

INTERVIEW I

DATE: January 10, 1980

INTERVIEWEE: EMILY CROW SELDEN

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: The Beverly Sheffield residence, Austin, Texas

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G: Let me just get you to sketch your background, Mrs. Selden, before we get started. Just tell me where you're from and where were you born, that sort of thing.

S: I was born in a little teeny tiny town called West, Texas, but we moved to Dallas when I was very young, so I remember very little about West. It was close to Waco. I remember one time--I don't know whether I remember or remember having been told--about us driving to Waco in a Model T and the car breaking down just on that trip to Waco--but it seemed to me quite a trip then--and my father fixing it with one of my mother's hairpins. And I remember breaking my right wrist there. I pushed something off the roof of a barn or a chicken coop--I think it was a chicken coop--and broke my right arm, which is the reason I give now for not knowing right from left. I don't know whether that's really a legitimate excuse. We moved to Dallas and we stayed in Dallas--let's see, I'm not good with dates, so I have really no idea exactly. We stayed in Dallas, my family did, until my father retired--I don't know just what year that was either--from the Federal Reserve Bank.

G: What was his name?

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S: George D. Crow--George Davis Crow. That name goes down, because our great grandfather was George Davis, the last attorney general of the Confederacy. So Father was named for him and one of my brothers was named George Davis Crow and his son is named George Davis Crow III. He and Mother were from North Carolina. Do you want all this?

G: Well, you don't need to go back into the genealogy.
(Laughter)

S: I could, but I won't anymore.

G: The main thing I want to do is try to establish your family household at the time you went to St. Mary's.

S: All right, at that time Mother and Father were there, of course Lois was there, my youngest sister, my next-to-oldest brother.

G: What was his name?

S: George Davis Crow. We called him Davis, because it's Crow Junior. And brother Jack, whose real name is John, John Armstrong Crow, was there part of the time. He finished high school very young, went one year to SMU and then to Chapel Hill, to the University of North Carolina, so he was gone a lot. He was there in the summertimes.

But Bird got to know all of them very well, and as I'm sure she's told you, she became fond of all the family, and we felt that she was part of the family. I remember one time when I was at the University [of Texas], Father asked me if I was going to bring any guests home, because they liked me to. I said, well, I was going to bring Bird. "Oh, she's not a guest," he said, "she's part of the family." That's the way they felt about her.

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G: How did you happen to meet her, do you recall?

S: Oh, yes. I don't know the particular moment, but probably the first day I was at St. Mary's. She was a boarder there, and I was a day student. Several of the girls from my high school went there; I don't know whether most of them were Episcopalians or not. We were, but most of their parents wanted, as my parents did, for us to go from high school to a small college first. And, oh, I think all the girls I knew got scholarships because we'd had at least a B average if not more, and poor St. Mary's then was in a financial predicament. Almost no Episcopalians in Dallas sent their daughters there. I don't know why. I don't remember any boarders there except Bird and Helen Bird, her roommate, though I know there must have been more.

G: Do you know where she lived? Did she live in a dormitory?

S: Yes, it was on campus. She was a boarder at St. Mary's. It was a room--I don't remember. I guess it was a separate dormitory, and the room was all right. It was just a small dormitory anyway, and St. Mary's was next to St. Matthew's, a cathedral, where a lot of people went, but almost none of them sent their daughters to St. Mary's.

As I say, Bird roomed with Helen, whose father was a rector at Brenham. I got to know both of them quite well. Helen, as Bird has probably told you, hasn't been doing very well for the past ten years. She's had a terribly difficult life.

G: What was St. Mary's like when you were there?

S: I liked it. I liked being in a small school, and I liked knowing everybody there. And I think the faculty was fairly good. There were

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no men teachers that I remember. We had a Father Lewis [who] was the chaplain. Though he was very young, we all called him Father. It was High Church. I thought the women teachers good--not great but good. Definitely not exciting.

G: Was there an emphasis there at the college, say, either Episcopal teachings or drama?

S: It was assumed that everybody went to services, but there was no pressure to become an Episcopalian. We just had the usual church service and no preaching. I think most of the girls at St. Mary's were Episcopalian. If they weren't, many became Episcopalians because they liked the ritual.

G: But as far as the school's focus, would you say it was theology or English or drama?

S: No, it was not theology. I couldn't say what the focus was, unless it was to keep St. Mary's going. There really weren't many students to pay expenses.

We did have drama. I remember two plays that we put on there. One was The Importance of Being Earnest--done very well, I thought. I believe that Bird was in that as a butler! I know Helen Bird was excellent as Lady Bracknell, and one of my other good friends, Harriet North, was charming as Cecily. Since it was a girls' school, girls had to take the men's parts. Pretty well, most of the time.

