

INTERVIEW I

DATE: January 21, 1965
INTERVIEWEE: MRS. KATHRYN DEADRICH LONEY
INTERVIEWER: S. DOUGLASS CATER
PLACE: The White House, Washington, D. C.

Tape 1 of 1

C: Mrs. Loney, would you give me your full names? I think they were different when--

L: Well, I was Miss Katy Deadrigh, and now I am Mrs. Chester Loney.

C: Tell me, when did you first know the President?

L: Well, it was 1912. I was hired for teaching up there at the little school and we started the last of September, I guess, and about the second month, I think it would be, Lyndon and his family lived near by and he would run away from home and attend the school, day in and day out.

C: What would he do when he got to school?

L: He didn't care about playing with the children; he just kind of hung onto my skirt and hung around when I was teaching.

C: He was how old then?

L: I think he was about five. But perhaps he wouldn't be five until the next year. I would have to figure it up. But anyhow he was under age. So I told his mother that if we could get the Board's permission, I would take him--he wanted to come to school so badly. If the Board would consent I would take him. So they said "Okay."

C: He didn't have any brothers or sisters in the school then?

L: No, he was the oldest of the five; they were all just little babies, just little stairsteps and he was the oldest.

Loney--I--2

C: Tell me, what was your recollection of him as a child. Is there anything that lingers in your memory?

L: Yes, the first two weeks, I think, when he started I couldn't hardly understand him. And I talked to his mother whom we called Miss Rebekah and she said, "Well, you come by the house and I will tell you how to understand him--he has his own little way of talking." Then from then on I could understand.

C: What was unusual about it?

L: I don't know what it was; of course, we had the Texas mingle accent, and I think he was more on the rolling of his r's and things like that that made him an exception.

C: Why would his have been different from the other children?

L: I don't know, but I know it was. I remember that. So he started and one day he would come--it was so cute--I think it was his father's Stetson hat, it was much too big because it came way down on his head. He would have his little toy pistol and he would be dressed up like a cowboy. Maybe the next day he would come dressed up. I don't know, a lot of them wouldn't know what a Buster Brown suit was, but that's what it was--a little Buster Brown suit and his little hat back on his head--just. . . You never knew which way he was coming. It didn't make that much of a difference. He would come and when it was time for his work, he would just stand by me and he would act as though he didn't care anything about it. I talked to him about it and he patted my knee like. . . and I would put him on my knee and my, he really worked. He was very smart.

C: Did he have any schooling at home?

L: No, Miss Rebekah had him so he was spelling and things like that. I don't think he read--I don't know she read to him. I don't think he read any at home but he could spell fluently for a little fellow.

C: How quickly did he pick up reading?

L: Oh, immediately. But she had helped him so much. I think his mother was wonderful. And he went through that time--he went through the first grade book just about as fast as he could and when I was teaching them he would pick out words we had today. He picked them out of things that he wanted to read. That way he soon got onto them: he picked out words he knew and then he was reading ahead.

C: Was he ahead of the other children?

L: Well, in a lot of ways, he was; a lot of ways he wasn't. He was so much younger than the others. They were all six and over.

C: How big was your class?

L: Oh, I don't remember how many there were in the first grade. I had about thirty-five children.

C: How many grades was that?

L: Eight.

C: You taught all eight grades?

L: All eight grades.

C: The same room?

L: The same room, one little room.

C: And where would keep eight grades going?

L: Well, that's the only way we had in those days. We had to keep them going. And well, we didn't have supervisors but we had the judge. I think he was from Fredericksburg. He came only in the fall. He drove his horse and buggy and got there when school started and spent the whole day with you. He

watched you teach and see what you did and then in the spring he would take another whole day--you would teach and he would watch. Then, if he had any suggestions, he would tell you. If everything was okay, why, he would congratulate you. That's the way it was then.

C: How many years did you have him?

L: I just had him the one. That was my second school. As soon as school was out, I moved to California. My father and the rest of the family was already out there. So when that school closed I came out.

C: Did you get to know his mother well?

L: Yes, I did. Nearly every day after school I went by to see her.

C: Did you?

L: Yes, nearly every day. To either see her or Grandma Johnson. I had to walk nearly three miles--I think it was a little less than three miles.

C: He was that far?

