

INTERVIEW I

DATE: March 2, 1987

INTERVIEWEE: OLGA BREDT GIDEON

INTERVIEWER: Christie Bourgeois

PLACE: Mrs. Gideon's residence, Austin, Texas

Tape 1 of 1, Side 1

B: Okay, Mrs. Gideon, I'd like to begin the interview by having you just tell me a little bit about your background.

G: Well, I'm sure you're interested in my background as pertains to Senator Johnson?

B: Well, yes, and just your background and a general sketch of your own background, too.

G: General background, all right. Well, I will tell you about my--I've been in Austin almost long enough to be a native. I moved here when I was about thirteen, I suppose. I went to--fourteen--to last year of junior high and through high school here and then on to The University of Texas. I was married first to Carl Bredt, who was, at the time of his death in 1961, Dean of Men at The University of Texas. A daughter, our only daughter, who is now Barbara Norwood, was also a graduate of The University of Texas. I worked--I have been associated with many figures in public life. After I was--I taught school before I married, but I never did like it. After I married, I really learned the shorthand and the typing bit, and I worked for one term as Speaker Bob Calvert's secretary, and he went on to become Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and is still an active lawyer in Austin. And it was--

Gideon -- I -- 2

B: When was that, that you were secretary for [Calvert]?

G: Hmm. Now see, this is what gets me, dates.

B: Well that's all right; just generally.

G: That's okay. I can remember just about, I guess. Let's say about 1937 maybe--

B: Okay.

G: --or in that range. I first went to work at Powers, Wirtz, Rauhut & Gideon as a summer replacement for Mary Rather--

B: Oh, really?

G: --yes, who was--I think--I believe she was going off to camp for the summer or something. Well, and then, when Senator Wirtz went to Washington as undersecretary of the interior under Ickes, I worked for Sim Gideon, who is now my husband. When the senator [Alvin J. Wirtz] came back, Mary stayed on in Washington with President Johnson, and so I became Senator Wirtz's secretary and was until his death in 1951. After his death I stayed on at the law firm, just long enough to sort of tie up loose ends for his personal papers and his personal work and went to work for my longtime friend, Congressman--then-Congressman Homer Thornberry, who succeeded President Johnson. He had been a lifelong friend and was best man in my wedding, and the kids call me "Aunt."

B: Right.

G: But I just did so on a very limited basis at first, and I worked at home. Are you interested in knowing what I did?

B: Yes, yes I am.

Gideon -- I -- 3

G: Okay. I read all the newspapers in the Tenth Congressional district and clipped anything I thought would be of interest to him, and I did lots of personal letters for him.

B: This was when you were working with Judge Thornberry?

G: When I was working for--

B: Then-Congressman--

G: Then-Congressman Judge Thornberry. And as I said, it was limited at first, but just like all work of that kind, it gets to be a little more and a little more, you know, and a little more. So I ended up being what they called then his district secretary, but believe me, it was not like the operation now. For instance, we didn't open the office until he was home in the district, and so there again I worked out of my home, which worked--which was very well since I had a growing daughter and a family. When his office was open, between sessions of Congress, he would bring down a couple of people from his Washington staff, and we never had over three people, I guess, working in the district office.

Well, at any rate, after my husband's death, Congressman Thornberry was appointed to the court as district judge, and his first assignment was in El Paso. So I moved to El Paso and thought I'd be there from then on, and we were back in Austin in seven months!

B: Is that right?

G: The judge here, Judge Ben Rice, had died, and he transferred back to Austin, which is in the Western District. It's in the same district El Paso's in. So here I've been ever since.

B: Okay.

Gideon -- I -- 4

G: And I worked for Judge Thornberry then until I retired in 1972, December of 1972, which now has been--what? Fourteen, more than fourteen years ago.

And my association with President Johnson was brought about because of my association with Senator Wirtz and Congressman Thornberry and Judge Thornberry and because I went for a long time with J. C. Kellam, who was, as you know, general manager of KTBC, and then--before his death, they had sold the TV station, and he was with the radio station, KLBJ. He was, I guess, vice president of Texas Broadcasting, Mrs. Johnson's company. And I worked for Senator Wirtz at the time that Mrs. Johnson bought her interest in--well, radio stations, in the radio station, with a legacy from her aunt, Effie Patillo. So it did start out as a small operation with family funds that she had inherited. I was a part of drawing up the papers and all that sort of thing. So I do know how it started, and I do know that is the way that the whole operation started.

B: Approximately how much did she pay for that station?

