

INTERVIEW I

DATE: July 17, 1987

INTERVIEWEE: JANET WOFFORD INGRAM

INTERVIEWER: Christie L. Bourgeois

PLACE: Mrs. Ingram's home, Johnson City, Texas

Tape 1 of 1, Side 1

B: Mrs. Ingram, I'd like to start by having you tell me your background, in some detail, your own background, where you were born, grew up, and--

I: I was born and reared in--until I was twelve years old--in Sabinal, Uvalde County, which is essentially the same type of area as this, just south of the Hill Country, and then when I was in junior high, my mother and my sister, Isabel, and I--my father had been killed in an automobile accident when I was a baby so there were just the three of us, and we moved to Austin. My mother went back to the university. She had graduated from a girls' school in her youth, but she--and had taught for several years--but she felt the need to get a degree, so she went back to the university. And my sister and I went to school in Austin, and it was quite an experience because the junior high we went into had as many students as the town from which we came had population. So we felt as if we had really landed. We went through junior high and high school in Austin, and, meanwhile, Mother had finished her work and was teaching in Austin, and if the teachers feel underpaid now, going to the university was the only thing I could *afford* to do! Granted, it was a good school, but I didn't particularly want to go to school at home, but it was all right. And my sister had

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gone to--who, incidentally, was the closer friend going through school of Mrs. Johnson's because they were both in the Department of Journalism, and they graduated together--but she had done her first two years at TCU, and then she transferred to the university, and I went to work. I got a job, and first off, I worked for--in the legislature when the legislature was in session. And then I went to work originally for the Texas Relief Commission and then the various federal programs that went into--in fact, that went on right up until President Johnson became [state director of the] National Youth Administration, and I changed and went down and worked in the central office down there, and then--

B: At that point you were working at the--you went where to work where in the central office?

W: In the National Youth Administration.

B: You did work for the National Youth Administration?

W: Yes, where he was. Then when the Johnsons moved on to Washington about the same time, and my sister had grad--they had graduated, yes. That timing is right, and she had gotten a job teaching school in Eagle Pass, so I went back to school and continued to work under the National Youth Administration in President Benedict's office. And I graduated from the university, and I taught school a couple of years in Eagle Pass, and then I went into laboratory technician work for about a year-and-a-half, and then I married, and then the war came along, and my husband went into service, and my sister had married a Chicago dentist, and he went into service and was sent to San Antonio where we were, which was one of the many fortunate things that happened to us, comparatively, during the war. And I remember Mrs. Johnson came down to San Antonio when the new federal building was built. It's not the new federal building now [in Austin?]. It's on Eighth Street, I believe.

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President Johnson was to have an office in that building, and she came down to San Antonio to buy furniture for his office. That was when my oldest daughter, oh, was [a] few months old, and I remember Mrs. Johnson standing gazing at Peggy in the crib, and she had Lynda Bird not a great length of time after that. Lynda Bird's eleven months younger than our older child, and--

B: This is before she knew she was pregnant with Lynda [inaudible]?

I: She did not say.

B: Did you think she was looking wistfully at--

I: Oh, yes, she looked wistfully! Yes, she did. Yes indeed, and, over the years, we teased our older daughter a great deal, that she inspired Mrs. Johnson to go ahead and have Lynda Bird. (Laughter)

B: Maybe she did.

I: I don't know. Actually, after they went to Washington, during the war years, we didn't see much of them, a Christmas card and an occasional note, but not much. Then after the war--I remember one time--I guess I had my two girls. I know my sister had her two girls and maybe her first son. She came down, and Mrs. [Johnson]--they were living in an apartment on Dillman, and she [inaudible] told us [inaudible] to get the key and said there was everything there except we'd have to bring plastic knives, forks, and spoons or something, whatever, because she said, "I just have one set of silver, and I take it back and forth." And then, of course, one of my sister's children got sick, and she was petrified. I've forgotten. It was a beautiful deep pile, pale carpet on the floor, and we were petrified--(Laughter)--for fear this child would upchuck on the carpet.

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To backtrack a little, my sister went to Eagle Pass to teach school right out of college, and she had borrowed a little money, two hundred dollars--which, of course, wouldn't last a month now, but, at that time, was--carried her through to finish. She went to Eagle Pass to teach school for seventy-five dollars a month. Now this--for seventy-five dollars [for] nine months. And--I guess it was when the Johnsons married--Isabel came to Austin at Thanksgiving, and they were there, and at seventy-five dollars a month--and she was paying back something on this school debt, and she hadn't had very many clothes--[she was] on a real, strict budget, and she was trying to help me; she was probably paying my tuition and books. But, anyway, the first thing Mrs. Johnson said to her was, "Isabel, how much money have you saved?" (Laughter) That's also been a stock story.

