

INTERVIEW II

DATE: July 10, 1969
INTERVIEWEE: CARROLL KEACH
INTERVIEWER: DAVID MCCOMB
PLACE: Mr. Keach's home in Robstown, Texas

Tape 1 of 1

M: This is an interview with Mr. Carroll Keach--Carroll spelled C-A-R-R-O-L-L and Keach spelled K-E-A-C-H--at his home in Robstown at 105 East Avenue. It is July 10 at approximately 2:30 in the afternoon.

First of all, I'd like to know a little bit about you. Where were you born? When? Where did you get your education?

K: I was born in Tomball, that's in north Harris County above Houston, in 1914, September 22. My family moved back to Houston when I was two years old. I did my first elementary work at old Travis School in Houston. When I was in the third grade my father moved [us] to Arlington, Texas. He thought that my older sisters and possibly myself--it might be more economical for a family with modest means to be able to go to that college there, which was a junior college at the time, a two-year college. But their roots were so deep in Houston, both his and my mother's, that it didn't last too long and we moved back to Houston when I was still in elementary school. I finished elementary school at Eastwood in the east part of Houston, then I went to Jackson Junior High School. And from there I went to Sam Houston, which was originally the old Central High School in Houston.

M: Was that the only high school in town at that time?

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K: No. San Jacinto was a junior high school and Houston Heights was not in the city at that time, and they had a high school there, but that's why they called it Central, because it was actually the only high school at that time, I believe. I mean when it was first started. By the time I got in high school, why, then there were others. San Jacinto became a high school, and then what was a junior high school over in the Third Ward became Jeff Davis. And then Milby, I think, was probably the third, although it was outside of the Houston Independent School District at that time. And then, of course, the Houston Heights came into the area which was Reagan, and so on.

I met Lyndon while he was at Sam Houston as a teacher of speech and the debate coach.

M: And you were a student?

K: I was a student in high school.

M: Did you take any classes under him?

K: Well, I was in his speech class, but not because I was a debater or wanted to study speech. But one of my closest personal friends that I grew up with in junior high school was a member of his debate team, Gene Latimer.

M: Oh, yes.

K: Have you talked to him?

M: No, but I've heard of his name.

K: He and Luther Jones, the attorney in Corpus Christi, were outstanding debaters, and the two years that the President coached debate, they went to the state finals. But on both occasions they were defeated by old Brackenridge in San Antonio, which was coached at that time by a little red-headed man named Barksdale, wasn't it? And they went to the finals

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two years in a row. Of course that second time, it was a pretty bitter pill for all of us to swallow because they had been so close twice.

M: Do you remember anything about Lyndon Johnson as a teacher? Do you have any impressions of him?

K: Definitely. He was just as dynamic then as he is now. I mean, as you can see from his debate success. Whatever he was associated with, or attached to, why, he went at with the same gusto that he does now.

M: Did he work you pretty hard in class?

K: Well, he didn't work me because I wasn't a very good student, but the pupils that he had that were outstanding, he kept in a pretty fast trot. He also had two girls who were outstanding debaters. I don't know that they ever went as far as the state finals, but they were very outstanding and very successful debaters.

M: Do you have any idea what kind of reputation he had as a teacher with the other students? Did the kids like him? Did they think he was tough?

K: I don't remember other students knowing him too much, because he was mostly identified, if I remember correctly, with speech and debate. He devoted his full time to this. I don't know that he had a whole lot to do with the rest of the student body because he was there such a short time.

M: The principal was who? Was that Mr. Moyes?

K: Yes.

M: Yes, who had a long career there.

K: Yes, been there a long time.

M: In the high school system. Well then, shortly after that, Lyndon Johnson got a job as an assistant to Congressman Kleberg.

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K: No, he was the actual secretary. He was congressional secretary to Richard Kleberg. Mr. Kleberg was elected in a special election when Mr. Wurzbach in San Antonio died. Mr. Kleberg was elected as representative in the House which gave the majority to the Democrats for the first time in the thirties in that particular era, which, when they reorganized the House, that's when John Garner became speaker. So, when Mr. Kleberg was elected as a Democrat, this threw the majority to the Democrats in the House by one vote. They reorganized the House and elected John Garner speaker.

M: Do you know if Lyndon Johnson campaigned for Kleberg when Kleberg was first running?

K: I don't think he did a whole lot. He may have done some, because he was a good friend of Roy Miller's, of Corpus Christi, Texas, and Mr. Miller, of course, had a lot to do with Mr. Kleberg's election, and Lyndon and his father both knew Roy Miller real well. I don't think he knew Mr. Kleberg too well, but I think it was through Roy Miller that he became Mr. Kleberg's congressional secretary.

M: I see.

K: So that's when he left Sam Houston and went to Washington with Mr. Richard Kleberg.

M: Okay. Then what happened to you?

K: I still remained in Houston.

M: You graduated from high school?

K: For a short time...well, I didn't graduate. It was during the Depression era and I was sort of a dropout at that time and was working at menial jobs.

M: That was a tough period of time.

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K: But after they'd been up there a year or so, why, when he went to Washington as Mr. Kleberg's secretary he took Gene Latimer and Luther Jones with him as his office assistants. They were assistant secretaries.

M: Yes.

K: Well, they would come back to Texas, you know, during the holidays, or during when the sessions were over. And one Christmas, why, he knew that Latimer and I were such good friends that he asked me if I wanted to go to Washington. He said he didn't know whether he could find a job for me or not, that I'd be on my own. And he'd suggested earlier in correspondence that I go to business school and try to learn to type and take shorthand. And I made a stab at it, but I wasn't--by the time we went to Washington I was very inept; I mean I was just a beginner as a stenographer. So I was pretty much on my own, but I went through the regular political process that all young people do when they go to Washington. I went to the National Committee to get a letter of recommendation, and told them that I had this connection with Mr. Kleberg, so I went from one little job to another at first. I worked in the Federal Housing Administration in the mail room. In fact, Senator Morris Sheppard helped me get that first job. I was really on starvation there, but my friends and I were all living in the basement of the old Dodge Hotel at the time.

M: Yes. Latimer lived there and Jones lived there.

K: Jones lived there, and Lyndon lived there. Bob Jackson, who is now editor of the Caller-Times, Corpus Christi, Texas, lived there. He was in the Senate Library when he first went up there, but he later became secretary to Senator Tom Connally, you know. He is now editor of the Corpus Christi-Caller-Times.

