INTERVIEW I

DATE: April 1, 1969

INTERVIEWEE: KATHLEEN C. LOUCHHEIM

INTERVIEWER: PAIGE E. MULHOLLAN

PLACE: Mrs. Louchheim's office in the Transportation Building, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 1

M: Let's begin by simply identifying you. You are Mrs. Katie Louchheim, and your last official position, as far as the Johnson Administration was concerned, was as deputy assistant secretary of state for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Prior to that, you had served in the State Department in the Community Affairs.

L: Community Advisory Services. It was my program; a program I invented.

M: And that was dating from the Kennedy Administration, correct?

L: I'm sorry, I don't remember the dates. I'll have to find them out.

M: Oh, they're easily checked. But President Kennedy did put you in that position?

L: No, President Kennedy put me in the department in 1961, as a special assistant to Under Secretary [Chester] Bowles. And that did not last, because the Under Secretary had different ideas; he wanted me to serve a man of his called Philip Coombs, who came in as the first assistant secretary for Education and Cultural Affairs. So I was moved there. I stayed there about seven or eight months, and I moved to Public Affairs.

Then in February of 1962, I was made deputy assistant secretary. I was the first woman to attain that title. And I stayed in Public Affairs for about two and a half years.

Then Under Secretary William Crockett, who was a great friend of President Johnson's, asked me about this program he'd heard I'd been trying to set up, which was to accelerate communications between the foreign service and grassroots citizens of our country. And he gave me an office and a title as the head of Community Advisory Services.

M: I see. I assume that you put most of the information regarding that position on the Kennedy tape, and I see no reason to duplicate that.

L: No, I didn't put any information on any of my State Department work on that tape.

M: We'll go into that. But let's back up then, because I take it that your primary connection with the Johnsons is more as a family friend, perhaps, than as an official servant.

L: That's right.

M: And you do go back with the Johnson family to their first experiences in Washington?

L: Yes. Now, I think I mentioned to you, Mr. Mulhollan, that I've been writing a book, and I did sort of sketch an outline on the chapter on President Johnson. And going back in my mind, I think I have said, in the outline, that I don't remember when we first met. But I do know who introduced us; it was James Rowe, who, as you know, is an old, old friend of the President. In fact, James Rowe lived

next door to us in a bachelor establishment on 30th Street in Georgetown in the thirties. We came here in 1934, and in 1937 Rowe married. That was the year the President came as a congressman, and sometime subsequently, we met; I don't know when.

M: There's a whole scale of subjective values that people have who've known another person over a long period of time. You're in a particularly good position to make some sort of impressionistic judgments on the Johnsons, Mr. Johnson and the family. Has he changed appreciably over this thirty-year period that you've known him?

L: Yes. I think he's changed appreciably, but I think, what I would call, for lack of a better expression, the leitmotif, or the main thrusts, of his public life have not changed. In other words, the man has changed because of the strains that he's been under, I'm sure, and also because of the pressures on him. He was not easy after the heart attack, and then I thought for a while, perhaps, that he would be permanently sensitive to this, but it was interesting to me that despite the little clues that I found in this journal that I kept, he got over his concern. I remember certain things, such as his saying to Mrs. Johnson, or repeating at dinner that he'd said it to Mrs. Johnson, "Bird, coming up these steps, I thought I was going to have another attack." He was constantly concerned about his health for a while.

M: This was after the heart attack?

L: The heart attack, yes. And in that way, he was remarkable, because he snapped back altogether. And there was no question about health.

He was very much interested in his work as majority leader, and also in running for office as president, and then ultimately as vice president. His strength and his determination remained very sound. In other words, his ability to overcome illnesses was remarkable. I can remember the time after the heart attack, people like Bill White, the journalist, who was a very intimate friend, and his wife June would talk about the President and would say, "Yes, he is difficult." And we'd say it was because of the heart problem. But this, I think, was a passing phase. But to get back to your question: I think his persuasive powers, his powers of creating a climate of what he likes to call consensus, his drive, his, perhaps very overwhelming sense of loyalty, friendship, and also his sensitivities, his thin-skinnedness, his awareness of who hit him where--that never changed. These traits have stayed completely as I knew him, if anything they've become more apparent.

M: The same is true of things like goals, hopes so far as public--?

L: Oh, yes, yes. In thinking about the chapter, it seemed to me that what I was trying to say was that both the President and his great friend, the Speaker, Mr. Rayburn, came from very simple, very rural, and very poor backgrounds. Perhaps modest is a better word than poor. I don't think they were ever poor. But in a sense, their drive to provide themselves with a life full of the things that most people want was similar. And they had a great sympathetic bond that was both philosophical and ideological.

I think the President's drive, for instance, in the field of education, which he liked to talk about the eighteen bills that were passed in this administration, had been with him ever since he grew up. He had a hard time getting an education. The drive for equal rights, though people will have a difficult time, I'm sure, finding it in the record, has been with him ever since the beginning, because he lived among various minorities, particularly those of Latin American extraction. I think he felt very strongly that there was nobody, for instance, who shouldn't have an education, any boy or girl in America. He sang that theme very well ever since I've known him. He also had a very clear idea of what he wanted in the way of services to the public. He was a government-minded man; he was aware of what the government could do. I've always answered the question, about the difference between the parties, is that Democrats believe that the government can help. The Democratic Party can help, and the Republican Party firmly believes that the less the government does, the better it is, because it's all up to private enterprise. These are the themes that I think have been consistent and very strong with the President.

I know less about his interest in foreign affairs. I'm not sure that I could draw conclusions, except that he was aware of them in a very objective and intelligent fashion. But his main interest outside of the fields of education and human rights would have been, I think, developed later; that was his interest in space exploration.

M: Right.

L: And certainly he followed through on those. I think his development in the field of foreign affairs came, as I say, only into public evidence, at least, or into the public domain, when he started to travel around as vice president and when he then was thrust into the White House.

M: As far as your experience is concerned, then, I take it what you're saying is that the critics, particularly, who divide his career into very clearly delineated periods, conservative and liberal, are exaggerating the differences that occurred after he was president?

L: I think it's absolutely preposterous to say so. I have had just a rather nice and pleasant time with an old friend of mine who worked for the Speaker and who is a Texan. And if I may, I'm going to look at my notes a minute, because we talked about Texas, and I had written something about it--if I can find it here--about the President and the fight, for instance, that went on in my day when I began to be aware of what was going on in the way of the battle between the liberals and the conservatives in his own state. The President was involved in that to a certain extent, and perhaps it won't matter too much if I quote to you from this. I say: "I am bored, too, with all the talk about Texas conservative, oil-rich, indifferent millionaires, and nobody else down there but some well-bred cattle and a lot of poor Mexicans." Because this is the general picture that the public has of Texas. And then I talk about Lyndon Johnson's Texas, being a poor, or rather modest, rural backwater, et cetera. Then there's a charming story that I tell that was told to me by a friend of the President

called Harry Jersig. Has anybody put this story into the record?

M: Not that I know of.

L: Well, I met him on the banks of the Pedernales, on a trip that I took when the President and Mrs. Johnson took all the Latin American ambassadors to the Ranch.

M: This was after he was president?

L: Oh, yes. I should be able to date it.

M: That's all right.

L: I think it was 1967, probably spring of 1967. And I was standing there, while the President and Mrs. Johnson toured the ambassadors, introducing them to the local folk who had been invited to help be hosts and hostesses. And I picked up a conversation with this nice grey-haired couple. The man turned out to be a friend of the President's, Harry Jersig, who was then a great, very successful man, who owns something called the Lone Star Brewery. But he told me that as a young man--he was age twenty-two and the President was sixteen, there was that much difference between them--he used to be a boarder--this is Jersig--at Mrs. Johnson's boarding house, the President's mother. He was then--Harry Jersig--a candy salesman, and he hired the President, this tall, nice looking boy of sixteen, to be what he called a gate-opener. As someone from the South and the Southwest, you will know this is a familiar story, the travelling salesman who took an apprentice with him, or some young person, who would carry the suitcase, the samples, and open the gate. And this

was the case with Mr. Jersig's relation with the President. He used to get twenty-five cents a gate. And then there was a story that attached itself, which I found endearing. That was that on very good days, of course, he would get a financial bonus, but he would also get a sample box of peanut brittle, which was his favorite candy.