G: I don't remember. I don't remember. It was a nominal amount. It was an amount that she could handle with her legacy, I know that, and I'm not sure that the papers ever spelled out the amount because, you see, many papers just say, "For ten dollars and other valuable considerations," so I don't--

B: (Laughter) Doesn't tell you very much.

G: I don't even know whether--I may have at one time known, but I do not remember.

B: Mrs. Johnson has a reputation as being quite a businesswoman.

G: She is quite a businesswoman, and quite a lady, and they were very fortunate to have, handling their business for many years while they were here and were gone, Mr. Kellam

Gideon -- I -- 5

because he was an astute businessman, he was a leader in the community, and he was well-liked. He was well-liked by people who didn't like the President, and, as you know, there were lots of people who didn't like President Johnson for one reason or for another.

But they were fortunate, and they would be the first ones to tell you. I know Mrs. Johnson would.

B: I have talked to some people who worked with Mr. Kellam in the NYA--

G: Yes.

B: --when he succeeded Johnson--

G: That's right.

B: --as state director, and some of them said that Jesse Kellam may have been the one man who could outwork Lyndon Johnson.

G: This is true.

B: Is that right?

G: I think that he--well, I think that anybody who worked for President Johnson--and, in his case, of course, that included Mrs. Johnson--I think first that you just really had to be completely dedicated and almost willing to give up everything else for it. President Johnson made sort of a--I won't say pass, but--(Laughter)--suggestion once or twice that I might work for him. But no, I didn't want to do that because I just--while I loved my work, and I don't think that it made any difference in my work, also I never could put my work completely ahead of my family.

B: Yes, and you feel that you had to do that if you worked for Johnson?

G: That's my candid opinion.

Gideon -- I -- 6

B: When did you first meet Lyndon Johnson? Do you recall?

G: There again, dates are sort of fuzzy, but I really knew him--I mean, saw him more, I suppose, when he was--ran the first time for the Senate and was defeated. He was in and out of our office all the time because of his relation with Senator Wirtz. And I remember one time he came in, and Luci was just a little girl, about like so, and Senator Wirtz had a couch in his office. I remember he brought Luci with him by the hand. That's one of the few times I ever saw him babysitting, but for some reason, he was. And I remember Luci curled up on that couch and went to sleep while he was talking to--

B: Senator Wirtz?

G: --to Senator Wirtz. So--goodness, I don't know how old Luci is now, but she must have been--oh, not over four at that time because she was just a little bitsy girl.

B: So you didn't have any opportunity to observe Lyndon Johnson when he was working for the National Youth Administration, then when he was working with--?

G: No, I really didn't. I mean, I just really--I just didn't know him that well then.

B: Do you remember when he decided to run for Congress? Do you remember when he was discussing that with Senator Wirtz?

G: No, see, there again, that goes back a little beyond my association with him.

B: All right. Johnson had a legendary temper. Did you ever have occasion to witness that?

G: Oh, yes. After his--after they returned from Washington, I was with them a great deal because I went to the Ranch just a great deal with--

B: This was after the presidency?

Gideon -- I -- 7

G: After the presidency. In fact, I was with him a great deal after that and much more than before because--well, lots and lots of weekends I spent at the Ranch because that's when Mr. Kellam caught up on his business. (Laughter) And it was fun, too, riding around the Ranch, and it's when I got to know Mrs. Johnson, and I have a great admiration for her.

G: When did you first meet Mrs. Johnson? Do you recall? Did you--?

B: No, you see--

G: --know her at all?

B: --there again, I had known her just casually through the years, but when my daughter was born in 1938, and when she was about ten, we went to a dean's convention in Williamsburg and went on to Washington. By then, Senator--he was Senator Johnson, and our friend, Homer Thornberry, was in Congress. So they--Senator and Mrs. Johnson could not have been nicer. In fact, they had a little party in their home for us, and I remember that Senator Russell was there, and Speaker Rayburn was there, and, you know, it was just really nice.

And then, of course, I saw her there again, I saw her more after the presidential years.

B: Do you think--

G: In fact, I've seen her just a lot [since] then.

B: Do you think that she changed a lot over the years? Did you notice that?

G: Well, I don't know that--I don't know that she changed that much because, as I say, I did not know her that well before. I know that she became, say, a little more clothes

Gideon -- I -- 8

conscious and that sort of thing, but I think anybody would do that if they were thrust in the position she was in.

B: She has a reputation for being shy in her younger days, and I'm sure had to overcome that somewhat to be in the public eye.

G: I'm sure that's why, and I have the feeling still that she would rather not have been in the public eye, but she certainly did it beautifully.

