

INTERVIEW I

DATE: February 16, 1972

INTERVIEWEE: SARAH McCLENDON (and her daughter, SALLY O'BRIEN)

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

PLACE: National Press Club, Washington, D.C.

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M: I thought you might be interested to know the first time I ever met Lyndon Johnson. I can't remember what year it was. I started covering here in 1944 and I know at first I worked on other states for about a year.

F: Where did you come from originally?

M: I came from East Texas--Tyler. I had been a newspaper reporter in Tyler and East Texas and Beaumont before I went in the Army. Then the Army brought me to Washington on name orders.

F: I see. And that's how you got to Washington.

M: Yes. After I lived here for about a year in public relations for the Army, I got out of the service and started as a news correspondent here at the National Press Building. That was June 12, 1944.

F: That was right at D-Day in Normandy, wasn't it?

M: That's right, that's right. She was nine days old when I started working here in the Press Building.

F: Let's identify "she" first.

M: Wait a minute now. She must have been nine days old. Born June 3, anyway.

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F: That's your daughter?

M: Yes.

F: And her name is--

M: Sally O'Brien. I married a man named John T. O'Brien and he is no longer with us.

I came down here to work for Mr. Bascom Timmons and then I worked for other states like Philadelphia and other places. After about a year I began working for Texas which of course I loved to do anyway. And that's when I wrote an oil story, my first oil story about the oil import situation. It was on the oil depletion allowance, implying that everything might not--well, anyway, the story was that everything might not be right about the oil depletion allowance, and it mentioned Lyndon Johnson who was then in Congress.

The first time I ever saw him he came outside the Ways and Means Committee and stopped me in the hall and shook his long finger in my face and said, "That's not true, and you ought to realize that too. You've written the wrong thing and that's not right." I said, "Well, sir, I will stand behind everything I have said, and I won't take back a word of it."

F: As far as you know, he'd never seen you before then?

M: That's right.

F: But he had you spotted.

M: Well, I don't know. I didn't have any reputation then or anything, but it appears somebody knew me. But from then on that was the sort

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of typical of our life. He was standing over me with his big long finger and telling me that I shouldn't have written that, I should have written something else, and that wasn't right, and I should do something about it. And I was not [going to].

F: Now that goes back twenty-seven, twenty-eight years now. Did ya'll develop a kind of a sentimentality toward each other the way some people do who always greet each other: "Hello, you old s.o.b."?

M: (Laughter) Well, we never said [it] like that, but I think we have a definite understanding, a definite relationship, and a friendliness and that sort of thing. As much as I annoyed him and as much as I must have bothered him at times, there were some people who would come to me and would say, [for example], one man always tells the story, he said, "Lyndon can't keep from winking at you or smiling at you or looking through the crowd." And while we'd be walking around the White House grounds with vast numbers of reporters, why, all of a sudden Lyndon would say something about a story about Sarah or he'd always mention my name in the crowd and somebody would say, "You may think he doesn't like you but he can't keep from mentioning you."

We had a deeper relationship I think during 1959 and 1960 when he was beginning to campaign for office. I traveled with him a great deal then, and he seemed to like to have me around and seemed to like very much my judgment. I don't know whether he liked my judgment or not but every now and then he'd say something. Of course, with Johnson you usually listen, and I listened a great deal. I thought we were

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very close for a while, pretty much as close as brother and sister almost, I'd say, about a lot of things.

F: Well, brothers and sisters fight a lot.

M: Yes. But then we had a sort of a falling out over the Bobby Baker situation, and from then on out I was kind of in the doghouse. I don't know who did this; somebody--some woman I'm told--about the time he went in the White House told the staff that Lyndon didn't like me and not to have me around and to cut me out of a lot of their parties and staff things when I'd always been in on a lot of them and [had] traveled with him a great deal. So from then on out, I don't know, I was just sort of [out of things]. Somebody spread the word. I'm sure he didn't. I'm sure he didn't even know it happened. But somebody spread the word around that my name was mud. But they were kind to Sally when they were in the White House. Sally was invited several times to functions and of course that was my heart, so I was glad and appreciated that very much.

But we really had some great times, Lyndon [and I]. Most of my experiences, my personal, close experiences with him, were before he became president. They were closer then, but of course we had some during the White House years, too. I think maybe Sally told you. (to Sally O'Brien) Did you tell him about the scene when he came back from Dallas?

F: No.

M: Well, we had heard the news of course. We were up here.

F: This was after the assassination.

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M: Yes. I couldn't travel with Kennedy. It was just too expensive [for] my papers, and of course they didn't send me to Texas. Kennedy could never understand this. Kennedy always thought that I should be going to Texas and always thought that I should be traveling with him. He thought somehow that Lyndon Johnson belonged to me. One Sunday night we were all standing out in front of Kennedy's house in Georgetown waiting for Kennedy to come back from some trip. Kennedy got out of the car. He stood there, and then another long black car drove up. He turned to me and said, "Sarah, there he is." Meaning there was Johnson.

F: He was presenting him to you, huh?

M: As Kennedy left Washington, left his office to go out to Dallas that last day, he came out of his door, and there was one other newspaperman and myself there. All the press had gone ahead of time. Kennedy wheeled around and saw us out of the corner of his eye, turned and gave a big quick salute with his hand and a big grin, and he went off to Texas.

Then when he came back, I heard the news and I went to Georgetown to get Sally--she was a student there--to go with me to the airport. She had no pass, but for some reason or other the Secret Service let her go in with me that day. As Johnson got off the plane--

F: Was there that kind of confusion? I would have thought in some ways it would have been tauter than usual.

M: It's never happened before or since. I don't know how it happened, whether the man happened to have seen Sally before with me and realized

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this was all right [or what]. I've never known it to happen before, because I thought she'd have trouble getting in. But anyway, we were there, and as they came off the plane, of course we saw Mrs. Kennedy come down with the blood all over her dress. We saw Mrs. Lincoln and her white gloves on and a black sort of all-weather coat, but very finished looking. It was such a contrast with Mrs. Kennedy. Then we saw Johnson get off. I felt so sorry for him and Lady Bird. The only time he smiled in that whole occasion was [when] he saw Sally and he said, "Hello, Sally." He just smiled and that was the only sweet, soft, happy thing.

F: Sort of like an island of hope in a--

M: Just so glad to see Sally, and it was sort of funny.

But anyway, while we're talking on that subject there's one thing I want to say. I don't know what she told. If you could ever get this for your historical account, I think you should. I had noticed that Luci was a little young girl, teen-ager, getting, oh, a little unruly, a little hard to handle. I noticed the girls were getting a little. . . well, their family, their mother and father had been traveling a lot. Once we were out there, I'd been out there just shortly before this, out at the house for some occasion, and the Johnsons were not there. I thought Luci was getting a little--she was talking about an art exhibit or something--obstreperous, I'd say, for a teen-ager.

After this happened, Mrs. Johnson must have had a talk with those girls, I know, from all that went on and everything. What

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she said, those words, must have been something that you ought to take down, because those girls got the idea, they got the picture, they got the realization completely that they had a job to do as well as the Johnsons. They were completely loyal to their parents and completely realized the burden of responsibility. They perked up, and it was just wonderful. It's just like overnight there was a difference. What she said to them I've always wondered, but it must have been good.

F: She can talk good.

M: Yes.

F: And straight.

M: And Sally probably told you what she always said to the girls over the telephone. (To Sally) You told him that?

O: No. Do you want me to?

F: Yes.

O: Oh yes, now, this is fantastic because I would be able to talk with Lynda and Luci. Lynda and I were the same age.

F: This is in the vice presidential days?

