

DECEMBER 9, 1967

DOUGLASS CATER'S INTERVIEW
WITH
MRS. ELAINE FISCHESSE
MRS. ELLEN TAYLOR
(Relatives of Mrs. Johnson)

AT 10:18 A.M. EST

MR. CATER: This is Mrs. Elaine Fischesser of Montgomery, Alabama.

Mrs. Fischesser, your grandmother and Mrs. Johnson's grandmother are the same; is that right?

MRS. FISCHESSE: Yes.

MR. CATER: I think the family tree is pretty clear here, so I won't even waste any time on that. But I would like to just ask you some informal questions about when you first met Mrs. Johnson, where it was, and what the circumstances were. What is your first memory of her?

MRS. FISCHESSE: When she was six months old I had the pleasure of visiting in the brick home at Karnack for six weeks. She was a great, big, chubby baby with large brown eyes, and smiling always.

MR. CATER: In Karnack?

MRS. FISCHESSE: In Karnack, Texas; the original home where she was born.

MR. CATER: Then at a later period you saw more of her in Alabama?

MRS. FISCHESSE: I did; from that time until she was five, I did not see her. When she was five her mother died and she came to Billingsley, Alabama, a small town, to live with her Aunt Ethie in my home. Aunt Ethie was an invalid at the time and she lived in my home.

So we had the pleasure of having her with us. She was beginning to talk well at that time.

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I would like to preface any remark I make with this: I think I have seen her off and on since she was five, frequently, until the time of her marriage, and often since then. I have never heard her say an unkind word about anyone in her life. I think that is about one of the noblest things a person could say about one. (2)

MR. CATER: It certainly is. Aunt Ethie, who was she?

MRS. FISCHESSE: Aunt Ethie was Lady Bird's mother's sister. She died at the age -- I don't know the exact age, but Lady Bird was five at the time of her death.

MR. CATER: How many years did you say she lived there?

MRS. FISCHESSE: She lived -- I could not remember the exact dates or the months or years, but I know she was in and out of my home until she came back to Texas. I don't believe she ever went to school in Alabama.

You see, I was in school at the time, during the winter. I won't be able to be sure, but I don't think she did. Then she would come back and forth to Texas during vacation and would spend apart of every summer with us wherever we were.

MR. CATER: Where were you now?

MRS. FISCHESSE: We were at Billingsley.

MR. CATER: Then you later moved to where?

MRS. FISCHESSE: Anniston. After I married and lived in Montgomery, she and Aunt Ethie, Wewee -- it is just a nickname -- I don't know whether you know her or not. I think I would like to say Wewee called Lady Bird "Bammy". She had two nicknames, Lady Bird and Bammy.

MR. CATER: That is in Alabama.

MRS. FISCHESSE: Yes. Bammy.

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MR. CATER: What do you remember of her early interests? When did you first become aware of a distinct personality?

MRS. FISCHESSE: Very soon, because she liked to play and would tolerate playmates. But it was very evident that there was a tolerance in most cases. In other cases, not. But I can picture her during her entire years stretched out in a chair or a swing with a book in her hand and either dried figs or dried peaches or dried apricots over on the side, munching them. That was very characteristic.

She was very fond of reading and at a very early age was reading books that you would not expect a person of her age to be reading.

MR. CATER: What kind of books? Do you remember any of them?

MRS. FISCHESSE: Don't ask me to quote them. I can't. That has been too long ago.

MR. CATER: Were they poetry, romances?

MRS. FISCHESSE: Mostly history and that type of thing. I don't think she was interested in romance books at that time.

MR. CATER: Did she do any writing that you were aware of?

MRS. FISCHESSE: She did on one occasion. Her Uncle Claude, for whom she was named Claudia, gave her a subscription to the Youth Companion at one time. As a result, so he thought, of the subscription and her reading the Youth Companion -- that is a very old magazine -- she entered a contest of some kind.

He was very, very proud of the progress that she made and the grades that she made on the papers which were submitted. Mrs. Cooper can tell you a little more detail on that. I don't know the details.

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MR. CATER: She has always struck me as having a real poetic flair, searching for words.

MRS. FISCHESSE: She has.

MR. CATER: Was this evident in those days? Did she look for words when she talked, the way she does now?