B: In those early days, when you did have an occasion to observe Lyndon Johnson when he was in and out of Senator Wirtz's office, did you get the impression that he was looking ahead politically?

G: Oh yes. I think he was a very ambitious man. Yes, I certainly do. I don't know that he ever thought it would lead to the presidency, but I do think that he was a very ambitious man.

B: I'd like to sidetrack a little bit here and have you talk about Senator Wirtz for a moment. Just characterize him for me. What kind of man was he?

G: Well, Senator Wirtz was a--I think, just a very sharp lawyer and a very polished man. I did not see the last movie about President Johnson, but--

B: "The Early Years"?

G: "The Early Years," but I understand that Senator Wirtz was portrayed as sort of a country hick. Well, that he was not! He was smooth; he was--somebody said I knew him at a time when he had mellowed a bit because, of course, he had already been in the [Texas] Senate and was on his way to being undersecretary [to Interior Secretary Harold] Ickes, and so I assume I did know him at a time when he had mellowed a bit. But he was--he

Gideon -- I -- 9

was to me always a considerate man, and in times of--well, like, when my daughter--my little daughter was extremely ill he would insist I go home, that I--you know, he was just a thoughtful man.

B: Do you think that Senator Wirtz was conservative or liberal? Did you get a sense of his philosophical--?

G: Well, I think Senator Wirtz was like I am. A lot of people think I'm liberal. Well, in some ways I think I'm liberal, and in some ways I think I'm conservative, and I do think that that's the way Senator Wirtz was.

B: Do you--?

G: I didn't--I would not ever class him as a wild-eyed liberal. I think he was a fairly conservative man, actually.

B: On what particular issues--he was known as a New Dealer and as a--

G: Yes, he was.

B: --Roosevelt man. On what issues do you think he was basically conservative?

G: I do not know how--for instance, on immigration. I do not know how Senator Wirtz felt. I never had any occasion--there never was any occasion I remember--that I remember--that would demonstrate whether he--what his feelings were in that area.

I do know about Senator Johnson, and I think he himself was sort--completely unbiased. I--

B: Really?

G: --really do think he was. Yes, I do. I don't think that many people really, just personally, dealt with a situation better than President Johnson.

Gideon -- I -- 10

B: Can you give me some examples?

G: Well, just the people that worked for him, for instance. He was--for instance, it seemed to me that he did not have any bad feeling for anyone because they were black, because they were brown, because they were yellow, and he had all of them working for him. And I remember his kindnesses, really, to some of the Mexicans who I assume were--I don't know that they were wetbacks when they came over, but at least they were not citizens, and he encouraged them to become citizens. I'm thinking of a man right now at the Ranch that became a citizen, that worked for him still, and that he secured a job for with the park service.

B: So he would encourage them to learn English and--?

G: Well, to just better themselves, generally. I just--I really do think that just personally he seemed to me to be unbiased--

B: You think so?

G: I think so. In fact, that's one thing that I always admired about President Johnson.

B: What was Johnson's relationship with Senator Wirtz like? What type of relationship did they have?

G: Well, I think that--I just think that he relied on Senator Wirtz' judgment in political matters. I don't know that he advised him about other things at all, but I just think that he had a respect for the senator's judgment--and he had been in the rough-and-tough of Texas politics. He had been in the Texas senate, and he had been friends with a good many people that--well, Maury Maverick, for instance, that was a friend of President

Gideon -- I -- 11

Johnson with--and I did not know him because this was before my time, but Welly Hopkins, who went on to Washington.

B: You didn't know Welly Hopkins. You did know--

G: No, I do not know Welly Hopkins. I have met him only. Just like friends of the senator's that I had met, too, through the years: Abe Fortas, Judge Fortas--

B: Did you know Maury Maverick?

G: Not really.

B: You didn't have occasion to observe--

G: No.

B: --Senator Wirtz's relationship with him?

G: No.

B: What did Senator Wirtz think about Maury Maverick? Do you have any idea? Maverick had a reputation for being sort of a firebrand liberal. Some would call him radical.

G: Well, yes, that's true. Well, they were good friends, but I just think he was far more liberal in his outlook than Senator Wirtz was.

B: I think Senator Wirtz was his attorney--

G: He was.

B: --at one point in 1939.

G: He was. He was. And there again, that was just sort of--right before my association.

B: Why do you think that Wirtz took such an interest in LBJ? Do you think that it was because they had similar philosophies or just that he saw that he was going somewhere and wanted to--?

