INTERVIEWEE: ELIZABETH GOLDSCHMIDT (Tape #1)

INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE

PLACE: Mrs. Goldschmidt's home in New York City

November 6, 1974

MG: Let's start from the beginning and the first time you met Lyndon Johnson.

EG: Well, I met him in a very characteristic way. In 1935, I was going to Texas to meet my in-laws, whom I had not met, and on our way we stopped in every capital city to see the WPA people and others, transient people that I was working with. So we stopped in Austin. The National Youth Administration office was upstairs over the other office, and pretty soon word came to me that Lyndon Johnson, who was then the NYA director, had heard I was there and had heard that I was Aubrey Williams' assistant and wanted to see me. I said all right. I went up the stairs, and he met me at the head of the stairs. In one hand he had a box of Texas pecan chewy candy, and in the other hand he had a list of questions that he hadn't got answers to from Washington. So he gave me the candy, greeted me, and then he said, and this was very typical of Johnson, "I want you to get on the telephone to Aubrey Williams," who was the head of the NYA, " and get me answers to all these questions." So I did, and that was the first

time I ever saw him.

MG: Do you remember the nature of the questions?

EG: Oh, I couldn't now. They were all kinds of administrative [questions]. He was considered one of our really better state NYA directors. He was very energetic, of course, and also very imaginative about how he put these young people to work. So it was really the NYA that started the program in Texas of roadside picnic places, and he did a lot of construction. Jesse Kellam was with him in those days, and Jesse would be the person who really knows a lot about the NYA in Texas. My connection with it was rather fleeting. I really don't remember very much about it, except I have a very clear recollection of this very aggressive and energetic young man, and I did what he asked. I guess I got him answers to most of his questions. Of course, later, in Washington, we got to know him quite well, but I think he always had a certain respect for me going all the way back to the NYA days.

MG: After meeting you, did he ever call you up while he was State Director?

EG: He probably did, but I don't remember it. Actually, later on, I did more with the NYA, but in those days I didn't do it. I was really on other things. He just took advantage of my presence there to get what he wanted. When you asked me the nature of his questions, they were all legitimate, in-the-course-of-business questions. He

wasn't asking any special favors or anything, he just wanted to get on with his job. My memories of him are rather limited in that period, except that we all thought that he ran one of the really imaginative programs. He certainly was very dedicated to it. In fact, I think when he became President that some of the things that he did in the poverty program with the Job Corps and so forth were very much influenced by his experience as NYA Director and his very strong commitment to it.

Then when he came to Washington as congressman, he was our chief helper in the Congress. I might come to that later. I had nothing to do with his campaign. Of course, we were all interested in it. It was principally important because he was the first person to campaign in support of Roosevelt's court plan, and Roosevelt therefore took a special interest in him. This was the beginning of a rather close relationship. And of course, Johnson was very much influenced by Roosevelt in every kind of way, even in his manner of speaking when he became President. It was very clear to people who had known him over a period of time. I don't think he was consciously mimicking. I think he just had absorbed so much of Roosevelt.

MG: Can you give us an example?

EG: No, I can't because it would be a matter of manner. Any one of his early speeches to Congress would reflect this, and I think that everybody

who lived through that period recognized that he had been very much influenced by Roosevelt.

MG: Can you recall if Aubrey Williams or anyone else in the administration tried to dissuade him from running because of the job that he was doing as State Director?

EG: I can't recall, but I would not think so, because it was so important to us--as I'll come to when we get to the Congress--to have a friendly spokesman and interpreter in the Congress that I think that would have outweighed any other thought. I could be wrong on that. After all, it was how many years ago, and my memory isn't that sharp on detail. But it didn't impress itself on me.

MG: I guess the next phase was the congressional phase.

EG: Yes. When he came to Congress, we had two lines of communication with him. I had really known him first because of my NYA connection and that continued when he went to Congress. I'll speak of that in a moment. Then my husband was Director of the Power Division, and the Lower Colorado River Authority was the primary concern of that congressional district. So he began having continuing associations with Johnson, discussions about problems relating to that. But at the same time that that went on between them, I had a continuing relationship with him [Johnson] on matters relating to the NYA. The NYA was really a subsidiary or a part of the WPA. So Congressman Johnson became one of our main reliances. We had a very peculiar

situation in that we never had a real authorization bill. We went from appropriation to appropriation. We never had a full year's appropriation for the WPA-NYA. We would go three months, four months, and then we'd have to go back and try to get more money. I became, over the course of my life, a very experienced lobbyist. I'm known for that, and a great deal of what I learned about it, I learned from Lyndon Johnson in those days. He was very dedicated to the NYA and also to the WPA. They went together. You couldn't separate the two. He would help us in a variety of ways and advise us in other ways. Of course, he had been there, as you know, as Kleberg's aide, and he obviously had a real feel for parliamentary procedure and was a past master at it. He acquired that skill, I would say, very early on. One hears more discussion about him as Majority Leader in the Senate, but even as a young congressman, he was very, very astute. He was very clever about understanding how you created an atmosphere of support even before you got to the point of counting votes. So when we had something coming up, we would prepare very short speeches. He was a great believer in one- and two-minute speeches. Well of course, the House procedure lent itself to that, so we would prepare speeches for rural congressmen, urban congressmen with this kind of problem, and then he would help allocate them out appropriately. So much has gone on

in my life and in his life since that time that I really can't elaborate on that. But he was a parliamentary wizard. For instance, all decisions about the WPA-NYA were taken initially in the Committee of the Whole House because they were part of an appropriation bill. One of the things that Johnson could do with the proper kind of backup support was to reverse the decisions of the Committee of the Whole, which is really quite difficult to do, as you know. You go out of the Committee of the Whole, and then the House sitting as the House has the power to review any decisions. I forget the details of how it works, but I think you have to have two-thirds to review a decision. We had many, many occasions when we were able to muster enough votes between the time we went out of the Committee of the Whole and into the regular House procedure.

MG: Was he your principal liaison in the Congress, or were there other people perhaps more senior than he?

EG: He certainly was for the NYA, because he had been closer to it. I noticed, incidentally, in reading today's paper that Carey, our new governor, was an NYA boy, got through college on the NYA. After a certain amount of time, we had a great many members of Congress who had had NYA help in high school and college. But at that time, I would say he was by all odds our principal supporter. The WPA, of course, was enormously important. We had three to four million people employed on the WPA, and it was controversial, but it was

of crucial importance in any areas where there was unemployment. So the organization of the whole WPA lobby, if you want to call it that, was quite a complex thing. We used every device that is used, mainly by getting the crucial back-home people to call their congressmen and senators.

MG: Did LBJ's support ever include discussing with, say, Aubrey Williams possible changes in the programs or something in order to make them more acceptable to the Congress? Did he have a policy-making input?