But the play I remember the best, because Bird and Helen Bird and I were all in it, is the one we put on before graduation, and that was

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Twelfth Night. Bird played Sir Toby Belch, I believe, and Helen Bird, Malvolio, and I, the Fool.

G: Who would attend these plays?

S: Parents and friends of the students, in general. I don't remember any having been advertised. Twelfth Night may have been mentioned since it was outdoors, the audience looked sizeable and since the weather was good everybody had a good time. I remember I turned cartwheels as the jester, which the audience enjoyed as much as I did. Bird and Helen Bird and I all liked the parts we had, and outdid ourselves that night.

G: It seems that one interesting contrast is that while Mrs. Johnson was basically shy, that she perhaps had less shyness when she was playing a role because she was assuming a different personality.

S: Oh, that's true, that's true. That's true with most of us.

G: Is that right?

S: Oh, yes. The saying that most actors are better at playing parts completely unlike themselves is true although some people who play themselves, particularly in movies, become stars. But in general, I think, you let yourself go a lot more when you play a character quite different from yourself.

G: Well, what was Mrs. Johnson like as a student there at St. Mary's?

S: She was like she's always been really, I think. She didn't like the school's being so restrictive, which it was. She didn't like the fact that there were no men around, and there certainly weren't. But she did like her classes. I don't think that she thought they were as

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good as I thought they were. We weren't in the same classes, in general, because she happened to be a year ahead of me. But the chief things she didn't like about St. Mary's was that it was so small and that she had very little freedom, really, to go anywhere or do anything. She couldn't stay up late, and there was no opportunity to meet many people other than those that were in the school. She had no relatives there. That's the reason she enjoyed coming to our house and our home became her second home.

G: Well, was she shy?

S: She didn't seem especially shy to me, certainly no shyer than I was. I guess we all were, most St. Mary's girls were rather shy. We'd been kind of--well--protectively brought up. But I certainly never thought of Bird as especially shy. She was more outgoing than I was. And we almost immediately became friends, so there certainly was no hesitation on either one of our parts to, you know, be outgoing with the other. We liked each other from the beginning, as far as I remember, because we liked to do the same things. And Bird just loved coming to my house, chiefly or partly because of me, of course, but also because she loved to be with the family. She was just crazy about my mother and father and very fond of my two brothers and my sister. And always was. She liked all of us and we all liked her. It meant a lot to her to have a family nearby, and it meant a lot to my family for me to have a good friend that I could feel so comfortable with all the time.

G: Do you have any idea how many students there were there?

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- S: Now, Bird might remember, but I surely don't. All I know is that there weren't many. About twenty or so, I think.
- G: Did you have to wear uniforms?
- S: No, thank God. But nobody dressed up much. There was no occasion to. But of course we wore dresses--not slacks or jeans.
- G: I gather Aunt Effie, Mrs. Johnson's Aunt Effie, was in Dallas for a while during the two years that she was there.
- S: I don't remember meeting Aunt Effie in Dallas. I remember her vividly from Austin days, however, but I don't really remember having met her in Dallas. I liked Aunt Effie. She was a very sweet, cultured lady and absolutely devoted to Bird. She was, in a way, I think, a woman's libber in her time.
- G: How so?
- S: I think, I have gathered, that she did not want Bird to marry Lyndon. She didn't think he was good enough for her, she thought that Bird on her own could get anywhere she wanted and that she could be a terrific success in whatever she did, and since Bird was taking journalism, she could be, you know, like what's her name with the Washington Post. And in that way Aunt Effie certainly was ahead of her time, I think. Her dream was not of Bird marrying and having a family. It was for Bird to have a real career. She was sure that Bird could succeed at anything she attempted. I think Aunt Effie might have liked to have had a career herself.
- G: I've heard that Aunt Effie was not practical, however, that--

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S: Well, I don't know about that. I just knew her as Aunt Effie--and what was the nickname Bird had for her?

G: Way.

S: What?

G: Was it Way or Wee, I guess.

G: I think it was Wee.

S: Wee. No, I remember it was Waah.

G: Well, another thing about her that I gather was true was that she was a nature lover.

S: Oh, Bird, I was going to say--which one are you talking about, Aunt Effie or Bird or both?

G: Both.

S: That, you see, is something else I didn't know about Aunt Effie. I did know Bird was a nature lover because that was one of the things we had in common from the beginning.

G: Well, elaborate on that if you will.

S: I had intended to. When Bird would come to our house often we would go out and play golf; so did my brother Davis. Sometimes we'd go horseback riding, or we'd take long walks, we didn't get out in the woods much there because Dallas didn't, and as a matter of fact still doesn't, have many real woods. But Bird and I both liked to be outdoors, and if we had a choice of indoors or outdoors, we'd choose outdoors. And, of course, that's remained true.

