

INTERVIEW V

DATE: September 9-10, 1982

INTERVIEWEE: MARY RATHER

INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE

PLACE: Miss Rather's residence, Gonzales, Texas

Tape 1 of 1

R: Let's see if I remember anything.

G: Okay. 1943. Let me ask you about the Johnsons buying [4921] 30th Place, the home in Washington. Do you remember that? Sometime in late 1942 I think or early 1943.

R: Yes, I remember it fairly well. They lived in Woodley Park Tower and then they moved across the street, and I can't think of the name of it right this minute, but lived in that apartment. After Mr. Johnson came back, though, from his military service and then also got through some of the traveling back and forth around the country that he did, they bought the house one day. That's about all I know, except that I was there and remember them buying it and going by to look at it.

G: Did you look at any houses--

R: --with them?

G: --with them before they bought this one?

R: No, I don't think I did. I don't remember doing it. In fact, I didn't even go with them to look at it; I went to look at it after they bought it.

It was a very neat little house. I say little, it wasn't tiny but it wasn't very big either. It was very compact. It had a third floor which was unfinished, although later on

they made it into a spare bedroom. On the second floor there was their bedroom and then two smaller bedrooms for the girls and a tiny room--not a tiny room, but a small room that Lady Bird used as her office. She had her desk in there and she kept up with her correspondence and her business from that room. Then below the house, underneath, they refinished it and made two bedrooms with a large sitting room in between, and that was for Zephyr [Wright] and Helen [Williams]. Now Zephyr wasn't married--well, she was married part of the time--but Helen was. Anyway, they were right there on the place and that made it nice.

Lady Bird loved it because she had been in apartments all the years in Washington and I guess it was about the first chance she had to grow flowers. And she had a vegetable garden. She had a victory garden later when the war started. Bill Deason was in Washington, too, part of that time, and he would come out and help her work in the yard. Then they screened in a back porch or they extended it--I think it was screened in, I don't think it was glassed in--and made a pretty good-sized room there. That was off of the living room so it gave a little flow when they had company, which they did as much as they could. On an informal basis though, not great big elaborate parties or anything, but just asking different groups or different bunches of friends to come over either on a Saturday afternoon or a Sunday afternoon. I can remember lots of Saturday or Sunday afternoons being out there and enjoying it very much.

G: He also early in 1943 moved his office from the New House Office Building to 504 in the Old [House] Office Building. Do you remember that? Is there any significance to the change?

R: Yes. Well, it was significant because it was an unusual thing to do. The members of Congress always wanted newer and bigger and better offices than they had, after they had

been there long enough to get their feet on the ground and get a little seniority. Mr. Johnson was located in what was called the New House Office Building as opposed to the Old House Office Building. It was very nice, but there were only two rooms and he always had more employees than a lot of members because he had such tremendous correspondence from home to take care of and so many people from Texas came up to Washington. We were just like sardines in a can. But it was a very pretty and nice office and new, you see.

But the time was coming for a new session of Congress, and that's when you could switch around some. He asked me to look for another office that would become vacant. I found that office on the fifth floor of the Old House Office Building. It had three huge rooms. It was dusty, there were rats. If you worked late at night, especially if I did and stayed there by myself, they would get very daring and they would be so big and one of them would go scooting across the floor and scare you to death. If you came in from a different entrance from the one you were accustomed to, you had a hard time finding the elevator. It would be around the corner somewhere. You go through a little door and then you'd find a little elevator in there. Some of the elevators only went to the fourth floor; not all of them went to the fifth floor.

But we got used to it, and he liked it. He had, like I said, a nice good-sized office if a group of people came to see him. And we had room in the middle office for the receptionist and one or two other desks without seeming to be crowded. Then the third office was the biggest of all. I don't remember how many people we had in there, but we had plenty of room for our files and plenty of room for our mimeograph machine, plenty of room for everything.

After Mr. Johnson was elected to the Senate, I believe I'm correct that Homer

Thornberry was the congressman from Austin, Tenth District, and he took Mr. Johnson's old office, our office, 504. I think that's right. And I know Albert Thomas--that was the congressman from Houston--discovered the Old House Office Building and the advantages of it and he moved over there, too, in the office next door to ours. And right across the hall from us, it seems to me it was that near, there was a storage room where you could put your retired files. But it was so close, if you had to go to back to one, you know, you could do it very easily.