EG: I would think it was quite possible, but I don't remember any such [thing]. Frankly, it's sort of hazy in my mind at this point. All I remember was that we felt very, very strongly that people were going to eat or starve depending on how astute and how hard-working we were in mobilizing support for those appropriations, so we worked terribly hard. Lyndon Johnson was a major source of advice and strategy when there were issues, and probably there were times, but without a lot of research, I could not reconstruct them. There were many issues on WPA, and I daresay he had some part in those, but I don't remember.

MG: How would you characterize his relations with Aubrey Williams?

EG: Johnson, particularly as a young man, though I think it was really true throughout his life, was very much of a hero worshiper. He had people that he looked up to and depended on. Of course, the chief one was Roosevelt, but Aubrey Williams was one such. Aubrey himself

was an interesting personality. He had a sort of homegrown quality. He sometimes was compared to Lincoln. He had the same kind of gaunt face. He was very much a country boy, or I guess we would now characterize it as a populist, though I don't think that Aubrey was politically analytical and knew he was a populist. But of course, Johnson to me is pure populist, and Aubrey Williams fell into that category. Williams was the son of an Alabama sharecropper who was sent to college by the parish--Maryville College in Tennessee, a small college. A parish in, I think, the Baptist church, sent him to Maryville with a view to his becoming the pastor of the church. Well the war intervened, and he went to Europe. Somewhere along the way, he lost his zeal to be a Baptist minister, so he became more of what I guess he would have described himself as a social worker. But Aubrey was very down to earth and very practical, and Johnson really, I would say, in his early youth revered Aubrey. He [Johnson] was always very loyal to the people that he liked, even when they did things that were embarrassing to him, because Aubrey sometimes spoke without thinking and was considered a radical, though he was a radical in the populist tradition, not an imported radical. But no matter what he did, Johnson would stand by him. The same way with Helen Douglas. When he was describing why he ran for the

vice-presidency and said he did it because he didn't like what Nixon did to Helen, he said, "Now Helen was an emotional girl, and she often said and did things that I didn't approve of. But she was basically our kind of a person, and I wasn't going to stand for having her attacked as she was attacked by Nixon." And he felt the same way about Aubrey, I think. Aubrey was a very charismatic person. He was a terrible administrator in many ways. Later I became his personal assistant, and it was really a job almost of administrative nursemaiding. You had to watch him every minute to be sure he didn't make some gross error. But he had this charismatic quality that inspired the people who worked for him, and I'm sure he was an inspirational figure to Johnson. There were many others. I think when you interviewed my husband, he talked about Alvin Wirtz, who was such a figure, and later Sam Rayburn, of course.

MG: Is there anything else with regard to Johnson in the NYA? Perhaps one thing you might do is explain briefly the administrative structure of the NYA under Aubrey Williams. You were his assistant?

EG: In the early part of my association with Aubrey Williams, I worked very little on the NYA. I worked first on the transient program and then on the WPA and only later on the NYA. So I had a peripheral association with the NYA. It was a federally administered program and each state had an NYA director. There was an ambiguous

relationship, very ambiguous, between the NYA organization in a state and the WPA organization in a state. Since they were separately financed, since the NYA had its own financing and had its own policies and procedures, they tended to operate fairly independently of the WPA, and they looked primarily to Washington for their direction. But that was a somewhat ambiguous relationship. On the whole, I think that the NYA thought of itself as being more idealistic, further removed from political considerations, fairly associated with the educational world because of operating in colleges and high schools, and probably tended to consider the WPA a little rough and ready by comparison. A good many of the NYA people came out of education. They had an educational, philosophical base, because while the purpose of the NYA under the WPA aegis was to permit young people to earn money on work projects comparable but different from the WPA, it also had a very strong educational theory which you hear even now. It comes along every so often, and that is it's good for the educational process for students to have work experience so that the interrelationship between earning money, the educational value of work experience, and the desire to help young people get through college were all intermingled in a rather high-minded, philosophical mix.

MG: Did the state directors report directly to Aubrey Williams, or didn't he have an assistant?

EG: Yes, he had a deputy. In the later years, it was a man named Dillard Lasseter, but I can't remember who it was earlier.

MG: I'm trying to think of the name myself.

EG: At one time, I think John Corson was an assistant, but that was a rather short period. I'm sorry. I can't reconstruct the NYA in its early days. My recollection of Johnson is primarily because he was so influential in my education about the parliamentary process.

MG: Well let's talk about Johnson the congressmen. Who did he lean on? Where did he get his apprenticeship as a congressman?

EG: His political apprenticeship he got first, I think, from Alvin Wirtz, but as soon as he got into the Congress, certainly Sam Rayburn was his mentor. Later on when Johnson was President, there was a tendency to act as if Sam Rayburn were his only political mentor. But I would say that in his early period, Alvin Wirtz was his first political mentor.

MG: What did Lyndon Johnson represent to Alvin Wirtz?

EG: Alvin, of course, was much older. He, too, belonged to this populist tradition. I remember arguing with Alvin once about the right to bear arms. I, not being a Texan, didn't have such a strong feeling. He would go on and on. He'd say, "They can go and blow out our transformers as they do . . ." On the Lower Colorado River Authority, one of the favorite games of the young in those days was

to take a gun and shoot out the transformers. But he said, "The right to bear arms in the most fundamental right of the American people." He really had a frontiersman's view of political organization, and I think it was in part he that instilled that same populist tradition or belief in Johnson. Oh, of course, Johnson's father and his grandfather, I believe, were members of the state legislature, so he had it in his own family, too. But certainly that was what Wirtz stood for.

MG: I guess Wirtz has often been credited as being the father of the development of the Colorado River.

EG: Well, he was very influential. Actually, his role was counsel--he was attorney for them--but I think he was enormously dedicated to it. And then Johnson, too, became a very strong advocate of public power. It's a little off my subject, but the heart of the populist idea was that the political health resided in the people, and that the centers of economic power were threats. Wall Street. In the case of Wirtz and later of Johnson, that got translated into the big power companies. This is all on my husband's tape. So they were strong advocates of public power and the REA-type of cooperative, and very mistrustful of the big power empires.

MG: Did Wirtz really believe this?

EG: Oh, yes, I'm sure he believed in it. I think it was deeply ingrained

in his whole psyche.

MG: Did he believe it justifiably? Did the power companies behave as Wirtz envisioned them as behaving?

EG: Well, this is my husband's department, but they did. They fought in every way that they could to restrict public power. The big issue was to buy it at the bus bar. They didn't mind if the government built the dams and the generators, but they wanted to control the distribution. So the big issue was who was going to distribute that power. There were laws that gave the municipalities and the REA preference standing. This was a continual battle in that period, and Johnson was very much involved in that.