Gideon -- I -- 12

- G: Well, maybe that, and I do think that he was a friend first, I understand, of Senator--President Johnson's father, who was in the [Texas] House [of Representatives]--I don't know--at the time the senator was in the senate perhaps? I'm not sure of that, but I do know that he was a friend first of his father's. And--I don't know. He just, I guess, just became his *protégé*, or maybe he thought he saw in him something that he would have liked to have done. I don't know.
- B: Were you ever around when he--when Wirtz was giving Johnson political advice?
- G: Well, not really. Not in the room really, no, because these--their sessions were one-on-one, except for phone conversations, when I would hear one end--would be in the senator's office, and he would take a call.
- B: What type of political advice did he give him? Can you--do you recall anything specific--type of advice he would--
- G: No, I don't because I'm afraid that if I answer that question I might be answering it wrong. I don't know. I'm going to say no.
- B: Were there any particular things that Wirtz--any particular things about LBJ that aggravated Wirtz, that Wirtz wanted him to change, or that he would counsel him against?
- G: Mmm.
- B: There are several letters in the files in which Wirtz urges Johnson--and this is around 1939, 1940, and 1941--urges Johnson to take a stand in Congress against the appeasement of men like Hitler and Mussolini, and from the tone of these letters, he

Gideon -- I -- 13

seemed to--Wirtz seemed to feel very strongly about this, and he seemed to think that Lyndon Johnson was not taking a strong enough stand--

G: Oh.

B: --in Congress. Do you recall this at all?

G: No, I don't. I think maybe that was--I believe maybe Mary was his secretary then. I don't remember.

B: You don't remember him talking about that?

G: No. You see, there was a period in there when I was there a while; Mary was there a while. I just--I don't remember that.

B: Okay. Did you get any--

G: But I'm not surprised.

B: Yes. Did you get any idea of how far Wirtz thought that Johnson could go in politics? Did he really see that Johnson could go as far as the presidency someday, or was he just taking it one step at a time?

G: Well, I never heard him--I never heard him talk [inaudible].

B: Okay. Senator Wirtz was attorney for George and Herman Brown--

G: That's right.

B: --is that correct?

G: Yes.

B: What was his relationship with them like? Was that close? Were they--?

G: Yes, I think they were good friends. They were very good friends.

B: Did he introduce Johnson to the Browns? Do you know?

Gideon -- I -- 14

G: I don't think so. No, I do not think so.

B: All right.

G: I knew Mr. Herman Brown better than Mr. George Brown--

B: Is that right?

G: --whom I did not know really until after President Johnson was back from the presidency.

Well, Mr. Herman Brown was the one who was in our office all the time. Mr. George Brown had--was in Houston and just didn't come to Austin as frequently as Mr.--

B: Herman Brown.

G: --as Mr. Herman Brown.

B: What was Herman Brown like?

G: Well, I liked Mr. Herman Brown and Mr. George Brown. I just--I just really have great admiration for both of them. Mr. Herman Brown was--he was always courteous and friendly toward me, and that's really as much as I can say because I don't really know the ins and outs of business, but just personally, I thought Mr. Herman Brown was a very likable man. Now, I know he was a tough businessman, and maybe business associations were different, but just personally, I just thought that he was really a neat man.

B: Is that right? (Laughter) Were there ever any particular conflicts between Wirtz and Brown, Herman Brown, on any particular issue that you can think of?

G: No, I really don't. I don't know of any--I can't remember any major disagreements they had. I think that--I think Mr. Brown had respect for Senator Wirtz's ability as a lawyer, and I'm sure that, or I imagine that Congressman--Senator Johnson may have had--who was, of course, their friend, and who may have had something to do with Senator's

Gideon -- I -- 15

selection as counsel for Brown & Root. But I don't think Mr. Brown was ever disappointed with his selection because he got value for his money.

B: Yes. (Laughter) When Senator Wirtz became undersecretary of the interior for Secretary Ickes, was there any problem? You know, Wirtz and Johnson were New Dealers, and so was Ickes, but then Ickes was, I think, in favor of the federal government acquiring title to more of the nation's coastline, which would put him in conflict with virtually any Texan; no Texan could afford to be in favor of that. Do you recall any conflict [inaudible]?

G: No, I don't know any details about that. I just do know this. It's always been my feeling that Senator Wirtz was not a person who was going to be second fiddle down the line to Harold Ickes or to anybody else for very long, and he didn't stay very long, you know.

B: Do you think that's why?

G: Well, I mean, I just don't think that he--I just don't think he was going to take direction from somebody about anything that he didn't agree with.

B: Do you think there was a little bit of conflict between those two men, Ickes and Wirtz?

G: I do not know. This is my feeling only. I do not know, but I have a feeling that there was a personality conflict.