O: Well, no. This was even in the Senate days, the Senate and vice-presidential days, but the one time I'm thinking of was when he was in the Senate. It was just before he ran, just before 1960. Lynda and I were the same age and Luci was three years younger. Luci was always, of course, quite a character. Lynda was a much more studious, more serious kind of person.

One time we were there Sunday morning with all the papers, and

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the Johnsons were in Texas. The phone rang and it was Mrs. Johnson saying that she wasn't going to be able to come back as they had expected. They [the girls] had been counting and counting [on it]. Luci especially was very emotional, counting on their coming back. She wasn't going to be able to come back. The way she was putting it was she was trying to ask the girls but in the same way sort of let them know that she really was not going to be able to do it and couldn't they please understand and this sort of thing. But Mrs. Johnson would always say on the telephone, "You are loved," any time she'd call. Well, it's sweet and nice, [but] I always thought it was a little much. But now that I have my own little girl I know exactly what she was talking about.

But this one day Luci got frantic. She absolutely screamed and yelled. We were about sixteen and Luci was about thirteen. She absolutely came to pieces, came apart and she wanted her mother and she begged and cried. It must have just broken Lady Bird's heart. She begged and cried on the telephone. She wanted her mamma to come home, her mamma had promised and why couldn't she be there, and everything like that. And it was just typical. Lynda talked to her mother and finally said, "Don't worry, Mamma. We'll take care of her. You stay. I understand that you have to stay. You come as soon as you can, and we'll look after Luci." It was Lynda taking the responsibility, but it was again Luci [with] the emotionalism coming through. But this "You are loved" was so important, I think.

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M: This gave them their security right there.

F: Did the girls fight like sisters?

O: Oh, in a way, just teasing, teasing fighting but never any deep, serious fighting.

Luci, though, was incredible, because I remember she used to write poetry, the most fantastic poetry. She was very, very emotional, very feeling, very deep and very expressive of these emotions, whereas Lynda wasn't. Lynda was a little more upright, a little more rigid about things. One time Luci called me on the phone and she read me this poem that she'd written about her mother. She was like thirteen years old at this point. It was a beautiful poem about a doe in the forest looking through the trees and after she had read this thing very seriously, a long poem, I just said, "Luci, my gosh! You're writing like a forty year old widow."

M: I read some of her poetry when she was eleven years old. It was about marriage and love.

O: Astounding.

M: It sounded like a woman of forty or fifty.

O: Really astounding, yes.

M: Back to LBJ, my role when he was in the Senate and all. I would try to tell him. Well, I remember one time I was sitting in his office. I think this was important. I didn't know him so well at that time, but anyway he was always outgoing and telling everybody who was near him all kinds of things. He passed me a telegram that he had just received from Lady Bird, and apparently she had just had

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a miscarriage. It was a sad time in their lives, and somebody had said Lady Bird was disgusted and depressed, which a woman would naturally be at that time. He was worried, and I knew that there was something that had gone on, some discussion as to whether or not she was going to go ahead with this marriage or not. I felt there was. Anyway, he got this telegram and he was so delighted. He passed it over to me to read. I can't reconstruct the words exactly, but it was something to the effect that "I have thought it all over and I have decided that I want to be with you and regardless of what happens, you know I'm with you." It was a lovely thing, and I'm sure he has it somewhere. Maybe you've read it.

As we got into all of these discussions with Texans on all sorts of things, sometimes I would go and tell Johnson, "Now you haven't had a Texas press conference in a long time and I think you should." Somehow or other he'd say, "All right. I will. Get them in. Get them in." And after we would get in around the room, his idea of a press conference was to do all the talking, all the reading, and not to give you any time to ask questions. So Walter Hornaday of the Dallas [Morning] News, who is now dead, wanted to ask him some questions, and of course Walter would try to interject a word, interrupt and get in. Lyndon would say, "Now be quiet. Wait a minute and let me finish telling you this." And so I'd try to get in a question and he'd say, "Shut up and don't ask questions!" (Laughter) And yet that was a press conference. The last one he had like this--this was up till after he was vice president, just

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before he became president--I had told him that he needed to have a Texas press conference. And we were all sitting in there asking questions and he was talking about space or something. I kept trying to ask him questions about the space problem because he was head of the National Space Council. And he said, "If you don't shut up and quit asking questions, we're not going to invite you back anymore." This was a press conference, mind you!

F: Now, all politicians, of course, try to manipulate the press to their benefit.

M: Yes.

F: Aside from being more voluble and in a sense more powerful than others, was he a worse sinner than most in that?

M: Well, he was much more clever. He could have written a book on that. He was better, more skilled at doing it, than any of the rest of them. He was very skilled. He was so skilled that, as I look back on it I realize now how skilled he was, we didn't realize that he was manipulating us. He was always talking about "you in the press, you in the press." Actually what Johnson did was he did what he did on a lot of things. He looked over the problem--and I'm not just saying this to be complimentary--and he studied the press and studied their weaknesses. For instance, he figured out that Monday morning was a vacuum on the [inaudible] newspaper headlines. He'd have George Reedy waddle into the press gallery of the Senate on about a Saturday morning and the boys [would say], "Well, George, would you stop to tell us? What do you know?" And George Reedy went, "Oh,

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nothing, nothing." Then maybe George would let out a little of this and a little of that, and this would make the Monday morning headlines. So it would be something that Johnson was purposely leaking. So as I said, he got to figuring out what would make a headline. Before the story happened he would make the headline happen. He was really clever at this. I don't think it was always so good that he did it.

But anyway, he had on his press conferences--

F: He wouldn't put out a major story, then, while Howard Hughes had the whole front page.

M: Heavens, no. He did some very funny things at press conferences. I'll never forget the time after his first heart attack when we, the press, had our first meeting with him. We were out at the hospital in the room, and the boys were all talking about how thin he was, how much thinner he'd gotten. And he said, "Sarah, go over there and stand in the corner and turn your back and I'll take down my pants and show the boys how thin I am." So I did and he did! (Laughter)

There are three press conferences that stand out in my mind. Two that I arranged for him to have overseas that he didn't know anything about. One was with Chiang Kai-shek in Chiang Kai-shek's garden. We were on this tour. He was vice president, and Kennedy had sent him to Vietnam and other places on this tour. Johnson was extremely hard on this thing. He had one press conference at one thirty in the morning that I missed on the trip. But when we got to Taiwan, Madame Chiang and her husband had heard that we were

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going to come there and lecture them. Some of the reporters had written that the United States and Kennedy couldn't stand what they were doing, they were too dictatorial and their government had to be changed, that we were all going to tell them and without this being official at all, this would be in the press. So Madame Chiang and her husband had decided that they were going to be cool to us and not really have anything to do with us.

So we had all this schedule planned. We got there and she was as cool as a cucumber. The first interview was between her and Lady Bird. She was as cool as a cucumber to Lady Bird and said she had to go back to their seat of government. She had to go back there, she was busy, she was working on some things. And that was it and that was all. She didn't act like she was ever even going to see her again or do anything. It was just a little tea party and we were all [left there]. She left for the rest of us to see instead of giving us a tour of the place; it seemed sort of cool. Then we didn't know whether or when Johnson was going to see them. Chiang was not going to see us; he was not going to see us at all. At that time I covered for New England papers, with Senator Styles Bridges of New Hampshire, as well as Texas papers. I thought this was ridiculous. Here were these people that we didn't know too much about their government, we didn't quite understand. There was a lot of misunderstanding, and I thought what a shame for us to be there and have this opportunity and then for them not to use it. So I went to their press people and told them that. I found

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out for sure that they were going to be very coy with Johnson, very cool and they weren't going to see him very much. They were just going to see him a little bit and just [go through] the bare courtesies. They weren't going to see the press at all, and that was just going to be it.

