WF: When he first worked for. . . .

TF: The highway department?

WF: No. That was when he was in high school and he worked for his dad in the highway department. Oh, what was [the name]?

TF: Kleberg?

WF: Kleberg.

TF: He was secretary for Kleberg. We really didn't get to see him very much, though one winter, Wilma and I had built a new house and Lyndon was congressman at the time. He asked if we could take in some

roomers. They didn't eat with us; they just slept there. It was his secretaries which was John Connally and Walter Jenkins and one other secretary.

WF: Mary Rather.

TF: The oldest one died and I've forgotten what his name was.

WF: I've forgotten, also.

TF: But they stayed with us in the wintertime and there's a few little interesting stories about that. Lyndon was a hard worker if I ever did see one in those days. They worked. They'd get up early in the morning and they'd go to the office--I believe he had it up here in the PEC building--and they would work all day. Then, of course, I didn't have anything [to do with it] or didn't even hear any of it going on, but Lyndon would come down and talk to his secretaries, and later they would work in our living room. We weren't in there, of course. We were in bed.

WF: We were in a different wing.

TF: But they would work maybe till two o'clock in the morning, and then be up seven o'clock the next morning working again. Also the secretaries maybe would have a party of some kind or maybe business of some kind--I don't know what it was, but they would all go to Austin. The only heating system we had was a fireplace and some little electric heaters. So I remember one night they, the secretaries, told me they weren't coming back--that they were going to stay in Austin. So I invited a friend of mine up. It was during hunting season and it was as cold as it could be, so we used the cover, you

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know, quilts and blankets, things like that from their beds.

WF: The blankets we took off of their beds to give to the visitors, not thinking they'd come home.

TF: So we got up early to go hunting, and I went in their room. I didn't know that they had returned. And there was two of them in bed-- I don't recall just which ones they were, but anyway they didn't have any cover whatsoever, but they had the two little electric heaters pointed up on them.

WF: That was the coldest John Connally ever was in his life. (Laughter)

M: Did Johnson operate out of Austin and then come down here with these secretaries for a visit?

TF: No, he was operating out of here just at that time. This was just a few months.

WF: Just about four months.

TF: He had his office here, but most of the time he operated out of Austin. It just so happened this was about four months that they stayed with us.

WF: He had his appendix taken out the week that he was to be elected representative for the first time. Really I was just amazed that he won it because he was going up against a well-known man from Round Rock and Judge Stone from Georgetown that he knew very well, too. I didn't realize how much help that he had from Roosevelt, but he must have had a great deal because these men were very well-known, both the man from Round Rock and Judge Stone.

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M: Did you help him at all in his campaigns?

TF: Well, of course, I thought I was helping. (Laughter) I don't imagine I helped much. I remember I believe when he was running the first time for Congress we had a big motorcade. In other words we decorated the car, "Vote for Lyndon Johnson," and had his picture on both sides of the cars. We'd go to various towns like San Marcos and stop and someone would make a little speech-- I don't believe Lyndon was with us.

WF: I don't think he was either.

TF: No, he wasn't on this. But anyway, we'd go to Luling and Lockhart, I believe, I'm not sure--whatever towns was in his Tenth District here. And we'd parade around and pass out literature. It would maybe be thirty, forty cars, you know, and you'd have four or five people in a car.

M: Did he seem to appreciate your efforts?

TF: Oh, yes. I remember maybe a secretary or so would be on with us. Oh, yes. I don't know that we did any good.

WF: He had things very well organized. Whoever worked for him took down all the details of who helped and you were always thanked for these things. Of course, I guess all politicians do that, but he was always very well organized that way. His office was always very well organized. And I do think that Sam, no matter how much embarrassment he may have been to Lyndon later, Sam worked real hard for his brother at that time.

M: Well, then Johnson went off to Washington, D.C. When he'd come

back, would he stop by and see you?

WF: Yes.

TF: Yes, yes, he did.

WF: Yes. He usually liked to come by and tell you what he was doing.

M: Did he?