B: They were both such strong egos?

G: I think this is true, and I don't know Ickes at all, but I do know Senator Wirtz, and as I said, I don't think he would take direction very long from somebody about something that he didn't believe in himself.

B: Do you think that the oil thing may have caused it?

Gideon -- I -- 16

G: Well, I do not know. I don't know.

B: But you think that possibly Wirtz may have stayed longer at Interior if--

G: He might have stayed longer. I do know, too, that it was a financial burden for Senator Wirtz to be in Washington because, of course, he didn't--I don't know what the arrangement was with the firm while he was gone, but I can't think that he would have taken much out of the firm while he was in Washington, and his salary as undersecretary wasn't great, I'm sure, and it takes a bit to live in Washington, at least to live well--at least to live like he'd been used to living in Texas.

B: Did you work in any of Lyndon Johnson's campaigns?

G: Yes. I did.

B: Which ones?

G: Well, the one that I did the most work in was when he was running on the ticket with President Johnson for vice president.

B: With Kennedy?

G: (Laughter) With Kennedy, yes, for vice president. He was the vice presidential nominee, and Mrs. Edward Clark and I were co-chairmen of Women of the Tenth Congressional District for the ticket.

B: Is that right?

G: And I can remember that it was--that we got an ad in the Austin papers of supporters, and I don't--I've forgotten whether it was two pages, like this, or maybe it was just one full page, but oh, we had thousands of names on it. And that was one time I remember President Johnson was really impressed, with that particular ad, and because of that,

Gideon -- I -- 17

when President Kennedy came to the Ranch then, after the election, because he did come, and I was invited to the Ranch to meet President Kennedy.

B: Is that right? You think as a result of your good work?

G: Well, that was the reason, because it was a political gathering. Yes, that was the reason.

B: What did the women do in that election as opposed to--?

G: Well, really, as I remember, that was our major undertaking. It took a lot of man-hours to get that going, but that really was a really major undertaking. But it was sort of the first time that sort of thing had been done. Now, you see it in all political campaigns, the page ads with the names of supporters and whatnot. But it was something--it was something sort of new?

B: Is that right?

G: Yes. At that time. Well, that was back away, you know.

B: 1960, yes.

G: Yes.

B: Did you work with the women's organization in earlier campaigns?

G: No.

B: You didn't?

G: No. In fact, I never have worked much with just women's organizations as such.

B: So in the earlier campaigns when you worked on his campaign you worked--

G: I'd never had any official capacity at all. And, of course, even my volunteer work was limited because I was already working full time.

Gideon -- I -- 18

B: Yes. While we're on that subject, I wanted to ask you a question. Johnson, when he was president, appointed a lot of women to different--various posts. Do you think that Johnson had a greater respect for women and their abilities than most men of his time? I mean, I'm talking earlier on.

G: Yes. [Inaudible] Let me think.

B: Or did he operate under the same assumptions? Do you think he--? What do you think about that?

G: I really think that maybe he didn't [inaudible] distinguish between whether a person was a man or a woman, if he thought they could do the job. I have a feeling that, like any politician, that he had a feeling that it would be good for him to appoint some women, and I'm sure that that was part of it. On the other hand, I think that he did feel that they could do the job, or he wouldn't have appointed them. I think he sensed that it was good to begin to get some women appointed to places and--

B: He realized that women voted too?

G: That's right, and a lot of them vote better than men.

B: (Laughter) Okay.

G: Or more diligently, or get to the polls, at least.

B: You may not--this may have been the time when you were not in Senator Wirtz's office, but perhaps you'll remember something about it. In 1940, there was a group in Texas promoting the candidacy of John Nance Garner and opposing Roosevelt's third term. Do you recall this, and do you recall Wirtz's role in this or Johnson's role?

G: I don't recall any active participation by Senator Wirtz--

Gideon -- I -- 19

B: Okay.

G: --in this.

B: He was in Washington at that time?

G: Yes.

B: Okay. Do you recall anything about that campaign at all?

G: No, I really don't.

B: How did Johnson react to the 1941 defeat? He was narrowly defeated in the Senate race. O'Daniel, Pappy O'Daniel, won that.

G: Yes. Well, I think that, like anybody, he would have been disappointed, but I don't think that he ever thought that was the end of Lyndon Johnson. I think he still thought he'd be going places. I don't really think--I don't think he was depressed.

B: You didn't get that impression?

G: No.

B: How did--do you recall Wirtz's reaction to that? Was he angry? Or did they just go on and--?

G: Well, they were just, as far as I can recall, pretty philosophical about it. This sort of "This, too, will pass" sort of thing.

