INTERVIEW I

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INTERVIEWEE: MRS. ANNA ROSENBERG HOFFMAN

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

PLACE: Mrs. Hoffman's office in New York City

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F: First of all, when did you first become aware of Lyndon Johnson?

H: I'm very bad on dates.

F: Yes. Well, we don't worry about dates.

H: But I first became aware of him, [did] not meet him, but became aware of him when I was working with President [Franklin D.] Roosevelt as sort of an all-around handmaiden or advisor. I would go to Washington for a couple of days a week, and he would say, "Talk to the Budget about this. Get up an Executive Order on this." Or "Go up to The Hill."

F: This was when you were working in New York?

H: Yes, but I [was] --

F: Commuting to a certain extent?

H: Yes. During the war, I commuted three or four days. I didn't want to go down. I wouldn't go down to Washington, because I had a family here. So we compromised on my commuting.

I knew Aubrey Williams well, of the National Youth Administration. And Aubrey Williams was talking to me about this very unusual young man who was with the National Youth Administration in Texas. "A

dynamo, a great liberal. You'll have to meet him." I hadn't met him. And here I am a little confused whether I met him once in Washington before he ran for Congress. I think I did. I think I must have met him, as I recall, with Aubrey Williams, when he was up in Washington.

F: Aubrey Williams had him come up for the 1937 inauguration, before there was a vacancy in Congress, and that may have been where it was.

H: I must have met him, yes. Because when he ran for Congress, the night before election -- late afternoon before election -- Aubrey Williams called me and said, "Can you raise five hundred dollars in New York? We have no money for radio. And things don't look very good here. We want to go on tonight. Tomorrow is election." This was early afternoon. And I said, "Aubrey, how can I raise money for you and get it down there? I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you five hundred dollars. All you tell me about him and all I know about him is worthwhile. I'll give you five hundred dollars. Go on the air, and I'll guarantee it." He said, "That's fine." Well, the election was held and Lyndon won by 90-something, a very small vote. I had a most fulsome, typical Lyndon Johnson letter: "This contributed to my election" and so on.

If I can go away from this a minute, this was a very amusing incident in our relationship after. Because when he became vice president, he would be at some public event and I would be there and he would tell the story about me and say, "My good friend, Anna Rosenberg, sent me five hundred

dollars, and that saved me. That saved the election." He became president, and he told the story twice while he was president in my presence. He said "I was so touched by it that I framed it and never used it." So I kidded him once when he said that. I said, "Lyndon, you better give me that framed check, because my bank deducted it." And he laughed. But, you know, he never forgot. That's him. He never forgot, which was very characteristic of him. He never forgot what people did for him, or whether they were friendly to him, especially in his early days.

Well, then, when he was in Washington in the Congress I saw him because I used to do some sort of liaison for President Roosevelt.

F: Now, he was on the Naval Affairs Committee, and you had, of course, a manpower assignment.

H: Oh, that was later, not when he was in Congress.

F: Right. Well, no, this was in Congress. I think you're thinking about when he was with the Military Preparedness Committee.

H: Oh, yes.

F: Now I didn't know whether that brought you into contact with him or not.

H: It may have. It did probably. But my greatest contact with him was on legislation that President Roosevelt was interested in, social legislation that he would say, "Go up and talk to the men on the Hill," and so on. He was there awhile when President Roosevelt said to me, "I want you to work with that young Congressman from Texas,

Lyndon Johnson. He's a comer, and he's a real liberal." I told this to Lyndon in later years. He valued it terrifically, especially when he was being attacked as a southern conservative, that Franklin Roosevelt thought -- and he did -- that he had liberal tendencies.

F: Did President Roosevelt have a pretty good mental catalogue of who stood where in Congress?

H: That's what I just was saying. Yes, he did. He could put his finger on what the weaknesses of a congressman were, what the strengths were. In later years, he even knew who his supporters were back home, and he had a pretty good idea. That doesn't mean that he always calculated, rightly, their reactions.

F: Yes.

H: But he knew all of them, pretty good descriptions of them.

F: I would presume that, with your sort of mandate from the President, Congressman Johnson was always extremely accessible to you.

H: Oh, he always was. But this was even after that. When he was senator, leader of the Senate, he was always very accessible.

F: When President Truman nominated you to be the Assistant Secretary of Defense, as we know, the Senate committee cleared you immediately. Then this was the beginning of the McCarthy era, and then problems developed.

H: Yes, then McCarthy had a man who, by the way, was proven mentally incompetent, deSola Poole. He, at the same time, sued Cardinal Spellman and Joseph Proskauer. McCarthy got him to file a complaint that he met me at the John Reed Club, which was a communist club, and so on. My

appointment came from General George C. Marshall. I worked with him when I was on the Advisory Board of the Office of War Mobilization and Reconversion, that Jimmy Byrnes headed first, and then, Stuart Symington. We had a lot of problems towards the end with the military because they robbed the plants of skilled manpower and so on, and we had meetings with General Marshall. Some time later, General Marshall sent for me and asked me to be Assistant Secretary of Defense. But I made it a condition that I would accept the appointment only if it was not announced until after the election because I didn't want a political football made out of the appointment of a woman. So he called President Truman at the Muehlebach Hotel on the morning of the election. He was afraid it would leak out. President Truman had one answer to whatever General Marshall wanted: "Whatever you want, General, it's all right with me."

During those hearings -- and they were gruelling and terrible -- Johnson was magnificent. He never doubted, he never questioned. Whatever chance he had, he fought a battle for me.

F: What did he do? Sort of lead you into saying the things that he thought you ought to?

H: No, no. As a matter of fact, there was one incident when he got very angry at me for what I said and bawled me out.