And Mr. Jersig told me that, one day when he was in the President's personal quarters over at the Ranch, he saw a white telephone, and underneath it, carefully hidden, was a box of peanut brittle. He said he hadn't changed his habits or his tastes.

M: Fringe benefits stayed the same.

(Laughter)

L: But he said that he was probably rationed and that he was hiding it from Mrs. Johnson. It was hidden under the telephone.

But it was an interesting story to me, because it was part of the President's boyhood that I don't happen to have read about, and also because it showed the kind of a background he grew up in. He was exposed to what we know as "making your way in the world," without the advantages that young people now have.

The other subject which we were talking about was the matter of the Texas struggles. The idea, again, as I mentioned earlier, that there were nothing but oil-rich millionaires was certainly exaggerated. My feeling about it in the fifties--in 1953, I became the director of women's activities for the Democratic Party; the President was then minority leader, and subsequently, a year or so later in 1955, became majority leader so that my closest contacts

really occurred during the fifties, and I had occasion to get acquainted with many Texans. I traveled a good deal and I certainly got to know the liberals, because as I made note here in my outline for the book, they were in power at the time, and they were strong.

However, in 1956, the President and the Speaker and the liberals were in a concerted drive to defeat Governor Allan Shivers, who wanted to be the favorite son of the Texas delegation, and who they felt did not represent the Democratic Party. So here was the great so-called conservative Lyndon Johnson battling with the liberals and with Mr. Sam to take over the state. And I said, in these notes, that I watched the liberals and the conservatives cannibalize each other, with the President, or with Lyndon Johnson, alternately playing missionary and/or policeman. And I think that about describes his role at the time.

The characters who were involved in the fight, some have been dispersed and some of them have stayed friends of the President. One of them is Byron Skelton, who was the committeeman, who is here now as the judge of the court of claims. Mrs. Randolph, whom I knew very well, struck up a battle with the President. Nobody ever really told me what happened. I suspect it had something to do with being slighted.

M: That came after the 1956--

L: Yes, it came at the second convention. Maybe you can help me out; but I believe there was a second state convention, and at that time the Harris County Democrats were not seated at the right time,

according to Mrs. Randolph, and she was not asked to sit on the platform, et cetera.

Then there was the division, of course, between the President and Senator Yarborough, who then rallied the liberals. He was eternally running for office, and he finally got elected, in a by-election, as I remember, when Price Daniel went home to run for governor.

Just to summarize: this Texan whom I have been conferring with, who really knew the state and worked with this particular group of liberals at the time, said that every time the President ran for state-wide office, he really had a problem. The problem was whether or not he could make it. Because, even in being, you might say, as good a, shall we call him a diplomat in the political sense, in handling different kinds of people in the state, he stood always within target range of the conservatives, and eventually, I suppose, certain of the liberals, also. In other words, he was very hard-put to stay on a middle course and achieve any kind of success statewide.

But you have, in contradiction to this, the fact that, in 1957, the very first civil rights bill was passed under the majority leadership of Lyndon Johnson. And although it was just a first step when you look at it on paper--it doesn't really add up to all the rights or all the privileges that anybody wanted at the time--it was absolutely miraculous for those of us who remember it. I sat in the Gallery the night of the vote. You held your breath as to whether they would make it or not, the Majority Leader and his people. It was a tremendous emotional purging for the American people to find

out that there was something going on and that the truce, you might say the end of the agreement between the Republicans and the Democrats in the South and the Southwest that nothing could be done about human rights, this kind of agreement which was never put on paper, but which existed tacitly for eighty years from Reconstruction on, was finally broken with this vote and this bill.

So that the President, I think, followed a course always of trying to help liberals without completely alienating the conservatives. He, I don't believe, was a conservative. If you want to call him a conservative because he wanted to acquire property, money, the kind of home that he now has, or the kind of business he now owns, I don't think that's the right way to apply the word conservative; I think that's a normal human impulse.

M: I was going to say, there are certainly a lot of liberals who are not averse to that kind of accumulation.

L: That's right! And some of them have actually sat around and just cut their coupons. They've inherited their money. This, to me, is a wrong interpretation of the President.

M: Well now, oddly, that same act that you mentioned, the passage of that 1957 Civil Rights Act, was one of the things that many of the national Democratic liberals, such as Paul Butler, at the time DNC chairman, and some of the people you were working with, with the Democratic National Committee, used as one of the evidences of their distaste for Mr. Johnson. And he began to get in trouble with a major faction of the national Democratic Party.

L: Well, that's another chapter, if you'd like me to go into that. I worked very closely with Paul Butler. He had acquired a taste for an intransigent attitude: he was a liberal whom you could never satisfy. Surely you and I have known them all, or read about them. The people like Joe Rauh, who happens to be somebody I've known a long time and respected, but who simply goes off the deep end; you can't satisfy Joe Rauh.

But there are lots of these people, and they have to have a cause. And after the 1956 defeat, in Mr. Butler's attempts to what he called restructure and rebuild the party, the first step was the creation of something called an Advisory Council. I was present when the advisory council was formed. I wasn't feeling too well after the defeat. We were all exhausted. I came back to attend the meeting. Mr. Philip Perlman, who was a lawyer here in town and had been an appointee of President Truman's, I think he had been solicitor general, I'm not sure, and a man called Paul Ziffren, from California--

M: Is that Z--

L: Z-I-F-F-R-E-N, who was then committeeman, or had become committeeman; and Camille Gravelle of New Orleans, who was the committeeman there, formed a clique. And there were some others, but that was the three horsemen of the four horsemen. These were Butler's advisors. And they decided to form this Advisory Council, because, quote, unquote--they never said this--"the leadership was not sufficiently liberal in the House and in the Senate."

And the night that the council's material was drafted and was about to be put out, I said to Paul, "Paul, have you communicated with the leadership, the Speaker, and with Lyndon Johnson?" "No, but we're going to." I said, "Well, I think it would be fatal to put this out in the paper without first calling both of them on the phone." I can't be certain as to whether he called them that evening, but I know that he did not heed my words about waiting for the release until he contacted them, because I remember one of them, quote, "was out hunting." I'm pretty sure it was Lyndon Johnson; I don't think it would have been Sam Rayburn. But anyway, it was put out, and it was put out, of course, that they were invited to join and so forth.

But from the beginning, the President, then Majority Leader, who came up to the following meeting, whenever it was held, I don't remember, announced that you could not advise the Senate, and the Speaker said you couldn't advise the House and that he personally would not become a member.

Well, that's when the first shot was fired. And the harassment of the leadership was, at first, subtle and then a little more open as we got nearer to 1960. But the advisory council met, and met, and met; and we spent money. We hired a man who had an office and who was named executive director.

Adlai Stevenson, I remember distinctly suspected their motives. He and I would ride back and forth to the meetings. He always stayed with a friend, Laura Magnuson, Mrs. Paul Magnuson, down the street from me, so we would share a cab going back and forth to meetings.

And he would say that this is supposed to be an institution for attacking Republicans. We're not attacking Republicans! In other words, he also felt this not too subtle attack on the leadership by this committee.

In the end, I don't think there was an open breach, but I remember remarks that the President made. "I don't like getting these messages through the transom," a phrase that he would use. And he would say, "Even if Eleanor Roosevelt had something to say about what the Congress should be doing, it would not be considered wise for her to advise the Senate." I don't remember the pieces of paper they put out. I know we had good publicity. I think that was one of the purposes, in other words, to secure a forum for various programs. I couldn't tell you, now, what they said on this policy or that.

M: How did that affect the position of the important national Democrats as the 1960 convention approached and it was very well known that Mr. Johnson would seek the nomination?