MRS. FISCHESSE: She read quite a lot of poetry. These things come to me as you ask me the questions. But I know she enjoyed together, when she got old enough to read poetry, with Aunt Ethie.

MR. CATER: Do you remember any close friends or associates she had besides her relatives there in Alabama?

MRS. FISCHESSE: I do not know of any in Alabama. All I know were distantly related. She was a very, very good friend of Lucille Patella, who was a second cousin, and also of Nettie Mason Patella, at that time. She has since married. I don't remember the name of any -- I was with her in Billingsley -- of any persons in Billingsley who were not related to her who were close to her.

MR. CATER: What was it -- was the lack of a mother apparent in her -- was she sad?

MRS. FISCHESSE: Not at all. She had so many mothers and fathers when she was in Alabama. Her Uncle Claude was devoted to her, of course, and she to him.

MR. CATER: Did her father come to Alabama much, or was it she came alone?

MRS. FISCHESSE: I don't remember her father coming with her. She came out alone. I will never forget the moment she arrived with a big French bonnet on. I can remember the bonnet. She was a beautiful child and a very interesting child. She was good company for anyone.

MR. CATER: Did she do any dating in Alabama? Were you aware of any?

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MRS. FISCHESSE: No, I don't know of any dating she did in Alabama. You see, when she was visiting me, I was doing the dating. She was a little bit too young.

MR. CATER: You were how many years older?

MRS. FISCHESSE: Twenty-five years difference. So I think I am doing well to remember such as I do. I remember her, though.

MR. CATER: Tell me, do you remember the first time you met the President?

MRS. FISCHESSE: I met him for the first time in Alabama. I am not sure of the date. I am not sure of any dates. But they were on occasions when he was a Senator before he became President.

Always, she had her friends for drinks at my house and then we would go out to dinner. On these occasions he was with us, although they were not at my home; they were at motels. We had a very pleasant evening with them. Of course, I have seen him several times since, at the ranch and here in Washington.

MR. CATER: When did you first know about him, and that she was going to marry him, and then what was your first impression? You can speak candidly.

MRS. FISCHESSE: I would not want to speak otherwise. The only way I know to be interviewed is to tell the truth.

I thought he was the best looking man I have ever seen in my life. He looked like a Harrison Fischesser. I just envied him, although I knew I was too old for him. We were very pleased.

MR. CATER: Did you see Presidential potential at that point?

MRS. FISCHESSE: I am afraid I wouldn't be a judge of that. Politicians is a long way from my mind.

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MR. CATER: He hadn't gone to Congress at that point, had he?

MRS. FISCHESSE: No. I would like to mention that I had the pleasure of reading a letter that his mother wrote to the two after their marriage. I wish I was able to quote that. It is the most beautiful letter I have ever read in my life.

I had the pleasure of knowing the President's mother in my home. She had visited in my home. I had nothing but very, very pleasant memories of her.

MR. CATER: By the time this occurred, you say you were still in Billingsley, or had you moved?

MRS. FISCHESSE: Oh, no. I was married then. I was living in Montgomery then. I just cannot remember dates. I just remember the incidents, but don't remember when.

MR. CATER: Are there any little episodes connected with her growing up in Alabama or connected with his visits there with her that sort of stand in your memory?

MRS. FISCHESSE: She was not in Alabama at the time she met the President. That was confined to Texas when she was in school there. I do not remember his ever being in Alabama until after the marriage. I did not see him in Alabama until after they were married.

MR. CATER: I was wondering if you recalled anything that was sort of on the human side about his visits. Does anything stick out more than ever other than his good looks?

MRS. FISCHESSE: One thing I can remember, and maybe it is right to say this, but I don't know. He just said the night he ~~met~~ ^{announced} her, "I am going to marry her." That was it. He did. As we know him now, I think we know him to be a very determined man and doing what he says he is going to do.

MR. CATER: Why don't we turn to Mrs. Cooper and then at the end we can have maybe a back-and-forth, if anything she says sparks any more memories on your part.

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MRS. FISCHESSE: All right.

MR. CATER: Mrs. Cooper, as I see you from this family tree, your grandfather and Mrs. Johnson's grandfather were the same man?

MRS. COOPER: That is incorrect.