F: I see.

H: It was a hearing when I was confronted by deSola Poole. They sat him down opposite me, and they said, "Take a good look at her. Is

this the woman who sat next to you at several meetings of the John Reed Club?" Senator Symington said, "Take a good look." He did and he said, "Yes." And then the Chairman turned to me and said, "And what have you to say?" And I said, "It's a goddamned lie!" I was so mad that I . . .

F: Yes.

H: And Lyndon Johnson got hold of me afterwards, and he said, "Don't you ever swear again!" He said, "Do you realize what it means in the Bible Belt? And especially a woman! Don't ever use language like that again." I said, "Lyndon, some day when you're confronted with an accusation that staggers you, when a man looks at you, you will say it, too," He said, "I sure will. But that's all right. I'm a man."

F: You didn't quite have equal rights on language.

H: Oh, no. Well, he did it protectively. He did it because he knew that some of the senators would think this is a terrible thing to say. I don't think that he was shocked personally, but he did it because he thought it would help me. No, there was no guidance anybody could give me. I had to say what was true. But I saw him sit through the hearing with the tears pouring out of his eyes; he was so upset by it. He was a very sentimental man.

F: Yes.

H: Especially in these early days. He got, I think, much less sentimental when he was president, which happens to any man for self-protection. But he was very sentimental about it, very easily hurt. Which, of course,

he carried into his presidency, too.

F: Yes.

H: Very easily hurt.

F: Did you ever have any confrontation yourself, personally, with Senator Joseph McCarthy?

H: No. No, never.

F: Did Lyndon ever talk to you about the McCarthy problem?

H: Some, but not much. The man who finally told me what happened was Senator Cain, a Republican. He told me later that he was asked to carry the ball on my fight at a meeting which was held in Senator Style Bridges' office with McCarthy -- because he was on the committee -- and he agreed to do it. He was a rabid Republican and a great reactionary.

F: Cain?

H: Cain. Harry Cain. He was representative of the real estate lobby. [He] came to see me one day, and said, "I want you to know that you have a friend. I'll help you in anything. I was ready to attack you. I agreed to do it. Then I listened to you. And I just had the feeling that you were telling the truth, and I'm not going to do it." And he was one of my greatest defenders after the hearing. Harry Truman was so impressed by this, and by the change in Cain, that he sent for Cain after the confirmation. Cain told him how he suddenly, as he said, "got religion"--that he realized what was being done to people. Harry Truman later appointed Cain to the Commission for Security of Government Employees.

F: The loyalty . . .?

H: Yes.

F: He decided this was an honest man.

H: An honest man, and as he used to say to me, "No matter what age, a man can get religion."

But I keep on going away from Johnson.

F: Well, this is a very sort of trying time that everyone was going through. Did you get the feeling that the opposition to you was because of your being a woman, being a liberal, being a Democrat, being a . . . Was it anti-Semitic, or was it just a combination of everything?

H: I think it could have been a combination of several things but there was one factor that was a motivating one that Harry Cain told me about. Senator Styles Bridges and other Republicans were very much against General Marshall because they disagreed with him when he was Secretary of State. They could not oppose Marshall but they were determined to oppose his first important appointment. However, his first appointment was Bob Lovett who is a Republican and a much-respected person. I was the next, and so they decided that was an appointment they could really attack. Later, Senator Bridges became friendly with me and told me they knew they could not attack Bob Lovett because as he put it, "We would have been laughed out of The Congress if we had tried to attack Lovett."

F: He had all the credentials they were looking for.

H: He said, "Then you came along. And boy, did you have all the things that helped us. You were from New York. You were a liberal. You were a friend of Roosevelt's. You were a woman. Your name was

Rosenberg." He said, "We had everything." But fundamentally, they made up their minds that the weakest appointment of Marshall's, they would jump on.

F: Was this largely because of their dissatisfaction with the Chinese situation?

H: Chinese; and also, Marshall, who was a wonderful, honorable gentleman, but very cold unless he knew a person well.

F: I gather you were about the only person he ever called by first name.

H: That's right. And he was an extremely warm, darling man. But he was so cold to them and would not show them deference. He said to me, "Whenever they speak to you at hearings, answer 'yes, sir' or 'no, sir'. They're entitled to it. But don't let them push you around."

F: Did he anticipate that there was going to be this confirmation fight?

H: Oh no, he was heartsick because I didn't want to go to Washington, and he talked me into it. And he said, "I would never have appointed you if I'd thought this would happen to you." No, he was really just like a mother when something happens to a favorite child.

F: Then, it went back to the floor, and you were confirmed overwhelmingly.

H: Overwhelmingly. But before I was confirmed, a Secret Service man, jeopardizing his position, came to see me at my hotel and said, "I want you to know that we had, for a long time, in the file [Activities Committee] the Anna Rosenberg who was mentioned in the original Un-American hearings. We know where she is. She's married. She lives in Brooklyn. So-and-so is her name. J. Edgar Hoover is sending men all over the country to investigate, because the President gave him that order. He knows this,

and the only way he is ever going to give it up is if General Marshall sends for him and shakes hands with him." General Marshall had such disdain for J. Edgar Hoover that he would cut him dead every time he saw him. And this, evidently, rankled J. Edgar Hoover.

F: Caught in another personal jealousy situation.