L: Well, I think his seeking the nomination was so full of ambivalence, Mr. Mulhollan, that I must pause here and say to you that it was always a mystery to me that he really thought he was seeking the nomination.

M: You think the ambivalence was genuine and not feigned, as is sometimes [suggested]?

L: I think he was disturbed at the idea of the choice of candidates. I think he quite properly thought of himself as perhaps more of a leader, more in contact with what was wanted by the people and for

the people than was Adlai, who had twice run and was about to be considered again. I don't know how he felt about Jack Kennedy. I never had any inkling of that. But I do know that, measuring himself alongside of other members of the Senate, I'm sure he felt himself more than equal to the task. But he never set about it right. So therefore, I can't answer your question.

I can only say that to me, who was sitting at the Democratic Committee, with no power to recognize him, and yet so much admiration and friendship for him that Mr. Butler threatened to fire me. He said to me one day, "You know, I could replace you with so-and-so." And I said, "You're more than welcome to." He said, "Well, if you continue your friendship," or whatever he called it "intimacy with the Majority Leader, I think I'm going to have to." And I said, "Well, by all means, help yourself." He never did, of course.

I remember one particular instance: I held two large meetings for women in the spring of 1958 and 1960, in Washington at the Sheraton Park Hotel. Both of them were enormously well attended and very successful, and we had very snappy programs. One thing I've always been known for is a fast-moving program and not a lot of long speeches, et cetera. And I had arranged it--I think perhaps at the 1960 meeting--that the Majority Leader be the principal speaker at a dinner. Paul Butler sent for me and said, "You can't do this. You'll have to have Mr. Truman on the program or somebody else. We can't have him as the only speaker on the program." I was so shocked to think that anyone

would question how I was running my program; I still haven't recovered when I think back on it.

They never gave me a penny for this operation, it was all supported by the people who came. As a matter of fact, I was in such a state of war with Mr. Butler the last three years that I almost had hysterics over it myself. He was a madman.

But anyway, I did what I could to help the President and Mrs. Johnson, and expose them to people. Going back to my notes to the visit I paid him after the heart attack in 1955, I remember a conversation in which I said to him, "Well, now, I'm going to start a series of regional meetings and I'd like you to send me a message to each one of them, so that I can read it." And he particularly speaks of it in a letter he's written to me, which I'll be glad to read you--I have it here because I'm going to use it in the chapter--that he wrote right after he got back home. And [he] says, "I want to be sure and send this message. Let me know when and where the meetings will be." So I had felt very strongly that I was helping him.

I did not really think of myself as being pro anything. I can't honestly say that I was altogether impartial. I mean, I wasn't. I didn't know Kennedy. I finally met him once or twice and thought very well of him. I did try to work with Adlai very hard because I wanted Adlai to remove himself from this race. I wanted him to reassure the Kennedys and thereby make himself available as Secretary of State in 1960. I did my best to work on that.

I failed completely. He was manipulated by highpowered women, including Mrs. Roosevelt and Mrs. Agnes Meyer, who insisted that he be nominated. The hope was that there would be a second ballot and that he would make it. And I believe, if my notes are correct, I also have notes saying that he once appeared on the Hill and that he was taken into a secret office to confer with the Majority Leader, who told him he damn well ought to get ready to be the candidate! So there are all sorts of instances where I felt the President was putting his foot in the water and taking it out again.

M: As an interesting ambivalence, a lot of people who look back now say, you know, they figured all the time that he had in his mind running for the President in 1938, or 1942, or 1944. Do you think that is inaccurate, based on your observances?

L: No, I don't think it's inaccurate; in this sense, that in the chapter that I just finished on Mr. Rayburn, I do mention an evening dinner when I sat with him on the sofa in the pre-dinner cocktail hour. He had a couple of drinks and we were watching the doorway as the guests came in. It was at the F Street Club in Washington. He pointed his finger at the President and Mrs. Johnson--he was then the majority leader--and he said, "That's the darn greatest woman that ever lived." And then [he] proceeded to talk about her, and he said, "She's got one thing, though, that . . . " Then he proceeded to tell me that "one thing" was the President's ambition to be president. And that was in the fifties. He meant, when he said, "She's got one thing, though, . . . ," he meant bothering her or hanging over her. He

didn't spell it out. Other people came along. And, as a matter of fact, if we can seal this up for the future . . . .

M: We can, forever.

L: . . . . I will say that he said two things. I'm not going to say so in the book. He said, "She's got to stop trying to give him a son. And he's got to stop trying to run for president."

M: That whole relationship with Mrs. Johnson, how would you assess the importance of Mrs. Johnson throughout the thirty-year period?

L: Well, I believe the President when he says he never really made a decision without her. He really had great respect and affection for his mother; he thought she was an extraordinary woman and I think he turned around and the reason he picked Lady Bird was because she too had extraordinary sensitivity as well as a great deal of intelligence and a fine character. All these talents counted up.

I wrote a piece about her, right after they went into the White House, for the Ladies Home Journal. I remember several things about it. Her advice was always consulted. I can't tell you that it was always taken! I don't know enough about that. I know enough about my own home life to know that there was never any real difference in our husband and wife decisions. But I know Bird was invaluable to him.

First of all, I don't think he could have been successful without her. I would assume that a woman like this is as rare among the human species as I've ever known. And I've known a lot of women, because that's been one of my interests. She is very southern in the

sense that she has a very closed personality; you don't get to know her, even as well as I've known her. With me I don't think she is altogether relaxed. I'm not sure that she ever is. I mean, she has such very fine perception of what's right and what's wrong. She's exercising her judgment all the time. I like what Marny Clifford said to me about her one day; she said, "She has pigeonholes in her mind that open when she wants them to. She remembers everything." This is true! She never forgets if she's seen you, what you've last done for her or with her, she doesn't forget names. I mean, this kind of woman was an asset.

The President once addressed a whole garden full of ambassadors and their wives, while I was in the State Department. To my great chagrin and shock, I found that ambassadors, American ambassadors who are appointed by the President of the United States, went to see the President of the United States before they left, paid a call on him, but their wives never got to meet anybody. Finally, with the help of Mr. Crockett and the State Department, and Angier Biddle Duke who was chief of protocol, we got it changed and, of course, with the help of Mrs. Johnson and the President. The wives went along with their husbands and they saw Mrs. Johnson and sometimes they saw the President, and sometimes they didn't. But we established that precedent.

And in this very Rose-Garden evening, he stood and talked to the ambassadors, "The strongest thing I can tell you is that the wife, your wife, is the most important asset you'll have." And then

he proceeded to talk about it, and he told a story about how, at the end of an evening when he had been out with Mrs. Johnson at a party where there were some very famous people, or some one special person, he would say to her, "How is it that the most important man in the room is always talking to you all evening?" He chuckled; then she would answer, "I don't know. I just asked him, "Tell me all about yourself."

M: (Laughter) That's generally enough to occupy him for the evening, I'm sure.

L: He had a way of telling these stories. The last time we had a beautification meeting in the White House, which was in December of this fall, 1968, we were waiting for him. We were upstairs in the Oval Room, and we'd all had drinks. It was one of those long waits, you know, when nobody knew whether he was coming or not. And so, finally, we went ahead, or at least Mrs. Johnson did, with the ceremony without him. Mr. Udall, the secretary of the interior, made a little speech about him. And then there was some kind of material passed out, a souvenir of the four years that we had worked together. And Mrs. Johnson made a little speech. She said she had hoped the President would come; she was sure he had pressing business and couldn't get there.

Just about three minutes later, in he walked. And I could tell he looked very stormy, but anyway, he finally shook hands, very glum, and walked to the microphone and made a speech. And it was a very good speech and full of wit. He thanked everybody present for all

their generosity and their support and their kindness. But most of all, he thanked them, now, for giving him back his wife! He said, "At last, I'll be able to get on her schedule." (Laughter) And it was lovely. That was just the way he felt about it.