So I told the press people of Chiang Kai-shek that I thought this was a shame. I thought it was a great opportunity for them to get acquainted with the American people and the American people to get acquainted with them. I said, "We've been told that you all do a lot of good things here. We don't know whether you do or not." I said, "I'm a friend of Styles Bridges. He's gotten up in the Senate and fought your battles and been for you and defended you over and over again. He's a friend of Lyndon Johnson, and you're being nasty here to this man. And if you don't do something about this, I'm sure going to go home and tell Styles Bridges." (Laughter) Well, you know, after [that] they called me up in my room and told me that we were going to get to see Chiang Kai-shek. They came for us the next morning and took us all out there by bus to his garden. By that time, Johnson was out there with him, and Johnson sent word to us that we were going to be able to have a press conference out there. And it had not been scheduled at all. I know this. Then Johnson said they didn't know yet just what was happening. We got out there and Johnson was there with, oh, the man from Austin who wrote his communiques on his trips so much, [Horace] Busby. Mrs. Johnson was there. We were allowed to go in and meet Chiang

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and Madame Chiang and [they were] very cordial. We went out to the garden, and actually there were only about two or three questions put to Chiang, but we did have a press conference in the garden. I have a picture of it. I remember Johnson saying--I was way in the back of the group--"Sarah, come on up here. Come on up here and get on the front row." So I have that picture.

The other press conference that I arranged for him overseas, it was for the fall after that, I think. We were in Paris and there were twenty-nine newspapermen and myself over there by the Pentagon on the tour of NATO countries. I think one other woman was supposed to go, but she backed out or something. While we were there, Lyndon Johnson happened to be in Paris and I said, "How utterly ridiculous for us [to be] here studying these things and for him to be there," and there was no attempt at all made by the military or anybody to get us together. I said, "There are things coming up that we need to talk about and ask about, and while he's here why don't we get together?" So I kept pushing and urging and asking our embassy people to work on it and they were too timid. They said, "Oh, no. Oh, no." So I asked Johnson's people if they would and he said he would. So we finally got them all together at the embassy. Then I was sorry I did it, because the boys were so nasty with their questions to Johnson, I think he was sorry he had it!

But it just shows you how so many times there was a vacuum of communications. Johnson wanted to communicate and would have probably communicated, but somebody was keeping us apart.

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F: Nobody really gets busy and does it.

M: Yes. The other press conference was one time when we were around his office when he was president, at the White House.. That unusual day they were letting different ones of the press have more than one question. I kept trying to get in and trying to get in and he was ignoring me and not taking my question. Finally I got in, and the answer to my question was "No." That's the worst thing he could do to me! You can't do much with "No." So the other boys were getting in their questions two or three times, and I decided I'd try to get in two or three times. So I kept injecting. All this was being taped, and the voice went on the tape. If it was just transcript, it would be different, but the voice went on [tape] and it annoyed Johnson very much.

So when it was over, he said, "Come up here, I want to see you." He let everybody else go and the Secret Service moved back and they didn't know what we were saying; it was just him and me. And he gave me the biggest bawling out, "What in the world were you doing? Why were you trying to get in so many questions for? You're not big, you don't represent big folks. You're just little folks. These other people represent a lot of bigger things. What in the world were you trying to do?" I said, "Sir, I'm just trying to get my story. I've got a right to ask questions. They asked two or three. I've got a right to try!"

But that's some of the history of Johnson and me!

F: Before we get away from it, I judge he and Styles Bridges were pretty close.

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M: Very close. And this came about because Johnson was sort of led into being a military expert. You know, he finally got to be head of this Truman Committee. He was sort of led into this; he sort of grew into this. The Air Force, I think, had a lot to do with bringing him [in] because they were always taking him places and impressing him [with] the importance of this. And Bridges, of course, worked on Defense, CIA, and FBI and these things. He knew Bridges was a very powerful man, still is to this day. He's got four or five appointees over here in key places in the Senate staff, in committees and all. Nobody realizes how powerful Styles Bridges still is. He and Johnson got to very close and worked together.

I know that Johnson became head of this old Truman Committee, it was called; it was the Senate Preparedness Subcommittee. There came up this problem between the Air Force and the Army as to which missile would be the prevailing one. I knew the Air Force had talked to him a great deal and I was more or less prone to the Army. I had been in the Army and I thought the Army ought to deserve a fair break. I was afraid the Air Force was lobbying with Johnson so thoroughly on these trips and pushing him, so that they were pushing him into the Air Force orbit all the more. So I went to him and, without any authority at all, of course, I just asked him to hear the Army side. So that night we were at our home out in Virginia having supper, Sally and I. The phone rang and it was Senator Johnson. It was about seven-thirty at night, and he said, "Is this Lieutenant McClendon? I just want you to know that we're

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going to listen to both sides." (Laughter). He's really something.

F: So you've got your footnote in the history of defense.

M: He's really something. I think one of the most notable nights that I saw--and I was the only reporter there because I was a pool reporter and this was in Vietnam--was Johnson's amazing, terrific experience with Diem. It's D-I-E-M. I can never pronounce it exactly right.

F: You have to be born to it.

M: This was the man who was murdered. And I think this is important, because you may want to put this together with something else that you will find. As far as I know, we have never made public, unless it's in his book, and I don't guess it is--

F: No, I don't think so.

M: --the report that Johnson made when he came back from Vietnam on the Vietnamese situation. I think it would be very worthwhile to have it, because whatever he said to Kennedy about that trip, you know, Kennedy and others passed it over like, "This isn't right. This isn't right. This isn't the recommendation." And about two months after that, Kennedy sent General Maxwell Taylor and Walt Rostow to Vietnam and had them make their investigation. They were really big shots. They came back and recommended that he send fifteen thousand troops over there, and those were the first troops that went over. So I think that ought to be in Johnson's history, and I'm sure it is, but I just thought this might add a little. The night that he was there with Diem, I was a pool reporter.

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F: You were in Saigon?

M: In Saigon, at the palace. It was a dinner given by Diem for Johnson. Of course, I didn't sit at the dinner table; I wasn't an invited guest but I stood in the hall and watched the whole thing. As they came out, they were trying to write a communique and everybody wanted to leave. It was about ten thirty or eleven o'clock. I stood there in the hall and watched them. Johnson decided to talk, had one of those long, long talks with Diem, just him and Diem, and the other diplomats couldn't leave. Nobody could leave. And they got in these talking sessions and talking sessions, and then they went into a room and decided that they would draft something. And they came out and looked it over and wrote it and re-wrote it over and over. These diplomats still couldn't leave, and they didn't get away until one-thirty. It was really something!

F: Must have been a restless bunch of diplomats.

M: I had met Diem that morning, I believe, and Johnson saw me standing in the hall and brought him over to introduce him to me again. He said, "Yes, I've met the lady." It was sort of interesting to me because this fellow Diem had no confidence in anybody. He was really on the spot in Vietnam and I'm sure that lots of times he was probably grossly misunderstood from what I saw. The people who didn't know him, young people in the cafes and restaurants, were just all critical of him. They said that he did get out and travel over his country now and then. But they of course didn't know that

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he did. He lived almost like a priest. He had mass said every morning in his palace.