H: Well, General Marshall had some good reasons. He felt that Hoover was a tyrant. I told General Marshall the information the Secret Service man gave me. In spite of having this information, I asked General Marshall not to send for J. Edgar Hoover as I knew how Marshall flet about Hoover. Marshall's answer to me was this. He said, "Anna, I'd send for the devil if it would help to get this situation cleared up." He picked up the phone and asked Hoover to come to lunch with him at The Pentagon. Hoover lunched with him, and Marshall asked me to come in after, and he said, "Anna, he told me that he thinks he can clear it in twenty-four hours." He called the General and said, "We have all the facts." This was coming up on the floor the next morning. I said, "General, I will only stay if you don't send this up to the Senate until after they confirm me. I want to see if all the evidence they have is enough. If not, they'll always be suspicious." He said, "You're taking a terrible chance." I said, "I'm sorry, sir, but I have to live with it." I was confirmed with . . . I don't think McCarthy came to vote, but everybody . . . a unanimous vote. And when they came and told us, I said to General Marshall, "Now you can send it up." And the Secret Service man came; he gave me the photograph of the woman.

Of course, they gave the name. Her name was Klein. She married a man named Klein. And when she was asked how she could let somebody else go through this, and did she know it, she said she did. She was a member of the Communist Party. She married this man; had two children. They never knew that she was a member of the Communist Party, and she was afraid --

F: It would come out.

H: So . . . But we go away, again, from Lyndon Johnson.

F: Yes. Did you get the feeling that Johnson and your other friends on the committee had sort of worked the Senate a little bit to reassure people?

H: Well, I don't know. Herbert Lehman and Lyndon Johnson, a few men I knew, spoke out openly of their confidence in me, but Lyndon said to me, "At the hearings, I will ask you very rough questions."

F: So it wouldn't look as if they were giving you an easy time?

H: No, no, no, no.

F: Give you a chance to prove it.

H: Herbert Lehman was not on the committee. You see, he just sat through every hearing as a senator from New York and as a friend. You know, when discussed, they would say what they knew, but they didn't go to senators and say, "This is crazy." You have to get yourself back into the atmosphere. These were the heydays of McCarthy and the heydays of McCarthyism.

F: You never knew where the attack was going to come from.

H: That's right. It was amazing how frightened they all were. I don't think

Lyndon was ever frightened but he was extremely sensitive. He carried around clippings or had them on his desk. He would send for me to come to Washington -- by this time he was leader of the Senate -- and say, "Look what your damned liberal papers in New York have done!" I'd say, "Lyndon, they're not my papers." "Well, talk to your friend Dorothy Schiff. Look at this editorial." Then he'd pull out other items, mostly on civil rights and so on. And then he would say, "How about your friend Eleanor Roosevelt? Why doesn't she say something? Why is she so against me?" One day Mary Lasker, who was a good friend of his, and I saw him together and he again brought up the injustice of Mrs. Roosevelt criticizing him. I finally said to him that I would talk with Mrs. Roosevelt as would Mary Lasker and we would explain to her where he stood on the various issues. I too felt the attacks were unfair as Lyndon had to make some compromises in order to get the Civil Rights Bill through.

He was a master politician and a master tactician. He knew exactly what he could get and what he couldn't get from the Senate. He played it like a violin. And he knew that to get passage of any real civil rights bill, he had to make some compromises. This was a fact. And so I talked to Mrs. Roosevelt. So did Mary Lasker. Mrs. Roosevelt said, "Dorothy Schiff should never have attacked him on civil rights." Because she understood also -- she knew enough about it -- that he was doing his level best. But the liberal press was against him in many areas.

F: Well, you know, Johnson made speeches at that time in which he said,

"We can't afford to listen, whether it's right or wrong, to either the left or the right on this. We've got to figure out just how far we can all go together or we've blown it for another generation."

H: And neither side likes that.

F: Right.

H: Neither side likes that. They think you have to listen to the right, and certainly you have to listen to the left.

I'll never forget that speech he made on civil rights in the United States Senate when he was president. I'm not a letter writer of compliments, but I wrote him a letter, and said, "No president, not even Franklin Roosevelt, went as far as you did. I don't know what else you're going to do, Lyndon, but that was your finest hour." And he wrote how much it meant to him that I thought he was on a par with [FDR]. He adored Roosevelt, you know; he looked up to him and wanted to have some of the aura that Roosevelt had.

F: You had a feeling, though, as far back as the fifties that his commitment to the civil rights was real, just pragmatically --

H: I did, and I'm not easy to convince. I did. I had many talks with him. I knew what he was doing, and I was convinced.

Another area where he was really responsive . . . Well, he made breakthroughs in so many areas. I've been interested for many years in cancer research. My friend, Mary Lasker, who really fought the battle -- I took her to meet Lyndon Johnson; I said, "You'll never get anywhere in the Congress unless you get Lyndon Johnson on your side. He was not easy to convince. You had to bring facts to him, information,

and he'd check with doctors and scientists. He became the strongest, staunchest advocate of health research and education. No man made such a breakthrough in education as did Lyndon Johnson. And you know, when you knew him --

F: Yes.

H: -- you could always trace back the terrific impressions made on him in his youth. When he talked about education, he would talk about when he was a teacher; he would talk about the one room school. When he put up a fight on poverty, he would talk about his mother carrying water -- I don't remember the distance -- for the house. He would talk about the kids he taught who didn't have any breakfast, who didn't have any lunch. This was not a social philosopher. This was a man whose life, and what he saw in his life, made a deep impression on him, and a determination that he was going to be in a position to do something about it. There's no doubt in my mind. He started it in Congress when he had less influence, but as he became president and leader of the Senate . . . the Vice presidency was a frustration to him . . . but when he was leader of the Senate, certainly when he was president, by God, he was going to correct the wrongs he knew existed. He didn't suffer from many of them, but he knew they existed. His whole philosophy was based on life experience. I think that's what made him so strong in his fights. It was not a philosophy he arrived at by reading what's just, what's fair; it was in the bone and marrow of this man.