One of the things about her when she was in college that really seemed very basic and very important to me; in those days--they may still, I don't know--they put out a student directory, which gave the address and telephone number and hometown of all the students, and she listed herself from Karnack, Texas. Most particularly the girls--most of the girls from the little, bitty towns listed the bigger towns closest.

B: It would be Marshall.

I: It would have been Marshall. In fact, there were two girls--not from Karnack, but from other small towns in the area--and they put themselves--which was all right. I mean, it was--for one thing, you didn't have to explain where it was. But to me, it just seemed--

B: Why do you think she did that?

I: Because I think there was absolutely no pretense.

B: That's where she was from--

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I: Karnack. That's where she lived, [so] that's what she put down.

B: Interesting.

I: I think it would never have occurred to her.

On this economic bit, one time she and my sister went to town. I think it was their senior year, probably; they were both in the honorary Journalism fraternity. Neither one of us--none of us were in social sororities, and anyway, she and my sister were going to something where they would wear formals. They went to town to shop, and Isabel finally found one that she could and did buy. But they didn't have anything she wanted, so she said, "Oh, I think I'll just wear something I have and go buy a baby bond," and that's what she did. (Laughter) Isn't that--

B: She has a well-deserved reputation for thrift. Is that right?

I: Well, a sound economic outlook anyway.

B: Yes. Did she like clothes a lot? Was she very interested [inaudible]?

I: She always had more clothes than any of the rest of us, and she also had a car, but she also had more money than any of the rest of us. I mean, the group that I'm speaking of, Bess Jones, Bess Harris Jones, and--although Bess was in better shape than my sister and me, because my mother was teaching. Both--for one thing, each of them had a father, and in those days, just basically, women who had to support families just didn't have it. We didn't know we didn't have anything. I mean, we were perfectly happy. There was no feeling of--

B: How did Mrs. Johnson handle having more money than her [inaudible]?

I: I don't think she knew she had any more money than the rest of us! She had a car, but she took--for instance, it never occurred to me, now that I think of it, that she was the one that

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was footing the bills for when we went anywhere. I mean, we never offered to buy gasoline. Of course, you didn't go as much in those days, as many places. I don't think she was aware of the fact that she had more than anybody else.

B: And so it didn't make you all aware?

I: Oh, no. No. No. It was just a basic fact, which . . .

And then, let's see, we got to the post war years. One reputation the Johnsons always had was that absolutely, either big or small, they did, for their friends and constituents, anything that was within their power. My sister moved to Illinois, back to Illinois, for him to practice dentistry, and, after the war, he had been caught with a--there was supposed to be a stipulation that a professional man had to be given six weeks--a month or six weeks--to close out their practice. He had ten days to close a downtown, a loop, Chicago practice and to report in San Antonio. Well, of course, he lost an awful lot of money, because essentially all of his collections had to be turned over to a collection agency, and, then, of course, a lot of them didn't pay. And there was also a stipulation that rents were to be refundable. They didn't even have time to stay to see that he got his money back. He didn't get that back. Anyway, when he went back into practice, he had to buy all of the equipment and everything like that, and buy a house, and establish a home and family and whatnot, so they were sort of strapped for cash. And, of course, nowadays, you'd just go to the bank and borrow it, but in those days it wasn't that simple, for several reasons. Banks weren't that anxious to loan money, and people were not that anxious to go into debt. They would rather be without until they had saved to take care of it.

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Well, anyway, the army moved them, or rather, you moved, and then billed the army for what it cost you. Well they didn't get their money, and they didn't get their money, and they didn't get their money. And they appealed to their congressman from up there, and nothing happened. Then they sat down and wrote Lyndon a letter, and they had a check in less than thirty days.

We had an experience in Gilmer, where we moved after the war, which was--the story that we heard was that the telephone company there during the war had gotten some cable to extend their service, and, instead of extending their service, they sold it on the black market. So they were on the bottom of the line for getting cable after the war, and we couldn't get a telephone. We bought a house in a residential area that was just beginning, and there was no cable out there. So people kept--town people kept building homes and moving out there, and they'd get a telephone, and the telephone company said, well, they were obligated, or something, anyway, to continue their service. Well, this went on for--we moved there in 1946, and our youngest child was born in 1950, and we *still* didn't have a telephone. I had a file, I guess, an inch thick, of letters--I had correspondence with the telephone company. Finally, a man and his wife built a home and moved in across the street from us. They didn't have any children. He worked for a mortician and drove the hearse and the ambulance. Anyway, I remember I wrote the letter and said that I doubted that even an ambulance driver had more potential emergencies than the mother of four pre-school-age children. I still didn't get my telephone. So I wrote then-Senator Johnson and asked him. I said, "Is there no pressure of any kind that I can bring?" Of course, I've regretted getting a telephone since. (Laughter) But anyway, within just a matter of maybe

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weeks, certainly months, here came a spool of cable earmarked "For Use Only in the Mitchell Addition," which is where we [were] living--of course, I was horrified to bother a United States senator over anything so trivial as a small-town housewife's telephone, but they can't--what do you do?