TF: Yes. One thing I would like to say about Lyndon, one good point that you don't find or didn't find in those days--it's different now--but I mean a lot of people were ashamed they came from little towns. In other words, if you went off to school, well, you didn't brag about coming from a little town. They'd seem to sort of poke fun at you if you did. But that was one thing about him--he didn't mind anyone knowing that he came from Johnson City and he never did [mind].

WF: We have some others that never wanted to really admit they came from small towns. You know, they would come home and visit, but then we would meet friends of theirs and they would be surprised that they came from Johnson City. They just hadn't ever mentioned it.

TF: But now it's different. I mean, you take quite a few of the wealthy people out of the cities, they come into the smaller towns now and lots of them make their homes here and not just here but in a lot [of places]. In fact they've been brought up on farms and ranches and some of them live here all the year around.

WF: One thing I'd like to say that might have influenced Lyndon. This little town always had Frontier Days a long time ago, I can hardly remember those, but then they turned into bank picnics, I think,

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or something on the order. But before that they were called Frontier Days, and I do remember that. It was in a park down here. And because of the proximity to Austin when we had Frontier Days, they would ask the various state candidates out to speak. Then Fredericksburg and Marble Falls and Blanco and the surrounding towns always came. Quite often two candidates for the same job would come and argue their political platforms. Well, Lyndon was always interested in this. His father took him, and they were always interested in state politics.

Then the fact, too, that his father had various jobs that came from the Democratic Party appointments. At one time he was overseer of the Blanco County highway maintenance crew, and we didn't even have a building to house the equipment. It was just all parked out there where the Boyhood Home is; it was all out in the yard. There was the old dump trucks and the gasoline was put out there, too. Once or twice Sam and Josefa and I filled up one of the workers' car with state gasoline and pushed it down the hill. We couldn't crank it, we were real young, about eleven years old. We pushed it down the hill in front of Aunt Tina's--she really wasn't our aunt, but she made good cookies--and it would catch at the bottom of the hill. Jo and I would push it and Sam was the one that knew how to drive. When the car hit the bottom and it would catch and then he'd stop and we'd jump in. It was an old T model. We learned to drive on that car. The owner was a good friend of our father's. We didn't think he'd mind, but we didn't dare ask him.

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M: Did it ever surprise you that Lyndon Johnson did as well as he has done?

TF: Well, no, I tell you . . .

WF: Not after the first race.

TF: . . . after he won the congressional race the first time, I always thought he'd be president.

M: Is that right?

TF: I really did, I mean, you could just tell. That time he ran for the Senate, you know Coke Stevenson nearly won the Senate race over all of them. Lyndon barely made the runoff and then he comes back and beats Stevenson.

WF: Well, he was counted out in same box that he won it in the next time. The only time that I thought maybe he might not make president was after he had his heart attack. The strain of trying to get there was awfully hard, I think, on him. He worked hard at it.

TF: He was a worker.

WF: I never thought he'd have another heart attack after he got there, because he enjoyed it too much. The strain of getting there was great on him.

But he has a simply fabulous wife to help him. With any other woman, I don't know whether he would have made it or not.

M: I've heard lots of compliments about Lady Bird.

TF: Yes, she's real nice, real nice to everyone.

M: When did you first meet her?

TF: Well, that's right after he got married. You know, he came home, or at least he'd come home on weekends, and we met her.

WF: I first met her when my first child was born. I was in Seton Hospital and he was having his appendix removed.

TF: That's when he was elected, that's when our first [child was born].

WF: No, I met her before that, but then that was the first time that I really got to know her well. She came to the house after that with Josefa.

M: After Johnson became president, did you ever see much of him?

WF: We saw more of him before.

TF: We didn't see him very much. There was such a crowd of news people and security people that he couldn't come around very often and fill up the store. I remember he brought Arthur Godfrey in the store one time. That was before he was president, though he was senator then.