The only thing I remember personally about the evening was that I came home and told my husband, "He was either awfully mad or awfully sick that night." I was worried about him, and sure enough, he went to the hospital the next morning with the flu. So he was feeling miserable, but that was why he hadn't been with us.

But I think that her influence on him has been enormous. Now, I don't think she ever attempted to tell him not to run for president. I think she knew better.

M: That was advice that would not have been taken.

L: That's right. I'm curious as to how many people you will interview who will know much more than I will [about] how many times he thought about doing this and what he did about it. He made abortive attempts to get in touch with the national committee, and I'm not sufficiently aware of them all to tell you about them. But I remember that he went one day to New York, and that his good friend Ed Weisl up there was supposed to be gathering up delegates and so forth, and that he was certainly more successful even than I had thought he would be--let's put it honestly--because I don't think they had enough time to properly prepare.

You know, he would come out and say, "I can't campaign. I'm majority leader, and I have to stay here." Then he'd show up at some

meeting where all the candidates were. The first time I saw him was in New Mexico, in--well, I'd be hard put to say whether it was January or February of 1960 where he was introduced as the candidate of the Southwest. Mr. Rayburn came and spoke for him.

And then at a dinner I was at in Detroit the night that Stuart Symington announced, he wasn't present. Mr. Rayburn was. You knew then, he had a spokesman there. Kennedy was there. And there were various such instances where I felt that there was this pullback; always, you know, whether they were really looking for delegates, or weren't they; what were they doing; what kind of an organization did they have? But I was too busy fighting for my life with Butler at the moment to really do much of anything about any candidate!

Can we break a minute?

M: Sure.

(Interruption)

M: . . . the most important accomplishment in the world in 1970. You know, you--

L: I don't think anything should be forced. I suppose, as a grandmother, one always feels this way, but one is more lenient. I pressed hard that my daughters go to college, because I never went, and I thought it was such a handicap for me when I went to work during the war, to get a job, because in those days, there was a sharp distinction between the clerical and the professional grades in the Civil Service. I couldn't get a professionally rated job, because I didn't have a college degree.

I thought of a point that I wanted to make about the position the President found himself in as majority leader. In fact, I had some research done on the subject, because I thought I might use it, but I don't think I will, in the book. It's about the kind of men who were in Congress when he became majority leader, and who, therefore, made his accomplishment even more astonishing and epoch-making, record-breaking. He had chairmen like Richard Russell and Willis Robertson.

M: A Virginia senator then.

L: Yes, a senator from Virginia. As chairman, at various times, [of] Banking and Currency, Robertson, I think, 1959-61, Fulbright before that; Richard Russell, of course, was Armed Services; Carl Hayden had Appropriations; Ellender was chairman of Agriculture and Forestry; Byrd was chairman of Finance; Walter George, of Foreign Relations.

M: I hesitate to say that's a rogues' gallery, but they do have similarities.

L: That's right! And John McClellan on the--still is--Government Operations.

M: Yes, he's one of my senators.

L: You're from Arkansas?

M: I'm from Arkansas.

L: So many interesting people in my life have been from Arkansas. Then, of course, we had Mr. Eastland, who succeeded Kilgore on Judiciary, and I think still holds that post. There was Lister

Hill. I don't think I would classify Lister as a conservative, nor Olin Johnston, who was on Post Office and Civil Service. Theodore Francis Green was Rules and Administration part of the time and part of the time [Thomas C.] Hennings of Missouri was. [John] Sparkman was in charge of the Select Committee on Small Business. And of course, the President had his friend Earle Clements, who was in charge of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee part of the time, and then George Smathers was. But I think you could describe the leadership as being overwhelmingly conservative.

M: Certainly could.

L: The Joint Committee on Internal Revenue had Harry Byrd on it. Harry Byrd was head of Reduction of Non-Essential Federal Expenditures! I have the date of the Civil Rights Act of 1957; it passed the House in June and the Senate in August and [was] signed by the President in September.

The other thing I want to go back to is the Butler situation. He was a very astute man; he was the first person, as far as I know, to woo black citizens. He held meetings that were solely directed to all-Negro participation.

M: When did these begin?

L: Well, about, they must have been after 1956. I would date them from 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959. Those were the years when Butler was constantly storing up ideas and trying to usurp power. He didn't want power to be in anybody's hands but his own. These meetings, which I am certain were mostly attended by conservative Negroes,

because in those days we didn't know any other kind.

M: There weren't any other kind.

L: That's right. We did have representation from Houston in the form of--

M: Hobart Taylor.

L: Hobart Taylor's father, yes. And he was a very fine and a very dignified man and is still, as far as I know. I saw him when I was in Houston a couple of years ago.

But I thought that, at the time--I used to say publicly, I only said it once, because I found Blacks didn't like it--that the situation the Negro community and the Negro leadership found themselves in was similar to that women faced. They were always getting up and declaiming that they didn't want recognition because they were black; they wanted recognition because they were entitled to it because of their professional expertise or their degree of experience. And I said, "Women say exactly the same thing." And neither of us mean it! I remember that at the meeting we were all seated; I got a couple of real dirty looks and nobody rose to support me! I don't think, at the time, I was altogether fair; but it was very difficult to survive in an atmosphere with Butler, who would not let anything happen in the name of women for fear of his losing his own direct relationship with them. He wanted me not to be--there was something innocent like a newsletter which I put out about women's news, which helped keep the grassroots interested. He wanted to take it away from me and incorporate it in a house organ. I can't

give you all the incidents of his pettiness. He wouldn't let me take my staff assistant to meetings because he said it was too expensive; sometimes he would relent at the last minute.

These were all the kind of personal vendettas he employed when he thought people were too popular. I was flattered by it, actually. It was amusing, but in the sense that he worked on the Negroes, he certainly did that. Accordingly, he bypassed Congressman Dawson, who was then the only Negro representative in the Congress and who was certainly out of touch with modern Negro thought. But he was a clever man, Butler was, and he'd had very good training in his own way. I suppose he thought he was fighting for the liberal cause; that's the way he excused himself. He ended up being very anti-Johnson.

M: I wonder. This calls for real judgment, because you weren't there in later times, you were doing other things, but one of the mysteries, it seems to me, about Mr. Johnson's presidency is, considering his reputation as a politician, the rather obvious disuse into which the Democratic National Committee fell in 1966, 1967, 1968. I wonder, do you think that might be a hangover from the old opinion he had back in the late fifties? Did he tend to go around them because he had been burned by them in the past?

L: No. I don't think so. And I may be wrong, but I don't think he trusted them. That was all there was to it. They were not his people. He would work through whoever was over there. He always had Cliff Carter or somebody over there, whom he could work through;

but he did not want to fire John Bailey or Margaret Price because he thought it would look--well, I don't know whether he thought it would look bad or not. He didn't want to do it, period. Because he could have. He had a perfect right, at any time, to call a meeting of the national committee and say, "I'm going to appoint somebody else." That was part of it. He just wasn't interested. In the whole time the Johnsons were in the White House, I'm sure that Mrs. Johnson did receive Mrs. Price, but not often. And they felt very strongly, I'm sure very accurately, that these were the people who were against him.

M: He considered them Kennedy people.

L: That's right. Not only Kennedy people, but anti-Johnson people, because Michigan was violently anti-Johnson. One of the things that I'm told that the then-Majority Leader specified with Kennedy when they discussed his acceptance of the vice presidential spot, was that he would have to assure Johnson--Kennedy would--that the liberal element, the CIO element and the Michigan people and all of those people were going to behave themselves. I don't know if he said "behave themselves," or be quiet, or come along, or whatever it was. The reason I lost my job, which I did, to Margaret Price was because Michigan had to get something and there wasn't anything left to give them!

M: (Laughter)

L: But me!

M: You were expendable.