Johnson and this man worked out this paper and while I was standing there, they didn't realize that they should give it to me. I found out that finally they had gone, but when Diem wanted to give out the communique, he called the only man he had confidence in, and I have forgotten his name. He was a United States man who was there with USIA; I guess they called it USIS at that time. But anyway, he called this man and had this man translate it and take it down to his office. With all that to do, standing there and everything else, with the press connections, they didn't realize in Vietnam that they should give it to me there. So I had to run down town to get it. And when I got back to my hotel, I woke up all of the reporters to give it to them, and some of them were not too happy! But I was doing my duty. But I'll never forget that night how Johnson and this little man got in great [rapport], they were just talking and very at home with each other. I'd love to know what Johnson put in that report. But as far as I know, it's not out yet.

F: A thought occurs to me on Jack Valenti's statement. I suppose now that Johnson is gone, all the reporters do sleep better.

M: Well, I tell you, we do have more regular hours.

F: That's what I mean. You used to never know when you went to bed whether you'd be there all night or not.

M: And the way he would keep from eating. I know one night on the plane coming back from Texas or somewhere--I don't know where we

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had been--we hadn't eaten, and I was hungry. I was just getting so hungry. Johnson was in one of those talk moods. And you hung over the plane, you didn't have a place to sit, there weren't enough places for the reporters but you didn't dare [mention it]. And sometimes he'd talk so low, and I was afraid I'd miss a word, because, oh, he had so much history to tell of things that had happened to him and some of those bore on today and some didn't. But it was very interesting. So one night I just got tired and I went to the back and told the steward to give me something to eat. I came back and Johnson was furious! "Where in the world have you been? Where have you been?" I said, "Well, we tried to get you to eat." "Well, I'm not ready to eat," he said. He didn't eat until about two o'clock.

F: He could eat voraciously, but apparently he didn't have to eat at any certain time.

M: That's right. That's right. And of course what people forget about Johnson, they say he's drinking, but he's nibbling all the time he's drinking, so that nullifies it.

Johnson did a fantastic thing to save the school of aviation medicine for--let's see, now the formal title is Aerospace Medical Center, I believe. It was a long-wanted project for Texas. For years we had been working on it and hoping and expecting to have it, knowing that it should be at San Antonio as the place. Thought we had it all settled, and all of a sudden one Richard Nixon was in Congress and one Richard Nixon was about to suddenly steal this away

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from us and put it in California. I don't know how I got wind of this by some means or other. Johnson was so busy on other things as Senate majority leader that he wasn't really watching it, didn't know about it.

There were lots of times when a reporter would know about a project, what was happening to it, and would tell Johnson, the senator. I was always telling him; if I found out anything, I would tell him. Anyway, this was serious. It was only twenty million dollars at the time, I think, that year, but it could have been more. Of course today it would be so much more hysteria [?] wise and everything. So I said, "Well, we've got to work on this. We've got to work tonight; we've got to work on it right now."

This was about five in the afternoon, and there was a big party being given in honor of Johnson by the Dale Millers down at the Mayflower Hotel. I said, "But you've got to call this man back!" And he said, "Well, I'll see. I'll see. I don't know whether I can or not." So I called the Pentagon and I got a couple of men to talk to me, but I realized it was crucial, that it was going if something weren't done. Johnson went to work on that and stayed with it and kept calling the Pentagon and talking to them about it until he got to the party about eight, much to the disgust of some of the people. But he saved in that thing.

And, as it turned out, just by chance, when they had the dedication of it, he was giving the speech. I happened to be in San Antonio and I went to it. I guess he recalled this or something,

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I don't know. After he gave the speech and dedication, he said, "Sarah, you want to go out to the Ranch with me to spend the weekend?" Well, I hadn't planned to at all, but I of course went. Dorothy Nichols, his secretary, was driving the car. We had the most fantastic drive from San Antonio to the Ranch. It was my first visit to the Ranch, and it was just delightful. We would stop along the highway at all these little German shops and get beer and cheese and summer sausage or something; we stopped about three times. We got to the Ranch.

He's a fantastic driver; I knew knew that before. He told me one time--I'll never forget how sweet he was to me. I had a car wreck; I said, "I was just so worried about my income tax I just forgot and rammed this car in the back." He said, "Well, I don't see how you do what you do." He said, "I just don't see how you do all you do, raising your child by yourself and all." He said, "You take me, I never drive in Washington. I drive at home, but I never drive up here." And that was smart. Other people should do that, especially maybe one we know. (Laughter) Anyway, he was a fantastic driver. There was ice all over every little twig in the road, you know, you forget that down in that part of the country. We had it then, mud, slush. He got Lady Bird to meet him along the way or out at the Ranch. We got in his car and kept driving till after dark on all these slushy, mushy roads, dirt roads. But the way he could drive that car was terrific.

F: What did you do? Just sit around?

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M: After we got the Ranch?

F: Yes.

M: Yes, we did. I know it was shortly after Lopez Mateos had visited there. I really enjoyed the Ranch very much. I loved to sit on that hot brick before the fireplace, that fireplace ledge they have there. I love that.

F: The Johnsons can actually make you feel pretty much at home, can't they?

M: Oh, yes.

F: You almost have to remind yourself, "I'm here with an official of the United States government."

M: And very good food. I enjoyed it very much. And then the most interesting time I ever had around that Ranch was--well, I know one thing that was funny [when] I was down there with the Kennedy sisters and Mrs. Johnson. We were getting ready; we were supposed to go to Waco.

F: This is in the 1960 campaign?

M: Yes. Hank Ford had come along and she had brought a horn to wake us up in the morning, some sort of antique horn she'd bought out at some place. Well, anyway, we were getting ready to go to Waco. That was in the days before they had any communications down there to make it safe for Johnson to land and take off. I know James, who worked in the kitchen. They say somebody called up to know what the weather was like over there--the pilot was somewhere else--as to whether he could come in and land. James looked out

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the window at the sky and--it was so funny!--he gave them some figure. I was in the kitchen and heard this, and we were all wondering, worrying whether it was too low a ceiling, whether we should fly or not or just forget about the trip. I was half hoping they would. James looked up at the sky and gave them the verdict to the pilot to come on it.

F: This was the local meteorologist and dispatcher.

Q: The visibility--

M: The funniest thing at the Ranch was that time down there when we didn't know why, all of a sudden we got a call from Willie Day--it was when he was vice president--to say that Mr. Johnson was going to the Ranch.

F: Willie Day was up here?

M: Willie Day Taylor. And she said he was going to the Ranch and he thought he'd like to take some of us along, would we like to go? I said sure. So there were three boys and myself; it was Bob Baskin of the Dallas News and Vernon Louviere of the Houston Chronicle and--I can't think at the moment--oh, I guess Felton West of the Houston Post. We thought we'd get down there and get a lot of hot poop, you know. He'd talk to us all weekend, and we thought we'd have a terrific time of hearing Johnson give us secrets.

F: You could see columns for the next two weeks.

M: Oh, we just thought this was terrific. Well, we got down there, and we fished in a little old tank with the Secret Service men. We waited and waited for Johnson; we waited and waited, and we didn't

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see or hear of him. It came time that night to go over to the Haywood for dinner. And we were all with him.

F: The Haywood is what, now?

M: The Haywood was a ranch that he had just bought on that lake, and he wanted to show us the lake, and I knew he'd just had some of the interior part of this house done over. He bought this house, I think, through an arrangement with TCU, I believe.

There was a very funny thing that happened on the way over there, I thought. We came over the brow of a hill real quick; it's a wonder we didn't telescope, because he had stopped his car. It's very flat land, but every now and then you have a little hill. He had stopped his car, and there, standing on the side of the road, was this great big, huge Johnson, his hands above his head, just like this, with a great big rock in his hands. I said, "What in the name of God is he doing now?" We jumped out of the car, and he was trying to kill a rattlesnake by the road with this rock. Well, he missed, and Rufus Youngblood pulled out his White House pistol and shot the thing, as I recall, three times before he killed it. Then they all got in the car and got ready to take off. They said, "Come on, Sarah."