WF: That was a real embarrassing incident as far as we were concerned. We had a new clerk. Truman has been very fortunate in having very good clerks, and in a drug store, you just don't tell anything; you know, it's just like being a doctor--whatever's bought there is just absolutely [confidential]--you don't make any remarks about it of any kind. When Arthur Godfrey came in the new clerk had just worked for us a week at that time. Of course, everybody followed him in, you know, gawking, and he bought some poker cards. We don't know whether it was the clerk. We think that it was, but anyway, she told that Arthur Godfrey bought the poker cards. Well, everybody in town more or less played poker, you know. She belonged to a

conservative church. Anyway, she told it and we were just real embarrassed about it. But she only worked for us two weeks; she wasn't a good clerk otherwise. It's just little things like that that people like to make big issues out of.

M: Did the Johnsons use your drug store?

TF: Yes, they did for a long time. They haven't in the past few years so much. Well, you know, they've had their own doctor, I think probably. Then there's so many things that a little drug store doesn't have. In other words, we stock for one doctor. Then you have to order if you get prescriptions for another one because they're nearly all--

WF: Luci and Lynda came in all the time. Luci came in for free candy most of the time. She and Truman had an affair going. I particularly admire Lynda. Luci is a whole lot like her father when it comes to the press and people. Lynda's shy but very brilliant.

M: Then you saw more of Lyndon Johnson when he was senator than when he was vice president or president?

WF: Yes.

TF: We saw him some when he was vice president.

WF: Well, other than being invited to things like when they had visiting [dignitaries], somebody like the president of Mexico or Eisenhower or Willy Brandt, or whoever he had over here, we weren't invited to the home for dinner anymore other than teas that they gave for

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things, like sometimes I'd be asked to pour at a tea for this, that or the other. But actually socially we don't see very much of them.

M: But you have been invited to the Ranch?

WF: Oh, yes.

TF: Yes.

WF: Lots of time. But we're not in their [group]. They have a group that they're in business with here and that are much closer to them than we are. And we both worked. I taught school many years and Truman worked twelve or fourteen hours a day, and we just didn't get around with anybody very much. We had lots of friends, but they had to come calling after hours and we had to go after hours, you know.

M: Did you ever happen to visit him in Washington?

WF: No.

TF: No.

WF: We had invitations for both when he was vice president and when he was elected president, but we didn't feel that we were able to go. Our son was studying medicine and our daughter married a young man that was studying law, and we were saving for a house. I like to watch it on TV, but I really didn't have any desire to go because I thought it would be such a rush and a crowd and I wouldn't really get to--I'd just be in the jam.

M: You mean this is for the inauguration.

WF: Inauguration, yes. But they asked their close friends--they provided them a way to go on an airplane. We just didn't feel that--

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M: You've been here in Johnson City a good long time. Here you have a member of your own community who becomes a very famous man. Did his fame change Johnson City to any great extent?

WF: Yes and no.

TF: Well, it did because no one even knew of Johnson City until he was president. Now everyone in the United States nearly knows there is and they'll come three or four hundred miles out of the way--you know, how people are traveling--just to come through Johnson City. Maybe they'll stop by the Boyhood Home and go on up to the Park if it's a leisurely trip.

M: So there's some tourist business, you think?

TF: Oh, yes.

WF: But for the old Johnson City, I don't think it changed it any at all, the regular trade territory. I think the people that are in the cafe business or selling gasoline or I think there's one or two places where they sell little souvenirs. But as to bringing in a great amount of wealth, I don't think it did. I think in the very beginning that they thought that it would just change the town entirely. But to the extent that they thought it would, it didn't.

M: Did it affect your drug store business at all?

TF: Well, it helped some.

WF: Helped the post card business. People came in largely to get cold drinks and talk.

TF: Anyone that would come in there is going to spend some money and quite a

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few, especially at first would come in the store.

WF: But then some people came in to find out about him and some people came in to sort of insult you, too. So you had to be very careful what you said.

TF: You know how politics is. I remember overhearing some people from out of the state, I don't know what state, I just noticed their car license was out of state. There were two couples--they were probably around fifty-five or sixty years old. The two women and one of the men wanted to go on out and see Lyndon's Ranch, and one of the men wouldn't walk five steps to see anybody's ranch, he said. (Laughter) It was funny, he walked on out of the store and I heard these women talking and they said, "Now, I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll just get tourist courts here tonight. We'll just go up there and see that Ranch and if Fred doesn't want to go, we'll just leave him here at the courts." (Laughter) "If Fred wouldn't want to walk five steps to see anybody's ranch."