F: He just knew people shouldn't have that experience.

H: We shouldn't have to live that way. That a child must have a decent

education -- that's just part of his birthright.

F: I presume, in your position as Assistant Secretary of Defense, with manpower as your particular object, that you never had any difficulty with him at all?

H: Oh, yes, I did. Oh, we were at war much of the time. Oh, yes, that was the period in which he and I fought very hard. It always interested me and I told him when he was president; I said, "You know, you amaze me because I disagreed on Vietnam. And he would always quote -- in later years, too, "The Joint Chiefs of Staff said this . . ." And I said to him one day, "You know, Mr. President, you amaze me. There was no man who had less respect and less confidence for the military than you did. I used to fight with you that these are honorable men. You have to make allowances that this is their life and religion; that they go overboard on military strength, but that they are honorable men. They really thought this was necessary. One must use his own judgment. But now you just swear by them!" And, well, he didn't like that at all. He said, "Well, I want a [inaudible]." You know what I mean. In later years, too, when he was the head of the manpower committee, he was very rough on the military, very abrupt, and very rough at hearings, and on me, if I fought their battle which I did when I thought they were right.

F: Well, you had a problem in that you had come into the Korean situation and you had a Defense that had been cut back under Lewis Johnson, so that you had a correctional job.

H: It was nothing. We had to build from scratch. We had no manpower. We had a reserve system which wasn't worth two cents. By the time you called up a reserve unit, the men were all too fat and too old, or had developed diseases, or were in important positions. When we called up the National Guard, why, we had a corporal's guard, that's all, to build on. But the military are extremely extravagant; there was no doubt of that. They want everything new; we couldn't stop to correct what we had. We had to go ahead.

There was one incident with Lyndon that appeared in Time magazine that President Truman was very angry about. Johnson was very rough on the military, very rough on me at hearings, which he had a right to be. But he was unusually rough at this particular hearing. He would have a habit of saying, "I want this, this, this, tomorrow morning, here" -- charts -- this and that. I spent countless nights at The Pentagon preparing which was perfectly all right. That's just how Congress functions, but he, more than anybody, made constant demands. But at this particular hearing, I disagreed with him. And after the hearing, right after it, he called me up and he was lecturing me. And he was very tall, and I'm rather short. So we stood there, and he was shaking his big finger at me. Time magazine was there and snapped photographs which appeared in Time; they were very critical of him for being rude and rough. I didn't know what happened, but I went up the Hill two days later for a hearing, and he called me aside and he was very angry. He said, "Dont't you go complaining to the President about me." I said, "Lyndon, it wouldn't enter my mind to complain to the President about you.

The President has other things to do than listen to a complaint from an assistant secretary. What are you talking about?" I heard a few days later that President Truman had sent for him the next day and bawled the living daylights out of him for being so rough on me. Truman had an attitude toward women that was almost unbelievable. Every woman had to be treated like Bess was treated.

F: Just really chivalry?

H: Yes. And when I said to him, "Mr. President, I appreciate it, but please don't ever do this again. I've got to stand on my own two feet. If you're going to represent me to the senators as a woman, I can't do my job. I'm not a woman. I'm an Assistant Secretary of Defense. I've got to take it the way the men do!" And I assure you, I didn't go home to cry. I might've cursed Lyndon out in my mind, but I said, "I've got to do that." He said, "I just couldn't stand it. I bawled him out."

But when the chips were down and you needed Lyndon, he was there. He was there as a senator; he was there as a friend. I think back, especially nowadays with what's going on, that there's never been a United States senator, and I don't know if there ever will be, who functioned as effectively and was as well organized as was Lyndon Johndon as majority leader. As president, he had his problems, but he knew how to handle them. Vietnam was his tragedy and undoing.

F: He pretty well understood what you were trying to do in the Department of Defense, didn't he, whether he wanted to do it or not? But he grasped it?

H: Oh, yes, he understood later and was very, very high in praise, later,

He understood, yes.

F: Somewhere in either Time or Newsweek, he paid you a tremendous compliment.

H: Yes, he was very, very complimentary when they had called him.

F: He still had an adversary position.

H: When I couldn't answer the question at one hearing. . . .it was National Security information. . .they had a terrible havoc in the Armed Services Committee. They would send for General Bradley and I. I remember one incident when Bradley and I went back to the Pentagon together, got in the car, and started to laugh. We didn't know what . . . He said, "What next?" They questioned him on whether the men are getting good, decent cooking that's like home cooking. "What are the meals in Korea," and so on. And then I was next, and they questioned me on the firepower of the Russians, if we know, the Chinese, if we knew, North Vietnam, what the weapons system, and so on. And it was fantastic, I want you to know. I, at one time -- and you couldn't argue with them -- said, "Gentlemen, I'm better equipped to answer what they get for their meals, and General Bradley is better equipped to answer what the firepower." I don't know which one it was said, "Madam Secretary, just answer the questions." And you could answer them because they really didn't know it either. General Marshall once said to me, "There's one trick which helps in appearing before the Senate: Be positive."

F: If you look uncertain, you give them too much of an opening.

H: They didn't know the answer either.

F: Right.

H: And if you say, "I don't know -- you couldn't say that to them -- or

"I'd like to get it for tomorrow." I had one incident with Lyndon Johnson that was very heartbreaking [at] that time, I mean. We went through hell, but it was very amusing in the aftermath when we thought of it. He got some reports on how extravagant the Army is at the bases, and that they make three cans of coffee, and then throw it out, and make other coffee. Very extravagant. He said, "How many pounds of coffee does the Army use? How many coffee beans do they use for X number of men?" I said, "Senator, I really . . . Nobody knows how many. I can get you how many pounds, maybe, they order a month, but we don't even know if they use that up. But how many coffee beans, and how many individual cans, it's impossible." "I want the answer. I want a breakdown, by camps, by tomorrow morning, how many pounds each camp uses and how many coffee beans." He meant, really, you know, pounds.