M: You were living in the basement?

K: There were bachelor's quarters down in the basement of the old Grace Dodge in Washington.

M: Oh yes.

K: And also, on the other side, they had these basement apartments for young unmarried women, too. Of course, it was on the lower floor, below the lobby, and the rest of the hotel, of course, was as most people know it.

M: You didn't have any windows down there?

K: Oh yes. There were windows.

M: Basement windows?

K: There were basement windows. When you entered the Dodge off the main street you went up a pretty good flight of steps to the lobby, and the lobby had several different raised areas and lower levels, and that sort of thing. The room we had was in a far back corner on an alley, but we did have a nice large window in there.

M: Was it fairly cheap to live there?

K: Yes, or we wouldn't have been living there. You know, with the wages that we were able to earn.

M: Do you remember how much it cost you?

K: No, I really don't. I really don't know. It's been so long ago.

M: And whereabouts did you eat? Did you eat at the Dodge?

K: No, only about once a month we'd save up. The Dodge had a wonderful dining room in those days and we'd try to save up and eat Sunday dinner there about once a month, but it was real excellent cuisine. We had to cut it pretty short. We snacked a lot and ate at pretty economical places.

M: What did you do to entertain yourself?

K: Well, even lower echelon people like we were, they had the --is it the Texas Society? Is that what they call it?

M: Yes. There is a Texas Society still operating.

K: They had monthly dances at the Mayflower. Somehow or other we would manage to rent a tux and go to those things. And of course there were a lot of things to see around Washington for people like us that were new. We did a lot of sightseeing. We rode those old open streetcars on Sunday afternoon for kicks. They still have these old trolleys running without any windows--open on the sides.

M: Yes.

K: Washington has a lot of parks and tennis courts. We went down to the river a whole lot. They had these free concerts during the summer on the Potomac where they had this bandshell out on the river. There was really a lot to do for young people that didn't have very much economically.

M: Did you find people to date?

K: Oh yes. There were just as many single girls up there, if not more, than there were single boys.

M: Do you remember anything about the Little Congress?

K: Yes, I do. Definitely. I remember that this was a very competitive type of thing. Of course, all of them being associated with politicians, the leaders of the Little Congress were, you know, 'gung ho' too. I remember the night that Lyndon was elected speaker of the Little Congress. It was quite an occasion. It was held in the Democratic Caucus Room or the Main Caucus Room in the old House Office Building. It was packed to the rafters and people even standing around the walls.

M: Really.

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K: They had all the news media of the day in there. Of course there was no television, but they had--

M: Even the news media was interested in it?

K: Oh yes. They had klieg lights all over the place taking pictures...

M: Why would the news media be so interested?

K: I don't know. At the time this evades me, but I guess it was because--I don't even know who the other candidate was, but it was a very close and vigorous battle for this office.

M: Well, Lyndon Johnson was practically unknown, though, when he first got that sort of thing, and all of a sudden he was elected.

K: Yes, but just like people know him nowadays, it didn't take Lyndon Johnson long to learn the ropes. Not only on the Hill, but in the various agencies and departments and independent agencies.

M: Did he campaign?

K: Oh yes. It was all conducted...they made speeches. They had their ward heelers on each floor of the House. There was quite a battle for it.

M: What did he do after he was elected?

K: I don't remember the details about the Little Congress, whether it was a debating society, or whether they discussed legislation and that type of thing, or not, but at the time we thought it was quite something for him to be so young and so new on the Hill to be elected.

M: I've read that in those days Lyndon Johnson would talk with his friends a great deal about politics, that this was the main topic of conversation.

K: Oh, he lived and breathed it. He woke up talking about it and he talked it during meals; he lived it. This was his life.

M: This would include all phases of politics?

K: All phases of politics, right.

M: How to get bills passed, and the characters of various congressmen...

K: Yes. He was very well informed. Kept himself well informed. In fact, he would discuss a lot of legislation with Mr. Kleberg and if they disagreed they would debate it within the office and if a vote was coming up that he felt differently about than Mr. Kleberg did, why he would express himself freely with the Congressman. He had a lot of influence with Mr. Kleberg on a lot of legislation, because he was so persuasive, you know. Just as he is no.

M: And he was persuasive in his arguments just talking about politics.

K: Even talking with the Congressman about particular bills that were coming up for a vote in the House. And, of course, Texas had so many committee chairmen because of their seniority in the House then. They held about, I'd have to count them up, but it seems like to me there were at least ten or twelve committee chairmen that were Texans.

M: Yes.

K: A great group of them.

M: To be so well informed, he must have worked pretty hard in his job.

K: Oh, he did. Well, the first thing he did before he even came to Corpus Christi and Kingsville to meet Mr. Kleberg, he stopped by my father-in-law's house in Floresville--Sam Fore, Jr., publisher of the Floresville Chronicle Journal and the Robstown Record, who is now deceased--and got acquainted with him. Introduced himself, and spent the night there. I don't think they'd ever met before that, had they, Marion? (speaking to Mrs. Keach, also in the room) And this is where they became acquainted. He had heard of Mr. Fore's reputation as a Democrat and as a leader in party affairs, and he knew that Mr. Fore was a real close friend of Richard Kleberg's. So on his way down from Washington to Corpus Christi to take over as secretary for Mr. Kleberg, before they went back to

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Washington, he stopped in Floresville and no telling how many other places on his way down to South Texas. And he spent the night with them, didn't he? The story goes that he took his shoes off and sat down on the floor and nibbled on a plate of cookies that Mr. Fore brought him, and they talked 'til the wee hours. Mr. Fore commented after he left, he said, "Elma, that boy's going places one of these days. He's got plenty on the ball." He sold Mr. Fore real quick. This is the way he operated.

M: Was your wife there at the time?

K: Were you home at the time when this took place? (speaking to his wife in the room, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Sam Fore, Jr. She relates story of when she met Lyndon Johnson, mostly inaudible. He was driving a car owned by the King Ranch)

M: Did the King Ranch supply that car?

K: Well, they have a leather shop in Kingsville that makes saddles. They call it the Running W Saddle Shop. They made these seat covers for him and they had the running W on them. It had these big balloon tires, you know. It was mod. Would you say mod? The way for a young, single man to travel in those days.

M: Did you finally go to work for Lyndon Johnson in Kleberg's office?