I always liked it over there, and I think he did, too. Much quieter. And lots of people that didn't have any business seeing Mr. Johnson, maybe they weren't even Texans, or if they were Texans maybe they weren't from his district, but people that wandered around the halls of Congress and around the office buildings, lobbyists of one kind or another, would drop in on you. Some of them, like I said, didn't have any business coming to see you or taking up your time. Well, a lot of those people couldn't find 504 Old House Office Building. That's all I remember.

G: He was appointed chairman of a special subcommittee to investigate personnel in the Navy Department and hired Donald Cook to work as special counsel and got Harry Coles and John Connally to work with that subcommittee. Do you remember anything about that?

R: There is probably a lot more to it than I am able to tell you. I expect that some of the personnel were scattered around the country at other naval offices and naval stations. But there was in Washington an abundance of employees, naval people, who were working at the Navy Department. I think the same was true at the War Department. The Naval Affairs Committee got the idea that too many people were on duty in Washington at desk jobs instead of being at sea or in foreign countries or other parts of the United

States. That's about the only part I do remember about it, that Mr. Johnson got from the Navy Department the name of every employee they had who was in the navy, whether the regular navy or the naval reserve, and what their job was and their age. Now, I don't mean he got every one, but it was up to a certain age, like up to thirty or thirty-five years or something like that, and when they had had duty outside of Washington or if they had ever had any. He, in the end, got most of them shipped away. Of course, there could have been a young man there who had had lots of service on board a battleship and had gotten it shot out from under him, and it was time for him to have a different kind of tour of duty. But there were some who had never been to sea at all.

G: This idea of using some Navy Department personnel to investigate the Navy Department was an interesting [concept].

R: Well, he got Don Cook and Harry Coles--they were a little older though, and I believe, I'm not sure, Harry at least had had some service somewhere else. Now Don I don't remember for sure. Anyway, Don didn't have very good eyesight. I really don't know for sure how he got in because his eyes were very poor. But they were naval people.

G: Do you know where he got the idea to use naval personnel to do this?

R: No. That's an interesting question, but I don't know whether he thought it up or whether Chairman [Carl] Vinson thought it up. But I don't imagine he did. Mr. Johnson may have thought it up by talking to naval people down at the Navy Department that he knew, and somebody there could have [suggested it]. I'm just guessing, I don't know.

G: Did he also in that capacity handle grievances that navy men had?

R: I don't know. I really never did have very much knowledge of what the Naval Affairs Committee did, because I was mostly so busy just trying to keep up with the things from the Tenth District. But Walter [Jenkins] did work as much as possible, not on the

committee, but from our office, sort of liaison between Mr. Johnson when he was tied up on the House floor or something, between him and the committee.

G: What was his relationship with Carl Vinson?

R: I think it was good, I'm sure it was. I think that Congressman Vinson, you see, he was getting pretty old, and I think he was maybe a little bit grouchy sometimes. But I'm confident he liked Mr. Johnson and appreciated him. He gave him good assignments on the Naval Affairs Committee. Then it became the Armed Services Committee, didn't it? Or was that much later?

G: Well, let's see, I think it took place right after the war, didn't it?

R: I guess it was after the war.

I do believe that Congressman Vinson wrote Mr. Johnson a letter or talked to him on the phone or something after the presidency and said he wanted to come see Mr. Johnson or he wanted Mr. Johnson to come see him. I don't know whether that's right or not, but I think it's right. And I think Mr. Johnson said he would, but of course he never could.

G: Well, was his relationship with Carl Vinson, say, different from his relationship with Sam Rayburn or Dick Russell?

R: Oh, yes. Because with Rayburn it was so much more intimate. And with Russell, too. They became devoted to each other. The friendship with Vinson was not on the same basis at all. Vinson was a much, much older man.

G: I gather he was more aloof, is that right, or stern?

R: Well, he gave the appearance of being stern, but I expect it was his age. But Russell was someone that Mr. Johnson had known without being on the Naval Affairs Committee for one thing. And they were kind of buddies. I think they really loved each other, and I

know I loved Senator Russell. He was a dear, dear man. But I never could have felt that kind of feeling for Vinson.