B: Do you know how he did it? What did he do, just pick up the phone and call someone, or--?

I: Probably. I asked him if since the telephone company wasn't--well now, intra- or interstate. "Intra" means within the state, doesn't it?

B: Right. Intrastate.

I: Since it was an interstate business, was there no way they could be forced through the FCC to accommodate somebody? They pose themselves as a service institution, and I didn't think they were giving service.

B: Yes. And you asked LBJ if--about--if the FCC could be [inaudible]?

I: This was the gist of my letter, and I--

B: [Inaudible]

I: He didn't write me back and make any explanation, but the cable came, and I thanked him. (Laughter) So I guess that's where it came.

B: Why do you think that he did these favors for people? Do you think that it was--he just liked doing favors for people, or that in his--

I: I think he did.

B: --in his [inaudible]?

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I: I think he had grown up without a great deal and probably at the outset had not been able--my opinion of President Johnson, and I told even my children, who became--who went to college at the time of the Vietnam War and made many snide remarks about my friend, that I felt absolutely his motivation as congressman, senator, and president was to do what was best for the most people, and I do. I said, granted, he makes mistakes, and he certainly makes some--there are some things that step on some toes, maybe ours, but I really think that was his basic motivation. I recently was discussing with Mrs. Johnson someone that--my remark about them was that they were embarrassed by affluence, and she looked at me and said, "Why? With affluence you can do so many things for other people." I thought that was a beautiful thought that, in my personal opinion, was a very basic thing in their public life and private. I think they were delighted to be able to do things for people.

I have known--I have known Lyndon--President Johnson; I forget, it's Lyndon to me, and I forget. It's probably not properly respectful. His youngest sister had married a young man from my hometown in Uvalde County. This was before--as far as I know this was before Bird--before the Johnsons even knew each other, and--

B: Lucia?

I: Lucia. She's the one that--she's the only surviving Johnson now. She's pretty.

B: She was pretty?

I: Beautiful. Very--a very fragile, dainty kind of beauty. I haven't seen her for years. I haven't seen her since she was a girl. I don't know whether she held on to her beauty or not. Mrs. Johnson was a handsome woman, President Johnson's mother.

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B: Mother, yes.

I: I would not--I wouldn't say she was a beautiful woman. She was an extremely handsome woman. Tall, rather stately. The recent TV thing depicted--you didn't get in at the beginning of it when they came on. I don't know why they depict Texans--try to depict Texans as corny, but they do. I don't mean they try; I mean they do it. And here was this mouse-like-looking little creature moving around on the scene, and it finally developed that it was his mother, and I can't think of any worse casting.

B: Is that right?

I: I just don't know where they got their information about her.

B: You feel that she was a much stronger woman than was portrayed in that movie?

I: Oh, definitely! Definitely!

B: What was her relationship like with her son? Did you ever get any insight into that?

I: She was very proud of him, very ambitious for him, with all of the pluses and minuses that those two things can entail in a mother-son [relationship]. I have always thought the Lord wasn't very kind that he didn't let her live long enough to see that he was president. Maybe I shouldn't put it that way, but--

B: [Inaudible]

I: I think it would have been just fantastically gratifying to her, but--

B: When you say "the pluses and minuses that that entails" that's ambition for him and pride in him, do you think that she sometimes was smothering to him in a way, that she paid too much attention to him, pushed him too much?

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I: Well, I never did see that, particularly. Actually, I never saw her around, the two of them together a great deal. So I don't know. My information--there was no hearsay on that and anything that has been written since quoting her and her--

B: Did you ever know LBJ's father, Sam Ealy Johnson?

I: No. As far as I know, I never even saw him, and I didn't know the other siblings either.

B: Well, tell me what Lucia was like. You say that she was a beauty in a fragile, delicate way. What was her personality like?

I: Well, she was infatuated with Birge, and he was one of the nice-looking, perhaps handsome, young men who had grown up in my community, so most of us think she plucked him from among us. I don't know. I really don't know what to say about her. She was very feminine.

B: Didn't have a [inaudible]--

I: Very clingy. Not a very strong personality. I think to marry Birge--and they just had one child--but marry Birge and have a home was all she ever wanted. And I have sometimes wondered if perhaps--and the fact that the brother never did amount to a great deal; now I shouldn't put it that way, but he didn't--was maybe because Mrs. Johnson had latched onto Lyndon as the one that . . .