MR. CATER: I understood that your grandfather was Thomas Taylor, Sr.

MRS. COOPER: That is my husband.

MR. CATER: Excuse me. I am sorry.

MRS. COOPER: My husband was William Thomas Taylor. He was the brother of Thomas Jefferson Taylor, who was Lady Bird's father. I am her aunt by marriage.

MR. CATER: That is right. You are an aunt by marriage.

MRS. COOPER: Yes.

MR. CATER: I misread the family tree, although I believe it is sketched in a little faulty here.

Tell me, when did you first know Mrs. Johnson?

MRS. COOPER: When she was five years old. One day my husband and I were seated on the porch at home. I saw this big car stop. My husband didn't recognize the people who were in the car and were getting out. It proved to be Miss Ethie.

She had this little girl by the hand. They came up the walk and my husband rose to greet them. She said that -- Miss Ethie said -- that they had been visiting her brother Harry and Selma and that she wanted to leave Lady Bird for a visit with us. My husband was Lady Bird's uncle. He did leave her with us.

MR. CATER: Where was this?

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MRS. COOPER: Burrisville, Alabama, my home, about 10 miles from Selma. It was on the way from Selma to Billingsley. She left Lady Bird with us.

At first I was a little bit -- she was such a white little thing -- I was much at loss, you know, to know what to do to entertain her. But when we went out on the farm in the afternoon, we took Lady Bird with us. She had those little stiff white skirts spread out on the seat just as neat as she could, and a book and a box of dried fruit.

MR. CATER: Five years old?

MRS. COOPER: Yes. She read quite a great deal. She enjoyed many books beyond her years. As you spoke a while ago, they had one of the finest libraries that her mother had collected. I visited out there at the brick house. I saw these books. Many of them were still crated, such as Scott, Dickens, Shakespeare, just beautiful volumes. Lady Bird's brother has some of the books. I have seen them in his home in Santa Fe, New Mexico. So they are a family that liked books, and read them.

MR. CATER: How long had her mother died at that point when she was five?

MRS. COOPER: She died a very short time before that. If I remember right, her mother died in September 1918.

MR. CATER: You say "the brick house." Explain what that is.

MRS. COOPER: Lady Bird's father bought this brick house, which was a mansion, and they lived there and the family -- we know the house as "the brick house." It was made of red brick and the bricks were made right near the site of the house. In later days the house was painted white. They did that because it seeped moisture through the brick. They were trying to make the house livable and pretty, too.

I think that was Lady Bird's idea. That happened along about the time she finished college at Austin, Texas, that she had her first degree then. I know she did, the

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year after that, we happened to be out there and she was getting ready to go back to college and I said, "Why are you going back to college? You have graduated."

She said, "Well, I have so many friends in Austin." That was the year that she met Lyndon, at that time.

MR. CATER: Tell me, getting back to when she was five years old, was she -- how do you explain this composure for such a young girl?

MRS. COOPER: I credited part of it with her influence of Aunt Ethie, who was a very dignified, lovely lady. She had all kinds of ambitions for the little girl.

MR. CATER: She did?

MRS. COOPER: Yes, she really did.

MR. CATER: She was spending the whole summer there at that time?

MRS. COOPER: She had come to Selma to her Uncle Harry's for a short visit and then we lived 10 miles away. She came to our house and stayed, usually about a week. Then we took her in our car and took her to her grandmother Bishop's, who was her father's mother, who had married the second time, named Taylor. Her second husband, Bishop. She went to the Bishop home for a visit to her grandmother.

Her uncle lived there and he and his wife had five little children. This summer, his wife was talking -- this son's wife was talking to me. She said, "I remember quite well when Lady Bird came to visit us. I gave the children a room, a playroom, upstairs and gave them a lot of catalogues so they could cut out pictures."

I said, "Just like little girls now will do." Then her Uncle Claude would come down there and get her and take her to Billingsley.

MR. CATER: At five, who would bring her from Texas? She didn't make that trip alone, did she?

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MRS. COOPER: Aunt Ethie brought her. You see, Aunt Ethie brought her to Uncle Harry's and then Aunt Ethie then went on. She was in her car -- she had a driver -- she would go on and leave her, you see. Then each one of us would help get her back to Aunt Ethie. She then spent the rest of the summer.