G: Did Vinson ever come over to the Johnson home or associate with them socially that you know of?

R: Not that I remember. Mrs. Johnson I guess could tell you. If they wanted to have a little cocktail party on a Sunday or a Saturday afternoon and invite some of the Texas congressmen or the Texas press or something like that, they wouldn't have invited him. It's just remotely possible that he could have been asked to come to dinner some night when they were having four or five other guests. But I don't believe that it ever happened.

G: Also during this period you had the laying of the Big Inch pipeline and the completion of that segment from Longview to Illinois. Do you recall his work on the Big Inch to get that pipeline put in?

R: No, I don't. I recall only that George Brown was in Washington frequently and so was Senator [Alvin] Wirtz with regard to it. I recall that Senator Wirtz phoned me one time and asked me to get all the information I could for him with regard to the Big Inch--was that the Little Inch or the Big Inch? That was the Big Inch--which I did and mailed it to him. Actually that's my only contact with it, except knowing when Senator Wirtz was in Washington, because he would keep in touch with our office so that if he got a phone call from Austin from his office, he would call me and tell me that he was over at such and such a place, so I could keep track of him if anybody back home needed him. And I know he was up there on that account, but I don't know anything specific about it at all, except they got the contract.

G: Do you think that the Big Inch was perceived by people like LBJ and Senator Wirtz as

being something that would help the independents in their competition with the major oil companies?

R: I don't know. I'm sure Mr. Johnson might have had some thoughts about it, because it involved Texas people that were trying to get the contract to build it.

G: But I mean getting the oil up there from the oil fields into the eastern markets.

R: He must have had that in mind, but I don't know anything--

G: It was not something that they [discussed]?

R: No.

G: Okay. In addition, at that point it was announced that Mrs. Johnson was purchasing KTBC. Do you recall your first awareness of that? Did you know anything about, say, their contemplating buying a newspaper before that?

R: Well, I knew she had this money available.

G: This was from Uncle Claud or Aunt Effie [Pattillo] or her mother's estate?

R: I don't know. She got some money when Aunt Effie died, but she had some money through her own mother, through Lady Bird's mother, who had inherited it from her father. Lady Bird was only five years old I think when her mother died. Uncle Claud in Alabama took care of some property that Lady Bird had inherited through her mother, land. It seems to me there was a sum of money and Lady Bird had lent it to her father at his suggestion--I don't think he needed it, but he told her the money ought to be working for her. I'm sure her daddy could have borrowed money if he needed some. But anyway, he paid her interest on it every year is the way I remember, and I believe that that was at least part of the money that she told her daddy she wanted to have back. She wanted to invest it another way, in this radio station that was for sale in Austin. You see--what year did Aunt Effie die, do you remember?

G: Well, she was still living I think at this time.

R: That's what I was thinking. I know some of the time, although I don't remember which years, Lady Bird had Aunt Effie living in Washington with them. When she was a little girl, Aunt Effie took care of her, and when Aunt Effie got old, Lady Bird took care of Aunt Effie. It's a very touching story. She loved Aunt Effie, who was such a gentle, unworldly little person. But they took trips, they traveled to places where old ladies travel and then here comes this little girl, this twelve-year-old girl or something along with [her]. Where all did they go?

G: Well, they went to Michigan once, didn't they, to Battle Creek Sanitarium?

R: Battle Creek, yes, that's where they went. And then I was trying to think, they went somewhere, where the Chautauqua had its headquarters. Oh, well, she can tell you about that.

G: Did you ever hear them discuss the possibility of buying a newspaper, maybe a second newspaper in Austin or something like that, rather than a station?

R: They may have, but I don't know it. I do remember, though, hearing Mr. Johnson say more than once--in fact, he told it just directly to me, but I might have heard him say it to other people--every two years when Mr. Johnson would be re-elected to the House of Representatives--and I think maybe I've told you this at some other time--he would say that was the last time he was going to run for re-election. What he wanted to do was to go back home and live. And he said he thought it would be very nice to live in a small town--he didn't necessarily say live in Austin; I remember he said a smaller town one time--and own the newspaper, buy the newspaper. With Lady Bird's degree in journalism that would be right up her alley, and that he himself would start an insurance agency. He said that to me a lot of times. So that's not--

(Interruption)

G: This is September 10 that we're recording this portion on.