B: Okay. There was some speculation that that race was stolen from Johnson, that he was--that there were some votes counted for O'Daniel that--

G: Well, there was talk about that, but then there's been lots of talk about races the other way, too.

B: Yes.

Gideon -- I -- 20

G: That's just sort of Texas politics, I'm thinking, a way of life, and I'm sure that there was stealing of votes in some areas, like--that are notorious for manipulation.

B: But you don't recall anything specific?

G: I don't, specifically.

B: All right.

(End of Side 1, Tape 1)

B: Do you think the nature of Texas politics changed in the 1940s due to the oil establishment gaining more political power? Do you have any sense that the state became more conservative than it had been?

G: Well, I surely think that's true of the Shivers years, for instance. I can't remember dates exactly.

B: Yes. 1948 he came into—

G: I think Texas has become, well, through the years has continued to be a little more conservative.

B: Did you get any sense that Johnson had to adjust to that? Because he had been known as quite the New Dealer before.

G: Yes, he was the New Dealer, but there again, like Senator Wirtz, I just never had the feeling that President Johnson was a liberal in the sense that we think of Senator Yarborough, for instance, as a liberal. I just don't--

B: You think he was more a moderate?

G: --think he was. I do think so. That's the way—I considered his politics like I consider my own, and that is moderate, and that's my judgment.

Gideon -- I -- 21

B: How much contact did you have with Johnson during the Senate years?

G: Well, those were years in which, when he was in Austin, he always popped in our office to visit with Senator Wirtz. They were years in which he was calling Senator Wirtz on the telephone and talking to him frequently.

B: He was still--?

G: And, as I've said many times, had I known that Senator Johnson was going to be President Johnson, maybe I could have done a better job of preserving memorabilia or letters or correspondence or whatnot, but most of their contact was in person or by telephone. There was letter-writing, of course, but it's easy to pick up the phone, and it's better to pick up the phone and talk to somebody than it is to wait for--if it's something that you want to talk about now, you don't want to wait until you get a letter to them, and they get a letter back, so most of their contact was personal or by phone. So I did see him frequently during that time.

B: Yes. Wirtz was still giving him political advice at this time?

G: That's true. Well, until his death. When I say giving this advice, at least they were in contact, and he was discussing matters with Senator Wirtz, and I'm sure Senator Wirtz was advising him or giving him his thoughts.

B: I wonder if Wirtz was giving him advice, trying to steer him into becoming a more national figure in preparation for a possible bid for the presidency in the future rather than a Texas--than concentrating on Texas and being a Texas figure. Did you get any sense of that?

G: Well, I just don't know.

Gideon -- I -- 22

B: Okay. Did you have any contact with Johnson when he was recovering from his heart attack? He had a heart attack in--I think it was 1955.

G: No. No, not really. As I said, the most time I spent with Senator--with President Johnson was after his presidency, and--

B: Did you--

G: --and of course, then he was conscious always of that heart condition. I had had a coronary in--well, it's been fifteen or sixteen years ago now, and apparently there was no damage, and every time I ever had a check-up, well, everything was fine, and he would just say to me several times, well, he wished that were true in his case.

B: Is that right?

G: He was always conscious of this, and I think knew that someday that heart would cause his death.

B: He would say these things after the presidential years or even before?

G: This was after his presidential years because, as I said, that's when I was around him more on a personal basis.

B: Well, let's talk about those post-presidential years for a minute. You would go out to the Ranch?

G: Yes, I was at the Ranch just an awful lot and made some trips with--well, to Acapulco two or three times--

B: Oh, really?

G: --with Mr. Kellam and the Johnsons and with whatever other guests they had. Yes, I do think he was conscious all that time of his heart problem, and--but he kept going. I don't

Gideon -- I -- 23

know that he did all the things he'd done before. For instance, a lot of people talk about his drinking, and certainly he did take a drink or two, but I never saw him when he himself had been drinking just a whole lot even though someone around him might be, and I don't know whether that was because of his heart condition, or, as I said, I just had not been around him that much before the end of his term.

B: Did he start smoking again after the presidential years?

G: I don't think he did smoke. I believe he quit.

B: I know he did quit after his heart attack.

G: Yes, and I don't remember his smoking, and he did quit smoking.

B: Yes, but he didn't take it up again, as far as you know?

G: I don't think so.

B: Okay. Well, what would you all do when you'd go out to the Ranch? What sort of activities?

G: What were our activities?

B: Yes.

G: Chiefly riding around the Ranch, looking at the animals, exotic and deers and whatnot, and--

B: Would LBJ drive you usually?