L: That's right. So, in a sense, it all amused me so, because I think there were times when the President felt that I might have done more. I'm sure he did--I had one or two instances in mind--during those months leading up to the convention. I have never discussed it with either of them, never had the opportunity. But the point was that I was holding my own. I tried to get Senator Neuberger, Maureen Neuberger, on the convention program. And everybody, all the feminists, were screaming about wanting a woman on the program. I couldn't get her on. You know why? Because Butler knew she was for Lyndon Johnson.

M: And Paul Butler was not prepared to allow . . . .

L: He was not going to do it. He was going to get movie stars. At one moment, I thought I would kill him! I learned not to go after him with a hatchet after a while, but anyway, I tried to talk him out of it. I said he would offend all the poor Democratic ladies who thought they were important and had worked their heads or their hands off for the party. And then he threatened me with Marya Mannes, whom he heard was very good. And I said, "She's excellent; she will also offend everybody, not only the Democratic women, but the men as well!" (Laughter) But it was a constant battle for who was for Jack Kennedy and who wasn't. And I take it that Butler had made his mind up in this direction as far back as 1956.

M: At that convention.

L: Yes. Because I don't think anybody else has made this connection, but there was a film shown called "The Pursuit of Happiness," a

documentary narrated by Senator John F. Kennedy, who was a complete unknown, as far as I remember, certainly in the Senate--1956.

M: There was a vice presidential boom for him.

L: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. That was interesting. The idea of his being, you know, a presidential candidate had certainly not occurred to many people. It started almost immediately after that. The narrator of this film was fairly important. It got a lot of public exposure.

M: Sure.

L: Butler fixed that one up.

M: Goes back quite a way.

L: Yes. And then there were some very amusing stories. I was discussing them with Hale Boggs recently. In January, there was a fund-raising dinner. Mrs. Boggs [Lindy Boggs, Mrs. Hale Boggs] was the co-chairman; this was at the time when Hale Boggs instituted a campaign to get himself made chairman of the convention. And I suspect at the time that Butler knew where Hale's interests lay. Hale was for Lyndon Johnson, through Rayburn, naturally. And Butler fought him on every ground. First, he produced the fact that he had signed the [Southern] Manifesto. They couldn't have anybody . . . And then, finally, he said, "Well, we can't have another Catholic." And Hale got absolutely livid; he called up, he called me on the phone one morning and he said, "Katie, you tell that so-and-so, that chairman of yours, that he should go out and get himself a Baptist co-chairman of his dinner committee!"

M: (Laughter)

L: "Let my wife alone." There was a lot of this kind of thing. Amusing in retrospect, but anyway--

M: The point is a fairly stacked convention.

L: That's right, a stacked convention, and it was meant to be. Now I must also tell another episode which remains fixed in my mind. The night of the acceptance speech for the Vice President, I was sitting on the platform. Butler was on the other side of the platform. I don't remember who else was on. My husband was sitting in the galleries with Mrs. Butler. After the Vice President came on, I rushed over and shook his hand. Butler refused to shake hands with him. I found this absolutely inexcusable! Butler looked pale, villainous and unhappy. And after it was over and we were breaking, I came down the steps in back, and there was Ann Butler, and her husband somewhere lagging behind, talking to somebody, saying, "Well, my husband ddin't have to shake hands with that man. You did." I said, "Oh, I beg your pardon, Ann, I didn't have to at all. He happens to be, very happily, the majority leader, as well as an old friend of mine." And I just sailed away smiling. But these two were crazy!

M: How widespread was that? Did it extend beyond the little narrow circle of Butler-riled type, or were there quite a number of prominent Democrats who felt pretty bitter about this?

L: Well, I don't know how Soapy [G. Mennen] Williams felt, but certainly the people in Michigan felt this way. And I remember strange things that come to mind. A few days after the assassination of President Kennedy, one of my callers was Governor Williams. He was really

upset. He didn't know what Lyndon Johnson was going to do to him! I mean, it amused me that he came to see me, and at home; he lived up the street. He hadn't been near me, you know, since Michigan took my job--but he must have had some feeling that something was going to happen, that he would be asked to leave. And of course, the President never did anything of the kind. He continued to use him, appoint him to office.

How widespread? I would have to go through the states, and look at them, and try to pick out the people for you. There were some wild-eyed liberals in different delegations, I don't recall them or their names. They weren't all in Michigan, and I'm sure even some of the Michiganders didn't feel this way.

M: Were you close to the decision-making process of the Johnson family in regard to accepting the nomination?

L: No. Unfortunately, as I say, in my spot as the vice chairman, I did not participate in any of this. First of all, because I didn't know about it; and second of all, I wasn't invited; but third of all, it was not part of my job. More importantly, it was my job to stay away and try, when the decisions were made, to influence everybody that I could to go along with it. Which I did. There were some people in the District of Columbia but, so help me, I couldn't tell you who they were. (Laughter) I don't remember anymore. Some who were for him and some who were against him. One of them, I think, was Polly Shackelton, who went along with Joe Rauh, who became committeewoman in my place, subsequently. But she certainly got over it in a hurry.

I mean, you get this kind of--it's like taking pot, you know. Everybody's passing it around; you're going to have some. It was a dangerous thing at the time. I don't feel it was very widespread. If you look at the record and see that the President got four hundred and something votes on the first ballot, I don't know whether they were all from the South and Southwest. I've never looked at the tally. They weren't? There were some from New York, weren't there?

M: I believe so. One of the big eastern states.

L: New York and Pennsylvania?

M: I believe New York's the one.

L: And I'm sure that people like the people who supported me, who were the pros: David Lawrence, and [Carmine] De Sapio, and Jake [Jacob] Arvey and those people were all for Lyndon Johnson; there was no problem of that sort. They were the people who told me afterwards that they spoke to Jack Kennedy about me, et cetera, they were my supporters. I think California had some real way-outs, but I don't remember them. I don't think it made that much of an impression.

M: What about the vice presidential period, which is described by most people as a very unhappy time for him?

L: I'd say it was, I think it was.

M: Was the unhappiness in the inactivity of the job or in the personal relationship with the Kennedy people?

L: I think it was both. I think that the Kennedys made it clear that this was a purely political arrangement and, you know, that friendship didn't begin after dark. Whatever you want to call it, there

was no intimacy; there was no socializing. And I don't know whether the President was consulted or not. I couldn't tell you that, but I can tell you a story. This, again, I think should be locked up, that Bill Crockett told me. Bill Crockett traveled with the Vice President. Have you interviewed him?

M: He's on my list; he's out of office.

L: He's in San Francisco. You're going to have to go out there!

M: Oh, I can't wait. (Laughter)

L: It's a nice city to go to.

Well, wonderful dear man, and I loved him dearly, he stands out in my mind as the most magnanimous, delightful human being. But anyway, he travelled with the Vice President, and one night something came over the wires. And my facts, as I say, are rusty. It has to do with a Senate vote which they were discussing. And one of them said, "So-and-so, Senator So-and-so, was a damned fool to do that." Either Crockett said it, or the Vice President. And the remark made by the Vice President was, "Yes, but he wasn't damn fool enough to run for Vice President."

M: Fairly clear.

L: Yes. Now, the outward trappings are always there. You're going to see the same thing in this administration. He's in the pictures; he's at the dinners; he gets sent around; he's given assignments and so forth; I don't think that even President Johnson, although he meant to treat Hubert Humphrey well, I don't think he did.

M: A very difficult position.

L: I mean, you look at the recent stories called to my attention by this epidemic of stories about Clark Clifford's change of mind about the Vietnam War. You'll find that the people who were present at these discussions did not include the Vice President.

M: That's right. He was rarely on the list.

L: He was not there, not there.

And I remember Hubert Humphrey came to see us. We've always been close friends with him and his wife. We went to the theatre together one night. They called us up right after, about a month or so after he was in office. They came back to the House. We had some of his favorite Canadian Club and had a few drinks. And he said, "The President asked me to do so-and-so. Told me to call these agencies, and to mastermind them, and so forth; and I did. And I found out one thing right quick. Unless the orders come from the White House, the orders from me mean nothing!"

M: Unless he can say, "The President said."