Let me ask you. The next item I have is--well, before we get into that, do you have anything that we talked about yesterday that you want to add something to?

R: I put a little check mark by Harry Coles' name. Have you ever talked to him about the Naval Affairs Committee, Preparedness [Sub]committee?

G: No. Do you know where he is?

R: I do not know, and I don't know whether he's even still alive, although I haven't heard that he died. I know his sisters died and his mother died. Donald Cook might know.

G: He's dead now, too.

R: Don is? Oh, I didn't know that.

G: Well, you and I have talked about Harry Coles and speculated about on where he might be. He's from New York, isn't he, or lived in New York?

R: Yes, he was from Washington, D.C. Then after his naval career, term or service, he went first I think to Philadelphia and worked for the--who is it that owns the *Philadelphia Inquirer*? Was that the Guggenheims? Well, anyway he was an attorney and he worked there, stayed in Philadelphia a few years, and then I think he went on to New York and I don't know who he was with there. Well, if Donald Cook isn't living, maybe Mildred [Stegall] could tell you somebody else who was on the committee who isn't dead and might let you know how to get in touch with Harry. I think if he had a little warning and could get his thoughts together, if there's anything you need to ask anybody about the work of the Preparedness [Sub]committee, he could do it. He was very bright.

G: Okay. In early 1943 LBJ helped Ernest Kurth of Lufkin cut some red tape in order to enlarge his facilities. Do you recall anything about that?

R: Oh, I recall Mr. Kurth. He was a most lovable man. He lived over in Lufkin and he had the--

G: Southland Paper Mill.

R: --Southland Paper Company or whatever the name of it was. The paper is made out of pulp or shavings or something from trees, pine trees in particular, and there was a shortage and I don't remember all the details, but there might have been some question about pricing, you know, OPA [Office of Price Administration] or something like that. But there were problems involved, and he came to Washington to try to solve them. Mr. Johnson I don't think had ever known him up to that point, but I think Mr. Kurth knew about Mr. Johnson, and coming from over there in East Texas he probably knew who Lady Bird was.

He came to our office; he might have phoned for an appointment first. And I think Mr. Johnson kind of fell in love with him, too. I know I did, because he was such a dear gentleman, snow white hair, a big man and rosy cheeks and always smiling. But he had a big problem. His problem also was a problem of newspapers, too, because they couldn't get all the newsprint paper that they wanted, among them the *Dallas [Morning] News*, who is someone else that always fought Mr. Johnson. But he saved the day for them as far as their paper was concerned in connection with his helping Mr. Kurth.

G: Mr. Kurth supplied the *Dallas [Morning] News* with newsprint. I see.

R: I believe so, yes. I think he might even have supplied paper up in Canada to newspapers, too. I don't know all the specifics in regard to the problem with the federal government but it did get worked out. It took a long time, though, and many trips for Mr. Kurth to Washington.

G: Did Mr. Kurth have rivals in the East Texas lumber business that were also seeking Mr.

Johnson's help?

R: Not that I remember. I'm sure there were other people with land and forests of trees or who could get permission from owners to cut and of course selected trees. You know, you don't just go cut down a whole forest. But their trees might have been used for something else. Mr. Kurth is the only one that I remember, but he might have been representing others, too, telling them, "I'll try to handle it for you or help get it handled." I don't remember that.

G: Also in early 1943 LBJ made a big push to eliminate absenteeism in the war industries and criticized Paul McNutt, the Manpower Administrator, and sponsored a bill, a work-or-fight bill, designed to eliminate absenteeism. Do you recall that?

R: I don't, I just remember the word. Because the staff of the Preparedness Subcommittee just grew and grew. We in the office didn't have very much--well, we did not work with the committee; we handled our congressional duties. To the best of my memory Walter was sort of a liaison between Mr. Johnson and the committee, in other words, keeping up with what the committee was doing when they couldn't and relaying messages to Mr. Johnson from them. And of course Donald Cook and Harry Coles and others would come to our office sometimes with committee matters and talk to Mr. Johnson--Congressman Johnson--about it. But I didn't have anything to do with them. And Mr. Johnson, of course, would go by the committee, too, a lot of times.