MG: Perhaps a lot of this will be answered by your husband's questions, so I'll ask more or less from your perspective, what did you witness with regard to the relationship between Johnson and Wirtz? Can you recall any episodes?

EG: No, I can't. I mean, it was always a very close one, very friendly one.

MG: How do you remember Wirtz?

EG: Oh, as a very engaging, friendly character who was constantly in our house, a very charming Texan of the old school but a very hard battler. So they were always--to say they were plotting makes it sound conspiratorial. There was nothing conspiratorial about it.

It was just one of those good, solid confrontations that goes on. There was never any disagreement among [them]. I would add Abe Fortas to the group, because first he was director of the Power Division and then he was undersecretary. They were all in total agreement on what their objective was: to get cheap power to the consumer, and from their point of view, this meant either public municipal distribution or rural electric cooperative distribution. But I'm not really the one to ask about this, because I simply lived with it. They were constantly in our house or we were in somebody else's house, and this was the constant subject of discussion, but it wasn't my bag.

MG: Was Wirtz sort of a father figure to Johnson?

EG: I think all these people were. This psychoanalysis is very speculative. And I really don't know anything about Johnson's relationship to either his mother or his father, but I think he was always seeking substitute father figures and, to some extent, substitute mother figures. Helen Douglas and I have often talked [about this]. I'm not much older than he, so I wasn't really a mother figure, but he had certain women whose respect he wanted, and Helen was certainly one of them. And then by a sort of trickle down theory, having established this relationship, say, with Roosevelt, it carried over to all of Roosevelt's most immediate helpers. For

instance, Johnson was very devoted to Ben Cohen, though philosophically, especially in later years, people might have thought they were rather far apart. And Tom Corcoran, who was a little bit more--you could say either pragmatic or opportunistic, whichever word you preferred. But Ben was the real philosopher of the pair, and I think that Johnson depended very heavily, in the period when he was in Congress and they were around the White House, on these presidential helpers. And on Abe. Of course, later he became very dependent on Abe Fortas.

MG: One more question on Wirtz. Did Johnson address Wirtz as he would, say, later Richard Russell or someone that he respected and viewed as someone on up the pecking order?

EG: Yes, I think that would be fair to say he did. I think he was extremely respectful to Wirtz. He would value the judgement of my husband or Abe Fortas or many of these other people, but he wouldn't defer to them in the same way that he deferred to Wirtz.

MG: Did he generally take Wirtz' advice?

EG: Well, I assume that he did. Although Alvin Wirtz had been in the state Senate in Texas, and he was a very shrewd politician, I think he would not have ventured to tell Johnson what to do, say, about the House in the way that Sam Rayburn might have, because

Sam Rayburn knew the House backward and forward, and Wirtz did not. So I think that on political questions, when it was a question of running for office, probably Wirtz was very influential, and on all matters relating to the Lower Colorado River Authority, he would have been very influential.

MG: Then in Johnson's career in Congress, I guess we go from Wirtz to Rayburn. Rayburn assumes the role of a mentor.

EG: Yes, he certainly did.

MG: Can you tell us anything about that relationship?

EG: No, I really cannot. That's where you would get someone like Helen Douglas, and so forth. All I know is that it was generally understood. Everything that you read, or just look at the pictures in their house or in the ranch or anything you touch. Sam Rayburn was a major figure in Johnson's political [life], not only when he was in the House, but also when he got into the Senate and with his whole political career. The only point I would make as between Wirtz and Rayburn is that Wirtz was an earlier influence and probably overshadowed by Rayburn later on.

MG: What about Lyndon Johnson during this period in electoral politics. Were you privy to any of the campaigns, the'41 campaign for the Senate, which he lost?

EG: Not really, no.

MG: Is there any area of legislation other than those mentioned that you think you are in a position to talk about?

EG: I can't recall any. There are many people who could answer that, but I cannot. I mean Ben Cohen, Tom Corcoran, Abe Fortas, Jim Rowe, all the people who were influential in the Roosevelt days. My focus was rather narrow in those days, and I'm sure he had a role to play, because he was one of the people that the White House depended on. They must have used him in many fights, but I don't know about it.

MG: Would Johnson, while he was a congressman, come over to your house?

EG: Oh, yes.

MG: Can you recall it?

EG: We were back and forth all the time, much more when he was in the House than when he was in the Senate. Well, there were many occasions. One thing that happened which is probably the least important is that when he would have people of influence or affluence up from Texas, like the Brown brothers, oil men and so forth, he would take them out in the evening. We were always summoned to help entertain the visiting firemen.

MG. Where would he take them?

EG: Oh, we would go to the Statler after the Statler was built, and before

that, we went to--oh Lord, they've changed the name of it now so that I can't remember--the big place up by the park. Usually to a hotel, all very respectable. Not like Wilbur Mills.

MG: I remember when we talked several years ago, you and your husband mentioned the Christmas gifts that you had received from him.

EG: Oh yes, that was very funny. He had a Texas sort of expansiveness and generosity, and one year he had a carload or part of a carload of turkeys from Cuero, Texas, which is a great turkey center, I understand. Everybody in our acquaintance got a turkey. They were forty-pound turkeys, and we couldn't cook them in our stove. We prepared them, then we took them around to a restaurant. Then of course, we couldn't make a dent in a forty-pound turkey, and all our friends had forty-pound turkeys, so this was kind of a joke. One man whom we knew well, John Carmody--I forget what his job was at that time; he later became head of the Coal Commission, or Coal something--he refused to accept one of these Johnson turkeys on the grounds that it was a bribe, and that infuriated Johnson. He never could say a good word for that man afterward, and he would say, "Imagine! That he could think that I think that I could buy his support with a turkey!" Very disgusted.

I remember also going to their house when their girls were very small children. Bird had bought the radio station by that time. She took money that she inherited from her father, I think, and bought

this radio station. And then Jesse Kellam, who was in the NYA picture and I think became NYA director after Johnson went to Congress, took over the station. I remember her sitting there at their dining room table with all the books of the station laid out in front of her. She really worked very hard at running that station, and she really did it, too. I think later on, as the property grew and they acquired TV and so forth, I think it's an interesting question how much of the management of that property he took over and how much she retained. In the early days, my recollection of it is that she really ran that station. She was very hard-working at it and a very astute businesswoman. Later, when the whole issue about those stations became controversial, I remember talking with Carol Agger, Abe Fortas's wife, who was attorney on the various arrangements that Johnson made when he became President, for trusteeship and so forth. Her comment was that anybody who had bought that station at the time that Lady Bird bought it would have seen it grow fantastically in value just because of the rate of growth of the industry. But I myself have no direct knowledge of it. It was just in the nature of the industry that people who got in on the ground floor made an enormous amount of money.

MG: Did LBJ seem interested in that station in those days?