L: That's right. I mean, you know, or even if the President had to call these Cabinet officers and say, "Look, I've asked Hubert Humphrey to work with you on such and such," Hubert Humphrey's calling and saying, "The President asked me to call you on so-and-so," doesn't mean a damn thing. I think people want to serve one master. I mean, it's a natural human instinct. You don't want to be checking with the Vice President every time you do something.

I think that Mrs. Johnson did a great deal for me at the period, which I would like to mention. It was impossible to work with Mrs.

Kennedy on the main program, which was to give recognition to foreign women visitors. She soon let it be known that she did not want to see any of these women. And I always appealed to Mrs. Johnson, and Mrs. Johnson would respond. I have recently sent her some photographs which I had produced in the office, with the proper names of people whom she saw in certain emergencies.

I remember one woman, who came from Latin America, I think it was Bolivia, but I'm not sure, had brought a piece of her wedding silver to give to Mrs. Kennedy. They wouldn't let her near the White House. And Mrs. Johnson received it. Then there was another photograph I sent her of the three Turkish ladies, who were identified.

And then, of course, Mrs. Johnson did the gracious thing, I remember, and gave a lunch for Indira Gandhi, which was beautifully done and which I worked on with Liz, Liz Carpenter. There were hundreds of such instances. One I don't think Mrs. Johnson rescued was the Japanese Cabinet. I worked on that very closely with Angier Biddle Duke. Apparently, our Cabinet went over there, and they came here, a return visit, our wives were received by the Emperor.

The only thing the Japanese wives wanted--and I had been in correspondence with our Ambassador's wife out there, Mrs. Reischauer--was to see Mrs. Kennedy. And this was the first time these women had left the country, these Japanese wives. Do you think we would get it done? No. Who saw them finally? President Kennedy. He had to take his day and cut it up in order to do his wife's job for her.

But anyway, to go back to the main subject which is the President, I don't think he was deliberately badly treated. I think there was a political barrier between him and Bobby from the beginning.

M: Do you know anything about how that started?

L: I would suppose that Bobby was influenced by the talk of the liberal group. Joe Rauh was fairly intimate with the CIO people, the Reuthers, and so forth. I don't know of any other reason. I mean, certainly, there had been no personal contact between them, that I know.

M: Didn't have any opportunity, maybe.

L: No. I got to know Bobby fairly well because my assignment was to work with him in the campaign after my office was given over to Mrs. Price. I think both men were surrounded with people who really worked them over to exaggerate and exacerbate this quarrel, once the President got into the White House. The terrible sting of the assassination, and the fact that it was Texas, and Kennedy's visit was an attempt to get Texas back together.

M: Perhaps you can give some insight better than many could on this problem. How important, after Mr. Johnson was in the White House, is this sort of, for want of a better term, social belittling and the Georgetown dinner circuit anti-Johnson talk? Does that contribute to a President's problems by influencing the media, for example, or this type of thing?

L: Yes. I think the President was dangerously criticized, by a group of people who were Kennedyites. Some of them were in the media, and

some of them were just plain people who wined and dined and knew the media. I've always felt there was a Kennedy press. Now, what happened was that when the Kennedys were first in, during even the inaugural period, they went to dinner with Rowland Evans; they went to dinner with Joe Alsop, or somebody else. You take Joe Alsop. I mean, Joe Alsop had a closed mind about Lyndon Johnson. I have no objections to him personally, "LBJ's just not a good administrator," or some thing of this sort. Well, you start out with this, you come out of the tunnel with this situation; you don't go into it with it.

M: Right.

L: I happen to have worked over a couple of newspapermen, who have started out feeling this way on the liberal issue, and one of them I brought around so strongly that I'll say his job is threatened now, I think. Because he became so pro-Johnson that nothing he ever wrote was any different. But anyway, the President got to like him, too. That was Kenneth Crawford of Newsweek.

M: Yes.

L: He was one of my great friends, and he was anti-Johnson.

M: At the beginning.

L: Yes. I mean, I know how much you can influence people. You had a thing going with the Kennedys--they appealed to young people. As I say, Sandy [Sander] Vanocur, who is utterly impossible, swell-headed in every way, he's permanently anti-everything now. It's become a thing with him. But he was always anti-Johnson; he was pro-Kennedy. And these people were carried around--I like to use that word--by the

Kennedys, because they entertained and wined and dined them. The Kennedys were not only visitors in their homes, but they were frequent visitors at the White House. And this was very heady wine.

And ten days before the assassination, to skip a little, I was having a female stag party at my house for a girl I'd worked with during the war. It was her first trip to America; she was a member of the public information staff of the Conservative government in England, and I was very fond of her and wanted to do something for her. So I had some of the smart newspaper girls to dinner. After everybody left, Liz Carpenter stayed on and talked, and talked, and talked with us. And she talked about this vile campaign that was being conducted against the Vice President on the [Bobby] Baker thing, and that there'd been offices set up--I've forgotten whether she said it was the Mayflower, or wherever it was--and prices set on pictures that could be obtained of the President with Baker and so forth. They were willing to bid high. And my visitor was absolutely fascinated, her eyes were popping because such things don't go on in England. But anyway, she was here long enough to meet Mrs. Johnson the next day at a foreign service wives exhibit they had in the State Department, and then, to live through the assassination period. But she never got over--the English woman--the conversations with Liz.

There was, you might say, a plot. I couldn't tell you who was heading it, or whether they were just looking for it as a sensational story, or whether they were deliberately trying to magnify the Baker story. They certainly weren't trying to play it down.

M: It's difficult to say that it was a conscious effort on the part of the Kennedys, but they didn't discourage it. Is that fair?

L: That's right. I think if Jack had lived, these things would not have happened, naturally, but I think Bobby was not only lost and sorrowful, but, how shall I say, he must have felt, you know, you always have to have a devil of some kind. And I think the devil, in this case, as I say, without his knowing it or thinking it, became LBJ.

Well, you had Jackie, who would have refused every invitation to return to the White House. I attended the dedication of the Jacqueline Kennedy Garden, which is opposite the Rose Garden, which Mrs. Johnson completed. She wouldn't come. She said it would upset her too much.

M: The Johnsons made repeated efforts?

L: Oh, yes. I wish I could remember. In fact, I went to find somewhere, what Mrs. Johnson said to her. It was quoted in the press at the time. She said, "We may not be able to remove her sadness, but at least we can accommodate her period of adjustment." She said it in a much more gracious way, but what she was saying was, "Don't hurry out of the White House." You remember, they stayed in their residence at The Elms.

Now I think the idea of playing the President as a sort of a river-gambler type, and a buffoon, and an exaggeration of evil in many respects, became fashionable. Now, who started it, or who carried it on . . . . I think almost the worst of it, as a matter of fact, I

felt, in the recent years, came from some of these boys from Texas who knew him when or thought they knew him when and could write about him. I thought that was much more--

M: You mean his staff people?

L: Oh, no, it was what was his name, that wrote in Harper's?

M: Oh, King, Larry King?

L: Yes.

M: They're part of the liberal establishment of Texas, by all means.

L: I think Eric Goldman . . . you know, but there again, you had a man who was let go. You never can tell who is going to bite you. You can tell pretty well if you're going to let somebody go.

I felt, for instance, that the great hole in the White House when Walter Jenkins left was never filled.

M: That's an interesting and fairly frequently made comment. So there's bound to be a lot of insight in that.

L: I promise you it was true, of all the years I've worked with people in public life, and reaching them through their staff becomes absolutely imperative, because they're too busy or too important for you to speak to. You could count on Walter Jenkins for a reply, for a return call. Sometimes he'd call me and say, "Katie, it's been three days since I've been able to call you back, but here it is." And then there was never any divided loyalty.

M: In Walter, you mean.

L: That's right. And this Moyers, whom I never got to know, I'm sure

was brilliant and, in every way, could have held the number one spot. But he was interested in Moyers.