But all those different things they worked on, the only one I really remember much about was the one you asked me about yesterday, wanting to get the young men who were navy men and naval reserve men who had been called to active duty--there was a whole slew of them down there at the Navy Department in Washington on duty. Mr. Johnson's committee thought that a good many of them ought to be on battleships. The

reason I remember that is because my brother was one of them. He had received his orders on Christmas Day of 1941, right after Pearl Harbor, to report to Washington, which he did. He and a group of about twenty-five or thirty young men were given a quick indoctrination of about six weeks, and when it was over each one of them was handed something from the navy telling them where to report. [Their] orders were to report anywhere from coast to coast, except my brother and maybe one other one; there might have been two of them. Their orders were to go down to the Navy Department and report there in Washington. He called me and told me and I was so excited. I knew how happy it would make my mother if he were kept there in Washington. But even so, I didn't dream that he would be.

But when he got there, then he had to go to the Bureau of Ordnance, and because of his background he was qualified--he was in the procurement of supplies or something on that order with Humble Company after he got out of business administration school. And they had this tiny little section in the Bureau of Ordnance for the procurement of small arms and ammunition. You had to make contracts with companies and you had to get what was needed to different parts of the world at the time they were needed. There was one young officer down there, and he had one girl working for him, and they put Edward in there to help. By the time the war was over Edward was still there; the navy never would release him when Mr. Johnson sent his name down on the list of young men in their twenties. Mr. Johnson called me in his office and said, "Mary, here's a list of all those young men at the Navy Department. Your brother is one of them. I'm sorry, but I can't do anything but ask why is he there and why can't he be sent to sea." And I said I understood. But then the navy sent Edward's name back and said, "We're going to keep him because of his experience."

By that time Edward knew--and Brown, the other young man in there, was kept, too. The department grew and grew and grew to thirty or forty people before the war was over because they were just getting things and getting them all over the world. They felt that if the--well, the navy did start bringing in men who had been at sea as long as they were supposed to be and then it was time for a tour of duty on land. Most of them were regular navy people. But Edward and this other fellow were the heads of it. Edward was the assistant head and this other young fellow was Edward's boss. But they worked together real good.

So I remember the details of that subcommittee work but nothing else.

G: Do you recall anything about Eddie Rickenbacker testifying on that absenteeism?

R: No.

G: Okay. Ben Powell wrote LBJ that year requesting help in getting the government to lease some of the Camp Mystic property. Do you recall that?

R: Oh, I will recall that well because I had so much connection with CampMystic all through my life. The Stacys had bought it and had been running it. They bought it from Mrs. [E. J.] Stewart, whose husband had died, and Mrs. Stewart got to be an old lady. The Stewarts were the ones who started it. But then the time came when Gillespie Stacy had cancer and was dying. The war was on and Agnes Stacy just knew that she couldn't run the camp alone without him and with him so ill and everything. So she wanted--well, to go back a little bit farther, when they bought the camp from Mrs. Stewart they did not have enough money to make the down payment, and they came to Uncle Ben--the Stacys did--to ask him if he would be a silent partner with them. So he put up one-third of the money of the down payment.

We asked the air force to consider it as a place--I've forgotten what it was called, but when an air force man had had a terrible long period of flying and fighting and needed rest and recreation--was that what it was called? [rehabilitation and recovery camp]--the air force had places that they sent them to recuperate. So with so much air force in San Antonio, the Stacys and Uncle Ben wondered if Mystic might not be [a potential location]. The climate is very good out there. Well, the upshot of it was that the air force chose it. They had other sites they were looking at, but they chose Mystic and it helped till the war was over [1943-1945]. They closed in some of the cabins so that it could be used in the winter as well. They made a few improvements, and it was a good arrangement for the Stacys particularly.

G: Now in March 1943 Tom Clark became assistant attorney general of the Antitrust Division of the Justice Department. In his interview I think he indicated that LBJ had

played a role in him getting it. Do you recall?

R: I'm sure Mr. Johnson recommended him for it and suggested it. There were four Clark brothers. William was the oldest and then there was Tom and there was Bob. There was a fourth one who had headquarters in Mexico City, the law firm kept them officed down there, too, the Clarks' law firm did. They were all sweet, lovable people, and I know Mr. Johnson was interested in him and wanted him to have it.