B: Yes. Did you ever hear her talk about her brother, Sam Houston?

I: No. I didn't. At the time that I knew her, I knew absolutely nothing about any of the rest of the family. She came back out some when they married and was talking about the fact that he married. She didn't know that he had married someone who was a good friend of ours, but in a little town, you--

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B: Things get around.

I: Yes. But I think the political scene and the prominence and whatnot of the Johnsons was not Lucia's cup of tea at all.

B: More a retiring, private type of person.

I: Well, President Johnson said to me one time--he said, "I think she's afraid of it." I think she--which--I don't know exactly what he meant.

B: Let's backtrack a little bit back to the university and Mrs. Johnson. You said that you all would occasionally go places, sometimes in the car. What types of places would you go? What were your activities? What would you all do?

I: Well, I don't know. I don't remember, really.

B: Maybe out to eat sometime?

I: Maybe. It seems to me that I didn't go as much as my sister did because I was working. But it seems to me recently she was recollecting a picnic, that sort of thing, and--

B: Was she a lot of fun? Did she have a good personality?

I: Oh, yes. Not nearly so extroverted as she is now--as she appears now. I think this is one of the things that she has learned to be.

B: Did you ever meet her family? Her father?

I: I met her father. Not during the university years. When we lived nearby in Gilmer, we went over to Karnack because his store was an institution. It was an old general store. Part of it had a dirt floor. His office was in the center, and I went in and introduced myself to him and told him, and I knew--after that, actually, I think probably--maybe it was when Lyndon was running for the Senate, but it couldn't have been when he was running for vice

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president--but I came to know Mrs. Johnson's brother's family, who lived in Jefferson. And then later--and I met her brother, Tony, once, but that could have been when Mrs. Johnson's father died. He was over in Karnack at that time. But meeting the other members of her family was very casual. We didn't--on the other hand, I think Mrs. Johnson was extremely fond of my mother.

B: Oh, really? How did she--oh, she knew your mother. Your mother was in Austin [inaudible].

I: Yes. Yes. I know she told Mother--she said, "Well, Lyndon said if I didn't marry him, he wouldn't be back." She said, "Mrs. Wofford, do you think he'll really come back?"

B: What did your mother say?

I: I'm sure she said, "I'm sure he would."

B: Did she date much in college?

I: I don't remember that at all.

B: Do you remember--you said that you all were not in a social--none of you were in a social sorority. Did you know that at one time she wanted to pledge Alpha Phi, and her father wouldn't let her? Do you remember that episode?

I: No. No.

B: Okay. Do you remember when she met LBJ? Were you in Austin when she first met him? It was a whirlwind courtship.

I: Yes.

B: Do you remember anything about it?

I: No, I don't. I remember when they married.

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B: You do? Tell me about that--what you remember about it.

I: Well, I--I mean, there was no personal association then, it was just in the paper.

B: Were you surprised to read that?

I: Well, in a way. Yes. I'm not sure--my sister might have known it ahead of time. I'm not sure.

B: Well, when did you first meet President Johnson? Was it during--was it after they married?

I: Oh, yes.

B: Okay. But during the NYA days?

I: Probably. I--they lived in Austin. They rented the then-economics professor, Dr. Montgomery's home. I. H. Montgomery.

B: On Happy Hollow Lane? Or was that the one [inaudible]?

I: I don't remember where it was.

B: I'll check. That's all right.

I: It was--I think it was next door to the Odoms. I think that's where that family friendship--association--and I don't remember what street it was on. But we were out there.

Something that I noticed--times do change. We're hopefully in the process of selling a home in Gilmer, and I was going through a bunch of stuff, and I came across the registry at my wedding, and Mrs. Johnson had signed it, "Bird Taylor Johnson." That's been a long time since she's signed anything that wasn't "Mrs. Lyndon B." or "Lady Bird."

B: I wonder how long she did that? [Inaudible]

I: I don't know. I don't know. The first time I see her, if I remember, I'll ask her about it, because I read many times that--well, I'm sure "It wasn't allowed" is not the proper term

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because she'd be too gracious ever to--but anyway, only her very old friends called her "Bird." In fact, I can't say "Lady Bird." It just doesn't come naturally to me. Not that it matters, but--

B: Did you--you were working for the Texas Relief Commission while LBJ was the state director of the National Youth Administration?

I: No, I don't remember that exactly. It could be--working in the National Youth Administration was a part-time thing, and so it could be that I had quit work and was back in school. But when he got that appointment, I asked for a job.