But almost every summer she came for a visit of a few days. I had a real pleasant memory of groups of young people. She had a way of collecting a lot of friends as she went alone.

They did such things as go swimming in Mulberry Creek and cook breakfast on the creek bank, and hayrides. Once, she promoted a bridge party on the front porch at my house. She was just an Americangirl having fun.

MR. CATER: Did you ever have to discipline her?

MRS. COOPER: No, she never did need any discipline at any time, because if you made a suggestion to her, she accepted it. There wasn't anything like that ever.

MR. CATER: Is that right?

MRS. COOPER: She was always so pleasant. My husband, her uncle, was very happy whenever she was with us because -- and for quite a few years -- until she had finished college she came during those times, too. She visited Billingsley and she had a friend there named Nettie Mason Patella. I don't know the family relationship or she and Nettie Mason were quite friendly.

Once Nettie Mason went to visit her in Texas. They were coming back to Alabama to bring Aunt Ethie's car. The car needed repair. At Meridian, Mississippi those girls had it repaired and it took all the money they had, so they were in Meridian almost penniless, so they wired Lady Bird's father for money. When the money came, it was late in the evening, but they set out for that journey and so they arrived unexpectedly at my house at 2:00 o'clock in the morning.

MR. CATER: Just the two of them were driving across the country?

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MRS. COOPER: Yes, the two were driving across the country.

MR. CATER: When was that? When she was in college?

MRS. COOPER: No, she was about 16 or 17; something like that.

MR. CATER: She was a very self-reliant young lady?

MRS. COOPER: She was quite.

I met Lyndon at the brick house. I went out there to spend Christmas one year. He was there with Lady Bird. But I knew about Lyndon because she came up to my house unexpectedly again one Sunday afternoon. When she came in, I said, "Who is with you?" She said, "Nobody. I just had to come out to Alabama." She had this picture she was holding up to her chest like this. She said, "This is what brought me to Alabama."

It was a picture of a very handsome young man. She said, "This man wants to marry me." I said, "Well, are you going to marry him?" "I don't know whether I am or not." I said, "Well, are you in love with him?" She said, "I don't know whether I am in love or not, but I know I never have felt this way before." I said, "Well, that's it."

She said that she wanted to go to talk to Aunt Ethie. She stayed with me just, say, 30 minutes. She went on then to visit some other close relatives. But I remember the picture and the picture is autographed of Lyndon when he was quite a young man. I saw it hanging in the White House. She had a group of family pictures.

MR. CATER: Then you met him for the first time after they were married, at the brick house?

MRS. COOPER: Yes, I met him there.

MR. CATER: What is your memory of that occasion?

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MRS. COOPER: Quite pleasant. His father had two sons. She and Lyndon were there and their sons and their families. We had quite a nice Christmas, with about 20 or 25 people at dinner, a Christmas tree in the afternoon, and a square dance. We finished up at the end of the day with that. We formed a circle around the piano and sang Auld Lang Syne.

We had quite a hectic Christmas. I saw Lyndon then. At another time, they went up to Billingsley on some business. They stayed with Uncle Claude that we spoke of a while ago. They came back to see me. When they came in through the land to my house and through the back way, there was a basket of green apples sitting over there. Lyndon went back and got two green apples from that basket.

He said, "Oh, I am so hot. I was hot last night and I didn't sleep so well. I was too hot." I said, "Well, come on and I will turn on the fan for you." I had a ceiling fan on the porch. I turned on the fan, he ate the green apples and Lady Bird and I started talking. He laid down there and went to sleep in the swing. I guess he slept nearly two hours lying there in that long swing. It was really long enough for his six feet, and then some.

MR. CATER: Did you know that he was going to be a President at that point?

MRS. COOPER: Really, I didn't. But when he began to make those leaps into fame, why, I began to think then sometime he might. I felt like he would make a good President.

MR. CATER: Do you have any other recollections of encounters with him, then or at any other times?

MRS. COOPER: Yes. They called me one day and asked me if I could come out to the ranch if they sent their plane for me. I was visiting at Brundidge, Alabama, about 100 miles from where I live. I said, "Yes, I would like to." It was about 9:00 o'clock in the morning, so I drove home, about 100 miles. I packed my bags and drove back to the airfield in Montgomery. The plane was there when I got there. So I was the only passenger, and they took me to the ranch.