F: Yes.

H: I went back to The Pentagon and all night long called up the Army camps; and then came back with how many pounds of coffee, and so on, they used. It may have been 99 per cent inaccurate. I couldn't rell. We had to take their word.

F: It was an answer.

H: And he knew it, too, probably. He wanted an answer. He got it. And we cut down. It's true that it served the purpose. After that we said, "Find out the amount that really should be used X times a day per number of men and try to see that the quartermaster observes it.

So there was always a reason behind what he was after. . . like

this particular incident that seems absolutely unreasonable and absurd, but it had some beneficial effect after.

F: You were an honorary chairman for Adlai Stevenson's campaign, the second term.

H: Yes.

F: Did you work much with Johnson in that campaign, or not?

H: No, he didn't like Adlai.

F: I know. Did he ever express to you why?

H: Oh, Adlai just wasn't his kind of man.

I was at the convention sitting among the delegates. I was very friendly with Sam Rayburn who was really Lyndon's mentor and almost a father to him. They were talking about nominating Lyndon for vice president. Sam Rayburn at that time was very opposed to it.

F: Did he talk to you about it?

H: Yes. Oh, I sat with him there and he was telling me.

F: It was just a feeling that the vice presidency was a step down?

H: Sam Rayburn had a very good knowledge of power, and he knew that the power of the Senate leader is much more than that of any vice president, even if the president gives him opportunities which, unfortunately, none of them do. I think they were Lyndon's most frustrating years.

F: Did he ever talk to you about it?

H: Oh, yes. One can talk about these things now.

F: Yes.

H: We had a birthday dinner for President Kennedy. I was chairman of

the First Person Birthday Dinner at Madison Square Garden where we raised a million dollars. At that time, I asked Arthur Krim to help me. He later took over, thank God, as I am not a money-raiser. Nobody even thought of inviting Lyndon. I said, "Arthur, let's go to Washington and ask the Vice President." That's how Arthur met Lyndon. The Second Birthday Dinner was held at the Waldorf. They had small tables for the dinner and the room was not set up for the entertainment. So it was necessary for the guests to go into a ballroom after the dinner for the performance. But before they did, President Kennedy went around to the tables shaking hands. Lyndon went into the ballroom and was told to go ahead and start, not thinking that he too ought to shake hands -- something he loved to do.

F: Yes.

H: As he was going past my table he said. "Come on." So we went in and we sat on the dais. He was leaving for Texas that night to speak at a high school. And he told me how many speeches he made, all very unimportant. I said, "Lyndon, you're killing yourself. What good are all these speeches? You're going to speak in a Texas high school. Who the devil knows it? You're vice president. You ought to get national publicity."

He pulled out a newspaper clipping; I think it was from the Journal American. There was a poll taken to see how many people knew who was the vice president, and how many people knew Goldwater, and someone else -- I don't remember who it was. Just a small percentage knew who was the vice president, and this hurt Lyndon. He was understandably bitter.

I said, "Get national publicity." He said, "I can't; I'm not allowed to speak." He always said that President Kennedy was extremely nice and courteous to him, but that the entire White House coterie, including Bobby Kennedy, were cutting the heart out of him, which was true.

F: Did you ever observe him and Bobby?

H: No, not closely. Arthur Krim gave a party for the important guests and the people and the stars who appeared at the Birthday Dinner. Lyndon and Bobby were there, but I didn't see them talking much.

F: I've talked with people even members of the Kennedy family who were friends of the Johnsons. They all said there was some chemistry present that made the two men react against each other.

H: Bobby, of course, bitterly opposed Lyndon's nomination for vice president. And Bobby was usually very effective with his brother; however, he lost that one.

F: Going back to the 1960 convention: Johnson, to a certain extent, deferred to Sam Rayburn's experience and judgment, and in this case, he went against him.

H: I don't know.

F: Or do you think Sam came around?

H: I don't understand it. After, I was told -- also by Sam -- that Sam Rayburn said he should take it. When we sat on the floor, Sam Rayburn was bitterly against it. Something must have changed Sam's mind because Lyndon definitely told me that Sam Rayburn was influential in his decision to run for the vice presidency.

F: How did you hear about it?

H: What?

F: About Johnson's accepting the vice presidential nomination?

H: Oh, I saw the Senator back in Los Angeles. He told me.

F: He told you he was going to take it?

H: Well, that he accepted, and that Sam was influential in it.

F: Something switched in the meanwhile.

H: Must have, because Lyndon claims that Sam did.

F: Did Johnson ever try to lure you back to Washington?

H: When he was president? No. First of all, he knew that I would never go back. I did that during the war. I wouldn't do it for Roosevelt. I commuted. No, he never did. And our relations when he was president were not as close as when he was vice president or when he was leader. As a matter of fact, I saw very little of him in The White House after he was president. I saw more of Mrs. Johnson. I would see him at different places, but I had a feeling he was angry about something. What it was, I don't know. He was easily upset. Mutual friends inquired because they couldn't understand. We had been good friends. He used to quote what I said and talk to me about things.

F: Yes.

H: And he dismissed it always: "I'm not angry."

F: No.

H: But I'm quite sure he was because it showed in his actions.

F: Did he ever talk with you at all about the manpower situation with regard to Vietnam?

H: No. Never.

F: Rather intriguing, isn't it?

H: Yes.