WF: You said you wanted to hear both sides. Truman had a pretty hard time. We don't have any illusions about politics, but you do like to see someone from your home town make good. Even though you might not always agree with their politics, it's better to have someone from your county be president than somebody from some county in California. A lot of the people, of course, here were not for Lyndon and they were friends of Truman's and they would give him a hard time. But they liked Truman and that's as far as it went. But now with the drug companies, it seemed like that at

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times that the drug salesmen were rather brainwashed. Seemed like they were sent out just in a very hostile--

TF: They were, that's true. I'd forgotten about that.

WF: He had a lot to take off of drug salesmen.

TF: I mean, it used to be that a salesman would never argue politics with you. They wanted to sell their products.

WF: You were the buyer.

TF: But the salesmen from these companies were strictly Republican, I suppose you'd say, either Republicans or they seemed to enjoy just running Lyndon down or something, just before the elections, you know. They didn't care whether they said it right in front of you or not.

WF: They didn't seem to really realize what politics was all about either. They seemed to think Lyndon was a wild-eyed liberal. Well, Lyndon, after he made money, was just as conservative as the next person. They were fighting him at a time when he was just as conservative as they were. Of course, it was politically expedient maybe for him to be with the liberals, you know.

But it's pretty hard. I felt sorry for his younger sister. She had no security men; she had one little girl, and they had quite a lot to take. And a lot of Lyndon's friends had a lot to take off of people that they shouldn't have had to take from.

TF: They didn't live here, though.

WF: Well, she lived here some of the time, yes, she did.

TF: Yes, that's right.

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WF: But she really I think left Fort Worth because of this. She just moved to Memphis and didn't leave her address. She just wanted to move away from it.

M: Now, these salesmen, they'd come in, they'd attack Johnson. What would you do?

TF: Oh, I just let them talk. I didn't talk. I just let them rave about him.

WF: There's no use arguing with people like that.

M: Did their prejudice interfere with your business any?

TF: No.

WF: Well, I think you sometimes ordered direct, didn't you, some?

TF: I just didn't pay any attention to it. I just let them believe whichever way they wanted to as far as I was concerned. Just because they'd argue against someone politically, I wouldn't quit buying from them. (Laughter) There's no use because politics--

WF: Well, you had to buy from them. They had you there, you had to buy from them. But it made business a little more distasteful. And it seemed like they must have been at meetings where they would work them up --brainwash them.

M: When Johnson was at his Ranch, did a lot of the news people stay in Johnson City.

WF: Yes.

TF: Yes, they did.

M: Did that seem to change Johnson City any--the fact that all of these newsmen came?

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WF: Well, business-wise I guess that it did, but then they soon moved out.

TF: Anyway, maybe there'd be fifty or a hundred here one day. They had a little old building called the press center down here. I mean, if something special was going to happen. But they didn't live [here]. Most of them stayed in San Antonio, I think, and Austin.

M: Were the people that lived in Johnson City able to get along with these outsiders all right?

TF: Oh, yes.

M: There was no problem?

WF: They didn't bother us. I believe only one time they had real arrogant news people come.

TF: They were all right, the news people were. They were friendly and all.

WF: They were very nice.

TF: Let's see, I don't know which bunch stayed here at some of the courts most of the time. I don't know whether it was the security people or some others that worked on something else out at the Ranch. Then some of them rented houses.

WF: If you were going to have company [it was a problem]. Before we built this house we had a very small house even though Lyndon's four secretaries stayed with us. Three men were in one room and I had to put a daybed in our master bedroom. It wasn't much of a master bedroom. Mary Rather had my son's nursery and I put him in our bedroom.

M: What did he say?

WF: We lived in the utility room while they were there. (Laughter)

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(Laughter) You've never seen such a set up. It was really hilarious.