G: Well, he drove, yes, usually. Sometimes if there were several of us we'd take two cars. Mrs. Johnson *loves* to drive.

B: She does?

Gideon -- I -- 24

G: Oh, yes, and many, many times--and this was after the president's death, too, of course--I went up there even more, probably, and she would always be the driver, and she likes--loves to drive over the Ranch.

B: Is she a good driver?

G: She's a great driver, and she can spot a native deer, "Oh, look at two o'clock!" "Look at six o'clock!" "Look over here." I couldn't see one at all until she had pointed them out, and then you could see them. She can see--

B: Good eye.

G: Good eye. Yes, he drove. He drove a lot. And, of course, he would plant the feed for deer, so we'd go out and watch the deer late afternoons. Just herds of them.

B: Did he seem at peace when he was doing those things after the presidential years? Do you think he was able to let the weight of the world fall off of his shoulders, or was some of it still on?

G: Well, I think that he was--would rather have been back in the midst of the fray.

B: Do you?

G: I really do.

B: Do you think maybe--?

G: Because that's just the way he was. He wasn't a man who would sit down for three hours reading a book, and one of the things I always enjoyed being at the Ranch was having a little time to get out and take my two-mile walk. Mrs. Johnson and I walked a lot. I've counted beer cans all over the Ranch road and the highway. We'd pick up trash, and we'd count the redbuds that were blooming and how many had died since the last time and all

Gideon -- I -- 25

that sort of thing, so--and then I'd get up early in the morning and go out and take my walk and, of course, swim. The pool was there if you wanted to swim. And one of the things I enjoyed doing was just having a little leisure time. There is a room on the second floor of the Ranch that is called "Mary Rather's room."

B: Is that right?

G: But--and then my room. Mary's room and my room. It's a sweet bedroom. It's still my favorite one, and it's one that they never have redecorated through the years. It has the same sweet little wallpaper and old furniture in it.

B: What type of things would LBJ talk about in those post-presidential years? Would--did he talk about the presidency or issues or anything like that, or was it mostly small talk?

G: Well, in my presence I'd say small talk though he did talk. Of course, Nixon was in office, and I do know that he had conversations with President Nixon from time to time.

B: Did he ever talk about that, or--?

G: I never heard him critical of President Nixon. He maybe realized he had a hard job, too, but I really never did hear him just extremely critical of Nixon. Now, of course, I believe Senator Wirtz was dead before Watergate, isn't that right?

B: Yes.

G: So I didn't experience that time.

B: Yes. What was the relationship between President Johnson and Mrs. Johnson like at that time?

G: Well, Mrs. Johnson was the lady who--she did her own thing, and I think that President Johnson had--trusted her judgment. I think that he had great respect for her. I don't think

Gideon -- I -- 26

the relationship was as close in many ways as the relationship between many husbands and wives.

B: You say that Johnson was apprehensive about his heart condition, and it really concerned him, and he worried about this. Could you tell me about that? Did you talk to him about that?

G: Well, it's just that he--that I've just heard him say several times something about his condition and the injury that had been done to his heart, and, particularly--I had had my--when did he come home? What year?

B: Probably 1969. 1969.

G: 1969?

B: Yes. Early 1969.

G: Well, I had this coronary fifteen or sixteen years ago—when would that have been?

B: That would have been 1970 or 1971.

G: Yes. And he just mentioned so many times that I was just very fortunate that I had apparently recovered from this and had no damage, though I had frequent checkups. And he'd just mention, he's just said several times, well, he wished that were the case, but that was not the case.

B: But that his heart had been damaged?

G: Oh, yes, and he realized how much, and I do think that he was--thought that was what would indeed take him, take his life.

B: He had sort of a sense of doom about it, that it was not going to be very long, or--?

G: Well, I don't know whether he--none of us know how long.

Gideon -- I -- 27

B: Yes.

G: But he did feel that that was what would take him--would cause his death.

B: Yes. When was the last time that you saw Johnson? Do you remember?

G: Well, I'm sure I saw him several days before his death.

B: Really?

G: I don't remember just exactly when, but as I said, I was up there on the weekends just an awful lot, and so I'm sure that I did see him [inaudible], and then I was at the Ranch at the time of his funeral.

B: How did Jesse Kellam feel about LBJ?

G: Well, they'd been friends, you know, forever.

B: A long time, yes.

G: But he considered him and Mrs. Johnson as employers, too, and he had, well, great admiration for Mrs. Johnson as an employer and as a friend, and so he did for President Johnson, but President Johnson was "Mr. President."

B: So he kept--there was a distance there.