B: Oh, you did? You asked--

I: I may have; I just don't remember that detail. I just remember the office was in the Littlefield Building.

B: And did you work in the Littlefield Building?

I: Yes. For the National Youth Administration.

B: So did you have an opportunity to see Johnson--LBJ--at work with the National Youth Administration?

I: Yes, but I really don't remember anything about it.

B: No? I see.

I: I probably was way down the totem pole.

B: Well--

I: I'm sure I was. I was a part-time college student.

B: Okay.

I: There, in that office, was where I first knew--his name just left me. Kellam!

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B: Jesse Kellam.

I: Jesse Kellam.

B: Did you know him very well?

I: I knew him in that office and then in later years [inaudible]. He was always very gracious.

B: I've heard some--a couple of people say that he was--that if there was anyone who could work as hard as Lyndon Johnson, it was Jesse Kellam--

I: Yes.

B: --that he was quite a hard worker himself.

I: Well, I think both of them ran their motors down before their time. If they'd moved a little slower, they might have lived a little longer, but then, they were doing what they wanted to do, so it's really irrelevant.

B: Do you remember when LBJ ran for Congress in 1937--

I: Yes.

B: --when Congressman Buchanan died? Do you recall anything about that campaign?

I: Well, I remember that he was running on a platform that was--again, this could have been hearsay--that Roosevelt desired, to increase the Supreme Court, and so there was lots of flak about that.

B: Yes. Is there anything about Mrs. Johnson during that campaign that you recall?

I: No, I remember when he announced--let me think. Well, I don't know. Some of those things are sort of--I think he was scheduled to announce from Wooldridge Park, and I think--but I think that's when he had an emergency appendectomy and couldn't be there.

B: I think the appendectomy was at the end of the campaign, right before the election. Yes.

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I: Well, all right. I guess--all right. He was--I remember--I can't remember whether it was that campaign or not. She was off campaigning, I think it was San Antonio, in the San Antonio area, and the car turned over. She was not seriously injured, but there was some delay in some activity that was supposed to take place, and I think--

B: Yes. I think she was with Marietta Brooks. I cannot remember which campaign that was, either, but we'll look that up. Yes.

I: Then when he ran for the Senate against Coke Stevenson--the first Mrs. Coke Stevenson had been a very dear, close friend of my mother's, and I remember we were talking about it, and Mother said--she said, "Well, I think Coke's just at loose ends." His wife had died. "I don't think he really wants to go to Congress--wants to go to Washington. I think he's just sort of floundering." She said, "I know which way you"--my sister and me--"will feel about this campaign," but she said, "I think I'm on your side because I think Lyndon has potential for statesman."

And then, of course, my sister, at that time, was living in Illinois. We had a dear friend who had lived in Dallas, who was lifetime friend of Coke Stevenson's, and when Lyndon was elected she said, "Well"--all she could say was that, if my sister hadn't campaigned from Yankee-land and left it to the Texans, Stevenson would have been elected! Which, of course, is just a quip. It didn't really--

B: Do you remember anything else about that campaign?

I: I remember him [inaudible] into Gilmer in the helicopter, landed on the football field.

B: I guess that was pretty impressive to people.

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- I: It was. It was. And, of course, Lyndon was a very outgoing, gregarious extrovert and was also, physically, a very big man, so that he sort of--after he finally put some weight on. Now, when they first married, he was just a skinny beanpole, but by the time he ran for the Senate, he was so overpowering, you knew there was somebody there.
- B: Anything else in the 1940's on either President Johnson or Mrs. Johnson that you recall? You told the story about Mrs. Johnson looking at your baby.
- I: Well, of course--
- B: Any other contacts?
- I: No, not really. Not really, except in those years when you're raising your kids you really don't have that much time for letter-writing and whatnot, and, of course--

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- I: The Johnson girls were in camp at Lake Mystic.
- B: At Camp Mystic?
- I: Yes. Well, let me think, 1943--and I can't remember at what age, my older daughter went to camp; probably 1958-1959, along in there. And we used to see--we used to see the Johnsons because, generally, after we picked up the children at camp we would come back by and visit them at the ranch. This went on for several years because our older daughter went two years and then the younger one, and the younger one is about the same--I believe--I believe Luci was a little younger than Pat, our younger daughter. I've forgotten exactly what that relative--but I think Luci's birthday is in late spring or early summer, and so I believe she's six months younger than our second daughter.

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B: Apparently LBJ really enjoyed that ranch immensely, and it was a source of strength for him when during the presidency he would go recharge his batteries. Do you think Mrs. Johnson enjoyed the Ranch as much? Do you think that she really--?

I: I think she came to. I think at the outset that--I think she may have thought it was an extravagance. (Laughter) In fact, she said to me one time, "I don't know why Lyndon bought this place. He--we already had a home."