F: You needed a photographer there, didn't you?

M: I said, "I'm going to take that snake." They said, "Oh, forget it, forget it. With that thing in the hot weather going back on a plane; you can't get anything done with it this weekend." Everybody tried to tell me not to do it. I said, "No, it isn't every rattlesnake that's

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been hit in the head by the Vice President of the United States and shot three times by a White House Secret Service man! I'm going to take that snake!" So of course we got it and took it on over to the Haywood. We got over there and we'd kind of stretched it out on the bank, and somebody came along and moved it, to make me think it was still alive and scare me to death. So then I had it all stretched out on the side; I don't know why I thought it would stay there, but I had it on this car where I thought it would ride, in between the bumper and the engine. And Johnson asked me if I minded moving from that car over to another car so he could ride back with A. W. Moursund and they could talk business. So I said, "Oh, of course not." So I moved and forgot my snake. Got to the Ranch that night, went out and looked on the car and of course it was not there. But on the way back to the Ranch, we had this fantastic ride with Vernon Louviere trying to drive. He didn't know the terrain, and he was trying to drive that car and trying to talk on that communication outfit. Every few minutes Johnson would say, "Come on! Come on! Keep up with us, keep up with us!"

O: Johnson was driving the first car, and Lady Bird the second and Vernon the [third]--

M: No, she wasn't there.

O: Oh, she wasn't driving?

M: She wasn't there.

O: Well anyway, he was trying to follow Johnson.

M: But anyway, Johnson would say to him, "Come on, y'all, you're slow!"

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Come on, come on!" We could just barely see the end of him, and we'd try to keep up, but we couldn't. So I just wagged my finger in his face that night, I said, "You drove one hundred and twenty-five miles an hour, and you lost my rattlesnake." And he said, "Nope, nope, never drive ninety-five miles, never driving anything like that at all." So I said, "We clocked you."

The next morning was one of the funniest stories. Johnson never cared very much about religion or church or anything before he became president, in later years, kind of like Eisenhower. Except he was always hipped on the subject of getting people to church on Sunday, especially Catholics. When Sally would spend the night with Lynda, he'd have her come and--

O: Walter Jenkins would stop by and pick me up.

M: He'd arrange the night before for someone to come over and take us to church. He was absolutely hipped on the subject. So this Marie Fehmer, I believe is her name, I think she was the girl who was going to church with me. We decided that we didn't want to bother him the next morning. She would drive the car; we would come out-- he was always saying, "You need the car to go anywhere? Take the car and go." So I said, "We'll just scoot down the back stairs and tip-toe lightly and get out, and we won't let him know we've gone."

So I was tipping through the dining room into the kitchen, and there was Johnson, standing there with his pajamas on and his robe looking out the window. First thing he said was, "Look yonder!

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Look yonder, look out there at those sheep. They told me those sheep never got on that runway. That's what's making holes in my runway!" The Air Force had told him that it was the urine of the sheep that was making the holes in his runway. But the employee at the Ranch had told him that the sheep never got on the runway. And here he was, early one morning: "There they go. All of them running across the runway."

O: That's where Buchwald got his title, I guess.

M: So, I said, "How did you feel? Did you sleep well?" "No, I didn't. Didn't sleep all night.

(Interruption)

"Didn't sleep all night? What's the matter? I'm so sorry." "Well, no, didn't sleep all night," pretty worried, he didn't say "I was worried," but you could tell he was worried. Somehow we knew he had talked to the White House the night before or something.

We went that day to Midland, Texas; he went through Austin and went to Midland where he made a speech. We got back to Austin. None of this weekend had we had any time at all really with Johnson by ourselves or Johnson to talk, or had Johnson given us any cue-in or any fill-in for columns or stories or told us any news at all.

F: You were just hanging around.

M: Nothing. So we got back to Austin. Mrs. Jesse Kellam said, "Now, Sarah, you ride with"--I always liked to ride in the car where he was, because of course, you know, that's where the news was. Anyway, if he was out of my sight, I knew I was missing something.

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So Mrs. Kellam suggested that I ride in another car and get away so that they could talk, said, "No, we want to talk. We've got to take him down to somewhere, so you all go somewhere else." So we had to stay up at the Headliners Club while he was down at the apartment.

He had to talk to Washington; it was a rush call for him to call Washington. We came back to Washington that night. At two o'clock in the morning we got in, and he drove me home. I remember on the way home I said--

F: The Vice President did?

M: The Vice President. Just him and me. I remember him saying to me something about he hadn't listened to the news. I said, "I haven't kept up with the news at all this weekend. I don't know what in the world's going on. The world could be doing anything, and I wouldn't know about it." That was at two o'clock. By ten a.m. the next morning we realized it was Oxford, Mississippi that had happened, and had been happening all weekend, and he had been in touch with the White House. That's what they'd been talking to him about. And three or four hundred policemen had been pulled out of Fort Hood, thirty miles from Austin, and taken to Oxford, Mississippi. We were so mad. We were so mad.

F: Sitting on top of [a big story].

M: We had the feeling that we might have been taken down there to be pulled away from something, we didn't know what, or maybe we would have got more news if we'd been right here in Washington. We were thirty miles from where they were making this decision to pull them

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out, and Johnson was obviously very much involved and very much being talked to by Kennedy about this, been consulted by Kennedy. And he hadn't said one word. Vernon Louviere was so incensed. The whole weekend he had said was off the record. But Vernon was so incensed that he figured that we had been taken, so he wrote a story about it. Johnson got so mad with Vernon that we understand that Johnson used his influence and Vernon lost his job over that. That's why we understand he lost his job. There may have been other things too, but we all thought it dated from that time. He and Johnson never had anything else to do with each other at all, and to this day, I mean, there is this feeling there.

F: Did anyone go after Johnson with that and say, "Why did you do this to us?"

M: Oh, yes, we all did.

F: What did he say?

M: It was the usual thing, you know. It was all done, and there wasn't anything you could do. You just felt so had, you felt so utterly useless, like you did sometimes. And I just felt--I was so disgusted, I didn't know what to do. But it rubbed off a lot of the goodwill that we had otherwise, you see. And then of course, my experience was real hard before he became president. Johnson always worried about what I wrote. He worried about me because I would write stories and he would say, "That's not true, that's not true." He didn't want anyone to write anything that was ever critical of him. He didn't ever like to be analyzed, and I like to analyze people. He couldn't stand to be analyzed, and I think I can understand now

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his feeling that way. You don't like for anyone to say you felt so-and-so and maybe you didn't; you like to tell yourself how you felt. But there was many a column where you felt like you had to analyze Johnson. So it worried him terribly if I was going to write something or say something. One reason--I was told once by the men down in Texas, this boss of mine called me and told me, "I'm going to Europe and I'm going to be gone two weeks. I'm going to give you some extra money; this is going to be a bonus of yours. While I am gone would you please just not write anything on Lyndon Johnson. Do me a favor." That was Harry Provence. He said, "Just do me a favor. Just don't write anything about Lyndon." He said, "If it worries him, and we have to look at the copy, and we have to check it, and decide not to use it or what to do. So just do me a favor and just don't write anything about Lyndon for two weeks."

F: That's kind of a hard assignment.

M: So you see, what Lyndon wanted was somebody that he could--I went after things for news; regardless of what, I went after news-- [feel secure with].. He couldn't pin his finger on me, he couldn't trust me, because if he wanted me not to write news, or if he wanted me to write just nice things, if some news developed, I would write it, or go seek it. And so he seemed to want someone that he would have peace with and have security with. I was down at the White House working like a dog after he became president. I thought it was my duty to stay down there as much as I possibly

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could and watch and report everything to the people that I could.