EG: My recollection of the early days was that he did not, that he regarded it as kind of, not a plaything exactly, but it was certainly Bird's thing. He would perhaps tease her about it. Then of course, the war came, and he joined the Navy. I don't recall whether he had been a reserve officer or whether he just up and joined, but anyway, he went out to the Pacific. I did have one thing that happened, but I'm having a very hard time remembering the details. I think that my husband remembers better than I do. He was at our house, and he was talking about some labor problem relating to the war. I happened to know a man who had been studying this same problem in England, and I put him in touch with him. That is one occasion I remember his being at our house during the war period. But there was a group of us who were very close friends. We were very good friends of the Fortases and later on Jebby Davidson and his wife, and Wirtz when he was in Washington, because he later became Undersecretary of the Interior. We were constantly back and forth. Actually, when Lyndon went to the Senate, our relationship was much less. . .

MG: Frequent?

EG: Yes. Not for any reason, I think, just because he was very preoccupied.

MG: Can you recall having any more of a professional involvement

with him during the Senate years?

EG: Yes, I did. I can't speak for my husband. Well, the one incident that I remember most vividly was in 1955, I think, and '56. Those of us interested in Social Security were trying to get disability insurance added to the bill. He was then Majority Leader, and he was very close to Senator Kerr. Senator Kerr was very much influenced by the AMA in Oklahoma. The House had added disability insurance to the bill, but when it came out of the Senate Finance Committee, owing to the opposition of Senator Kerr who was very, very influential, it had been dropped in the Senate bill. I wrote a memorandum at that time to Johnson--I sent it to Jim Rowe, who worked for him at that time--not on the advantages to the disabled of getting Social Security but on the political implications of getting Disability. Because Eisenhower had at first been opposed to Social Security and then later on, he became very supportive of it. So there were no issues on which there was a clear Democratic-Republican division other than disability insurance. I wrote a memorandum and sent it to him on these political implications. Never heard another word, but when the bill came up on the floor--oh, I of course said that he would have to get Kerr's agreement, that Kerr was the person who had to be persuaded. When the bill came up on the floor, to everybody's astonishment Senator Kerr

led the fight to reinstate disability insurance on the floor. It was passed, it did go into the law, and Kerr was the keynote speaker at the Democratic Convention. He started out his speech with this great achievement of the Democrats of getting disability insurance. But I never really knew how it came about, and quite some time later, my husband saw Walter Jenkins. He asked how I was. Tex said, "Well, she was very, very pleased with the way that disability insurance thing came out." Walter was very surprised, and he said, "You mean she didn't know that it was her memorandum that turned the trick?" It was one of the very few cases in my experience where one thing that I did bore a very direct, identifiable result. Usually you cast your bread on the waters, and you don't really know.

MG: So LBJ persuaded Senator Kerr.

EG: Yes. He was persuaded by my arguments, and they in turn were persuasive with Kerr, and it went through. That's the only specific thing. Oh, I did do another thing. At one point, I wrote him a letter because Social Security was an issue, I don't remember which year it was, and I urged him to rely on the advice of Wilbur Cohen. Well, he had never known Wilbur Cohen before that. Of course later on, he appointed Wilbur as Secretary of HEW. But he always associated Wilbur Cohen with me, and I can tell you some funny stories about that when we get there. But it was during the time when he was

Majority Leader that I urged him to take advice from Wilbur on Social Security. There were other occasions of communication, often through Jim Rowe, because Jim was, as you know--I don't know what they called him, Secretary to the Majority or Staff Director of the Majority in the Senate.

MG: Did you work with him?

EG: With Jim?

MG: Yes.

EG: There may have been occasions, but the only one I can remember specifically is this thing on disability insurance. I knew Jim, of course.

MG: You weren't employed by him.

EG: Oh, no, no. In that period, I had by that time left the government and I worked from 1940 to 1950 for the American Public Welfare Association, which was the organization of state and local public welfare people. But I became nominal, I'd say, leader of the Social Security lobby in that period because, at least in the beginning, the AF of L and the CIO were separate organizations. Green would not permit the AF of L men to sit down with the CIO (then) woman on Social Security unless a third party brought them together. So I became that third party. We had a very closely-knit group of people who worked on Social Security during that period.

MG: Can you tell us anything about Johnson's relationship with Senator Russell?

EG: No, I really had no part in that. All I know is that Bird often spoke of Senator Russell as being one of their closest friends and a person that Johnson relied on most heavily. They had some differences of opinion somewhere along the line. I don't remember what they were. There was a very close tie there, but I would not have been in a position to observe it.

MG: Do you think that LBJ during this period was as liberal as he really wanted to be?

EG: No. No. Of course, he was a very pragmatic person. I do remember one thing he said, now that you bring it to my mind, in the period when he was in the House. We had a group at our house, Abe Fortas and I really don't remember who all was there, and they were trying to persuade Johnson to do something that they wanted done. Finally he got very angry, and he said, "You New Dealers make me sick, because where would you be if you could not get people like me elected to Congress?" That was a very characteristic thing for him to say. He was always conscious of the Texas electorate breathing down his neck. I have a poor sense of chronology, so I slip up on time somehow, but at one point, he approached Tex and Tex in turn involved Ben Cohen in trying to develop a middle of the road civil rights bill. It had to do with voting rights, because Johnson always felt very strongly that the key to the emancipation or involvement of the blacks would

be the vote. He said, "You'll see the day when Senator Eastland is out begging them to vote for him." He was full of rather shrewd observations of that kind. He wanted Tex to sound out some of the civil rights organizations as to how they would view this bill. I did not get involved in that, but that was one of the few cases that I can recall where he tried to take the initiative on something that would have been considered liberal for a Texan. He did have a bill, but I can't remember the details of it.

When he was Vice President, he was invited to talk to the National Urban League, and that was the first overture that any one of the civil rights groups had made to him. He called Tex up at the time, and he said, "Who the hell is this fellow Whitney Young?" And Tex said, " Well, Wickie knows him, but I don't." I did know him, and I told him about the Urban League. Well later on when he became President, he relied very heavily on Whitney Young and the Urban League, and I think it was the direct result of the fact that they had made overtures to him earlier.

I simply have to say that, except for these rather episodic things, during the period that he was in the Senate and during the period, really, when he was Vice President, we did not have very much contact with either of the Johnsons, and it was not for any reason that I know of. There was no falling out. We were reluctant to approach him unless

we had some strong reason for doing so. So it was really only when he became President that we moved back into a situation of, well, not intimacy but continuing contact. Of course, when he became President, one of the people that he relied on very heavily was Abe Fortas. He quickly turned to Abe on all kinds of things. He needed his legal advice, in the first place, on how to handle his holdings, his property and so forth. But Abe was a principal adviser on all kinds of things. During the period within, I would say, a week after the assassination, something came up about foreign aid, I think, and Abe said, "Well, you really should get hold of Tex Goldschmidt." So they called us up and said would we come down and have dinner at The Elms. They hadn't yet moved into the White House. We went down there for Sunday supper and stayed, I guess, with the Fortases. Then Tex went to the White House, and we have a picture of him with Johnson in the Oval Office with it being totally bare, which shows how early on it was. But you would have to get the details on that from him.