But anyway, if you were going to have some company, quite often, you know, you'd want to have [some], or our hunters were coming in and we would go down to get rooms for them at the motel. But if that was a weekend that Lyndon was coming in and all his security men, you couldn't find a room in town for people, you know.

My daughter graduated from SMU, and she was getting married. We were trying to get rooms for the wedding party and guests. Lyndon was giving a speech in Austin and a lot of his friends were coming down to hear him, and all the security men had the motel rooms.

M: Why I was following this question a little bit more about how Johnson has affected Johnson City in his fame, his politics, you mentioned that CBS came down to your drug store and did a program or filmed segments for a program right out of your drug store. Did that surprise you when they did that?

TF: Yes, I was surprised at the time. For a while, you know, people would come in, would hear my talking in the back. This was a national program. And they would say, "I can tell that's his voice right now." Then some old guy, say, from Montana or something, would come in the store and tell about hearing it.

M: This was on Walter Cronkite.

TF: Yes, on the Walter Cronkite news. So for three or four months, you might say, it helped business. Of course, eventually they forgot all about it. But people would come in the store and say, "Is this

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the store that they had the newscast?" or that they read about or something like that.

WF: Was it the British Broadcasting System that was here last summer with you and Kittie Clyde?

TF: I don't remember. Let's see.

WF: I know they were down here one time.

TF: I don't know, except about news people, one was with the News and World Report. Of course, there were a lot of them in right after Lyndon was elected president. And someone down the street had told him that I had gone to school with Lyndon, and he wanted to ask me two or three questions. So he said he heard I went to school with Lyndon. I said, yes, that he was two years older than me. He said, "Did you ever go fishing with him?" and I said, "I don't ever remember Lyndon going fishing." So he took my picture out there and underneath it read, "classmate and fishing partner of President Johnson." (Laughter)

M: Then your friendship with Lyndon Johnson has affected your life to a certain extent.

TF: Oh, yes. You're proud that someone can, from a small community like this, your home town, you know, become president.

WF: We're proud of the Redford boys, too, as well as others. We've had other poor boys make millions, also.

M: Well, I've pretty well exhausted all the questions I have for you. Is there anything else that should be mentioned that should be a part of this that you can think of about your relationship with

Lyndon Johnson or the Johnson family?

WF: Not so much our relationship. This might be interesting and it may not be. The Johnson family, like other families in those days here, had two or three generations living in the same house, you know. You didn't put your grandparents in an old age home. But his grandmother Baines, his mother's mother, came to live with them, say, four or six months out of the year. She was a very cultured old lady and she was a great needlewoman. She knitted for the children caps and mittens and sweaters and also made their clothes and did nice handwork. My grandmother knitted for us, too. Now these ladies weren't financially dependent, I don't think; it's just that they had given up [their homes]. I know that my grandparents weren't. But I think that had a lot to do with Lyndon's responsibility or sense of responsibility toward his brothers and sisters.

M: Because this old lady came?

WF: Yes. For instance, some of the Johnson children went out to his aunt and uncle who lived in Wichita Falls and graduated from high school there. They had this inner relationship with the family--all families helped each other out. Now this wasn't unusual for families in that day and age. We all did. But I do think that did help. So many people have been so surprised that Lyndon found jobs in his businesses for all of his family. And I think that had a great deal to do with it. He really enjoyed being the big brother. He got aggravated with them, but after his father died, he wanted

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to be the big father, you know.

M: But he did have a responsibility for his family.

WF: Yes, he did. Now sometimes his brothers and sisters resented it. But on the other hand, he did feel this responsibility and life was easier for them.

M: Mr. Fawcett, do you have anything to add?

TF: No, I don't. I thought of something a while ago, but I can't think of it anymore.

M: Then let me call this interview to an end. I wish to thank you for your time.

TF: We enjoyed it.

WF: You're welcome. I hope some of it will be [useful].

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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Truman Fawcett
Truman Fawcett

July 3 - 1979
Date

Wilma Green Fawcett

Wilma G. Fawcett
Date July 3 - 1979

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