K: No. He came to Texas after I worked at all these menial jobs around in different places in government departments, including the old Post Office Building. And I had one job where I had to go to work real early in the morning. I was what they called a machine operator, you know, a sorting machine that sorted these comptometer cards, I guess they were then. Predecessor to data processing. It was in this old Post Office Building

which still stands. It has a big, old clock and the tower on it. Do you know what I'm talking about?

M: Yes.

K: Well, the elevator would only go so far, and then I had to walk these steel steps up several flights. And then later I got a job with the Department of Agriculture as a file clerk. And it was in that same building. I don't know whether you've ever been in it or not, but it has a great big center in it, and these floors go around. It has skylights in it. Although it wasn't the main building of the Department of Agriculture, in those days, they kept a lot of their files from the AAA Program and that sort of thing in this old Post Office building. I worked in there as a file clerk. And they just had rows and rows and rows of files for every state, every farmer, all over the nation in this particular building. Then later as patronage jobs opened up, through Lyndon and Mr. Kleberg, I went to work in the Capitol Building first as an elevator operator. I was running an old elevator way back in the center of the old Capitol Building that went up to the old Supreme Court chambers. You know, they were originally in the old Capitol Building before they built the new Supreme Court building. And it was way back in an isolated corner where a very few people, except a few Congressmen or old, old time employees of the Capitol even knew it was there, so I would sit there by the hour without even a passenger. And then later I was promoted to elevator operator in the new House Office building as it was known then. There was the old House Office building, and the new House Office building and that was before the Sam Rayburn Office building was built. And this was a very modern building. Mr. Kleberg had been in that building from the very beginning, which was unusual for a freshman congressman, because

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so many of them, even like Maury Maverick after he was elected to Congress, had an office in the old House Office building. When Lyndon resigned as Mr. Kleberg's secretary to come to Texas to become state director of the National Youth Administration, his brother Sam Houston Johnson became Mr. Kleberg's secretary. By this time Gene Latimer and Luther Jones had gone on and completed their educations and they were doing other things.

M: They went to law school, didn't they? In Washington?

K: Yes. Latimer never did complete his work. He didn't ever become a lawyer, but Luther did. Luther Jones did and is a very outstanding attorney as you know. One of the most outstanding probably in Texas, among the most outstanding attorneys. He's considered a lawyer's lawyer, you know.

M: Do you remember if Lyndon Johnson went to law school?

K: I think he did probably a short time, I believe in Georgetown. I don't know for how long, but we all did a little bit of that. I even entered some law classes at George Washington University, you know, but I was just in there a short time because I didn't have the background or the.... They were night classes, and I took a few hours in torts, contracts, and that sort of thing, but it didn't take and I just didn't have the background for it. I hadn't had any undergraduate college work--at the college level.

M: Do you have any idea why Lyndon Johnson quite working for Kleberg?

K: Well, I think he saw in this National Youth Administration an opportunity to come back to Texas which he wanted to do. I think he had just 'done his thing' as a congressional secretary and he wanted to move on...

M: While he was working for Kleberg did he fairly well run that office?

K: Oh, definitely, definitely.

M: Answered the mail, set up the appointments, and the whole thing..

K: Right, right.

M: I've also read that at that time Johnson got into the habit of answering mail immediately.

K: Oh, this was a fetish with him. Also accurately typed letters. I mean he wouldn't put up with a sloppy job of typing at all.

M: Did he work for Kleberg like that?

K: Oh yes.

M: Getting the mail out.

K: He drove them, drove everybody that worked for him, just drove himself and everybody that was associated with him. He just always had that tremendous drive.

M: Sometimes people with that kind of ambition and drive make a lot of enemies. Did you like him at the time? Did you consider him a good friend?

K: Oh yes. Yes. Of course I just thought he hung the moon, and still do. We called him "Chief," even then. As his assistants, although we were just flunkies in the office we all referred to him as "Chief"--we called him the "Chief." And still do. If I were to meet him tomorrow it would be difficult for me not to say, "Hi, Chief," instead of, "Hello, Mr. President." It would be real difficult not to refer to him as "Chief."

M: Well, then, he came back to Texas for the NYA.

K: Right.

M: And you were there in Washington. Then what happened?

K: Well, in the meantime, after Maury Maverick was elected to the House, I became an assistant secretary in Maury Maverick's office under Malcolm Bardwell who was Maury Sr.'s secretary when he first came to Washington.

M: Did you know Mr. Maverick?

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K: No, that was through Lyndon that I met Mr. Maverick. They were working then at that time on trying to get the Post Office building in San Antonio through and while I was working with Mr. Kleberg and Lyndon in that circle, I met Mr. Maverick because he and his associates and the architects were making frequent trips to Washington trying to get this project approved. Dan Quill, the postmaster, and that sort of thing. So that's where I met Mr. Maverick and his employees. When he came to Congress they needed an assistant secretary, and so I worked in there first. Then when Lyndon resigned from Mr. Kleberg's office, Sam Houston became Mr. Dick's secretary, then he took me on as an assistant. I moved from Maury Maverick's office back to Mr. Kleberg's office.

M: And worked under Sam.

K: Worked under Sam Houston.

M: Did the office procedures change much?

K: Not a great deal. Sam Houston, also, is a very astute politician. In a lot of ways his mind functions just like Lyndon's as far as his awareness and being astute in the ways of political. . .

M: What kind of work did you do in Kleberg's office?

K: Well, it was typical, you know, typing letters and filing, talking to people that would come in. I would keep the office open during the summer months when they were back in Texas, sometimes.

In fact, that's where I met Mrs. Keach. Was it 1936? Yes. I was keeping the office open and during the Democratic National Convention she was to represent Texas in its Centennial year in this, what they used to have, sort of a beauty pageant. Anyway, it was in Philadelphia. But they stopped by Washington on their way to Philadelphia to the convention. And, of course, they wanted to meet Mr. Garner.* Mr. Fore

Note: Garner made his first campaign speech for Congress in Floresville, Texas, Fore's hometown.

had known Mr. Garner for a long time, who, by that time, was the vice president. I took them over to Mr. Garner's office and Marion presented Garner with a bouquet of red roses from Tyler, Texas, and Texas Centennial. They went on to Philadelphia to the convention. She was elected the National Queen of the Democratic National Convention that year [1936] and came home with a great big trophy about three or four feet high. She has a scrapbook that's full of where her picture and Mr. Fore's picture appeared all over the world. The wire services picked it up. She has a scrapbook about three inches thick of nothing but this Democratic convention experience. But while they were in Washington, it was my duty to escort them around to the Supreme Court and the typical tourist sort of thing. [The Library of Congress, etc.]