MG: Was this the same night as that dinner at The Elms?

EG: It would have been the next day, I think.

MG: Can you remember any more specifics about that dinner?

EG: I was sitting by the President, as by then he was. The only thing that I remember was something that came up and that I spoke about

on the enforcement of the desegregation of the Court. At that time, Whitney Young and a number of people were pressing very hard to put into the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as they did, and into all Federal grants and aids some provision that they would be conditioned on a non-segregated or an integrated administration. I said that there was a case in the courts that would probably make it unnecessary for the Congress to take that step. It was the case of a North Carolina hospital--I can't remember the name of the case now--where the court did eventually rule. It was one of the early and, to my mind, very influential Supreme Court decisions. Well, it was originally a Circuit Court [decision], and then the Supreme Court refused to review it, so they confirmed it. [The court ruled] that any hospital that received tax money, not even Federal money, would have to operate under the Supreme Court rulings on an integrated basis. Well, Johnson had an amazing capacity for absorbing information and retaining what he had absorbed. He was like a sponge. He would fix his eye across the room as if he were just being mesmerized, and he'd say, "Tell me more. Tell me more." So I explained the case and explained why that would really take the place of any Federal [congressional action]. Finally he said to me, "Will you write that down for me?" So when I went away, I wrote up a memorandum for him on that case. That's the only specific thing

that I remember.

Oh, he talked a little bit about the differences between Kennedy and himself. He was very sensitive about the Kennedy's silver spoon background and very uneasy, I think, about his own simpler origins. Though actually I think he exaggerated that since, as I say, his father and his grandfather were both in the legislature. But they went through very hard times, and he was very much affected by their poverty.

MG: Did he feel at that early date, do you think, that he was really prepared to assume the presidency? Did he seem enthusiastic about being President?

Just a minute. Let me turn this tape over.

(End of Tape #1. Interview continued on Tape #2)

Interview continued from Tape #1

INTERVIEWEE: ELIZABETH GOLDSCHMIDT (Tape 2 of 2)

INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE

PLACE: Mrs. Goldschmidt's home in New York City

November 6, 1974

[Question asked by MG at the end of Tape #1: Did he feel at that early date, do you think, that he was really prepared to assume the presidency? Did he seem enthusiastic about being President?]

EG: He was very preoccupied, very absorbed by the problems of the presidency. I suppose you could call that being enthusiastic. He was, I think, very conscious that he had a dual problem, and that was that he felt obligated to carry on Kennedy's programs and policies. And at the same time he was very conscious of the fact that he had to establish his own role because he would have to run again in less than two years. I remember that evening he did say one funny thing. He was talking about this problem, and he said, "After all, I only have this job for eighteen months!" or whatever it was, which struck me as a very funny way to describe the presidency. He was groping, I think, for ways in which he could put his own stamp on his administration without departing from the Kennedy program.

Later on, I got quite involved on another front. He had Tex come down several times, well not several, but he asked Tex to prepare material for him and to study the whole problem of foreign

aid. Tex got permission from the United Nations to do that, and he worked on that. At more or less the same time, when Johnson was groping for something that could be peculiarly his, he came upon this idea of a poverty program. Before Kennedy died, he had had a small group working on a poverty message. It was really the idea of his brother Robert, and they were really at sort of a standstill in the Congress. He was trying to think how he could give a new look to some things that weren't going very far, like the Job Corps. I can't remember what the various components of it were. Bobby Kennedy had had in the Justice Department a juvenile delinquency program which, together with Ford Foundation money, had been trying out a kind of plan of inner-city organization geared to juvenile delinquency. They had about four cities where they tried this. One of them was New York, where they set up Mobilization for Youth. Another one was Syracuse. I can't remember precisely--New Haven, I think, Baltimore. I'm not sure. Robert Kennedy had said, "If this idea of self-organization in the inner city is good for juvenile delinquency, why don't we try it out on a larger scale for dealing with poverty?" So they had a little tiny idea of a program for trying this out, and at the time that Johnson became President, they had this small task force, or whatever they called them in those days, that was working on trying to put together a poverty message.

What later became the Community Action Program, at that time they were talking about trying it in fourteen places, seven urban and seven rural. It was the very early beginnings of an idea. Well, when Johnson, reviewing the various things that were on the legislative stove, as it were, being prepared for the new Congress came on this, he seized upon it as being something that would be appropriate for him to build up. He started to expand it into what later became the war on poverty, and he involved me in that. I had rather different ideas. I didn't think this community action idea was going to work. Considerably later, Johnson agreed that I had been right. He was not happy with it. But he got Sargent Shriver into it, and they had a group working on it. I was really off on the side. I was working with one of the legislative men in the White House. I can't think of his name. And I worked with Wilbur Cohen on that. Eventually I become very worried about the poverty program as it took shape. I wrote a memorandum on why I thought it wouldn't work, and I took it to Walter Jenkins. Jenkins took it to the President, and he said, "Well, tell Sargent Shriver that I want him to talk to her." So I went to see Shriver, but he really gave me very short shrift and the thing went ahead anyway. I remember Abe Fortas saying that Johnson saw the poverty program as being a kind of reincarnation of the early days of the New Deal, that

he saw it as if it were something like the NYA, and so forth. I felt that this was a very poor parallel. I still do, though I later came to think the poverty program, particularly the Community Action, had served its purpose. Although, I always thought that it was terrible irony that this man Johnson, who wanted so much to be the President of all the people--that was his constant, reiterated phrase, presided over two of the most devisive things we've ever had in our government. One was the war in Vietnam and the other was the poverty program. The poverty program was constructed to be devisive, at least the Community Action part of it. One time Abe Fortas couldn't understand why I was concerned about it, and he said, "If you had to say in two words what you think is wrong with the poverty program, what would you say?" I thought about it a little bit, and I said, "Intrinsically divisive." But as I say, I later came to see some value in that, but politically I think it was murder. I think it was very damaging to Johnson politically.

MG: Did Johnson see this factor in advance, do you think?

EG: No, I don't think he did. I think later on he came to see. In fact, Abe told me that he had said to him, "Abe, Wicky was right on that." But you know, you set up a big task force, a working group of Cabinet people, sub-Cabinet people, and they put together a program. They naturally put their best arguments forward, and it's not surprising if somebody of no significance in the government comes along and

raises some questions on it, that the official group is going to prevail. So I never really felt very bad about it.