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I had quite an interesting visit, because Lady Bird arranged for some men to take me around and show me the farm and cattle and Johnson City, and Lyndon's birthplace, and quite a few interesting things.

Then I went with them on that plane to Washington and spent a week at the White House.

MR. CATER: This is after he was President?

MRS. COOPER: Yes. He designated the first chair to the right as my seat as long as I stayed there.

MR. CATER: At the ranch?

MRS. COOPER: No, at the White House.

MR. CATER: At the White House?

MRS. COOPER: Yes. I had it out in the country, too. There I was real impressed with the meal they had on the ranch. Many of the things they had produced themselves. If you see the garden, with the overhead irrigation -- they have vegetables they grow in their own garden -- and ham which is home-cured.

MR. CATER: I get the impression that Alabama for Mrs. Johnson is a memory of happy times, that these were -- do you remember any unhappy times in Alabama?

MR. FISCHESSE: I do not. I know she was very fond of her grandfather's home there, which was a three-story frame building. She adored going from bottom to top, always, even after she was older. She knew that as her mother's home and her mother, who was one of my favorite people, and I think I was one of hers, I am proud to say, had a great influence on Lady Bird's life even the few years she was with her. I am sure she did. She was a highly well-read person and treated Lady Bird as an adult, not a child, when I was visiting with her at that age.

MR. CATER: None of you have mentioned brothers. Did they come to Alabama on any of these visits?

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MRS. FISCHESSE: I can mention Tony. He was my baby. He was with us when he was just a baby in arms. We were living down in the country at Milton, Alabama, near Selma. That was when I was a good deal younger than when we were in Billingsley. We had a gin mill. In that gin mill was a loft where we adored playing. Everywhere I went, Tony went. So I picked Tony up to take him up in the loft. I got up there safely, but I dropped him coming down. Fortunately, I didn't hurt him, but I tell him that every time I see him. I was just determined to take him up. I got up fine, but dropped him coming down.

I am very fond of Tony. I knew him as a baby. He was living with us then and his mother was away. I got an association with him at a very young age. Since then I have not seen him so much.

MR. CATER: His age in relation to yours?

MRS. FISCHESSE: I will have to think about how old Tony is. He is 60. So I am 74. So that is the difference. I was just at the age where I was crazy about babies, and particularly Tony.

MR. CATER: He was about six years older than Mrs. Johnson?

MRS. FISCHESSE: I did not know the difference in their ages.

MAN: You should tell him about the time he had to take his goat with him.

MRS. FISCHESSE: I was wondering about that.

MR. CATER: Go ahead. This is unexpurgated.

MRS. FISCHESSE: I was visiting at the ranch at this time. Mr. Taylor, as you know, Lady Bird's father, was married a second time. We knew her as Miss Beulah. I never met her personally, I don't think. We were going one day to Marshall, which is a distance of about 15 miles, and Tony loved animals, particularly his goat.

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We were on the back porch getting ready to leave. Miss Beulah said, "I am not going if the goat has to go." Tony says, "The goat is going." He was determined to take his goat.

They thought that was real funny. It was at the time. That was my only visit out there at the time. She was there. Of course, I saw Lady Bird at the time, too, but there was no event to mention. It was just a visit that I was having with them.

MR. CATER: When they came to Alabama, do you remember them together? Were they coming in separate visits?

MRS. FISCHESSE: You mean Tony and Lady Bird?

MR. CATER: Yes.

MRS. FISCHESSE: I could not remember an instant, but if she came, I do not know whether they came together or not. I know Tony was with us quite some time. I would say more than a year. I do not remember her coming -- he is six years older, isn't he?

MR. CATER: Yes.

MRS. FISCHESSE: I don't remember her being there during his visit. I remember them at the ranch together for a little while, but not at Alabama.

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MR. CATER: Tom, he died quite young, was it?

MRS. FISCHESSE: He was a prince.

MR. CATER: Mrs. Cooper?