Les Carpenter was not around at all. And of course this was an old running sort of competition battle. I got Les's job [for him] in Washington when he first came by running down the hall and saying, "Look, I know of a vacancy." He'd been to my office, and they told him there was no job. He had had a back injury and had been getting out of the Navy, and they had told him there was no job. So I ran down the hall and said, "Look, I know of one coming up." So Les got the job. Well, anyway, we had this competition. And naturally Les was working for his wife. I'd been down at the White House after Lyndon became president, working day and night. I suddenly got a call from Harry Provenge saying that I would no longer handle Austin and Waco. I would handle Lufkin and Port Arthur--of course, Lufkin was just nothing--and that Les Carpenter would take over the duties for them. I said, "But Les hasn't even been here. He's not working. I've been down here working to give you service and he hasn't even been down here." Anyway, Les was somebody that they could depend on more to not ever bring up a strident note or a bone of controversy or something. So he got the job and he said that Les had done this only with the understanding that I would be given the same money.

So that arrangement went on for some time, but of course it was a great blow to me because with two papers--

F: Cuts down your readership.

M: When the man who lived near Austin had become president, it was just terrible.

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Then we were out at the hospital when Lyndon was having one of his operations and I kept asking questions of Bill Moyers and asking questions. And of course I had a contempt for Bill Moyers anyway because I had seen him come up. Finally he came up and asked somebody afterwards, "Why are you asking all these questions about Lyndon?" And I very stupidly said, "Well, the San Antonio Light asked me to find out everything I could and let them know, keep them informed, and I'm doing it." And within twenty-four hours I had lost the San Antonio Light.

F: That soon.

M: Through action not of the San Antonio people, who told me they thought I'd been doing them a good job; I'd been working for them seventeen years, but through somebody up in New York or somewhere. Now there again, Lyndon might never have known about this, but he was very close to Dick Berlin. But Bill Moyers decided that this was too much.

F: Now, Dick Berlin is who?

M: Dick Berlin with Hearst, one of their top executives. He and Lyndon had formed a friendship which was very profitable for Lyndon, a very interesting friendship. I think it started in the congressional days. It was very interesting.

F: I have a high respect for the Capitol correspondent generally. I think he knows more of what goes on, he's pretty educated in the ways of men, politics and so on. But do you have those that, not in a financial sense but just philosophically, sell out to the incumbent?

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M: You do have people who get--I don't say sell out--

F: But I mean they become the advocate.

M: --an attachment. Oh, yes, they become an attachment. Oh, yes, and Johnson had his. When he was in, he had people who became so close to him that they haven't gotten over it yet. There are one or two. A girl got transferred just the other day from the White House to the Capitol to work on Democratic candidates because she was still doing Johnson's thing at the White House, she was so close to them. Isabelle Shelton.

F: A news girl? Oh, Isabelle.

M: Yes. Isabelle Shelton, and she's no longer at the White House. And another woman is down there covering him who told me, "I came down to cover the Republicans." The way she said it was odd, and then I found out that this had not been a choice thing with Isabelle; she'd been transferred.

Oh, yes, you have these people; they become very much attached to the man. Johnson had his hero worshipers. And of course I think it sort of swung me the other way when I saw some of these people who never had known Johnson very well and never had been around him so much and then ran to him because he was in. Now one of the girls said she was very, very close to them, but I had never seen her around them, never been around her, never seen her on any trips, never seen her at their home or anything. It was Ruth Montgomery. She immediately rushed in and did a book on them.

F: Yes. Right.

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M: So these things do happen. I was just thinking. One of the things that I think was sort of sad about Johnson is the way his sister, Josefa, loved him. Oh, she loved him.

F: Let's talk a little bit about that.

M: Oh, she loved him so much! One of the last times I saw her, not too long before she died, she was telling me how she knew she was smart and she knew she was capable, but no one was asking her for advice or help. And these Kennedy women were there and the other women from Washington who came down with them like Mrs. Dale Miller, Mrs. Carpenter, Perle Mesta, and different ones. But everybody was just sort of ignoring Josefa. Josefa has this great love for Lyndon. And Sam Houston [did], too. They both had this, which they have communicated to me, and this is one thing that I hope Lyndon Johnson knows. They had the greatest devotion in the world for Lyndon. Josefa would clip for him all the time, and she would tell me in little ways, "Now, Sarah, don't write anything critical of him. Please don't, because it hurts him so. It makes him feel bad."

F: Where did you get to know Josefa?

M: I guess at the Johnson Ranch, and maybe if she came up here to visit.

F: But ya'll got to be sort of personal friends?

M: Yes, we were very close, and I got very close to Sam, too. Well, I just know families. I just know how families mean. Families mean so much to Johnson, I know. And then I have respect for the family relationship because I'm the youngest in mine and I know how important brothers and sisters can be sometimes. Josefa used to clip all the

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papers and clip and clip and clip to find things. She spent her days trying to find something that would be of interest to Lyndon that would help him in his work, which is a very nice thing for somebody to do. But she would tell me, "Now, Sarah, you wrote this, but I'm not going to show it to him because--" (Laughter) But she expressed so much to me her sadness that she was not taken in more on counseling and on advice and in on the planning.

F: Was she pretty capable?

M: Well, I thought she was. I think she may have had somewhat of a drinking problem. I don't know. But I thought she was very smart and a lot smarter than some of the others, and yet it looked as if, from what I could observe there, that neither Lyndon nor Lady Bird were asking her advice or including her in these things. I thought she had all the capability and looks and poise and everything, that she really deserved to be in on more of the consultations. And that's always sort of saddened me and then of course her death. The last time I saw her she was over there; I knew that she was being completely sort of ignored and just kind of brought in like they didn't really want her, weren't too happy she had come over. But that may have been because of the drinking problem, and I can certainly understand how that is. I think there was a problem there. And then Sam. Just nobody in the world loved Lyndon more than Sam.

F: Well, I spent three hours one time listening to Sam just talk extravagantly about how great Lyndon was and at the same time you could--I felt real sorry for him. I mean, "I'm bright, too, doesn't anybody know it?"

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M: That's exactly right. And he was.

F: Yes.

M: He's very bright. He's very bright. No question in my mind about that. When he had that job over at the Senate that Lyndon got for him--he was in the Policy Committee--if we couldn't get to see Lyndon or couldn't talk to him, we'd find Sam and Sam would always think of some long-winded thing. He would talk your arm off, but he was trying to find something to tell you what a great man Lyndon was. Of course, Lyndon and I had this agreement that if I couldn't find him and I needed to know something quick--because sometimes I do need to know something quick or sometimes I think I need to know quick--that I was to see Walter Jenkins and Walter would tell me. Of course I am devoted to Walter Jenkins. I still think he is the most efficient man I ever saw in government.

F: I get that opinion all the time.

M: Most efficient man and that's one of the things that Sally and I-- Sally just adored him. I'll never get over this and I'll never understand it, but maybe we'll understand these things better some day than we do now.

F: I have wondered whether part of Johnson's problems began when he no longer had Walter running the staff?

M: Well, of course, that is a thing that is easy for a person to say.

F: It's hard to gauge.

M: I will certainly say that Johnson had problems before while Walter was there, but Walter could surely iron out a lot of those problems.

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He surely could, and he worked like a dog for Lyndon.