MG: It would seem to me that just by the very design of, say, the Community Action Program that the purpose was to give political clout to the low-income areas.

EG: Well I don't think Johnson understood that at all. I think he probably thought of it as a form of self-help, but I don't think he realized that he was creating a political instrument. I really don't think he did. The only discussions I had on this were at second hand. I had them with Walter Jenkins and with Abe and with Wilbur Cohen and other people.

MG: I might say from my own vantage point at the time, the Johnsonian administrators of the War on Poverty seemed to be much more enthusiastic about, say, community organization and making the people politically powerful than Nixon's administrative people did.

EG: There were a lot of cooks mixing into that broth, and they all had different ideas of what they were doing. Later on they came to quarreling with each other as to what this term participation [meant], and you remember Moynihan wrote a book called Maximum Feasible . . . what did he call it?

MG: . . . Misunderstanding.

EG: There were great differences of opinion as to what they were doing.

My quarrel with it was a very fundamental, philosophical difference. As I say, I later came to see that there was something to be said for the other point of view. Having worked during the whole New Deal period to build up certain institutions like the Social Security Act and so forth, I tended to think in terms of strengthening existing institutions. I think many other people, other New Dealers like Leon Keyserling and so forth, really saw the challenge in terms of how can we make our institutional structure solve these problems, whereas other people wanted to throw a new element into the picture and reconstruct the whole [program].

MG: Did you see the War on Poverty or, more specifically, the Community Action Program as bypassing the established political process or the local political channels and creating new ones?

EG: Well, it certainly did as it worked out, but if you're asking whether that was the intent, it was ambiguous it seems to me. I think if Johnson had known the way the Community Action Program would go, he probably would not have been for it. It was contrary to his temperament, but the idea of declaring a big war on poverty and ending [it] for all time, all the rhetoric of it appealed to him very much. In fact, I think he built the rhetoric up beyond that which had been planned by his advisors.

MG: The fact that he created an Executive Office of the President put,

say, OEO in this, and more or less put it under the protection of his own wing would seem to indicate that he had some foresight that it would be controversial. Do you recall anything here?

EG: I don't think that's why he did that. It may have eventually served a good purpose. I think he did it because he wanted it identified as his program. I have felt that he did two things to put his mark on his presidency as opposed to his inherited program. One was the War on Poverty and the other was his effort to enlist and appoint women. This is really speculation, so I shouldn't go on about it, but Kennedy had been very poor on the subject of women. It was a constant source of complaint with Mrs. Roosevelt and women leaders in the party that he hadn't appointed more women. So rather early in his administration, Johnson made a big point of seeking out women, appointing women to high places, and I think he figured--maybe not consciously; it may have been intuitive with him--that this was another place where he could make a political pitch that would distinguish him from Kennedy. But I think the poverty program served that purpose in his mind.

MG: Can you recall any other subsequent statements that he made about the program or his disappointment in the way it had turned out?

EG: No, I really can't. The only way I know that he was troubled by it was because Abe Fortas told me so. He never said anything to me.

I never discussed it with him at all. I mean, I was asked to work with various of his subordinates and I did, but I never talked to him about it.

Later on, I became very involved in a particular part of the poverty program, the Legal Services program, but that was not because of Johnson. That was because of other things that I had done. So I became a very staunch supporter of the Legal Services program, and I had a great deal of respect for Sargent Shriver. I thought he was a strong leader of his program and carried it through some very stormy weather. But it was bound to be unpopular with Congress and with all elected officials, because it not only bypassed them, but it threatened them.

MG: One question: can you recall the genesis of particular programs within the poverty program, such as Head Start. Who thought of Head Start?

EG: Some of them had been in the Kennedy program. The Job Corps had been. I don't recall about Vista. I'm merely stalling for time to try to think what the origin of Head Start was.

MG: I think Kennedy had envisioned a domestic Peace Corps.

EG: Yes, I think so, and the Peace Corps itself, of course, had been a Kennedy innovation. And I do know the history of the Community Action, which, as I say, really came out of a small program dealing

with juvenile delinquency and youth. But Head Start I really cannot say. I have it in my mind that when they began talking about a poverty program, there were some people, educators and child development people--Julius Richmond was one and there were some other people interested in child development--that sold the idea to the task force that if you could get hold of children before they went to school out of impoverished backgrounds, you could prepare them better for school. But I don't recall any such program having had an antecedent before the poverty program. I think it came about with the poverty program itself.

MG: I have read that, particularly in light of what happened to the War on Poverty and the OEO later, that it really had been President Johnson's plan to dismantle it as a structure itself and farm the component agencies out to existing departments. Is this true?

EG: One of my difficulties is that the program went through many stages and permutations, and I can't remember what happened in what sequence. I think at one time there was an idea that the office in the presidency would be a coordinating [body] riding herd and that all the programs would be administered in various departments of the government, a good bit of it, of course, in Labor. Willard Wirtz was one of the principal people who worked on it. Labor and HEW were the two main departments, I guess. But I think by the time the program

reached a legislative stage that that idea had been abandoned. One of the pieces of paper that I worked on, and Willard Wirtz was involved in it, too. The person I worked with--the name has finally come back to me--was Myer Feldman. He was doing a lot of negotiating around with various people on the poverty program. I think this was before Sargent Shriver had taken on the principal role. These were preliminary things. But I don't think I can be very helpful to you on that. I'm sure that there are histories that go through it step by step, and I can't do that.

MG: Your remarks on this have been helpful, I think. Well, shall we move to Medicare? I think this is where you were . . .

EG: Yes. I'm trying to think of the sequence and I cannot. I was appointed to a whole series of things by Johnson, simply because he knew me. And I do have a record of. . . . Could we stop for a minute? I have a chronology. . . .

(Break in recording)

For instance, Johnson appointed me as a delegate to the International Red Cross, an alternate. He was very strong for having people other than State Department people on all international negotiations, and the International Red Cross has government delegates and society delegates. When it came to the government delegates, to the great irritation of the State Department he decided that he wanted to appoint two women, one from a social welfare background and one

from a health background. So he appointed me, and Helen Taussig was the doctor, and we went to Vienna. But there's only one comment I'd make about that. This was one of the few international bodies at that time that had both communist and democratic countries. In fact, it had East Germany and West Germany; it had North Korea and South Korea, and the Russians were very active and all the Eastern European countries. So some way I got the message that he wanted to convey to the Russians that he felt on all these philanthropic things there should be more collaboration. So I went and conveyed that message to the Russian delegates, otherwise I wouldn't say that was very significant.