M: How did this happen to fall to you?

K: Well, different ones would keep the office open and then the rest of the force would move to Texas so that they could be with the people and make speeches and travel over the district during the time that Congress wasn't in session.

M: How long did you work for Congressman Kleberg?

K: After Lyndon became state director of the NYA, I stayed with Mr. Kleberg, I don't know, possibly a year or two. I wanted to come back to Texas then and there was an opening at the National Youth Administration in Austin. I had been corresponding with my future wife, and that was a great attraction. No, I'll take it back. There wasn't an opening in the National Youth Administration at the time, but one of the other assistant secretaries in Mr. Dick's office was a boy named James Spivey who grew up in Laredo and went to Texas A and I. He married a young woman from Corpus Christi, Ben Grisham's daughter who at that time owned Grisham Ice Cream Company. This Spivey boy was a very unusual secretary in that he spoke and wrote Spanish fluently, and as you know, Mr. Kleberg spoke and wrote

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Spanish very fluently, and Spivey was one of the few people who I knew or who have ever known in the congressional circles up there from Texas that could take dictation in Spanish, and compose these letters for Mr. Dick in Spanish. It was through my acquaintance with Jim Spivey that I got a job with the Grisham Ice Cream Company in Corpus Christi in order to get back to Texas. I worked in the main plant in Corpus Christi learning the basic fundamentals of the milk and ice cream business, and then they sent me up to Floresville to open a little substation. This is, again, where I--

M: That's just where you wanted to go.

K: Where I wanted to go. I was closer to the scene of my object of affection. I worked there, I guess, in Floresville about a year and then they did have an opening in the National Youth Administration, and I gave up this job and went to work for the NYA.

M: And what was the nature of the job with NYA?

K: Actually, I didn't have a specific title but I was doing, in a way, sort of jobs for Lyndon Johnson and his assistant, who was Jesse Kellam. He was the assistant state director. And I traveled with them a great deal. They traveled all over the state and they held district meetings and state-wide meetings. They'd bring in district directors to Austin, and I had a certain amount of chores to do in arranging these meetings, a place for them to meet. Then when they traveled over the state to various projects, why, I went with them, drove them, and was sort of a traveling secretary, handyman, and that sort of thing.

M: Was Lyndon Johnson working just as hard then as ever?

K: Yes. Oh my goodness, yes. He even brought Dr. Mary Bethune to Texas. People like that. Aubrey Williams, who was the national director, came

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to Texas. Eleanor Roosevelt came to Texas and visited a number of NYA projects that he was particularly interested in.

M: Did you meet Eleanor Roosevelt at that time?

K: I don't believe I did. I don't believe I did. Mrs. Keach also worked for the National Youth Administration in public relations, and she attended either a luncheon or you were around Mrs. Roosevelt somewhat while she was in Texas, were you not? (talking to Mrs. Keach in the room-- she says something about Mrs. Roosevelt, not too clear) Did she and Dr. Bethune come together on the same trip? But they had a number of work experience projects that were unique to Texas and they brought a lot of national people down here to show them what they were doing in these training programs.

M: Did Mrs. Roosevelt then know personally Lyndon Johnson at that time, do you think?

K: Yes, because through his contacts, she had met him at different places, but she was very much interested in this particular program. I think through Aubrey Williams that he invited her to come to Texas. This is all so long ago that the details of how it came about evade me.
(Mrs. Keach speaks off mike to Mr. Keach)

K: Well, this was after Lyndon was elected to Congress.

M: We'll get to that.

K: We'll get to that later.

M: Okay. Now you're working for the NYA.

K: Yes.

M: And how long did you work for them?

K: Quite a while. While I was traveling around with Lyndon making these various trips over the state visiting NYA district directors and other

personnel, I drove him quite a bit and stayed with him in the hotel. We'd take trips where we were gone three and four days at a time.

Mr. Buchanan who was, I believe, the fourth member of Congress ever to represent the old Tenth District from Austin, died suddenly. He was chairman of the House Appropriations Committee at the time. And when Mr. Buchanan died, we drove to Brenham, and Lyndon and Lady Bird attended Mr. Buchanan's funeral. Shortly after we returned to Austin he began making his contacts with people in Austin and over the district, feeling them out as to whether he should get in this race for Congress or not.

M: Did he say anything to you at the time of the funeral about entering the race?

K: This I don't remember, whether this was actually on his mind at the time or not. It could have been but I don't remember him discussing it at that particular moment.

M: Had you gotten married by this time?

K: No. I was still single. Still single.

M: But still courting.

K: But still courting.

M: I see. And of course Lyndon Johnson had been married by this time.

K: Yes.

M: Did you have anything to do with the wedding?

K: No.

M: Oh, I see.

K: They had been up there a year or two after Mr. Kleberg was elected before I went to Washington. When I say they, I mean Mr. Kleberg and Lyndon and Gene Latimer and Luther Jones.

M: Yes.

K: I don't remember just how long, but they'd been up there at least for a session or two before he took me back to Washington and said, "Well, you're on your own. Go out and see if you can get yourself a job somewhere. I don't have one for you, but good luck."

M: Okay. Then Lyndon Johnson decides to run for Congress and starts to lay his plans, and I assume you continue to work for the NYA through this. Did you help him campaign at all?

K: Then after he--

Mrs. K: He resigned.

K: Well, after he announced for Congress, then I resigned from NYA and traveled with him as a traveling secretary, valet and chauffeur. I went with him every step of the way. The only place I missed was the opening rally at San Marcos. He opened his campaign in San Marcos because [of] his affiliation and his affection for Southwest Texas State Teachers College. But I kept the headquarters in the old Austin Hotel open that night. I was about the only one left there. Everybody else went to San Marcos for this opening rally. And I kept the headquarters open in the old Austin Hotel.

M: Yes. And who was the campaign manager?

K: His name was Claude Wild.*

M: In Austin. A lawyer.

K: Yes, he's an attorney, I'm sure. I haven't seen him in a number of years. But he did have a good reputation as a campaign manager.

M: I was going to ask you, why did you people select Claude Wild?