F: I gather you were right alongside with Mary Lasker and Lady Bird in the beautification program.

H: Yes.

F: How did you get into that?

H: Well, Mary Lasker is very interested. She's my closest friend. I had been very interested in beautification. I was chairman for New York helping Mary. Also, I would have gotten into anything Lady Bird wanted. I think she is a magnificent human being.

F: How did you get acquainted with her?

H: Well, I met her -- you never remember how -- when he was still senator.

F: No. I mean, did you just kind of move in, did she move into your life, or what?

H: No. Well, I think when she became first lady, I saw more of her because she was doing things on which she wanted help. And she became a very close friend of Mary Lasker's, and I would go over to the White House. She would ask me about things. And, as a matter of fact, not long before he made this statement about not running -- which I had no idea -- she had me over and asked me what was wrong; what was he doing and so on; and called in some of his speech writers.

F: Did he seem to take advice from you fairly well?

H: Not when he was president. I didn't even volunteer to give it. He didn't ask for it, and I didn't give it. He did as senator; he did

in many areas, and he asked in many areas, but not later.

F: We touched on something in our talk that I think points up a Johnson problem. He evidently had some feeling that because you had friends in the publishing world, or he had friends in the publishing world, that he could then control what came out in the paper.

H: Well, I tell you, yes. This was one of the reasons, when he became leader of the senate, he said to me, "You know that I don't know a single important publisher, newspaperman, television man. Will you give me a part in New York, a lunch to meet them?" And I said, "Sure, Gladly, Tell me the date." Then he called me up and told me that he could come up on a Saturday. This was in spring, when Saturday is practically a graveyard in New York City. And [he] said, "I've just spoke to Dave Sarnoff, and he said he'll help you." I said, "I don't want Dave Sarnoff to help me." Dave was a good friend of mine, but the networks wouldn't want another network inviting them. I said, "I wish you'd do it another day." No, he wanted it on this particular Saturday. Well, to make a long story short, I gave a lunch for him at Twenty-One, upstairs. I had every newspaper owner, publisher, Bill Paley, Sarnoff, everybody who was important. He spoke, not too long, but they could ask him questions. And they went away absolutely enchanted. He was at his very best: open, truthful, not, you know, belligerent. I had nobody else there, only these people. He felt that if he knew these people newspapers could be influenced. He didn't think as President Nixon who went after people through their income tax. Lyndon felt that

if he knew people, he could convince them. He urged me to contact the hostile press and try to influence them which I did when I thought they were wrong. I did fight; I called up my friends and talked to them not trying to influence them but told them, "Look, you're wrong about Lyndon." When he fought for his civil rights bill, well, I called up everybody I knew not only in New York because I thought the criticism was so unfair and that it was important that Lyndon not get discouraged. Because he would get very angry, and tighten up.

F: I'm sure there were times when he felt like telling them what they could do with it and just walking off.

H: Oh, yes, yes. You always have to . . . You know . . . Well, any man would.

F: That poignant little vignette you told me a while ago about no one knowing who the vice president was. That was so typical, that he would have, as always, a clipping in his pocket.

H: It was some survey. It wasn't a Gallup survey. It was a Hearst paper, I remember.

F: I sometimes thought it would have been better if he couldn't have read.

H: Yes. Oh, yes. The clippings became a very important matter. When he was president, he carried polls in his pocket all the time; he could pull out a poll on almost anything. "But this isn't so. This is what people think," he would say. And I once said to him, "You know, you're very unsophisticated in communication. You don't realize that a question can be so worded that it will get the answer that is

wanted. That Hearst story was worded that way." He wouldn't believe it. He thought the poll was like you going up to me and saying, "What day is it?"

F: Yes.

H: And the newspaper, the television comment, he had a very thin skin, far too thin for his own good.

F: He needed a little more of Harry Truman.

H: Oh, yes, yes. He was very hurt by it. He was hurt in the early days, and when he became president, he was more angry than hurt. I remember he didn't like many dinners at The White House except formal ones. But he asked Senator [William] Benton and my husband, whom he liked very much and thought a great deal of . . .

F: I've seen your husband, incidentally.

H: Yes . . . to have dinner with him at The White House. It was only the Bentons, and ourselves, and Mrs. Johnson, and we ate upstairs. And it was well into Vietnam, and he was very angry that people didn't understand what he was doing. It wasn't towards the end of his administration. And I said, "Mr. President," -- I always called him Mr. President -- "you never explained it to the people." "What do you mean, I don't explain? I told them in May." This was four or five months later. And I said, "People's memories are very short. Since then, many people who felt differently than you do tried to influence the public." This was -- it couldn't have been very late because he was still carrying so much of what Kennedy had done, and so on. It was well into the Vietnam War. I said, "Whether I agree with you or not, or others, is not

important. What you say now are logical, important things. People's memories are short. They live a different life than you [do]. They are taken up with children, the cost of living, everything. And you have got to go and tell them this, time after time." And Mrs. Johnson said, "Lyndon, listen to Anna. She's right. I've been saying that you don't tell enough to people." And he walked away and picked up the phone . . . (Laughter)

F: He called somebody.

H: . . . and made a call, you know.

F: Right.

H: He was like a child, by the way, with those telephones -- he could call from the dining room, any place. He had some very childlike, lovable qualities.

F: Did you ever go to the Ranch?

H: No, I never went down to the Ranch.

F: Did Mrs. Johnson ever talk to you at all about Vietnam, or did she stay clear of it?

H: The only way she ever talked about anything was, "Where can I help? Where can you help? What can he do to understand better?"

F: The sad thing about this is, as you talk about your publishers, he was a superb teacher with small groups. If he could have held a fireside chat in every county seat in the United States, he would have come across.