L: No, where I boarded. I boarded with his uncle and her step family.

C: But he was only a short distance?

L: He was only a short distance.

C: Somebody told me she worried about rattlesnakes?

L: Well, Texas has rattlesnakes, I guess everywhere in Texas. Miss Rebekah worried about it because there were weeds and things. We didn't have very good roads, just a trail from the house to the school. That's all we had. But we never had any snakes around the school. I guess we made so much noise when we played.

C: Well, tell me a little about your recollection about the mother?

L: To me she was a very outstanding woman. She came from a very lovely family--the Baines family. She was older than I. I don't know--everything she said was just about perfect. She was so sweet and so patient. She was

Loney--I--5

always ready to help you if you wanted advice. To me, she was just precious.

C: Her relationship with her son--was she strict with him?

L: No, I don't think she was strict but--what would I say--she would appeal to him to do things. I don't think she ever scolded him. I never heard her scold them. She would just talk to them in a little gentle voice and they seemed to understand that that was right.

C: Did he show any traits that you would have marked for future leadership at that time?

L: Well, let me think. Of course, Grandpa Johnson always said we had a senator Miss Rebekah and I would always say, "Why stop at a senator?" But he was good to get along with the children. But he generally told the children what to do.

C: Was he small for his age then?

L: No, I don't think so. I don't believe he was. It didn't seem like it to me that he was. I had one or two other firstgraders who I thought were smaller. I think he was a good size boy.

C: Did he ever get into any trouble in school, do you remember? No fights with the other children?

L: No, I don't remember of any fights. In fact, I don't know if we ever had a fight.

C: I think that's cool.

L: I was brought up in a way that I never thought much of spankings or scoldings myself.

C: Then you never had to discipline him at all?

L: I don't remember ever having to. The other little children, most of them were German. And they were mighty sweet little kids.

C: They picked up English?

L: Yes, they did fine. I had to teach German. But I only had it in high school. So there was an awful nice minister. I would go over to his house one night a week so he would help me with my lessons for the next week, I would be sure and get it right. They thought anything I did—as far as I can remember if I asked them to do something they would do it you know things like that. I don't remember ever having to chastize any of them.

C: Were there any other episodes, particularly about that year that you remember about him—an incident happening?

He was a healthy child, I gather?

L: Yes, he was a healthy child. I don't--

C: If he wasn't quite five, I can see he probably hadn't developed any characteristics at that point?

L: No, he hadn't started. But he would come up and I'd think, well, he would stand here but he wouldn't say a word until I took him on my lap and the other children didn't resent [it].

C: You mean, he had to do most of his reading, he--

L: Oh, he had to sit on my lap. If I said, "Let's have your lesson," he would climb up. Wouldn't say a thing. But if I put him on my lap, he would show the other kids what he could do.

C: The rest of them didn't mind it?

L: Oh, no, they didn't mind it--Lyndon did it--they didn't mind it.

C: Well, thank you very much, I think that's very useful to have.

L: He graduated at sixteen. I saw him then.

C: Oh, did you, now how did that happen?

L: I met him. .that's the last time I saw Miss Rebekah. It was--maybe he wouldn't remember this--I think it would be good if he did. Every year

Loney--I--7

the old soldiers--I don't believe what they call it now--it started from the old soldiers. We had a three day reunion at Driftwood. I'm not sure-- I don't think it's over twenty miles from Johnson City. This one year we'd gone back to Texas and someone told me Lyndon was going to be there and his mother. So we went over. Nearly everybody took provisions for three days and camped and visited with everybody else. So we went over and camped. I saw Miss Rebekah. She said, "Have you seen Lyndon?" and I said, "No, I haven't." But that's one person I wanted to see. I'm sure he just graduated that spring.

C: That was the year of. . .?

L: 1924. I think it was 1924. Anyway, he was sixteen when he graduated and I had a lovely visit with him.

C: What was he like then?

L: He was a nice looking young man--tall and thin and had a very gracious manner.

C: This was before you went out to California?