B: Really?

I: Yes. So that could have been--

B: She grew to appreciate it more.

I: Yes. Living there in East Texas, as we have for the last thirty or forty years--it's a whole different--it's a different world from this part of the world. So she had some terrific adjustments to make. But I think there was a--I spoke of the fact that they liked to do things for other people, but also I think each accommodated to the other's wishes and desires. Perhaps she more than he. But I meant this to be attributed to several things. One thing, the ERA hadn't come along, and Lyndon just did more [inaudible]. And she was never a retiring person, but she definitely was not the dominant personality that he was.

B: What were they like together, the two? Did they have a lot of fun together? Did they--?

I: I think they did. I think they did. I remember that--the thing that I remember about them when they were together was that they were very much more overtly affectionate than most people, which was fine. Wholesome. The way people are today, but it was ahead of--

B: Ahead of its time?

I: Ahead of its time. Yes.

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B: Okay.

I: Of course, I think this. I think her marriage was--it was just her life, because her brothers were years older than she was. I think maybe ten, twelve, maybe more than that. When she was a little girl growing up, they were off at school. Her father had married again, and I don't know at what point. I never have known. My sister and I were discussing that at one time, and Isabel thought that maybe he had married again after she got--after she came to the university, but I never was aware of it. Anyway, there was no--there was absolutely no compatibility there. Well--just no compatibility. I don't know that it was anything in particular. It could have been, as is frequently the case, that this second wife didn't want to share. But because of that, I think that, after her marriage, her husband and her children became--

B: Foremost?

I: --the whole--the whole thing, except her friends. She has an amazing capacity for maintaining her friendships. I know we have a mutual friend who lives in Eagle Pass. We all have an awful hard time keeping track of her because I don't know. She just--she never puts forth the slightest effort. I know when Mrs. Johnson was down there on business, and her husband said he was going down to [inaudible]. Maybe it was an opening of a cable office or something like that, and he said he was going, but she wasn't going. He said, "Well, I bet Bird's there." She said, "Oh, you men!" But she was. And he went home and managed to get her to come down, and Bird said several times she had been down there on business; she couldn't get them to meet her for lunch. But there was no reason in the world for her effort to maintain the friendship except that she was fond of her.

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B: Yes. She liked--what other interests did she--? Her interest in wildflowers is well-known. She also had an interest in--has an interest in literature. Does she like to read? Did she ever--?

I: Yes. Well, I think some--I was thinking the other day, and I can't remember what it was. There was something else that she was quite interested in before--it seems to me before the wildflowers. Although she was always--because I read something recently in which--I think when he was a senator--I think it wasn't when he was in the White House--inquired of the President where she was, and he said, "Oh, I don't know. She's out planting flowers somewhere." (Laughter) So that's a--that's a--

B: Longstanding?

I: Long time. I think she came to the realization that she did have a great deal of influence, that her name linked to anything was prestigious. Which, of course, it is. And that instead of spreading things too thin, she needed to decide what she thought was the highly desirable thing for her name to be linked to, and I think she decided that--and I'm glad she did.

B: Yes.

I: Of course, this has been going on for a long time. I think even during his lifetime she had started the award, which she gives to the--around the state to the Highway Department--maintenance, the district that's--the outstanding person each year. I think that was back before his death. Of course, education has always been an extremely important thing to her, and I'm quite sure in the planning of the many fine programs that the Johnsons--that he promoted during his presidency, I'm quite sure that they were joint

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thoughts--efforts--desires of theirs, because he was quoted at one point by somebody as saying that he always discussed everything--

B: With her?

I: --with her.

B: He seemed to value her opinion.

I: I had driven east with my daughter, who was in school in Massachusetts, and when we came back through Washington, the name was still in the telephone directory, which rather amazed me.

B: This was 1962?

I: It was when they--well, no, it was when they still lived in The Elms, wasn't it?

B: Yes.

I: I've forgotten where they lived later, when he was vice president. Is that when they moved the vice president to the--?

B: Yes. I think The Elms--I think that they lived in The Elms until they lived in the White House. I believe. I could be wrong.

I: Well, it always intrigued me while they were in the White House, if you wanted to call them, you just called the White House and asked to speak to them.

B: Really?

I: I don't believe it's that simple now.

B: Probably not. Did you ever do that?

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I: Yes. On one occasion. Something involving one of the girls, and I needed to talk to--[inaudible] my sister went to one of Mrs. Johnson's what-you-call-them--luncheons for women who do things?

B: Yes, women-doer's luncheons or something.