K: I suspect that Senator Alvin Wirtz...

Mrs. K: Allred, too.

*(Note: He had others or at least one, perhaps, but the campaign was not progressing and that is when they brought Claude Wild in) C.K.

K: ...and Jimmy Allred probably had a lot to do with it. I don't know whether Claude Wild had actually managed any of Governor Allred's campaign on a state-wide basis, but I would assume that it was through Senator A.J. Wirtz and probably through Jimmy Allred that Claude Wild was brought in to the picture. He wasn't campaign manager when he first started. I don't know who was. I can't remember, but they thought things were beginning to flounder a little bit, and there was disorganization in the typing pool and getting out literature. They brought Mr. Wild in shortly after the campaign opened, but how long it had been going when he came into the picture, I don't know.

M: Did he have any particular strategy or policy for this campaign?

K: Well, Lyndon Johnson's policy and strategy always was just like it is now: to get out and meet the people and shake hands with them.

Mrs. K: Get the job done.

M: Yes.

K: Mr. Fore used to like to tell a story about him when he came to Floresville campaigning one time. They'd worked all day long and climbed over fences to shake hands with farmers plowing the fields, and Mr. Fore was almost as indefatigable as the President about campaigning. It was dark and they were hungry and tired, and they had started to go to the house to eat dinner, and Mr. Fore said, "Oh Lyndon, I forgot. There's a man that runs a service station way out here on the edge of town that we missed. Let's go shake hands. I want you to meet him."

M: So they went one more.

K: So, this is the way--although Floresville wasn't in the Tenth District when he first ran for Congress. I assume this was one of his senatorial campaigns. But Mr. Fore and a number of people from South Texas, like

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Denver Chestnut, who was the publisher of the Kenedy [Texas] paper. They actually went into the Tenth District, a lot of these people did, that knew Lyndon through his association with Mr. Kleberg. They came into the Tenth District to campaign for this young friend of theirs.

M: Well now, if you were traveling around with him, you must have done a lot of driving.

K: Yes. I did. I did all the driving.

M: Where did you spend your nights?

K: In hotels, or if he had close friends in the town they would put us up for the night. He had a lot of connections that he had made through his statewide advisory board and this NYA program. He had built quite a base there of friendships and all with the public officials, school people from the college level on down, business leaders, civic leaders at all levels, through his NYA program which was a state-wide program.

M: Did he give many speeches?

K: Did he give many speeches?!

M: I mean, did he get up to rallies?

K: Oh yes. We had a sound truck, you know, an automobile with a record player in it. When we'd move into a town we'd have an advance man who would go in and make arrangements, you know, as to where he should speak--on the courthouse lawn, or where would be the most accessible or available place. Then before the rally would start, why, then I'd change cars. I'd get in this car and play these records and make the announcements: Come hear Lyndon Johnson speak at the courthouse square, such and such a time, you know.

M: Did you play any records in particular?

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K: Oh, the "Washington Post March." I can still hear it ringing now. We didn't have very many records, and I had to play them over and over again.

M: So you'd try to gather a crowd. Then what would you do, change cars again and drive him up?

K: Well, then while he was speaking I'd go around town putting placards in drugstores and tacking up placards and handing out stickers. I didn't always stay for the speeches. While he was talking I'd be circling through the business community and passing out campaign literature, and that sort of thing.

M: Was he a good speaker?

K: Yes. Especially--this is his real forte--on the stump, speaking extemporaneously, as you know if you've ever heard him.

M: There's been a lot of talk about what a poor television speaker he is, versus how good he is talking to small groups. Do you think this is true?

K: Well, I don't happen to think he's a poor speaker. I think it's just his style that they compare with other people. They tend to compare him with people who have made a profession [of it], who probably took professional training for television.

M: But his stump speaking is very effective.

K: He was very much in the Harry Truman style of 'give 'em hell' type of speaking.

M: Was a lot of his speaking ad lib? Was it extemporaneous?

K: They were all extemporaneous. Yes. He carried all of his stuff in his head. He very rarely used notes unless it was a radio broadcast, and of course this irritated him a whole lot because they demanded prepared scripts in advance in those days, a lot of radio stations did. I don't know if it was the individual radio station, or whether it was the

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Federal Communications requirement, but a political speech had to be reviewed by the station in advance. He didn't like this, of course.

M: Did he use the radio a great deal in this campaign?

K: Well, there wasn't a whole lot in the thirties, as we know it now, but he used it wherever it was available in that first race. Mostly the Austin station, I presume, because there weren't any other large towns in the Tenth District, if I remember correctly, as it was constituted then. Austin was the largest city in the district, if I remember right. Isn't that right, Marion?

M: Did you go mainly to the towns and cities?

K: Oh, we covered the whole [state]. We covered them all. We didn't miss any of them.

M: What would you do about farmers out on their farms?

K: Well, a lot of times this advance man would set up a meeting in a rural area, say like in Brenham. They'd know in advance that they were going to have [it].

M: You'd announce it maybe a couple of days before?

K: Announce that Lyndon Johnson was going to be there. And invite a group of farmers or people like that to be at such and such a place at a hall and then Lyndon Johnson would appear.

M: I see.

K: As I say, he had made friends and connections, and they would give, say, a breakfast for him where he'd meet different leaders in the community, then he'd get up and say a few remarks.

M: Did they have barbecues in those days?

K: They had barbecues of a sort. I remember one time in Brenham, especially. They had a breakfast, out at a very interesting place where they had broiled steak and eggs and the works, just out in the open. I don't know if it was a private club, or just what it was. Of course, the barbecues and that sort of thing weren't as elaborate then as people have come to know them in a political way by today's standards.

M: Do you have any idea where he got the money to run this campaign?

K: Well, I probably didn't know it at the time, but I have read since then that when he finally made the decision, Mrs. Johnson called her father in Karnack, Texas, Mr. T.J. Taylor, and told her daddy that she wanted to draw out a sum of money from her inheritance and that they would pay it back. Then, of course, after Claude Wild took over and Senator Wirtz, I mean, contributions started to come in. But I think his initial push came from these funds that Lady Bird had inherited through her family.

M: Did Mrs. Johnson campaign at all? Or did ladies campaign in those days?