L: Yes, just before we went out to California. Then I suppose we all had a struggle to get along and I lost track of him. First thing I had heard of him after that--when he was in California we didn't see him but I wish we had. But it was during World War II. When I went to California they wouldn't recognize teachers' certificates from Texas. You just had to go to school for six years or not teach. So, I didn't have the money to go to school so I started in bookkeeping. I kept books for ten years from then. Then after we were on the ranch--then during World War II they called for everybody who could teach. I had a daughter that began teaching young. They trained you during the summer so you'd be more modern. So I thought I'd finally go back to teach but you had to have some proof

that you did teach. So I couldn't think what I'd do so I wrote Lyndon a note and asked him if he could remember me and verify that I taught.

C: Where was he then?

L: He was in Washington. I think that's about the time. Yes, he was in Washington. That was in 1945. He'd been there a long time then.

C: In the Congress then?

L: So he wrote a nice letter for me and I got my school and I taught five years in California. Then I had a heart attack and the doctor said no more teaching, so I quit. Then when his book was published--what year was that? Well, anyway, he sent me the book and his picture.

C: I don't remember, which book was this? Oh, the book written about him? By Booth Mooney?

L: Yes, he sent me that and he sent me his picture. Every once in a while he would write me letters. We kind of kept in touch from that time on.

C: When did you last see him?

L: In 1960. That was kind of good. We knew he was coming to Sacramento and the paper said Eldorado Hotel. Well, I called up to see if they would let me talk to him. One of the secretaries--he was a man--said Lyndon didn't have time for personal visits--it's impossible. He said, "We can't have any personal calls at all." I thought for a while and then I decided I'm going to try to see if I could say, "Hello Lyndon." That's all I wanted--just to hear his voice. One of the secretary girls answered and I said, couldn't I just speak to Lyndon a minute and say hello. She was so sweet. I told her I was Miss Kitty, so she said, "Wait a minute." And I got to talk to him. He said, "Miss Kitty, can you get down here within the hour?" I don't think I ever moved so fast in my life. He said, "If you get down here in an hour, I can say hello." Well, we got down there

Loney--I--9

just within the hour; he was on a long distance phone, we waited and we had just a second, you might say. It was worth [it] just to say hello and see how he had grown up; he's such a big man. He said, "I'm going on the air in fifteen minutes and you're going with me." So we got in the car and went to the television station. So we had a chance to visit a little. I was ill and couldn't go. I was sorry to miss him. But he called. He called to see how we were.

C: Did you get an invitation to the inauguration?

L: My husband had a major operation, nearly a year now and we didn't know if we could come but we wanted to, then we decided--Medicare isn't in; we didn't get insurance on our big bill--we couldn't see how we could. Out of the blue sky, Mr. Marks called. Wanted to know if we were coming. I didn't know what to say so, so he said if Mr. Loney is able to call and come as Lyndon's guest. So when Chester came--"Do you want to go, mother?"--I said, oh yes I did. So we made telephone calls and different things around. Mr. Marks was lovely; everybody has been so wonderful; we just rushed here.

C: You got the tickets for the ceremony?

L: Yes, we got the tickets to everything and we got a card and a nice little driver that has taken us everywhere we wanted to go.

C: Oh, how nice.

L: We got tickets to the inauguration. We had that lovely dinner and went to the Armory that night to the show. We never expected anything like that. It's marvelous. We met so many--Mr. Reedy's been nice, Mrs. Roberts,

C: Have you looked up at the Cabinet Room?

L: No, Mrs. Roberts thought she could get away and meet us. But we got here too late that one day. The time we got together we didn't get to see the White House.

Loney--I--10

C: Well, let me take you and just show you the upstairs, the Cabinet Room. I think the President is having a meeting in his office right now.

L: They [two daughters, members of my family] thought so much of him because I loved him so. So they each paid their own way. The young one is going to help grandpa with the cattle this summer. They wanted to shake the hand of LBJ.

C: Let's go up.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE
LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON LIBRARY

Legal Agreement pertaining to the Oral History Interview of Kathryn
Deadrich Loney

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, Chester Loney of Penn Valley, California do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title and interest in the tape recording and transcript of the interview conducted with Kathryn Deadrich Loney on January 21, 1965 in Washington, D. C. and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

(1) The transcript shall be available for use by researchers as soon as it has been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

(2) The tape recording shall be available to those researchers who have access to the transcript.

(3) I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcript and tape.

(4) Copies of the transcript and the tape recording may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request.

(5) Copies of the transcript and tape recording may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

Donor

Date

Archivist of the United States

Date