I: Yes. My sister went to one of them, and she'd never been to Washington, D.C. Bird had said, "Let me know when you get here." So she flew into Washington, went to whatever hotel--I don't remember--and checked in and then called Mrs. Johnson. And Mrs. Johnson was horrified that she was at the hotel. She thought she was going to call her from the airport. Anyway, she sent a limousine over--

B: Is that right?

I: --and said, "You're staying with us."

B: At the White House?

I: Yes. And my sister said the way to see Washington was in a presidential limousine, because when Mrs. Johnson was otherwise involved, she just called a car and had them take her to the National Art Gallery or to the Smithsonian or to whatever. Then, at one point in time, the two of them and the two girls sat out on the Truman Balcony and had tea. I remember my sister said she believed she was the most naive person that had ever been to one of those things, because--there was a luncheon and then I think the next day--I mean, I know the next day there was some sort of garden party at the White House, and she was standing talking to this woman, and the woman had been introduced, and my sister had heard the name, but anyway, she asked the woman what her husband did in Washington. The woman looked at her and said, "He's Secretary of Defense," or something like that.

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(Laughter) And [inaudible] said, "Anybody but me would have recognized the woman's name!"

B: Well, did you ever have any contact with the Johnsons during the presidential years?

I: We were out at the Ranch a couple of times, but not in D.C..

B: Do you remember who else was there? Anybody from Washington, or mostly Texas people?

I: It was family.

B: All family?

I: And the postmaster from San Antonio--I can't think of his name right now--who supposedly is the person who went to Sears and bought the wedding ring.

B: Oh, Dan Quill.

I: Dan Quill, yes. It was not a political--I remember one time when our younger daughter was at camp--now this would--she wasn't still going to camp when Lyndon became president. But, anyway, we took her down, and we had had a Rotary Exchange student from Sweden who had been living with us, and I had brought him down. He was flying out from Dallas, and I wanted him to see this part of Texas, and we were supposed to go by the Ranch for brunch, and I was to call the day before when we got down here. Well, anyhow, the President of Pakistan was coming that day, so we didn't get to go. Maybe he was vice president when that man--when that person came. I don't remember.

I think Lyndon was a person of rare talents. I think--I don't know how kindly or unkindly history will treat him. I think he was a victim of the Vietnam War bit. Incidentally, I spoke earlier of my children's--

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B: Viewpoint.

I: --and our oldest son was in Harvard, and I don't remember what had occurred, something with regard to the--and I got this three- or four-page, single-spaced, typewritten letter running down the President. And I thought a long time, and finally I wrote him about eight lines, and I said, "From personal experience, I think President Johnson wants to do what is best for everybody in this country. He may make some mistakes. But for you, young man, I would like for you to hold your--

B: Judgment?

I: --very critical remarks in abeyance until *you* have a personal friend in the White House!" About five years ago, he said, "You know, Mama, I think you're right about Johnson."

B: That was certainly a time of great passions.

I: Yes. And he was just going along with the--with the students. Of course, I think this. I think--well, I guess it happens more now, but it began in this country. The youth of this country did not appreciate the fact that they could make these cutting remarks about their head of state without being arrested. It's happening in--well, it's happening certainly in the Philippines and Korea, but up until it happened in this country, [inaudible] you could practically get your--in some countries, you'd get your head chopped off!

B: How about post-presidential years?

I: I think he was miserable.

B: Did you ever go out to the Ranch during that time?

I: Yes.

B: Tell me about that. You think he--

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- I: Well, one time we were there, and he had this telephone sitting on the dining-room table, and he was talking on the telephone, and we were sitting, waiting. And finally she said, "Lyndon, if you would get off of the phone for a few minutes and say the blessing, the rest of us could eat." (Laughter)
- B: That's good. Did he get off?
- I: Yes, yes, he did. And then one time we were--the sprinkler system wasn't working. He had to have new heads for the spigots or something. I don't know. I think maybe that was the same time. He was on the phone about that. Anyway, he said--well, they really were late. They were supposed to have been there the day before, or certainly that day, and they hadn't arrived yet. So he said, "American Airlines is going to get them down here!" Well, in a minute, here came the plane and landed, so he leaped up and went and got in his Lincoln convertible and went out, and guess who it was? The president of American Airlines brought the things for his sprinkler system. But--
- B: This was after he was president?
- I: Oh, yes indeed. He was out of the White House. But it seemed too bad to me for a man with the fantastic abilities that he had to be almost reduced to being concerned about a sprinkler system!
- B: And that's what--
- I: That's what it seemed.
- B: And that's what--when you say he was miserable, that's what you're talking about?
- I: Yes.
- B: But he seemed to be--

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I: He had to have something to be tending to, to be--well, I don't mean "fussing about" in a derogatory manner. I mean--

B: Be busy.