K: She went with him to certain things, but she didn't campaign with him in the sense that people know her now as a public figure. She kept the home fires burning. And laundry was a problem with him traveling that much, you know. I mean we'd run by and grab a few clean shirts and a couple of suits and toss the laundry bag in and say, "Goodbye. We're going somewhere. See you later." She may have campaigned with him more than I remember, but I don't think in the sense that ladies have in more recent years.

M: Did he get sick toward the end of that campaign?

K: Yes.

M: Had appendicitis or something.

K: Yes.

M: What happened?

K: Well, he just had acute appendicitis. He just bowed his neck and said people would accuse him of using this as a sympathy thing to get votes, and he just rebelled against it. They finally called in about four or five doctors and told him he didn't have any choice, they were going to have to come out that night. He called in people like Mr. Fore, Marion's father, and Denver Chestnut, and Senator Wirtz. Debated with all of them, and they finally just told him, with all these doctors in the room, "You don't have any choice, Lyndon. They've got to come out and they've got to come out right now." And they did.

M: So he had an operation.

K: At Seton Hospital in Austin. Had he already been elected? The reason why I ask is because I know we went to Karnack then for him to recuperate. And as I remember right, we stayed out there a couple of weeks, at least, while he was getting over this appendectomy.

M: Yes. And, then, of course, he won the election and was off to Congress.

K: Right.

M: All right. What did you do then?

K: I stayed with NYA.

M: Under Jesse Kellam.

K: Under Jesse Kellam, and I did the same thing for Jesse that I did for Lyndon. I traveled with him, drove with him, was sort of the traveling valet, or whatever you want to call it.

M: Do you remember Lyndon Johnson meeting Franklin Roosevelt?

K: Yes, this I remember very distinctly.

M: What happened? That was right after the election, wasn't it?

K: He hadn't taken his seat in Congress yet, but he had admired the President, and I think had tacit support from the White House during the election, because he ran as a New Dealer, a New Deal candidate. But the President was fishing in the Gulf, and after this fishing trip he landed at Galveston. Marvin McIntyre, who was his secretary at the time, had all the White House communications center and everything set up in Galveston while he was in this Texas Gulf Coast area. Jimmy Allred, of course, was a very strong supporter of Franklin Roosevelt's, and I have a picture somewhere that was made in front of the Galvez Hotel with Jimmy Allred introducing Lyndon Johnson to Franklin Roosevelt. And I remember then Elliott was in Ft. Worth at the time. I don't know what Elliott Roosevelt was doing, but he wanted to come to Galveston to meet his father. When Franklin Roosevelt was traveling on the ground between places, they had a big, open-air touring car that he traveled in, that the top would come down on. When Elliott phoned Marvin McIntyre and told him he wanted to come to Galveston, he sent this White House car to Houston to meet Elliott at the railroad station. I rode in the front seat with the Secret Service agent and Lyndon was in the back seat because he evidently knew Elliott and the Secret Service agent wasn't familiar with Houston. Well, I had grown up there, of course, and I told him just where to go coming in Harrisburg Boulevard--the quickest way to get to the depot. But I didn't have to tell him how to get out of Houston; he remembered. He just shot right back the same way we came in. So then when the President left Galveston they would put him on the train and then the Secret Service would drive this car to the next stop. Which happened, in this case, to be College Station. He made a speech at A and M. He invited

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Lyndon Johnson, among others, to ride with him from Galveston to College Station. This is where I think they first became acquainted, actually.

M: You didn't get to ride on the train, did you?

K: I didn't get to ride on the train. I had to take the car back to Austin. In fact, I never did fly even when Lyndon was campaigning. I would have to take off in a car an hour or two before they left by plane so I could meet them at the airport.

M: After meeting the Roosevelts and Lyndon went to Washington, you remained in Austin with NYA.

K: NYA, right.

M: How long did you work for the NYA?

K: I stayed with NYA until I came down here in 1941. But after a while, instead of traveling with Mr. Kellam so much, I got involved in public relations and did quite a few brochures. I had a real good rapport with the people on the Austin American Statesman at that time, and also with the wire service people in the Capitol Bureau--INS, UP and AP. I had a lot to do with getting pictures and releases about various NYA projects to the news media at that time. Later, a move was made through, I assume, Aubrey Williams, who was still the national administrator, to put the NYA under Civil Service. Well, I didn't have any formal education to qualify for Civil Service status as a personnel officer. They wanted to make me state personnel officer. And I even tried to enroll in special classes at The University of Texas so that I could qualify under Civil Service, but they didn't permit me to do this. But I did do a lot of the actual duties of the state personnel officer without actually having the...the Civil Service bit never did come about. Yes, after I couldn't get into the University, even as a special student just to audit classes,

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after we were married in 1939 I attended night college at St. Edwards University. I had a real good friend who we worked with in various types of NYA projects and with the poor in South Austin, a young priest named Father Patrick Duffy. He got me into St. Edwards as a special student, and they gave me two Brothers who tutored me in the high school courses that I lacked. And I actually graduated with the equivalency of a high school diploma from St. Edwards which had both a prep school and a college at the time. And after I got through with these high school courses, then I went in to the night college.

M: After your work with the NYA, what did you do?

K: Then I came to Robstown in 1941. I stayed with NYA until I came here in August of 1941.

M: You've been here ever since?

K: Ever since.

M: Now, when did you get married?

K: June 24, 1939.

M: Nineteen thirty-nine. And Lyndon Johnson was at the wedding.

K: He was the best man.

M: Now how did that come about? Wasn't he off working in Washington?

K: Well, he was real busy, but he thought so much of Mr. Fore, and I assume me, too, that he told me he would accept if at all possible, but to have a standby in case something happened. And so my good friend, Gene Latimer and his wife were in Floresville, and in the event that Lyndon and Lady Bird couldn't arrive, why, Gene was to substitute as best man. But Lyndon was there.

M: What did he do, come in on a train?

Mrs. K: A car, I would think.

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K: Oh, I imagine somebody drove him in, I forget now. But I'm sure they drove down from Austin, probably, or San Antonio. Because he and Mr. Fore had lots of mutual friends like Dan Quill, the postmaster in San Antonio, and people like that who attended the wedding. Mr. Quill may have driven down, I don't remember this, or any of these details. But the wedding was a home wedding held in the Fores' residence in Floresville. And the reception was held outside. It was sort of a house-garden type of thing.

M: Maybe I shouldn't ask the groom this, since you were probably pretty nervous, and may not remember too much of it.

K: Nervous.

M: But did Lyndon Johnson perform his task as he should have?