Of course the funniest thing [is this], and I think for history's sake you ought to know this. Walter called me one night at twenty minutes of six. Johnson had just come back from the trip to Scandanavia when he was vice president. I had found out through the Bobby Baker story, a tiny little story in the Washington Post about a civil suit having been filed. I'd been working on this thing, looking enough at things around the Capital that I couldn't get in print, but didn't know just what they all meant. But I knew something was going on that was wrong. Another woman and I had been watching it. When I saw this suit was filed, I went down and spent the day with the man who filed the suit. He had tapes, he had transcripts of telephone conversations, he had everything. He had the goods on Bobby Baker. That was Ralph Hill, who is here in town, and he really had everything. I wrote the story and I tried . . . it was just so big. I sent it to my Texas papers but they felt they would be looking as if they went all the way out on the limb to hurt Johnson to be the first to print it. And I could understand some of this, but not all of this. I said I believed the story that this man was a protege of Lyndon Johnson's, and he was. So I tried the Chicago Tribune. They said the story wasn't worth anything because if it was any good, Willard Edwards would have written it. I tried the Des Moines Register-Tribune and they said it couldn't be printed because it must not be important if Clark Mollenhoff hadn't written it.

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F: I see. If Clark Mollenhoff hasn't certified it, it doesn't work.

M: That's right. Well, it was funny. I just couldn't get anywhere with this thing. And finally I sent it to a syndicate, the North American Newspaper Alliance up in New York, that I'd sent things to before, and they were going to print it.

And so, at twenty minutes of six I'd gone home from the Capitol-- I lived way across over here in the northwest--Walter [called and] said, "Sarah, would you come to the Capitol?" I said, "Well, sure. If you called me, it must be something important, and I'll sure come." So I went on back to the Capitol and Walter said, "Now, Sarah, we have your story that you sent to Harry Provence in Waco." He didn't say at first it was Provence. I found out later it was. "We have your story that you sent down there and he has sent it back to us, and we have read this story and we knew that you have been trying to peddle it all over the country for days and peddle it through the press gallery and we know you're trying to get it out. We want you to stop it and you are not to print this story. It is not true that Bobby Baker is the protégé of Mr. Johnson. Mr. Johnson hasn't seen him in ages. Mr. Johnson has barely seen him since he's been vice president," you know. I said, "Look here, Walter, you're trying to treat me like I'm sort of a criminal. I'm not the criminal, Baker's the criminal. You must not realize just what this man has done, which I know, selling abortions, all these things he's done around this Capitol, and selling influence, and selling the influence of Lyndon Johnson, and selling [inaudible]

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things under Lyndon Johnson's name and doing things in Lyndon Johnson's name that probably Lyndon Johnson never heard of, but doing it in the name of power, power, big power." And I said, "A lot of times nobody knows whether Lyndon Johnson knew of that or not because maybe Johnson would show up at some function later." But I said, "You can't stop this story. You needn't think you can. Just don't try." So I went to the telephone and called this little syndicate up in New York and I said, "Look, you all are in for some trouble. He'll make trouble. He's going to make an awful lot of trouble." And they said, "We don't care, we don't mind. It's already on the wire." Bam [they hung up]. And it got on the front page at the Des Moines Register-Tribune.

F: Which could have had an exclusive.

M: And about a month afterward, why, the wires started working on it. About six weeks after that the New York Times, the New York Herald Tribune, said Andy Glass said, "I didn't want to write about it because Bobby's given us so many stories. I hope they don't assign me to it. I don't want to write it." And Clark Mollenhoff said, "I didn't write it because it's dirty rotten apples and when you stir dirty rotten apples you get dirty." Then Clark started writing about it. But there it goes.

E: Did you get the feeling--I'm always interested, for want of a better term, the public relations approach--that whereas the Johnsons handled the Walter Jenkins situation impeccably, that the Vice President goofed on the Bobby Baker situation, that he should have

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said, "This is a fellow I've loved and trusted"?

M: Did I get the feeling that Johnson--

F: That they goofed on the Bobby Baker case? I mean, I can't fault the handling of the Walter Jenkins situation. I think that was done just perfectly..

M: Oh, I see what you mean.

F: But in this one they would have done better if they had made . . .

M: If he'd come out. I think he should have handled it differently, yes.

F: Instead of denying that he and Bobby Baker had had any relationships for a long time.

M: Yes, I think that was bad. I think that was a mistake. Yes, I do. I think lots of times Johnson's biggest mistake was not being frank and coming right out about it.

And of course I think it's a tragedy that Johnson did not run for office again. I don't know whether he would have been elected or not, but I think it was a tragedy to me. Where he was getting ready to make this announcement, I got in there a little late and there wasn't any chair or place to sit so I sat down on the floor, and then I was on my knees and somebody said, "That's the first time I ever saw you on your knees to Johnson." But I couldn't get over it. I think that the tragedy of Lyndon Johnson to me was that he failed to trust people more. If he had trusted people more-- and I guess that bears on what you were saying--he would have found out that they were trustworthy and that you could trust people. I wasn't

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trying to belittle Johnson in my writings. I wasn't trying to tear him down. I was just writing what I saw and I wrote many good things about him. I was one of the best friends Johnson ever had. He had this distrust of me all the time. I think if Johnson had been plain and honest, I mean if he'd been--

F: Forthright.

M: If he'd been forthright, he would have found that he would have established a feeling of trust, and it would have been far better for him in his relations with the press and far better with his relations to the public and he might not have bowed out of this race. But that to me is the tragedy. And this is a quality that I think [he has]. Also I think Lyndon Johnson had somewhat of an inferiority complex based on his poverty, the poverty that came after the Civil War to that part of the country. I think it affects many people, does to this day. And I think his family and background . . . he had some inferiority complex. There was no reason for that, no reason in the world. He had a very great family and he knew it too in a way, but I think a lot of that attributed to some of his decisions and some of the things he did. But I do not think that he should have been so wary of people. They would have done more for him and everything else if he had just trusted them more.

One thing Johnson did he was always checking people, and he may have checked into their personalities so much and their lives that that might have engendered his distrust. I know what he told me-- I always remember what he said about the Senate. It was after he

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became majority leader. He told us that the first thing that he did was he had a complete study made of the life of each senator. He knew everything about them, their weaknesses, their good and bad things. And this he needed, he felt, to work with those men and to get along with them. This is also what he used and he did this to people. He told me once one of the times I had to go over to his office when he was senator to be grilled on something I had written. I knew he was going to fuss and he shook his hand at me and said, "We've got a file on you. We've got a file every time you call up this office. We've got a file on you." And he kept precinct files I think on people in Texas through his organization. He had people who would call him up and tell him things that were going on from all over. The thing that got me about Drew Pearson was that Houston Harte used to call Johnson when he'd get an unfavorable article on Johnson written by Drew Pearson. Houston Harte would call Johnson and then Johnson would call the various newspaper publishers in Texas who carried that column and ask them not to use that column. That's happened over and over again. And then, look, when Johnson went in the White House, guess who was there every day.

F: Yes. Drew Pearson.

M: That annoyed me, that Drew Pearson, after he had previously written the things that he had about Johnson and all, when Johnson was in power, he was just using him.

F: Did Johnson behave any differently toward you once he was sort of free from his Texas constituency? I can see why he would be extra

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tender while he was depending on Texas to get him back. But once he's vice president in a sense he has shaken Texas, and you're still writing for Texas papers.

M: Well, he was still very, very nice to me while he was vice president. This Bobby Baker thing, I think, is what entered into it. When he became president he had the feeling that, "Now look, I've got bigger fish to fry than you and you're just a little thing." So he was looking more for the big circulation and for the bigger people. And that's what goes with the presidency. That's kind of the way Richard Nixon has done people today on the China trip. He's hurt a lot of people by leaving a lot of them out, but he was looking for impact and circulation.