I: --busy about. Yes. That's better. And there just wasn't that much for him. Of course, I think--I have always thought that we have never been a country who took full advantage of the best people we have. In the early years, some of the presidents went back to Congress, or at least one of them did. And, you see, also, William Howard Taft became--went on the Supreme Court after he was president. But not even in a--and, of course, they changed parties. But we don't use--or at least Lyndon was not used, I think, as the emeritus.

B: Did you have any--get the feeling that he was concerned with his health during that time period, that he was--?

I: I never had that feeling. I think he never was concerned with his health. I think there were probably two facets there. Maybe, now--this is just purely personal opinion. It's not based on anything else. But he had two attitudes toward it: one, if you paid no attention to it, it'd go away, and two, the Lord wouldn't dare take him! No, I don't think he took care of himself. I think he may have at the very end, but--he did not at first after he had that heart attack.

B: In 1955.

I: Yes. But I'm sure part of that was because Bird probably rode pretty strong supervision on everything. And their lives became so involved, that that probably couldn't continue. I mean, they just gradually had no definite further manifestations of it.

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B: LBJ has a legendary temper. When he gets mad, he--when he would get mad, he would really let it show at certain times. Did you ever witness this at all?

(Interruption)

I: During her college years, Mrs. Johnson used to give up smoking for Lent. She never did smoke. (Laughter) So I know she never smoked. At the time she was giving it up for Lent, she didn't smoke! (Laughter)

B: I was going to say, "I didn't know Mrs. Johnson ever smoked."

I: She was the only Episcopalian in the group, I think, is why we remember it and were aware of it. But we used to have lots of fun out of her about that.

The cover story in *Time* magazine on Mrs. Johnson--I don't remember the woman whose name was given, but I think it was someone from East Texas. Anyway, someone who supposedly had known Mrs. Johnson for several years--some time--more than several years. I didn't think it was very complimentary. There were several--perhaps not derogatory things she said, but definite negative.

B: Like what?

I: I can't remember. Anyway, I took exception to them, and I wrote *Time* magazine and told them so.

B: Do you remember what year this was, or approximately?

I: I have the *Time* magazine at home. I can find out, and it would have been within six months because my full letter--my full letter came out in the letter section--

B: Okay.

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I: --of *Time*. In fact, a friend--a college friend that I'd lost track of for probably fifteen years--saw the letter, and we started corresponding and have seen each other several times!

(Laughter)

B: Is that right?

I: Yes. But I took them to task and told them they should be more careful than to quote just one--

B: Source?

I: --one source, that--

B: You don't remember at all what it was--?

I: No, and I'm sorry. I don't even remember--it wasn't just blatantly critical.

B: Yes.

I: But it was something that I felt compelled to take issue with them. If among my souvenirs, memorabilia, I can find the copy of *Time*--surely there is a copy.

B: Oh, I'm sure we have it at the Library. There's a person who clips articles on Mrs. Johnson.

I: Because at that point in time, they're bound to have had clipping services that they kept on that sort of thing. But I guess the thing that I have objected to the most was some of the pictures that they have--various members of the media have--well, actually, published the both of them. Lyndon wasn't all that photogenic, either. But I think he came off better than she did. But it doesn't bother her. Doesn't seem to, anyway, which is fine. She should rise above it, and she has. I think--I think she's had a remarkable life since the President's death. In a way, it would have been great if they had had years and years and years down the way, but in another way, it's great that she has had--being so capable and so desirous of doing

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things--that she's had the years to do it on a completely different type of activity. I have often thought that she has come into her own, which is a rather trite expression, even as Eleanor Roosevelt did after President Roosevelt's death.

B: Do you mean with the wildflowers and--

I: Yes. Yes, but I'm glad they went for wildflowers instead of coal mines. That's not meant to be flippant. Coal mining needed to be done, but--and, of course, she's done a fantastic--that library would not be what it is if she hadn't, I think--if she hadn't been so very active.

B: I think she had a large part in the planning.

I: Yes. I went down--I was by the office and she--we were going down to South Texas. I was in Austin, and I was to come out to the Ranch, and we were going to fly down to South Texas to see the wildflowers. Anyway, I was talking with the girls in the office, and they said, "For goodness sakes, go!" They said, "If you leave her out there by herself all weekend, she'll come back with fifteen times as many ideas as we can get done!"

(Laughter)

B: People that have worked for LBJ talk about him as a hard taskmaster, but she was--she--

I: Oh, yes. She gets it, too. But, even as he, she works as hard as anybody. And I think maybe--I think maybe, neither of them--it never occurs to them that everybody's not as enthusiastic about it as they are and *wants* to do that. Because they don't ask anything of anybody that they don't do themselves.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I

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