K: Oh yes. Yes. He never had any problems.

M: He didn't drop the ring or anything like that?

K: No. No. Not Lyndon Johnson. He never dropped a ring anywhere, as far as I'm concerned.

M: Since Mrs. Keach is right here and she was the bride, I might ask her. Were you impressed that Lyndon Johnson was there and handled his duties well?

Mrs. K: Of course I was. We were very honored that he would come and...

K: Naturally, we were highly honored.

M: Was Mrs. Johnson there, too?

K: Mr. Eyler, the archivist, has already gotten pictures of this type of thing from Mrs. Fore in Floresville.

M: There are wedding pictures?

K: Yes. He has all this type of thing that was in Mr. Fore's files that he went through.

M: Well then, after this point in time, after you came to Robstown, did you see Lyndon Johnson much, have much contact with him after that?

K: Not a whole lot, because I was learning to become a newspaperman, but he stopped here--and we haven't ever found this panel yet, yes, we did find it, too, I think I gave it to Mr. Eyler--when he was campaigning for the Senate. Was it 1948? And he was using the helicopter. He landed on the campus of an elementary school here.

M: Were you out there to meet the helicopter?

K: Oh yes, we were out there and we made pictures of him shaking hands with old friends. He knew a lot of people here in Robstown because he worked here as a boy during the summers. One of the first jobs he had, he worked in a cotton gin and a cafe here. He was distantly related to the Roper family. There were two brothers, H.M. Roper and J.M. Roper. They were from Marble Falls, but he had known them a long time. And I believe they were distantly related in some way. He worked one summer in Robstown at a gin here, and I think washed dishes in a cafe here.

M: This was when he was a boy.

K: Just a youngster, yes. Probably high school age, or something of that sort, but there were a lot of other people here who had known him then through his NYA connections. Plus the fact that he was all over South Texas, you know, while he was with Mr. Kleberg.

M: Yes. Were you impressed by the helicopter, by the way?

K: Oh, definitely. Because it was unique for campaigning, and probably still is. Do you know of anybody else that campaigns by helicopter? For instance, he was flying into Robstown and there was a group of laboring people out picking cotton, and he told the pilot to circle around and go down real low and he had a PA system on there. He flew over this group

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of things, but the President wasn't actually in Washington that summer that we were there.

M: Did you have much contact with him when he was a senator? When he was a majority leader?

K: Quite a bit, especially during the campaign after he...what was the last campaign before he became Vice President when he ran against...was it 1954? He came to Robstown and made a speech before the joint service clubs here, then he spoke to the student body of the high school. While he was going up the steps to the high school he turned around to Cliff Carter and he said, "Cliff, I want to see every school child in Robstown." Cliff said, "Senator, do you realize that we are on a real tight schedule and we've worked for months to get you a place to speak before the General Baptist Convention of Texas in Corpus Christi?" And he turned around to Cliff and he said, "Are we going to join the 'Can't-Do-It-Club" right here on the steps of the Robstown High School?" And there was a young police officer standing there. He said, "Son, go out there and get on that police radio and tell every school in Robstown--parochial and otherwise, that Lyndon Johnson is coming by and wants to greet the school children." And he did. We started out at the Negro school. They had them lined up on the sidewalk. He got out and made a little talk and said, "You're seeing a United States senator probably for the first time. I'm Lyndon Johnson and I want you to go home and tell your mother and daddy to vote for me." We went by the two parochial schools. We visited every public school. He'd get on top of my car and make a little speech and in addition to other media representatives, there was a young man traveling in a car and I noticed he'd parked kind of back from the [crowd]. He motioned me over to his car when we were at St. Anthony's Parochial

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School. And he said, "I'm so and so with the Wall Street Journal. Does this man campaign like this all the time?" I said, "Yes, he does. I've known him since the early thirties, and this isn't anything unique. This is the way he goes after it." He just shook his head in amazement. He said he'd never seen such personal contact with potential--these weren't even voters. These were school children that he was telling to tell their mothers and daddies they saw a United States senator today and they wanted them to vote for Lyndon Johnson.

M: Did you have anything to do with that big fight in Texas politics in 1956? When Johnson and Rayburn--

K: In Fort Worth.

M: Yes, Johnson and Rayburn.

K: No, I wasn't on a committee at that time. The only time I ever served on the State Democratic Executive Committee was while John Connally was governor. So I wasn't at that convention. I think Mr. Fore was. I'm sure he was. He was a delegate from his county. But I didn't attend the '56 convention.

M: I see. All right. Have you had any other contacts with Lyndon Johnson?

K: Well, of course, whenever he came back to South Texas, whenever he came through here he always stopped to say hello.

M: Have you been to the Ranch?

K: He invited us a number of times, but we were not in a position to go. We had small children and the type of business we had, it's hard to go off and leave it. They were very gracious in inviting us up there, and we just didn't have an opportunity to take advantage of it. But after he and John Kennedy were elected, they came to the Ranch, and we drove Mr. and Mrs. Fore to the LBJ Ranch the night that he and John Kennedy

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flew in. We met President Kennedy, and of course Lady Bird and the rest of Lyndon's staff.

M: Were they pretty exhausted at that time?

K: Well, Lyndon didn't appear exhausted. In fact, I don't think John Kennedy appeared exhausted. He probably was before Lyndon let him leave that Ranch because he took him deer hunting. (Laughter)

One of the funny incidents that happened, Marion's father--and I don't say this with disrespect, but he was an unusually large man--he weighed well over three hundred pounds and he had a hernia condition. It was nearly dark when the last plane [arrived] bringing correspondents and all from the Washington Press Corps into the LBJ Ranch. It was getting pretty tedious for these planes to come in on this small landing strip, but Lyndon drove this convertible that he liked so up to the side of the hangar. And if I remember right, Lady Bird was sitting in the middle, Lyndon was driving, and President Kennedy was sitting on the right side, and there was a Secret Service man or two in the back seat. Lyndon looked over his shoulder and saw Mr. Fore standing over there, and said, "Sam, aren't you going to get in?" Well, it wasn't a four-door automobile but Mr. Fore hopped over the side and got in that back seat just like he was a teenage boy. This is how much he loved and respected Lyndon Johnson. He did the impossible for a man of his age and his physique. Then he took the President-elect on a tour of the Ranch.