F: He got the TV people.

M: That's right. That's right. I was looking here to see if there's anything [else]. I think that's about everything I have down here.

Oh, I've got two things here to tell you. One, I always go back to this: about John Connally and Lyndon. I think John felt like he wanted to be his own man and kind of get away from Lyndon. But I remember one time in a hotel room--I believe this was 1959 when Lyndon was beginning to feel that he wanted to have a campaign yet he didn't want to really admit it--he begged John Connally for forty minutes. I heard him in a hotel room in Pittsburgh. For forty minutes he begged him to come with him and run his campaign and help him and John wouldn't do it. That's always come back to me when I think of these things.

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F: Well, why do you think he wouldn't?

M: I think that John was tired of being under the stress and strain of working for Lyndon. I think he wanted a life of his own. I think he just didn't want the day and night wear.

F: Yes. Did you have the feeling that the whole 1960 push was pretty futile or did you think that he might [make it]?

M: No. No, there again we've seen a lot of comparison between that and the race that these men are making for the thing now. Lyndon Johnson started something there, because up until that time they had always said that no senator could run or win or get anywhere. I think a lot of men now are running maybe thinking, "Maybe if I'm not president, I'll be vice president." I think also that there again if Lyndon had just been a little more confident, if he'd just come right out and said, "I'm a candidate. I'm a candidate," and just gone after it, he might have gone farther. But he was not known. He had to become known. It's very difficult to become really known in this country. People know a United States senator today much more than they did at that time, much more. And he would get letters from different parts of the country and he would call me in and talk to me about these letters and things. Some of them, it looked like a real good deal and some of it didn't.

I must tell you about the Mormon church people. Lyndon is now very religious, apparently, and I know for a fact that he's gone down here to this little chapel at St. Dominic's Church and a lot of the people didn't know he was gone.

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F: St. Dominic?

M: St. Dominic's church. The priests down there know him. One time he called them down there at ten o'clock at night and didn't want them to open the big church, so they just opened their own little private chapel for him. And Lyndon's become very much more religious. I've just wondered if he's a Catholic. Some people think he's a Catholic. He may be. But at one time he told me before he became vice president, "I only know two Catholics: you and Walter Jenkins, and I don't want to know any more."

F: I see. You can take that any way you want to, huh?

M: That was before he had his relationship with Kennedy.

F: Yes.

M: And Luci.

F: Right.

M: "I only know two Roman Catholics--I don't want to know any more--you and Walter Jenkins."

F: Were you around him much at the 1960 convention?

M: Oh, yes.

F: I presume that was as much a shocker to you as it was to everybody else.

M: Yes, it was a great shock to me.

One of the things I must tell you about is how he got tied up with the Mormon church. I think that's a good story. He's been very close to them all the time they've helped him when he was president, and people don't realize how this happened. Johnson

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never went to church on Sunday morning. We were out in Salt Lake City at the hotel.

F: Now, this is in the senatorial days?

M: This was when he was campaigning for president.

F: In 1960.

M: I guess it was 1960. We were all out there Sunday morning. When we were on these trips traveling, why, frequently John Burns, who is now the governor of Hawaii, who is a very close friend of Johnson's was always along on the trips. John Burns was a Catholic, and John Burns and I would slip out and go to Mass. So this was Sunday morning. Lyndon saw us coming in from Mass or something. He was sitting down there in the lobby with his feet propped up on the big old coffee table, just sitting around. "Well, you two been to Mass, huh? Y'all just wanted an excuse to get out and go together. I know. I know." And I said, "Why don't you go to church? It wouldn't hurt you. It'd be good for you."

So I said, "There's a Mormon tabernacle right here in the same block. There's a wonderful museum over there, a lovely museum of terrific things they show over there." And he took his feet off the table and looked at Lady Bird. And I said, "It's a great museum. You ought to go and see that church over there. It's a great place." And he said, "What do you think about going to church?" So they looked at each other and decided yes, they'd go. There was about thirty or forty minutes for them to catch the next service. They sent word over there they were coming and they went over there, and

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the Mormon people were just delighted. They lined up to greet him and meet him at the door and they thought this was the greatest honor that he had come to their service and for him to be there. And from then on their friendship with the high leaders of the Mormon church

F: He's been a good Mormon ever since, huh?

M: So when the Bishop came to the White House to meet him one time, I couldn't help but smile thinking of it.

There's another little incident that I think is very funny. I went with Lyndon and Lady Bird one time to Boston when they were going up there to speak. This was before the 1960 convention. This was in April, I guess. I don't know whether this was April of 1959 or 1960. It must have been 1959, and Johnson was going up there to make a speech for Jack Kennedy. Boston is just a delightful place. In the hotel room, there were United States district judges, the Speaker of the House and all these potentates around, everybody all in one room. I thought how many people gathered together here in this small little room. I don't remember any of the reporters on the trip. There must have been [some], but I don't remember them.

Boston just adores Jack Kennedy so and these politicians did, and as we started back, Jack Kennedy decided he wanted to come back on the plane with us. We were on a small plane which Westinghouse had offered. And to get Jack's luggage from where it was across town to this place was quite a job, but these Boston politicians all pitched in and you would have thought--Jack's plane, Jack's bags,

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Jack's bags; it was like a comic opera to see them work. They all just [pitched in]. And they finally transferred it in the nick of time and got it across town and on our plane, and we all started out. So Lady Bird went up to the front of the plane to nap. Sitting in the back of it, as I recall, we were all squatting around on the floor. It was a small plane. There wasn't any place to sit but we were in the back where we could all group together talking. It was Lyndon Johnson and Jack Kennedy and a man named Hobbs with Westinghouse and O. B. Lloyd and myself.

F: Who's O. B. Lloyd?

M: O. B. Lloyd is a newspaperman from Texas whom Johnson brought up here to work for him and he's now working . . . I suppose he's still working with the [National Aeronautics and] Space Agency. He was for a while. I'm not sure. But he's in the Washington area. He was here to handle the funeral arrangements for Cliff Carter when he died. So O. B. Lloyd could tell you a lot. He's one of those who worked for Johnson, a newspaperman that he brought up. But it was a little different working for Johnson than being a newspaperman in Texas and I think O. B. Lloyd was always a wire service reporter. Anyway, I don't think he was too happy. But he's still in this area somewhere in government.

So we were squatting there on the plane, and I wrote this up for a column later so I guess it was April of 1959. We remembered, the different ones of us; Lloyd and Hobbs and I have talked about it since. I said to Johnson and Kennedy, "Why don't you two run on the

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same ticket? You'd be a great team." Neither one of them said a word. (Laughter)

F: You killed that conversation, didn't you?

M: You could just feel they were [wondering] which one would be on top. But it was funny.

Oh, another time Johnson gave me quite an experience. I asked him a question about constitutionality; I'm always asking people that. One time he gave me an answer this long (demonstrates) on the transcript. It was on the printed transcript of the paper. It took up that much space in the paper, his answer. I think it ran about twenty-five minutes or something. Another time I asked him a question about, I think, something to do with the Tonkin Gulf and constitutionality. He suggested that I go down and talk to the Attorney General about it, check the constitutionality, so I did. I went down and spent an hour with [Nicholas] Katzenbach, at the end of which time Katzenbach just said, "I know, I know," after we got to discussing and discussing. Then I think the issue was foreign affairs, whether or not the President has the power to control and direct all or not. Anyway, at the end of it Katzenbach sent for his books and . . . (Laughter)

I guess that's about everything that I can think of.

F: All right.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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