M: What about the Kennedy staff people that stayed on? Were they participants in this sort of campaign of anti-Johnsonism?

L: Well, the only one I knew well enough to talk about was [Theodore] Sorensen, and he used to come to our house frequently. We knew him very well. My husband had recommended a friend of his, who used to be in the FCC, called Mike [Myer] Feldman, who called him and said, "I've been asked to go to work for John F. Kennedy. What should I do? I want to go into private practice. I want to make money." And my husband said, "You'd be a fool if you don't take the job." And so, through Mike, we got to know Ted; I got to know both of them very well during those Kennedy years.

Sorensen came to the house afterwards, when Johnson was in the White House, and told us several times that Kennedy had never treated him as well as Johnson did. That he'd personally never had the solicitous attention, that when he went down to the Ranch for Christmas to help with the State of the Union Message, that his quarters, where he took his three sons--he was divorced, and he had the children for the holidays--were stacked with food; that the President personally supervised the "digs", that he was graciously received. He said the President used to invite him, once in a while, to go swimming with him. He said Kennedy never, never let you go beyond a working relationship. Sorensen, as far as I know, has never opened

his mouth. I don't know what he said in his book because I haven't read it.

M: Mostly Kennedy business, not unfavorable.

L: That's right. I always thought that [Richard] Goodwin was all right. I worked with Goodwin in 1964, the Saturday night before election. He called me and I helped him put on a television show for the President. I went up to New York.

M: He apparently worked with Mr. Johnson for a fairly long time thereafter.

L: These are people, you know, who have no . . . . I hate to attack the whole modern generation, but they are the modern men. They don't really care as long as it's a winner. They really don't have the same sense of devotion.

M: They don't personalize issues, perhaps in the way that some others do.

L: That's right. I mean, in other words, they're very good at words, they're almost too good. And they'll apply their profession where they think it's going to get the most return.

M: What happened after Mr. Johnson became president? You mentioned Mr. Kennedy's keeping his personal relationships in a business way with his staff. What happened to Mr. Johnson's relationship with his quote-unquote "old friends" in the White House? Did most of them continue to be frequent guests and close confidants?

L: Well, yes and no. I think that the Texas people, whom he liked, stayed there, and I don't know of anybody that was a fall-out in

Texas. I know the Jack Brookses were often there, and others that he liked very much. I think the real fall-out with McCarthy--I think McCarthy was fairly intimate, at least Abigail was with Lady Bird. I knew that end of it better, and there was a complete cessation after McCarthy took out after Vietnam, long before he became a candidate.

M: Right.

L: Fulbright was another drop-out.

M: Were they close personal friends?

L: Oh, yes. He used to call Betty Fulbright to go shopping for Lady Bird and buy her presents for him.

M: What about the non-governmental types, like Jim Rowe you mentioned, and Ed Weisl, and people of this nature?

L: Well, now, I happen to know about Jim Rowe, but Weisl you can't have a falling out with. It's quite easy to fall out with Jim Rowe. I've had a few myself. (Laughter) But, over the years, I always tease him about it. When we first knew each other, he stopped speaking to me one time, and he can't remember why, and I certainly don't.

M: Serious, serious trouble. (Laughter)

L: But the President and he had a fall-out in the 1960 campaign. And the President really took it quite hard. And interestingly enough, the person who told me what it was was Sorensen. I never knew it otherwise. It was about a speech that the President didn't want to make in Oklahoma, that Jim was setting up. And LBJ kept saying, you know, "It's a dog, and I'm not going there. There won't be anybody there,"

and so forth. Well, apparently, Rowe insisted--I guess Rowe was being told to insist, I don't blame Rowe--and the President went. And he was right, it was a dog, and Lyndon Johnson, when he's unhappy, you know, is apt to say so. And I guess he said a few things to Rowe. And Rowe sat down and made the mistake of writing him a real hot letter, I'm told. And the President stopped speaking to him.

M: So there's no general answer about the old friends.

L: No, I think Weisel never had a falling out. Weisl is much more contained, at least. I think he got annoyed at LBJ a few times, but I don't think he ever let on.

M: What kind of role did these people, or people like yourself, play? Was it a policy advisor, a comforter, or what? Simply an associate? Someone to sit down with at night when things were over and talk about informal things?

L: Well, first of all, I think, in order to put myself into the category I belong in, I belong in the category of old friends who he felt, after he got into the White House, belonged to Mrs. Johnson. I don't think my husband and the President ever had any kind of a sympathetic relationship. So we were never asked, after dark, to small dinners; I'm sorry because I would've enjoyed it. But I enjoyed a lot of privileges that Mrs. Johnson gave me, and I saw a lot of her. I don't feel that I played any role in his life after he became President, except to carry out, through people whom I knew on his staff and through Liz, certain things that he wanted done in the State Department. I certainly worked for them when he was Vice

President, and I worked for them again when he was President, particularly that time with Charles Frankel when he and I were having a hair-pulling contest over who would not speak out on the road on the Vietnam issue; and a few times when I had problems that had been instigated by actions like people like Drew Pearson, who got commitments out of the President that I had to hush up and straighten out. I mean, I did a lot of that kind of thing, and he may never have known about these episodes.

And I did see him once in a while and talk to him. Once was on the Vietnam issue, when I had brought some wives to the White House. And subsequently, I was offered a trip to Vietnam.

M: By the President?

L: Yes. And Marvin Watson called me, and asked me to go out with [Ellsworth] Bunker, and it was three days' notice, or two days' notice. My husband almost went through the ceiling, and my doctor, whom I thought I could count on, I called him that night, and he said, "Certainly not." I have a bad stomach and have had, for years, some trouble with my insides, which I won't go into. But anyway, it wouldn't have been a good idea for me to go to the tropics, no matter war or no war. And I felt at the time that the President knew it, and he would not have understood, because it would not have been told to him the way I would liked to have told it to him. You know, Marvin Watson was very understanding, but I'm sure he wasn't--on the telephone. And I was a little shy about that.

But he never treated me anything but well, and on occasions and most of the time, he always kissed me, he was very friendly and would say nice things. But I never had any real role in advising him. I think my work was really as a spokesman for him around the country and with newspaper people, particularly in the last difficult years. I was somebody who was immediately tagged as pro-Johnson, and as somebody who was sometimes successful in talking people out of what they believed about him.

M: Sort of a general trouble-shooter's role.

L: That's right.

M: Is that the way he used most of his friends?

L: I think so. I think he'd never asked that of them. I think, in the end, the circle narrowed. I think it was Abe Fortas and Clark Clifford.

I think he played the men in the White House differently. I think he liked Harry [McPherson] very much, and used him whenever he could. Bob Kintner, when he was there, I think was close. According to what I know about Moyers and the Watson relationships, they were very close, but very cold. And Lyndon Johnson is not a cold man. You know, he's not. I don't think Moyers ever came up to dinner. I think he was fond of Rostow.

M: Walt Rostow.

L: Yes. And I think Rostow's a very warm man and he is a different kind of a human being.

M: I spent four hours with him last Friday, in a robe.

L: He helped me out when I was first in the department, and those are the things you don't forget. I mean, he understood. I always have said that the men who are fair with you are the men who like their wives. If they like women, they like all women; they're happy with women; they're not uncomfortable with them; they don't feel that they're going to have the chair pulled from under them. And he got me an assistant when I couldn't even get anybody to talk to me about what I was trying to do.

M: Was that when he was chairman of the Policy Planning Council?

L: Yes, that's right. I got to know him and his wife, and they were very dear. So I know how warm and how friendly he can be. And the President responds.

I think the President feels that way about me. I mean, he would relax with me. Last spring he came to Bill White's birthday party. And there were just, let's say, thirty of us, or forty of us. And on such occasions I could always count on a most lovely relationship with him. I went and talked to him. I didn't overstay my time, because, you know, people kept coming and going. And I asked him what I should do about the Humphrey campaign coming up. It was a real question in my mind. And he said, "Well, I'm not going to give you any advice, Katie, but they're crazy if they don't take you." He said, "I don't know anybody"--and then he proceeded to praise me very nicely, in a gentle voice--"who has more friends or knows more people," and so forth, and so on.