MRS. COOPER: He died two years before his father died. His father died in 1960. His father was buried at Marshall, Texas and it was just about 1960. She was speaking about Tom and Tony coming to Alabama. Tom and Tony were sent away to boarding school, to go back while their mother was not in good health at all. Several times she was away at hospitals for treatment.

These two boys were sent up north to school for a while. Then I know, I don't know too much about Tony's schooling, but Tony went to a school out in California. It was a very exclusive school. I don't remember the name. But he attended that school and when he came back to his home in Texas, well, he wasn't particularly fitted for any particular job, we will say.

I remember that his father one day told him -- his father told me this himself -- says, "Tony, you have got to decide what you are going to do." He said, "Everybody around here works and you must decide what you do and you should get up early in the morning."

Tony told his father, he said, "Well, I haven't been feeling so well." His father said, "If you are not feeling well, then you go to the doctor."

He went and the doctor found out he had tuberculosis. He was sent -- he had been to school out at Las Alamos at the place where we have the atomic energy plant now where there was once a very exclusive boy's school. Tony went to that school.

This summer I was out there visiting. He took us to ride, after Sunday dinner, to Las Alamos and pointed out the building where they had had school. In fact, we were on the terrace behind that building. He was full of memories of that country.

He is a very intelligent, well-read man with a

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fine retentive mind. He is very fine company for anyone.

This summer, I visited in Dallas. We went over to Sante Fe for a few days. Tony took me with him to a seminar at St. John's College, a very interesting school. I heard some leading professors of the big eastern colleges, one ex-governor. They were taking part in a discussion of the Madison papers. Tony likes history. I do, too.

So I enjoyed hearing the discussion. But he even though he is a busy businessman has one of the largest importing businesses of Mexican-made and Spanish-made goods of various kinds. They are high-classed.

MR. CATER: Let's go back a minute to Mrs. Johnson. Do either of you remember any evidence of political interests on her part? Did she ever talk politics or political issues?

MRS. FISCHESSE: I do not.

MRS. COOPER: Never did I hear her mention anything like that except I heard, after her husband who was prominent in politics -- I knew that she assisted him in different ways.

Of course, we were with her when she was in Alabama on the Lady Bird Special. We were with her in Huntsville when she came there. There, she entertained her Alabama relatives.

MR. CATER: Were you there when she went to Tuscaloosa?

MRS. COOPER: No, we were not invited to that because I thought it was rather exclusive. Anyway, not any of us went.

MRS. FISCHESSE: Since I was living so near Tuscaloosa and Montgomery, she called me and Mrs. Rose did invite me to lunch. But I was ill at the time and couldn't accept.

I thought it was very nice of her. She was

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just having a few people. I was so near. Lady Bird, I think, thought I might like to come. I would like to have gone but I didn't.

MR. CATER: What did you think she wanted to be? Did she ever talk about what she wanted to grow up to be when she was a young lady?

MRS. FISCHESSE: I was not with her when she was old enough to be thinking about that that much. I was married and living in Montgomery. I saw her less then than during her youth. I do not remember any particular incident of her life after she went to college, anything special. Mrs. Cooper may.

MRS. COOPER: The fact that she was interested in writing -- she went back to college to get an extra degree. It was in writing, you know. like newspaper writing. I have forgotten the name of it.

MR. CATER: Journalism?

MRS. COOPER: Journalism. She took journalism. That is the only thing I know of. She also was enrolled at the University of Alabama, part of one summer. She was making some credit while she was in there visiting. She wanted to make this credit in journalism. She did go back to college just for a short time. That is the only time that I knew she ever attended school in Alabama.

She was really enjoying life in those days when she was young. Nothing she liked better than get a crowd of girls around. It didn't appear to me she was too interested in boys.

MR. CATER: You don't remember any boys she dated?

MRS. COOPER: No dates.

MR. CATER: In Alabama?

MRS. COOPER: No. She came there really for visits up until the time she was in college and after

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she went to college her visits shortened somewhat. But always she came to see her Aunt Ethie. I will always know that.

MR. CATER: The other girls, did they bring around boys? Was she just disinterested in them?

MRS. COOPER: It is kind of the crowd. That is the way it was. When she went on the swimming parties and when they went hayriding -- I couldn't remember any particular time any particular young man that she -- that is why she said, and she showed me Lyndon's picture. She said she hadn't had a lot of experience.