G: Who would he have talked to I wonder to help him get that job?

R: Whoever was attorney general [Francis Biddle] I imagine. Who was? I don't remember that at that time. I don't believe that that would be an appointment that you would get through the President himself. The attorney general would be the President's choice, but not the whatever of the Antitrust Division. I can't remember who was attorney general at that time. Then of course Tom ended up by being the attorney general himself. And his brother Bob--well, his brother Bill, too. He was killed in a plane crash. He had been in Washington; he was in Washington a lot on business. He left there one day and the plane crashed about halfway between Washington and Dallas. I think it was around Memphis or somewhere like that.

Bob, though, continued to run the firm until he died. He died a long time before Tom did. I don't know much about the brother in Mexico although one time when I was in Mexico City years and years ago he called me at the hotel. I was with Liz Odom. He asked if we would have a drink with him, and he came over to see us. Then he wanted to know if there was anything else he could do for us, and we asked him a lot of questions, but that's about the only time I ever knew him.

G: Also that spring LBJ was selected to study bases at Casablanca and other places. Do you recall that?

R: Anything about him going to New York and meeting with Bill Paley and Ed Weisl and Dick Berlin? I think this is right after they first bought the station. I think he was probably trying to get CBS affiliation is what it looks like.

R: Well, when you mention Bill Paley, but then Dick Berlin, wasn't he head of--

G: INS.

R: --INS, whatever the name of it is, International Newspaper Service. Mr. Weisl could have been hired by the radio station to help them in New York, but I don't know anything else about that. I know Mr. Johnson seemed to have known Berlin a good while.

G: Shortly after that Mrs. Johnson hired Harfield Weedin to take over as the station manager. Do you remember him and his--?

R: Well, I remember him as being a very nice-looking young man with poise and a good voice.

G: He'd done some work in one of the campaigns, hadn't he, the 1941 campaign?

R: Yes. I don't know exactly how to describe him but he was a good speaker, he was kind of like an actor. He might have put together all that business in the 1946 campaign that we were talking about when you first came in here. I know he was very presentable and he was bright, and he was young. Maybe he had to leave, though, and go to the war, I don't remember. I can't even remember who followed him as manager.

G: Pat Adelman.

R: Adelman? Well, Pat did work down there and was very loyal to the Johnsons and to the station, and a nice fellow.

(Interruption)

G: You were saying?

R: Mr. Johnson did a great deal to help Southwestern University at Georgetown during the

war, when the students were falling off on account [of the war], especially the young men. He helped them get the navy to establish some kind of training program there. I've forgotten what it was called. The university was most grateful for it.

G: Now he took a trip to visit defense installations, I guess shipbuilding programs in Orange and Corpus [Christi] and Houston. Do you recall that?

R: No, just kind of vaguely as being some place that he went. But they were going strong in Orange and Corpus. I don't remember what was being done in Houston, but I guess it was.

G: I have a note that the Austin airmail service was interrupted, and he helped arrange to have this taken care of, I think working with Braniff and Bergstrom.

R: I don't know, I don't remember that.

G: Let's see. Do you see anything there on those notes that I haven't asked you about?

R: What page are you on?

G: I'm looking at five and six; I'm on six now.

R: All right. Let's see.

G: The bond rally?

R: Well, I was just going to say that--

G: Were you there?

R: Oh, yes, I'm sure I was. Yes, I'm bound to have been there, because I remember seeing him and everything. He was the one, though, that really got Robert Taylor, Jack Dempsey and Nancy Gates. Nancy Gates was a young starlet. She was from Denton, Texas. I believe it was Denton. But her mother had taken her to California and tried to launch her in the movies and succeeded, and she was a sweet young girl. Anyway those people came to help attract the crowds, you know, and make the bond rally a big success.

And it was a huge success. Robert Taylor was literally mobbed. (Laughter)

G: Is that right, was he?

R: Almost, by women standing outside the building waiting for Mr. Johnson to bring him down. They just had to protect him. Mr. Johnson took them over to other towns also and I remember him saying that he had a flat tire. You know, he didn't have a chauffeur or anybody to change it, so he got out and he was trying to change the tire and Jack Dempsey got out and helped him and did most of the work. But Robert Taylor didn't know how to change a tire. (Laughter) I just remember a few little things like that, except that it was a very, very great success.