There have been other such occasions. I don't know whether I can remember them all--a weddding, the Fowlers' child's wedding, when you could see that he was relaxed and very fond of me and he even used me: at the White House one night, when the [Ludwig] Erhards were there, the Chancellor started to leave, I was on the dance floor, and he turned around and said, "Katie, go get Bird!" You know, it was just that way. And there were other times like that.

But that I ever was an intimate, I think it is more understandable if I may explain it this way: it is the husbands, usually, the men, in a president's life, who counted. And mine was a female relationship. And once he introduced me to somebody I've forgotten, some dignitary at a dinner: This is my good friend, my great friend"--or whatever it was--"who takes care of my wife and daughters," or something like that. Which I didn't even do; I didn't know the little one--Luci, I never got to know--but I was very fond of Lynda. And I did help take care of Lynda; I'm devoted to her.

And he was a man of many moods, you know. You could strike him when he would be ugly as hell and mad at somebody, not you, necessarily. And I could always tell.

M: If you happened to be there at the wrong time.

L: That's right! I was interested, I started to write him a letter and my husband wouldn't let me about the Washington swearing-in, Walter Washington. We were invited to the White House. Just recently, you know, he was resworn-in, and it was the coldest thing I've ever sat through. Nixon didn't even know where Washington was sitting. He

kept saying, "Now, uh uh," and "I'm turning my head around and I'm looking for the man. I figured he's here somewhere!" Well, that was his bad staff work. But anyway, there were about a hundred very top-flight Negroes in the audience, and Mr. Nixon, after he had sworn him in and said a few kind words, and had sworn in the new members of the council, just simply bounced off the podium and disappeared.

Well, I went home and looked at some pictures that I had that had been sent to me by Bess Abell, and the President not only had a receiving line when Walter Washington was sworn in, but I have a picture of him kissing me in the receiving line. And there was coffee served, you know, or maybe . . . .

M: He stayed around.

L: Yes, and Mrs. Johnson. It was a jovial and warm [time]. And I was at many of those events and I always got the most friendly greeting. Or we'd go, we'd be invited to the hanging of Mrs. Truman's picture, or the hanging of the Eleanor Roosevelt picture, and so on. And I was at two upstairs parties, that I wouldn't give anything for, in the White House. A Christmas party, although the President was not home, he was on his way home. Remember that time, Christmas before last, when he stopped with the Pope? Mrs. Johnson had called and invited me to come, said, "I'm just having a few friends, and the fire"--and you know how she can talk--"in the Oval Room; come and bring your children." And I said, "Oh, I wish I could." It was for Saturday. I think Christmas was Monday. We always take our grandchildren to the homestead over Christmas. I came home, and I said,

"I was a damned fool! Why the hell, why don't we postpone our departure?"

M: You can go there every Christmas.

L: That's right. You know, you don't think on the telephone. So I called New York; I asked my daughter, I said, "Can I borrow the children a day earlier?" So I took the two grandchildren and my husband and I went to this perfectly lovely Christmas party upstairs. It was just old friends. There were the Rowes, and there were the Fortases. The Fortases brought their housekeeper, Marianne, which I found rather enchanting. They had no children, but [they brought] their housekeeper of many years. And the Cliffords, and what's his name? There were all these people from Texas that I never can remember the names of. I think the Jack Hights were there, and of course, there was Liz, I'm sure. Maybe there was Liz, I don't remember, and Bess. But anyway, isn't there a man named Beamis? What's his name?

M: Beamis?

L: No. [Willard Deason?]

M: Busby?

L: Well, I know Busby was there. Horace Busby was there. But the other man, with the eyeglasses, and the owlish look?

M: Oh, George Reedy.

L: Oh, no, I know George.

M: Owlish look threw me off.

L: I know George was there. But anyway, this was an old friend. But anyway, they were all there, and it was a lovely party.

And then, this last Christmas, we went to a reception. I know Mrs. Johnson's pigeonhole mind worked on this one, because I'm sure all the good friends were invited who were not going to be invited to the farewell lunch that the Cliffords had, which none of us were. And the Texas people were there: Wright Patman, and Bob Poage, and, I guess, the Brookses. And there, again, as I say, the Rowes and the Fortases and the Symingtons, and, you know, a whole mess of other people. The Yarboroughs were there, even, which I thought was very nice. The President came very briefly. But there was a lovely upstairs party, and that was the last one.

M: Could his friends talk back to him, or did they?

L: Not enough of them.

M: Not enough of them were willing to take the chance of--

L: I got very cross with all these senators. You know, I fancy myself as being fairly free with him, and I have been over the years. I remember talking to Muskie once. I said, "Why did you sign that letter to the President?" You remember when seventeen of them signed a letter? I said, "Why didn't you go up there and talk to him?" And I said, "You know this man. He doesn't like to be addressed in the press." He said, "Well, you can't do that when he's president of the United States." I said, "What do you mean, you can't do that?"

Well, it was just one of many such illustrations I had over those last two years, where I felt that he either had to close out these people because of time and pressures, or that they were afraid to approach him and couldn't talk to him, or that they weren't listened

to. I talked to Gene McCarthy till I was blue in the face. He happens to be a good friend. And I said, "You must be able to communicate with him." No, you couldn't budge them.

M: He didn't think he could, or he didn't try?

L: I don't know, you know, when people say they didn't think they could. And then I would work it the other way around. I would get through somebody like Ed Weisl, whom I knew well. I would say, "For goodness sakes, do have the President have these people to breakfast, not in a group of the leadership, but two at a time, or three at a time." I don't know what [happened]. Ed would say I was right; then he would call somebody. Or I would talk to Bob Kintner or somebody like that. I was always scheming to try to do something to break this down, because I think it did come from the Hill. I have a strange theory about it which I would like to put on the record.

M: Sure.

L: I have a feeling that a great many of these senators who used to work with him were fiercely jealous and didn't know it. You know, human reactions are made up of so many strands. They kept saying to themselves, "There, but for the grace of God, go I. Who is he? He's just another senator." They didn't feel that way about Jack Kennedy. Jack Kennedy didn't really stay in the Senate. He was never one of them. He never bargained with them for their votes. He never did anything with them. He wasn't a presence, as far as they were concerned. But this man was one of them. And particularly

people like Fulbright and Albert Gore. Well, Gore smarted from an old hurt.

M: Yes, Gore's animosity goes back a ways.

L: Yes, some committee that Lyndon pushed him off or didn't give him. I've forgotten what it was. But Fulbright used to talk to him every day on the telephone.

M: Even after he became president?

L: Oh, yes. I think so. Now, of course, Fulbright let it be known, to people other than me, that he didn't get to talk much, that he did a lot of listening on those calls, and the President did have that habit of calling people and talking and talking. Scotty Reston has told me this. You know, I could name half a dozen to you.

One of the people whom I was interested in cultivating was a man named Walter Annenberg, who has just been nominated to the Court of St. James. Well, I happened to meet him on a boat coming home from Europe in 1959; he made a big fuss over me. And when I got a degree from Drexel Institute, he invited me to a very fancy dinner in my honor, and we talked and he was all for Lyndon Johnson, smiling, you know, "I talk to him on the phone." And I saw him a couple of years later, and I said, "How's your relationship with the President?" And he said, "Oh, you can't have a relationship with that man. He's a bully!" and so forth, and so on.

Well, of course, I'm sure there were times when the President felt that you shouldn't have written that, or you shouldn't have said this. Or maybe it was . . . . I don't know what the argument

was. I just didn't ask. And I figured the opposition wasn't worth working over, so I didn't try.

But, as I say, my job was to take advantage of these contacts, to try to work on them. I remember, in the last winter, in 1967, a friend by the name of Mike O'Neill who was very strong for Lyndon, was one of us and a great friend of mine who was head of--

(Interview ends abruptly)

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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