H: Whenever he had a small group of businessmen who were -- I knew some

of them -- antagonistic, they came away completely charmed. It didn't last long, but he convinced them. Oh, he was great person-to-person or with small groups.

F: I've seen him where there were students who were antagonistic, quite antagonistic towards him, and suddenly, there was no gap there at all.

H: That's right. Of course, to me it's a tragedy, but maybe in history -- history has a better perspective -- Vietnam will not be the only thing that people judge him by. Because as a president he was superb domestically; he really got this country on the road to doing things that are making a vital difference. This generation of young people have already benefited by some of the things.

F: And some things that I don't think you can turn back during his administration . . .

H: You can't. Hard as they have tried, this administration certainly has tried to turn back, and they might turn back some things, but the fundamental principle of responsibility towards people in certain areas can never be turned back.

F: Did you ever turn up a conception of Johnson before he became president that you could have anticipated that he'd get all this done?

H: I knew that he wanted to get things done. I knew that he was a superb -- I hate to use the word -- politician, but a president has to be --

F: It's a good word.

H: -- a politician in the sense of getting things done. I knew that

he could do it. I don't think that I truly realized what this man really would do and could do when he had this enormous power. I consoled myself and my friends when President Nixon was elected, whom I was against, by saying that something happens to a man when he gets into The White House.

F: Yes.

H: I've seen it. They grow.

F: Yes.

H: You know. But it hasn't happened this time.

F: Right.

H: But it happened to Lyndon. It wasn't so much growth, as he wasn't taken up with the routine of the Senate, and his concept of what he wanted to do became very clear, and no president ever used the power of the presidency more beneficially, or better, for the worthwhile things, than he did. I'm sure he used the power of the presidency for other things that I probably wouldn't approve of but to me, those are not as important. He used the power of the presidency . . .

F: Well, he went after some fundamental problems that we had let drag on eternally.

H: That we put bandages on; we made a little scratch and said we're doing something, but we never got to the guts of it, not even Roosevelt.

F: No.

H: [Roosevelt] started some of the things, but not in the broad concept.

Sure the poverty program made some terrible mistakes. Other programs had some terrible mistakes in them. But the fundamental ideas

were right. And I'm sure that if the Vietnam War had not come along, whatever was wrong could have been corrected because he was a good enoygh administrator and would have seen what was going wrong. He would have built on this magnificent foundation. He really would have.

F: To get back to Mrs. Johnson just a moment, did she pretty well know what she wanted on beautification, or did she come sort of seeking to be led?

H: I think she knew that she wanted Washington to be more beatiful. She planted the bluebonnets in Texas. I think Mary Lasker had a lot of influence on her. Mrs. Lasker knew, technically, more; also, Nash Castro of the Parks Department. However, Mrs. Johnson knew what she wanted. After a while, she knew exactly what she wanted. In the early days, she knew she wanted more beauty.

F: A feeling.

H: She wanted more trees. She wanted flowers. She wanted people to enjoy life more. But now she knows. She knew then. You know, towards the end, people were very critical of the President. And I, in my work, come across groups of businessmen, and a few others, who were down on him. I'd always fight for him, because even if I disagreed in some areas, I was always reminding them of what else he's done that's good.

F: Yes.

H: But never, never, heard anything but, "Well, believe me, Mrs. Johnson's different. Now, there's a fine woman!"

F: Yes.

H: Never criticism. I don't know any president's wife . . . Of course, Mrs. Roosevelt was great, but she had terrific criticism. And Mrs. Truman was a homebody. People didn't think of her as a citizen contributing, although she was a fine woman. Mrs. Kennedy was praised for things, but also criticized. Mrs. Johnson was universally respected. And is. I was talking with Laurance Rockefeller yesterday. We are working on a memorial plan. He just thinks she is the greatest. And I do, too.

F: He spends about half his time, it seems to me, in Texas.

H: Now they're looking for a rug for the . . .

F: Right. Did you take part, at all, in the campaign of 1964?

H: Yes. I didn't travel much but I did some work.

F: What did you do?

H: I worked very hard in New York State. And I made some out-of-town speeches.

F: Did you have any difficulty convincing people?

H: Yes. Yes. By that time, it was pretty hard. Although New York was a state where he was better liked. But I went to places where I had clients and I would speak. It was a tragedy that people were remembering what he was doing that they disapproved of, and were critical of his mannerisms and so on, and forgot completely the great things he was doing. But if you reminded them, many of them softened and realized this.

F: Early, after he became president, he contacted you in some way, about the problem of automation. Do you have any recollection of that?

H: Yes, he appointed a commission, the National Commission on Technology, Automation, and Economic Progress. As a matter of fact, it was strange. The Sunday after he became president . . . What day was that?

F: That was on a Friday.

H: A Friday. On Sunday, he telephoned me, and I was quite overcome that he had thought of it. It was very sweet. And [he] told me how much he needed help and so on. He appointed me to commissions.

F: Were the commissions generally effective, or were they window dressing?

H: Regarding this particular one, we were appointed when there was high unemployment. By the time we finished our report employment was high again so nobody was very much interested in what our report had to say.

And there was a quirk of Lyndon's. We were waiting to present it to the President. He called us to present it, to come down on a Saturday. We were called on a Friday. There was a snowstorm! I said to whomever called, "Look, we can't possibly get the people together." "Would you get Victor Reuther? Will you get a few people?" I called like mad. Reuther was some place where he couldn't be reached.

F: Dearborn?

H: No, at Solidarity House in the Pocono Mountains. To make a long story short, the only person who showed up was Al Hayes because he lived in Washington. None of us could get there. There was no train. There was no plane. It was a very big snowstorm. He was so angry that we had to send the report to him. And this was all.