I'm really thinking of all the things I can tell you about the early days of the presidency, and I don't know when that came. At one time I got a call from Mrs. Johnson. This was very early in the administration. She wanted to go and talk in the South. She felt a very strong bond to the South, and she wanted to convey to the South that they were part of the Union as far as the Johnson family was concerned. So she asked me to try to find some kind of a welfare gathering that she could go to and speak that would be relatively non-controversial, and I did that for her. I can't remember now what gathering it was, but eventually I think the Secret Service or the Army or someone persuaded her that she had better not do

that, that she would run into civil rights demonstrations. So instead of that, she went to Huntsville. They felt that if she went to a Federal installation, they could protect her better from demonstrations. I had negotiations with her from time to time on various things. I got her to write messages and things to organizations. During the time that Johnson was President, I served on at least five advisory bodies on the subject of welfare. They weren't all presidential appointments. I'm trying to think what I can tell you that would be significant about him. One was a statutory body, the Advisory Council on Public Welfare. One was his own Task Force on Income Maintenance. This was during the period when he was running for the presidency. He set up a group of very secret task forces on all kinds of subjects. His idea was, I think, that they would map out the goals that he should be striving for in his second term, or in his first real term of his own. I was on the Task Force on Income Maintenance. I did not think that that was a very fruitful task force for this reason. I guess he met with us in the beginning, and he said, "Now I don't want you people worrying about what is feasible. I want you to set up the ideal program, and I will worry about the mechanics of how to get there." Well I don't think that's a very fruitful way to develop policy. I think you have to think about where you're at and how you get to where you're going. He had a

large group of those, and we were never supposed to tell anybody that we were on these task force groups. No reports were published.

MG: Did he personally admonish you to keep your own counsel on this thing?

EG: Yes. In fact, I think very few people really know much about them. I don't know how many he had, must have had about eight, I think, or maybe more.

MG: There were a lot.

EG: Maybe more than eight. I'm sure you run into them all the time.

MG: There were education task forces.

EG: Yes, that one. Then I was asked to be on the Heineman Commission, which was also a task force on income maintenance. I'm having trouble reconstructing this now. There was a bill for welfare that those of us in the business didn't like, and we wanted him to veto it. We put on a big campaign trying to get him to veto it, and he did not; he signed it. Then in order to placate those of us who had wanted him to veto it, he said, "I'll set up a task force," and this was the Heineman Commission. But he set it up at the very end of his incumbency, and the Commission didn't even report until after Nixon had become President, so it didn't have much influence. But I refused to go on that, because I was kind of mad. I said, "If the President wants to know what I think about welfare, he can look at the other six advisory bodies I've been on!" Which was considered very

improper, but I felt I had really done my stint on these advisory bodies.

Then he appointed me on the Advisory Commission on the Status of Women. Esther Peterson was really running it at that time. She wanted me on it, and he wanted me on it because he wanted somebody that he trusted not to be too far out. Of course at that time, we were very modest in our wishes with respect to women, because the new wave of feminism had not started. I don't really consider that terribly significant as far as he was concerned, but he did appoint me to it.

I'm trying to think of any part of my activity on Medicare. Oh, I can tell you a funny [story]. I was always involved in all Social Security legislation through my connections with the labor unions and the welfare organizations and with the people who were then in HEW, including the Social Security Commissioner, Bob Ball, Wilbur Cohen, Ellen Winston, a whole group of people there. So I didn't really need Johnson to involve me in that, but he always associated me with it. He used to say to Wilbur, "We've got to pass Medicare for Wicky." He always had it in his mind that somehow this was something that I wanted. It was kind of a joke. One very funny thing that happened--this is just an anecdote but it's a good one as far as Johnson's concerned. Wilbur Cohen was then

Assistant Secretary of HEW and in charge of legislation relations. One Saturday he was in his office. Oh well, before that a reporter from the Post was trying to make some news for Saturday, and he was picking up rumors that various Kennedy appointees were getting ready to leave. It happened to be a time when they were considering the question of salaries for top-level officials, and there was a bill pending to raise the salaries of assistant secretaries. Wilbur thought he would be smart, and he said to this reporter, "If they don't raise the salaries, I'm going to have to leave because I can't afford to stay." He thought he was doing a little lobbying to get his salary raised. He was in his office working on a Saturday, and the telephone rang. He picked up the phone, and it was Johnson. He said, "This is the President. What's this I read in the paper about your planning to leave? Why, I could no more get along with(out) you than I could get along without Lady Bird. I don't want any more of that talk out of you." And he said, "And besides that, what would Wicky do if I let you go?" He had these fixed associations between me and Wilbur Cohen, Social Security, Medicare, and so forth. But I worked very hard on Medicare and was one of the

people who over the years dealt with it. And of course once he was President, he supported it. I don't think he had ever supported it when he was Senator. He was very fearful of the Texas AMA. For some reason or other, the Texas AMA and the Oklahoma AMA were particularly potent. In fact, he once said 'way, 'way back that the only things that he had done in the Senate that had really gotten him in trouble he did for me and Jim Rowe, and that was to support the creation of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare which, for some reason or the other, the AMA thought was a threat. So when he was senator, he was very cautious, but as soon as he became President he was very supportive. It was one of the high points of his presidency, I think.

MG: Can you describe your role in this?

EG: Well, it's very difficult to. I made a lot of speeches; I wrote things on it; I met with people who were planning it. I helped evolve strategy. I testified over and over and over again, usually for some welfare organizations. Oh, one thing I did, thinking about it, among other organizations that I worked for, I worked for the YWCA. I got the YWCA to come out for Medicare, and this was the first middle-of-the-road organization that endorsed Medicare. I always thought it was very significant.

MG: How did you do this?

EG: Well, I was advisor to their public policy committee, and I persuaded them that it was necessary. I did it in many, many ways. I did a pro and con thing on Medicare for them, and I did questions and answers for them. I constantly wrote things for different groups on the subject. I did all the things that people do that are trying to promote legislation. And as I say, I was associated in Johnson's mind with Medicare, but I don't recall any incidents where I had any direct dealings with him on it. I was just part of the crew.

MG: I was wondering if you had any knowledge of how he was able to pass the legislation? For instance, if there was a problem in the Conference Committee.

EG: Well, I did a long tape for Columbia [University] on my views on that, and I'm really having trouble trying to reconstruct it. I think that what passed Medicare was the eventual awareness of influential members of Congress, ultimately Wilbur Mills and many others, that none of the alternatives were going to work. Even the insurance companies. They had started special health insurance. Excuse me, could we turn this off for a minute?