MR. CATER: If she made the decision, she made a good one.

MRS. COOPER: She believed in him, all right, enough.

MR. CATER: She didn't come to Alabama alone that you remember after she was married?

MRS. COOPER: I know once she came. She came to my home late one afternoon. I fixed a little supper for her, a regular Alabama supper, hot grits, sausage, scrambled eggs and hot biscuits. That is an Alabama supper.

MR. CATER: It is a good one, all right.

MRS. COOPER: Yes. She had been out at Billingsley on business.

MR. CATER: She had some property there.

MRS. COOPER: Yes.

MRS. FISCHESSE: I have a spot of land adjoining her's at the Hall place in Autauga County. She had been down prior to Lyndon becoming President, and visited me and we went together over the farm.

I have had the pleasure -- she has visited me with Lynda. Lynda has been at my home with her mother.

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At the time she was there she was about 12, I think. I was impressed because she wanted to get in the yard and help me work. She helped me plant Iris's that are now blooming. I want to tell her that.

MR. CATER: Already working on beautification.

MRS. FISCHESSE: Yes. At the time Lady Bird was there, I remember there was a picture of the President on Time Magazine. Of course, I used to have a time with the newspapers because she did not want it to be publicly known that she would be there. But they would always manage.

She had to consent for them to come out and take our picture together and she had to be holding the Time Magazine with the President's picture on the front. So I was looking at that picture the other day.

MR. CATER: We ought to note for the record that this is being done on the morning of Lynda's wedding so that fact isn't overlooked.

Do you have any other memories of the daughters that you would like to mention at this time, particularly Lynda?

MRS. FISCHESSE: Of course, I visited the Ranch when the daughters were young. I have been at the Ranch on several occasions. But this time, I think Luci was 13 -- how much difference? Lynda was a little older. The difference, as I say, as girls will, you know, they were having a house party.

Lady Bird was going to Dallas for some occasion. She never left the children alone with just -- she would want someone there. My sister and I had happened to be there at that time. I believe Luci's house party was in progress. She said to Lynda, "I want you to come down and meet them and that is all." They loved each other very dearly, of course, but there was that difference in the two.

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MR. CATER: Quite different girls.

MRS. FISCHESSE: I was chaperoning them. Lynda's guests had to leave on the bus. Lady Bird said, "Whatever you do, don't leave them here alone." So I jumped in the car and ran to the bus with Lynda and remembered when I got to the bus station that I had left Luci at home. So I dropped Lynda and drove back to Luci.

MR. CATER: Do you have memories there that are jogged by your notes?

MRS. COOPER: Yes, I have a few. One afternoon when we were visiting in Texas, we went over to a famous place called "Scottsville Camp Meeting Grounds." Lady Bird's father was with us. He said, "Let's go around this way." We walked into this beautiful cemetery and walked around by Lady Bird's mother's grave. She is buried in that cemetery.

Her brother, Thomas, said he was thinking about a proper epitaph to put on her grave and the bookkeeper at this store, the big store that he owned, suggested this: "Forgetting self, she lived for others," which was quite appropriate for the life that Lady Bird's mother had lived.

MR. CATER: Did she refer to her mother or did she remember her enough to?

MRS. COOPER: She had referred to her mother. I think people like Elaine and others that had known her real well have kindly kept the memory alive. One thing that is rather odd is that they don't have a picture of their mother. There is not one in existence that anybody knows about. Everybody in the family has been looking and searching.

MRS. FISCHESSE: I brought a picture of her grandmother -- which I doubt if she has that -- which I want to deliver to her during this visit. I have searched every place I know for her mother's. I am disappointed I didn't have a picture of her mother because I was very devoted to her and I think she was to me.

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As a matter of fact, I am still looking to find her a picture of her mother.

MR. CATER: It is a real tragedy.

MRS. FISCHESSE: It is to me.

MR. CATER: What about her father? What was Mrs. Johnson's relation to him? Was it a close one, or intimate?

MRS. FISCHESSE: You would have to visit in the home which I did to know that. As a baby and a very young child he was most devoted to her. He thought "this is the only baby in the world." Very devoted.

MRS. COOPER: He was very proud of Lady Bird. He realized that she had a lot of efficiencies, you know, that she wasn't using right then. He spoke about the fact that he had given her a checkbook and that she had the right to check for him for what she needed.