G: There was. I mean, he respected his position, and he was always, "Mr. President." Many people in Austin, through the years I know when President Johnson would come back, would say, "Lyndon," and you could see Mr. Kellam just cringing. And I, too, because I never would have said anything except "Mr. President," just like I say "Judge Thornberry" except when we're just at dinner together or something because I feel that's the respect they deserve because of their position.

B: So this really bothered Kellam to see--

Gideon -- I -- 28

G: Well, see people not giving his office its proper respect. And you could see him, barely, sort of cringe when someone would go up and say, "Lyndon this" or "Lyndon that."

B: Do you think it bothered LBJ?

G: Yes, I do.

B: Do you?

G: I do. I think he didn't like it either.

B: You probably didn't have too much contact with Johnson during the presidential years because, of course, he was devoted to his work, and any work that--

G: That's right. No I really didn't.

B: Did you ever get to go to the White House?

G: I went to a state dinner when he was vice president, but, you know, I don't believe I did go to the White House while--

B: While he was president?

G: --while he was president.

B: You said you got to meet President Kennedy after the elections?

G: Yes. At the Ranch.

B: At the LBJ Ranch. Do you have any impressions of him? I know you weren't probably around him--

G: Yes. Well, of course, I was just there for a dinner party with all the other politicians of this area. Well, I just thought he was a good-looking, charming young man. (Laughter)

B: Like a lot of people did.

G: That's right! Like a lot of women.

Gideon -- I -- 29

B: How did Johnson feel about Kennedy? Did you have any sense of that?

G: No. I think that most people in Texas really take a dim view of the Kennedys *per se*, but I never heard President Johnson say anything direct about President Kennedy.

President Johnson loved to give gifts, and he loved to get them. I recall one Christmas that he gave several of us who were with them a lot--I don't know whether it was Dalton pant suits or some name brand. I know I'm still wearing mine.

B: Really?

G: Yes, it was a wool pant suit, and he really did just love to give things.

B: Did he actually go--?

G: One thing that I treasure is one of the silver cups--some jeweler makes a limited number for the presidents each year. But he just really got a kick out of shopping.

B: Did he actually go and pick these things out?

G: Yes.

B: You'd think he wouldn't have time.

G: Yes, but I think he did. Well, this was in--this case I'm talking about now was after the presidential years, and he did have time. Yes, and he did the shopping himself, or a good part of it.

B: Well, he liked to take care of details, and I guess that's--

G: He did. I'll tell you something about him that I admired. The people who worked for him were dedicated people, and, as I told you, I would not myself have liked to work for Senator Johnson, but I observed, too, how good he was to people, for instance, at the Ranch. He tried to locate people in jobs so--for instance, in the case of James Davis, so

Gideon -- I -- 30

he could continue his benefits of federal employment. He got people jobs when he could with the National Park Service, and he did try to--oh, he and Mrs. Johnson bought houses for people, for employees.

B: Is that right?

G: Oh, yes. Well, I know of two or three occasions when they'd buy mobile homes or--and furnish the property for them to put them on. He was very generous.

B: He just liked to do favors?

G: For the people who had worked for him, and I just always admired him for that. Now, by the same token, he was hard on them, but also, I do think--I am thinking of several specific instances when he really did do things for people that had worked [for] him that were--

B: Do you think that sometimes when he was particularly hard on one of his employees--do you think that his conscience would bother him a little bit [and] he would try to make up, or do you think that he just got--?

G: No. I don't think it was that at all. In fact, no, I don't think his conscience bothered him--(Laughter)--about that. I just think that he did this because--not because his conscience bothered him but because the people had been good employees and because he wanted to see that they had something later on.

B: So he--you don't think he connected those two things, that he was--?

G: No, I really don't.

B: Okay.

(Interruption)

Gideon -- I -- 31

G: Well, I think they called--I didn't think I would ever forget that dog's name, but I believe it was Yupi [Yuki].

B: Yupi. Seems like you couldn't make that up.

G: He was crazy about that dog, and he was around a lot.

B: Was that a beagle like he'd had earlier or was it a different kind of dog?

G: No, actually, I don't really know. I just always considered it a sort of Heinz 57.

B: Is that right?

G: It was not a beagle.

B: Was it a big dog?

G: No, not too large. Just--

B: Medium?

G: --a medium-sized dog, and--but the President really liked that dog.

B: Is that right?

G: I'm not sure whether Yupi died before the President did. I believe he did, but Yupi was around.

B: Was it his constant companion?

G: Well, not constant, but a good bit. He liked that dog. He didn't pull its ears as I recall.

(Laughter)

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I

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