F: Yes.

H: I was on the National Advisory Commission on Selective Service appointed

by him.

F: Did he show a real interest in reforming the draft?

H: Yes. Oh, yes. He acted on some of the recommendations made by the Commission.

F: You were also on one with Income Maintenance, I think, with Ben Heineman, weren't you?

H: Yes. The President's Commission on Income Maintenance Programs. Our report was not finished when President Johnson left office. President Nixon came in and asked us to continue our work. He was very interested. I have a strong feeling about commissions - they should be given very little money so they really work and finish the job as quickly as possible. But when they start off with a million or two million dollars, the staff has outside studies made by professors all over the country, studies so voluminous that commission members haven't the time to read them. I'm not exaggerating; this is so. And this is what happened to Income Maintenance. Finally, it has to come to its conclusions, or some statistical basis, some reports, but not philosophical dissertations which come from all over the country. We must have had fifty of them! We had too much money.

F: Yes.

H: And I've served on a commission where they had just enough money for staff, and, by God, they turned out the stuff.

Also, towards the end, Johnson was preoccupied with Vietnam. He had no time for anything else, except what was burning.

F: I always got the feeling that if he could have named the commission, and you could have reported tomorrow, it would have been fine. But by the time you went through everything, he was tired of the whole business and wished he had never named it.

H: Well, and on many things, he had to act before a commission ever reported. That Commission, the Automation Commission, it was unfortunate, because everybody was worried about jobs. He did some things on it. And you know, I've also learned, on some of these commissions, that you see, two or three years later, some action is taken and they refer back to it. Somebody gets the idea in the Senate or the House, or the President wants to do something, and they said, "What's the literature? What's been done on it?" "There's been a Commission."

F: So you had a feeling that even if Johnson didn't read it then probably some Cabinet official, or someone, picked it up --

H: Yes. Oh, yes!

F: -- and moved on it.

H: Yes, someone. When Roosevelt appointed a commission, he would say, "Come tell me about it before the Commission formally comes to present it." And I would brief him. Harry Truman read every line of everything that was brought to him. I never saw a man work so hard. I was the liaison with the Pentagon, when I was Assistant Secretary of Defense. General Marshall asked me to be the liaison, which meant I was to be the liaison dealing with General [Harry] Vaughan. I remember saying to President Truman, "Mr. President, General Marshall asked me to do this. But I'm very sorry, I have to be truthful to you. I don't want to do

it if I have to deal with General Vaughan." He said, "Why, Anna? He's my military aide." And I said, "I'm sorry, Mr. President. The military don't respect him and, if I may say so, neither do I." He said, "Wait a moment. All right, you're dealing with me directly." And I would go in there and give him something, you know, hard tough reading, and he would say, "Come back tomorrow morning at eight-thirty,or something. I'd come back. It was marked up; it was read; every line was read of whatever you gave him. Johnson had a much quicker mind.

F: Yes.

H: He caught things quicker. He was more intuitive. But Truman was a worker.

F: Johnson seemed to have that gift for looking at a page and picking out the key word.

H: That's right. And in a conversation, you could see in his eyes where he caught on, what interested him. If you were stupid, you kept your conversation going, but if you knew him, you immediately changed the subject because you could tell if he was not interested.

F: You've known some good men.

H: I've been very, very lucky. I've known good men. I've worked with good men. And then I really appreciate it.

They were great years when you could do things.

F: Can you think of anything else we ought to cover?

H: I don't know, unless there's something you want. I don't think I said enough about . . . I told you some incidents that may make you feel that I'm critical of him.

F: "We'll xerox this for --"

H: Who started all that? Who started it? Who made education important? People's lives have been spared by the cancer research, the heart research, the many things; and when they, the Nixon Administration talks about prevention, never do you hear what Johnson did.

F: Yes.

H: We are a country of such short memory. Maybe it's easier for people to live that way, but if you live through an era you just can't . . .

F: If you can remember when.

H: That's right.

F: When we opened the education papers down there at the Johnson Library, one of the, oh, something like the associate commissioner for Education of the State of Michigan came down and he was fortyish, and he was telling what his school was like in 1957. He'd just been a schoolteacher. . .

H: Yes.

F: . . . without maps, without any of the facilities, and he was able, you know, to . . . It was a great reminder to people that, you know, fifteen years ago we didn't have any of this.

H: Yes. What happened in all these years? I hope someday the Library can find a way of . . . Because his last television appearance, which was beautiful, touching, I think that, every birthday, it ought to be shown. It should be shown on educational television. And if the shcool could do something on the history of what he did in health, in education, in the poverty area. This is what's fundamental, I think. It could mean a great deal.

F: Yes.

H: Civil rights. Civil rights, they remember best.

F: Yes, they do. Because there is one group that . . .

H: Well, that still lives. That still has to . . .

F: Yes, they're still grappling with it and know where they were and where they've got to go.

H: That's right. But the other groups. It ought to be in the education program of every teachers college.

F: You mentioned the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Of course, that is a Johnson bill, too.

H: Sure.

F: I thought of that as we were watching Watergate at night, you know.

H: That's right.

F: You got the feeling that generally, on commissions and so on, that Johnson tried to make good appointments?

H: Oh, yes.

F: And they weren't just merely political?

H: His were not political appointments. No. No. He might have had --

F: Well, he spaced them geographically.

H: -- some geographically, but never dumbbells, never dopes, and he appointed people who he knew were not for him, many of them. When he wanted substance, he didn't fool around.

F: Thank you.

H: You're welcome. I hope I gave you something.

[End of Tape 1 or 1 and Interview 1]

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