He says, "And to tell you the truth, she hardly ever goes over \$100 a month for all of her expenses." He thought that was just a wonderful thing, that she was learning how to be thrifty along the way, you know. He was very, very much devoted to her. She was to him.

MRS. FISCHESSE: I remember on my last visit, I believe, out to Shreveport, Lady Bird always gave me just a moment's notice on anything. She says, "I want to meet you in Austin in two days. We are going to go out to Scottsborough and we want to go back out to the old home place and I want you to go to the hospital to see daddy."

Of course, I had been very fond of her father. At age 20, I think I was, I had made the visit when she was a baby. I looked a little better than I did about 60 years later when I walked in the room.

He says, "Elaine, you don't look like you did when I last saw you." That amused Lady Bird. She said, "Well, you can't expect her to. That has been 60 years."

She thinks about that real often when he says, "You don't look like you used to." I am sure I didn't.

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MR. CATER: How did you compare his personality and the President's? Frequently a daughter who has grown up like that looks for a husband that has some of the qualities of her father. Were the men alike at all?

MRS. COOPER: At the time, he was gentle in his manner. He also was determined, I think, when he came to certain things that he wanted done. The people who worked for him seem to take a pleasure in carrying out his wishes.

MR. CATER: What would you observe about that?

MRS. FISCHESSE: I would certainly recognize the fact that they are both excellent businessmen, if you want to speak about the President as a businessman. They shared that quality, indeed.

MR. CATER: But I presume, I never have known about him but he was not in the same dynamic role that the President is.

MRS. FISCHESSE: I would say not. The circumstances of their lives were so very different.

MR. CATER: Mrs. Cooper, is there anything else you would like to contribute to this memory session?

MRS. COOPER: There are many things that I think I could think of that are quite pleasant. Once, I started to New York to the National Educational Association and we stopped off in Washington for a couple of days for my friends were sightseeing.

Lady Bird met me at the hotel and didn't let me occupy the room that I had reserved and took me to her house. There, I saw Luci and Lynda Bird when they were small children, about 6 and 9 were the ages.

And while Lady Bird and I were visiting, Luci had an old crayon and she was drawing pictures and writing on the white plastered wall. Lady Bird didn't notice her. She turned around and said, "Oh, Luci," she said,

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and she reprimanded her very gently. She says, "Never mind, mother will wash it off." But the crayon didn't wash off.

The next day, Lady Bird took this group of teacher friends of mine and me and she took the two little girls with us. We went to the Capitol and went on a tour for the city, conducted by Mrs. Johnson. These two little girls were with us. I remember that they had on little gingham dresses and little oxfords like most little girls wear. They were the most delighted little children that their mother was going to be with them. There was an office in the Capitol that Mr. Johnson used.

So we went into that and stayed and later had dinner. But we were so happy. Those little children were happy to be with us and we were really happy to have them.

MR. CATER: Did the children ever pay any visits alone to Alabama the way Mrs. Johnson did?

MRS. COOPER: No. They never did. I saw them at the brick house many times. Mrs. Johnson had a maid for them who usually stayed in the room with them and took care of the children. I have been in Texas at the brick house visiting when they were there. They were cared for by their maid.

MR. CATER: If you have the time, I would be -- we could leave that and might type that up as an appendix to this tape.

MRS. COOPER: I will be glad to leave it with you.

MRS. FISCHESSE: I think you will find it interesting.

MR. CATER: Anything else you would like to add, Mrs. Fischesser?

MRS. FISCHESSE: I don't believe so.

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MR. CATER: I think we have pretty well covered the water front, fine.

Thank you, so much. I think you had better head on back to get ready for the wedding.

MRS. COOPER: Yes, I think we have.

MRS. FISCHESSE: It has been a pleasure to talk about her.

MR. CATER: It is a pleasure, I must say, to be here at the White House and to work with her. I get to, on some of the projects, work with Mrs. Johnson. It is always a great delight.

MRS. FISCHESSE: She is a great person to work with, to live with or to visit.

MR. CATER: Thank you.

END

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By Mrs. Elaine Fischesser

to the

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Director, Lyndon Baines
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