G: Yes. Well, how did he get Jack Dempsey to help with the bond rally, do you know?

R: Oh, I just think we just asked him.

G: Yes. Had he known Dempsey at all?

R: I don't think so. It may be--you mentioned Ed Weisl a little while back. Mr. Weisl represented some of the--or at least one of the movie producers. Maybe he asked Mr. Weisl to help him; I'm just guessing at that though, I don't know. And he asked Nancy Gates to come back to Texas a time or two--I can't remember what years or what occasions--and do something that was like a civic thing and she came every time asked her. She married and he would ask her husband to come, too. I don't guess anyone's heard from her for a long time now. I don't know whether anyone thought and remembered her when they were in the White House or not. But they might have.

I was just reading the next [entry], right below it, that he goes to Buchanan Dam to relax until Sunday afternoon when he goes to a Czech settlement near Smithville to make a speech. That was at La Grange. We were talking about La Grange a while ago. I didn't go with him to La Grange, but I picked him up wherever he was that morning and

drove him first to where his [mother was]--he wanted to go by to see his mother real quick. This says he goes on Sunday afternoon. The time I remember that he went it seems to me it was up in the morning, but it wasn't afternoon. Anyway, he rushed in to see his mother for a few minutes, and then he said, "Mama, I've got to go to La Grange and make a speech. I haven't even given it a thought yet." And she said, "Well, I will tell you about La Grange and about the Czech people," and she proceeded to tell him the history of the Czech people over in Czechoslovakia and how they began to come over here, and she just briefed him so quickly. Of course, he had a wonderful memory himself, and he got enough background then to go on down there and make a real good speech. I didn't go or anything, but I heard about it afterwards then that he told me that it was a success.

I always admired his mother. She was a very smart woman.

I remember he did enjoy those days that he got to go out to Buchanan Dam, days and nights. I didn't go every time and I don't remember who he and Lady Bird took with them or any special occasion, but he did enjoy it.

[Reading a document] "Raise the price of milk or reduce the price"--"or reduce the price of feed." Oh, I see, do one or the other. But I don't remember that.

G: Now, Tom Miller is making a lot of insinuations about LBJ and the Dillman Street property. Why don't you explain about Tom Miller and his relationship with LBJ during this period.

R: Well, Mayor Miller was a hard person to understand. He was civic-minded. He loved being the mayor of Austin and was re-elected time after time. Not everybody wants to give as much of your time, your life, your activities for something like being a city official, but he liked it, enjoyed it, he did it well. But he was an excitable and kind of a

high-tempered man and he got off on tangents sometimes about things he didn't know anything about. He was a big talker. I don't know why he began to circulate stories about Congressman Johnson--and Mrs. Johnson--that weren't true. Lots of people thought that Mayor Miller would like to be the congressman instead of Mr. Johnson, and that every year, every two years, he would think about running against him, but he never ever got up the courage to do it.

But he started dreadful stories about their buying the radio station and their buying the house on Dillman Street and buying a house in Washington, insinuating that there was something wrong and how did a congressman have enough money to buy all those things. And it was true that Mr. Johnson didn't have any money except his congressional salary, which I think was ten thousand dollars a year back in those days. You had to travel back and forth, you had to have a place to live in your hometown, you had to have a place to live in Washington.

And you had lots of expenses. But Mrs. Johnson did have an inheritance through her mother, who had died when Mrs. Johnson was a little girl. Then Mrs. Johnson's father was a wealthy man, and then Mrs. Johnson had her old maid aunt, Aunt Effie Pattillo, who intended to leave nearly everything she had to Mrs. Johnson. And then there was Mrs. Johnson's Uncle Claud. She didn't inherit all of this at once but over a period of time, and that's the way of course they managed to purchase these things. But you couldn't convince Mayor Miller there wasn't something wrong about it, something suspicious.

G: There's some indication from the files that perhaps Mayor Miller wanted to buy that Dillman Street property himself and felt a little bit envious when LBJ had bought it. Do you know anything about that?