(Break in recording)

I had had to do with Medicare for some time. I spoke at Madison Square Garden when Kennedy came there on Medicare. And I had been on a group set up during the Kennedy campaign for

Mrs. Kennedy called "Women for the New Frontiers." Frances Perkins and I ran a press conference that Jackie had. I had a very tough time on that occasion because I had to figure out a logical reason for Jackie to be interested in Medicare. She was very independent, and she had to have some reason. What I did with her, which I later used with the YW, too, is that one of the great hardships of middle-aged people was that they often found themselves torn between the medical needs of their parents and the educational needs of their children, that these two pressures on them often came at the same time. Jackie could understand that, and we had a press conference around it. And also I was on Kennedy's task force that was set up before he became President, that is, in the transition period. When Kennedy was elected, they had no provision for transitional help at all. There was none. He set up a series of task forces for the sole purpose of giving him a program with which to start off in January, because he had said, you know, we want to get going, and so forth, and he had to have programs. So I was on the Task Force on Health and Social Security, and we worked out Kennedy's program. I must say it was extremely successful, too, because everything we recommended was passed eventually, much of it under Johnson, of course.

I have now recalled a very funny incident about Medicare. When Johnson first became President, he was uneasy about press

conferences. Kennedy had been exceptionally adept at handling the press, and Johnson felt insecure. So for the first few weeks of his presidency, he really gave the press people very little to do. He set up a meeting, or somebody set it up for him, of the people supporting Medicare. Most of these were older people. I think he was making a sort of gesture toward the older people's groups. But I was invited to this gathering, which was held in the White House. After he spoke and promised them that he would do everything he could to get the bill through, he said, "And now I want to come and shake your hand." So he came down the row shaking [everyone's hand], and the press was there and the photographers were there, and the networks were there--I mean the TV. He came down shaking these old people's hands, and he came to me and he gave me this great bussing, which is his typical way, especially with married friends. That picture appeared all over the country, mainly I think because they just hadn't had very much to photograph. That was the Medicare meeting.

Well, you were asking why it passed. As I say, I think it passed primarily because there was an obvious need, and it was transparently obvious that the private insurance companies couldn't meet it. They had set up special 60-plus plans, and they were going broke on those plans. They were in the situation where they were either going

to have to charge their younger insurance holders a disproportionately high premium to carry these old people's policies, or they wanted out. I think they really wanted to get out. I think that that had about as much to do with it as anything. The AMA was incredibly inept. Up to the very last minute, all the planning and all the propaganda had been done for hospital insurance. In fact, the term Medicare was coined as a derisive term by AMA. We proponents were very careful always to speak of it as Hospital Insurance for the Aged, and it had nothing in it but hospital insurance. At one hearing before the Ways and Means Committee, the AMA spokesman said, thinking he was making a telling point very derisively, "What's the use of giving an old person a hospital room if you don't give him a doctor, if he hasn't got a doctor?" And Mills said just like that, "We'll give him a doctor. If that's what you want, we'll give him a doctor." So at that point, what is known as Medicare B, the doctor insurance part of Medicare, was born, and I claim the AMA was directly responsible. I think one can find that in the hearing.

MG: I understand that one of the key votes in, I think, the Conference Committee was George Smathers' change. In the past he had supported the AMA, and this time he voted for the Medicare bill and I think when asked why he did it, said, "Because Lyndon Johnson asked me to." Do you remember anything about that?

EG: I wouldn't know. Of course, he had a very heavy elderly constituency. Any senator from Florida that voted against that bill was deciding he didn't want to be in politics much longer. I'm sure that on all the major achievements of his administration, Johnson used every possible means of persuasion that he had. People would advise him. Now I was active in it, but I would say that the AF of L-CIO probably played the most active role in the sense that they had people who did head counts, and they knew precisely who in the Committee was, as they say, for, leaning toward, leaning against, and so forth. I would not at all doubt but what it was true, but I just don't recall it of my own memory.

MG: Is there anything else that you would like to add while we're still on tape here?

EG: There is one, to me, very sad commentary on him. We were at the White House at a formal dinner. I think it was for the Shah of Iran. We had been in Iran, so they often asked us when they had something about Iran. We were staying at the White House, and this was really just about two weeks before he withdrew from the nomination. After the dinner we went upstairs in the family living room. He came out in his pajamas, and he looked terrible, just terrible. I've never seen a person look so utterly exhausted as he did. There were other guests and people there, and he sat talking with them. I really

don't know how the subject came up, but it was about Vietnam, and he said, "I don't understand who these young people are that are opposed to the war. I never meet any of those young people. The young people that my daughters bring around are not like that. I just can't believe it." To me, this was a really sad commentary on his isolation, the kind of thing that George Reedy later wrote about.

MG: Do you feel that he really was isolated from this sort of input?

EG: Yes, I do. I do. I think George Reedy wrote a very perceptive book on this whole question of the isolation of the President. I forget the name of his book.

MG: The Twilight of the Presidency.

EG: Yes. I think that he truly did not understand the extent of the opposition to that war. I think it just didn't reach him. When we came home, we had two young people in our family that were very violently opposed to the war, and my daughter said to me, "Mother! How could you sit there and let him say a thing like that and not challenge him?" And I said, "If you could see how tired this man was, how utterly and totally exhausted, you would understand that I couldn't have done it." But it is an example of George Reedy's point.

MG: But he was so close to the news networks.

EG: Well, like all the others, he mistrusted the news networks, I think.

He didn't carry it to the lengths that Nixon did, but he was basically mistrustful of them.

MG: Do you think that he felt that his presidency had been successful in spite of the Vietnam conflict?

EG: Yes, I do. I told you earlier that we went to visit him at the ranch. It was the Easter after he had left the presidency. I felt at that time that he was deeply hurt, rejected, and really quite depressed. But they showed movies of his last year in office, and afterward Lady Bird said, "Oh, what a tragic thing! You know, we were so close to winning on that war, and it was our friends that defeated us." A very sad remark, I think. So I answer that question in a kind of ambivalence. I think his ultimate loss of confidence over the war hurt him deeply and perhaps in the end overshadowed his confidence. So I think when he released the papers in Austin that the confidence he felt was somewhat reasserting itself. No, I think he basically felt, and rightly so, that he had achieved remarkable things. I think he did too. I think the Civil Rights Act was probably the greatest achievement of his administration. I think Elementary and Secondary Education and Medicare were all great institutional changes. I think sometimes he tended, with his preoccupation with numbers--you know: "We passed 450 bills," or whatever it was--that he let sheer numbers obscure for him what were the great, lasting changes that

he made, because I don't think he had a strong historical perspective. But that was a rather superficial thing. I think it was the war that he simply could not cope with. And yet as I say, even two weeks before he withdrew from the fray he still couldn't believe that there really was this amount of opposition.

MG: That's something. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

EG: I can't think of anything now.

MG: Okay. Thank you very much.

(End of Tape #2 and Interview)

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By ELIZABETH W. GOLDSCHMIDT

to the

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2. It is the donor's wish to make the material donated to the United States of America by terms of this instrument available for research as soon as it has been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

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

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

Signed Elizabeth Wickenden Goldschmidt

Date September 4, 1975

Accepted [signature]
Director, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library for Archivist of the United States

Date 9-19-75