M: Let me ask you a few questions about the personality of Lyndon Johnson and I don't want to ask these to embarrass you or embarrass him, or anything else, but since you had a close contact with him: Lyndon

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Johnson is said to have a quick temper or a hot temper. Have you ever experienced that?

K: Do you know any successful businessman, literary figure, actor, or any professional person that's successful that doesn't have? If they've got enough drive to be successful, they're going to have a [temper].

M: Did he get impatient at times?

K: He stayed impatient, all the time. With himself as well as anybody else.

M: Were you ever subject to his temper?

K: Oh yes, but I was--what do you say when you take a certain amount of medicine, you become immune? I was immune to it. I traveled and lived with it so long it rolled off my back. It didn't ever eat on me like it did maybe other people. It didn't bother me. This was part of the game. But he was just as quick, then, to react in just the other way. These things pass in such a flurry. The next thing he'd be patting you on the back [saying], "Boy, we racked them up back there, didn't we, Carroll?"

M: He also seems to have a rather unusual mind in that he'd keep a lot of things going.

K: Fabulous. Fabulous. Fabulous the things that he can remember. He almost has a photographic memory. Especially for meeting people and names.

M: Does he remember people's names well?

K: Yes. Yes. Yes, he has a fantastic memory. Especially old friends that he knew and maybe hadn't seen for thirty years. Things like that.

M: Can he keep track of a lot of different things at the same time?

K: Yes, it's amazing. Amazing. He can be talking on three telephones at one time if he had a third hand, and then still dictate a letter.

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M: Did he like to use the telephone when you knew him in the early days?

K: Yes. Yes.

M: Did he ever mention why? Did he just find it useful?

K: He just felt like this was a fast way to communicate with people. And the faster the better. He used it a great deal from the first day I ever met him.

M: The people that write about Lyndon Johnson, especially those that don't like him, like to say what a crude man he is. Both in action and in speech. And they say he will use a rough, earthy language. Now, what I'd like to know is, since you know him, does he use earthy language? And if so, is it offensive at all?

K: It's not offensive to me because I use earthy language and I don't know of a President that didn't start with George Washington.

M: So this is nothing--

K: This was nothing unique to Lyndon Johnson, and it's not just a provincial problem. It's not indigenous to Texas politicians, or to people in the professions or anything else. No. No.

M: Is there any doubt in your mind that he's an intelligent person and leader?

K: Oh, man, he has an intellect that even his bitterest critics will admit he's one of the most intelligent men ever to serve in the presidency.

M: Does the man have any faults as a leader?

K: This would be hard for me to say because I'm too close to him and I think too much of him as a personal friend, plus the fact that I wasn't around him any during his tenure as Vice President or President. I mean I wasn't associated with him in a way where I could observe anything close hand. This would be an assumption on my part.

M: If you had to select one thing as his key to success, what would you say?

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K: Well, first this intelligence that he has.

M: And of course his drive.

K: He's an administrator. He's a manager. I mean he wants to manage everybody, even the people that work for him. The young people that got in financial trouble and had to borrow money from him. He wanted you to toe the line. He was lenient in a lot of respects, but this was part of teaching you. This was part of his discipline. He would have thought he'd been derelict if he didn't tell you what he thought. He did this with his employees, he did this with other members of his family. Anybody that was associated with him. But he had this motivation from the day he hit the ground running.

M: And he had lots of energy to go with it, then.

K: And he's never stopped since then. Of course, I didn't know him as a high school boy. They say he worked on the highway and went to California. I didn't know him then, but from the very first day that I met him in Houston when he was a high school teacher, why, he stayed in a trot and everybody trotted behind him trying to keep up. As Mr. Fore used to say, "You have a pilot light, and you have a giant burner." And he says that Lyndon Johnson kept the giant burner going all the time--never the pilot light.

M: This is all the questions I have for you, unless you have something you want to add, or something else you think ought to go onto this record.

K: Well, I've just known him so long, I think so much of him, both as a friend and as a real public servant. A lot of people don't know--
(Mrs. Keach mentioned Lady Bird) Oh yes. Tremendous.

Mrs. K: Remarkable, remarkable.

K: Nobody knows.

M: You might say something about that.

K: I lived in their home with them and nobody knows the devotion and the long hours and little tedious details that she took care of. Even when he was just NYA Director, or whether he was congressman, or what it was. If there ever was a devotion of picking up the pieces after the, as one writer who traveled with him one time dubbed him the 'Blanco Blitz' came through, it was always Lady Bird that always calmed the waters down and saw that all the knots were tied. When everything was in the package she was responsible for a lot of it. But I think this is true of all successful men. There's usually a helpmate in back of them that contributes a lot more than.... So I think in the long run, with the historians of the future that write about Lyndon Johnson, Lady Bird will play a very prominent role in his career from the very day that they met.

M: She always seems to be somewhat in the background.

K: Well, she was naturally a shy person. If you've read anything about her at all, her mother died when she was six years old and she was raised by her Aunt Effie Pattillo and this housewoman that ran Mr. Taylor's house for him. She lived out there at Karnack, which was very isolated, and she had two brothers and no sisters. And naturally being around older people she was real shy around young people. Even after she got to college age, they tell me that she was real [shy]. Still very shy, reserved. She's this by nature though, too.

M: Are you impressed with the way she played her role as First Lady?

K: I admired Eleanor Roosevelt a great deal and other First Ladies that I've read about in history, but I believe that over the long pull that her story will be just as fabulous, if not more so, probably, than Eleanor Roosevelt's.

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M: Do you have an opinion about that, Mrs. Keach? You've known them both.

Mrs. K: Yes, I agree. They're just wonderful.

K: I think she has really blossomed out in the last four years, not only as an individual but as a national figure. But Lyndon Johnson likes people and likes to do things for people. Especially little people. Because he never has forgotten the hardships that he grew up under. He has friends, of course, in the upper echelons of finance and this sort of thing. This has been, I think, one of the great motivating factors in making him a great leader: that he likes people. Especially he likes to help the underdog. His legislative record as President and as Majority leader shows that. And it did when he was a member of Congress from the Tenth District. Look what he did for the Tenth District in the way of rural electrification, the Colorado River Authority, and things of that sort.

M: Well, I'd like to close the interview at this point, unless you have something else that either one of you cares to say.

K: Well, when you've known anybody that long and that far back, it could go on for hours and hours.

M: I thank you for your time.

K: Well, you're certainly welcome.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview II]

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