R: Only that Mayor Miller could have bought it if he wanted to. But he just fooled around too long. Maybe he was trying to get them to lower the price. He didn't say, "Well, okay, I'll take it," so Mr. Johnson said, "Well, we'll take it then." It was just about that simple, as I remember it. No one would have thought--well, there was a house here in Gonzales that I would have liked to have bought, had very good reasons for wanting to buy it, because my great uncle built it. And Edward wanted to buy it, too. I would have said to Edward, "Well, you go on and buy it if you want to," but before Edward could come to terms with the people that wanted to sell it, somebody else bought it. Well, you can't get mad at that person who bought it. You were just too slow on the draw. And I think that was the whole thing involved with the house on Dillman Street. Mayor Miller just didn't act quick enough. And the people wanted to sell it. It belonged to a man in Houston, at least he built it. But he didn't live in it, he lived in Houston. When he died suddenly, his wife and his sons didn't really want any rent property in Austin and they just wanted to sell it. So they did.

(Interruption)

G: --tell us again.

R: I just remember the group that Jake [Pickle] was referring to when he wrote the letter about remembering the Christmas before. By then Jake was at sea, because he was in the navy. But they did have a good time briefly, that little group that loved to play dominoes. Jake's wife was with him. Because he was going to be transferred and away, she came as far as she could to the water's edge to be with him and say goodbye. She was called Sugar. I believe her first name was Eleanor; I've forgotten [her name was Ella]. But no one ever, ever called her that. Her parents started Sugar I guess when she was a little girl. She was the daughter of Judge [Richard] Critz in Austin, and she was Ida Nell

Connally's best friend. She was lots of fun. But she died quite, quite young after having a baby. She had cancer. And eventually, I don't remember now how soon it was after the war was over and Jake came back.

But Jake was just reminiscing. He was a hot domino player. (Laughter)

G: Was he?

R: Oh, a hard one! Just as hard as Mr. Johnson was. We used to get him out to the Ranch in the fall after Mr. Johnson came home from his heart attack in Washington. A. W. Moursund and Mr. [Ernest] Stubbs [would come], or A. W. and somebody else from Johnson City, and then [we would] get Jake out or Mr. [Jesse] Kellam could play dominoes. But they'd have some wicked games. And Mr. Johnson was not above giving signals and talking double talk to Jake. (Laughter) I wouldn't have put up with it. Melvin Winters used to play with them, too. He's a Johnson City man.

G: Toward the end of the year there were a lot of suggestions that LBJ go down and have it out with Tom Miller and straighten out this rumor situation. Do you recall what he did on that?

R: Oh, he thought of a lot of things and he could not understand it. Senator Wirtz would tell him what Mayor Miller was saying about him, and Mr. Edgar Perry, who was such a dear old gentleman, would tell him what Mayor Miller was saying about him. So would Ray Lee and so would various others. Mr. Johnson thought of writing a letter and explaining everything, but I don't know that he did write it or not. I don't remember, I think it got drafted but I don't know whether it ever got mailed. But then he would think, well, why should I have to tell, why should I have to explain our personal finances. Everybody knows that Lady Bird had a wealthy father. But you don't just go around explaining your own personal finances to people. I don't know that he ever had a confrontation with

Mayor Miller about it or not, I just don't remember.

I do know though that in one of his campaigns for re-election to the House of Representatives, I don't remember whether it was the year of 1944 or 1946, there was a very large rally in Wooldridge Park and a great deal of material explaining how the Johnsons could make a down payment on the house on Dillman Street, how they could buy the radio station, how they could buy a house in Washington or at least make a down payment on it, and then Lady Bird paying it out by the month. Every financial detail was put together in writing, and Mr. Johnson stood up on the platform and held it up and went into great detail telling many people--Wooldridge Park was just covered with people as I remember it--what it was and why it was prepared. I don't know that he said it was prepared just on account of Mayor Miller, but that because somebody had been spreading rumors, false rumors, about the Johnsons. And he said, "Here it all is. Anybody, any one of you that wants to see it, come on up here and I'll give it to you and you can just start reading it right here and now," or words to that effect. He maybe ended up saying, "It will be in my office if anybody wants to come." But he told them what was in it, too. And as far as I know, as I can remember, nobody ever came. It kind of shut things off. I guess it was so convincing that Mayor Miller decided he'd better quit talking.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview V]

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