My family was a great believer in outdoors and walking and--oh I remember--this goes on for as long as I've known Bird--her sharing our

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love for picnics. We went on lots of picnics, and at the University of Texas, I remember--it's okay to shift to the University of Texas?

G: Yes.

S: When we had any spare Saturday or some time in the afternoon off, we'd go on picnics--I remember one little place--I asked Bird if you could still go there and she said no--it was Onion Creek. We'd take a picnic lunch and go somewhere or other often where we could swim as well as picnic. I remember Bird's sandwiches were usually cream cheese and pineapple. I don't know what I brought, but Bird's cream cheese and pineapple sandwiches. They were good.

Let's see. Oh, yes, besides her interest in outdoor activities, she, like all my family, loved reading, and one reason she liked to come over to our house was that the walls were lined with books. She liked the books and she liked the relaxed atmosphere. I know my father, who was an ardent golfer and who had a place for everything, however strange it might be, used to put his golf balls on top of candlesticks in the living room, so that he always knew where they were. So anytime he wanted to play golf and wanted two good golf balls, he could get two off the candle holders, which he did. And my mother didn't object.

And let's see. Well, to this day, Bird has always asked about everybody in the family. She's kept up with them through me. She's kept up with Lois and Bev [Sheffield]--Lois pretty much since she lives in Austin--though I'm not sure that she knows that Lois is now a high school counselor and has gotten more scholarships for the seniors

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than anybody ever before and more than ten times the number of scholarships of the senior counselors who preceded her. The high school is LBJ High School, that's why I make that point.

Bird always asked about Jack, my brother, who's at UCLA still and who's written a lot of books starting with The Epic of Latin America, then Mexico, Spain, and then on Greece, one on Italy. I think Bird has read them--I know she asked Jack for his books, and I believe he sent them all to her, I'm not sure. And my brother Davis who taught for a while at TCU and then in South Carolina, Bird and I used to double-date with. Sometimes she'd have a date with my brother Davis and I'd have one with one of my boyfriends, Stanley Jones, usually. She always asked about Davis and his family. And she continued to ask about and to see Mother and Father as long as they were alive. My father died considerably sooner than my mother, but then Bird kept up with my mother over the years.

G: You mentioned that at St. Mary's there were no men around, or no boys. Was there a boys' school with which you would have teas?

S: No. Not like Randolph-Macon or Sweet Briar where--or women's colleges, Vassar, Wellesley and Smith and so on. No, there was not. SMU, but--

G: But you didn't have mixers with them or anything?

S: No, the administration at St. Mary's did nothing of that sort, made no attempt. Perhaps they had in the past, but they certainly didn't when Bird and I were there. A shame really. I was doing very little

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dating at that time then myself so I wasn't much help to Bird except with my brother. Yes, St. Mary's was dull.

G: Do you know why Mrs. Johnson decided to go to the University of Texas after that?

S: There was never any doubt in her mind but that she wanted to go to the University of Texas. She would have liked to have gone there as a freshman, I'm sure.

G: Really?

S: It was then, as I think it still is, you know the University, and Bird longed to go there. It was her father's decision to send her to St. Mary's.

G: I had some indication that he went up to St. Mary's, either when she first got there or before she got there, and that was one of his rare trips away from Karnack, to look over the campus. Do you remember that?

S: I wasn't there then, I'm sure. You see, I was there the second year. I met Bird's father when I visited Bird in Karnack. That's one thing I do remember very, very vividly--I went there several times--is going to Karnack and meeting Mr. Taylor and the boyfriends that Bird had there. I remember one particular beau, Bo Boehringer, I thought he was just charming, but Bird said he never would amount to anything. Anyway, he had this beautifully slow, southern, East Texas-Louisiana speech, and that just completely captivated me.

What I remember most about it--part of it's driving there and as you got close, the red dirt, the dusty roads, we'd have to put up the

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windows to the car as we drove along. If any cars came along--and there weren't many cars--you'd put them up. Bird would say to cover the windows up and if we didn't hurry, we'd be covered with red dust. And I remember listening to the car radio then, and the only thing you could get, I always associate it when I hear it now with Bird and driving to Karnack, around Karnack--is country-western or western music--the first time I'd heard any. And it just seemed to be exactly right for that time and place. You know, it's just suited for driving along a red, dusty road in the country.

G: Were you still at St. Mary's the first time you went to Karnack with her?

S: Oh, yes. I went there most when I was at St. Mary's. You see, she came to my house a lot and when she wanted to go home, she'd ask me to go home with her, and often Helen Bird would go, too.

G: What was her father like? Do you remember?

S: He was very tall, big--not fat, but big--absolutely, obviously absolutely devoted to Bird, but very, very busy. Unlike my father, he wasn't at home much, and he was not what I would call conversational. I didn't get to know him except as Bird's father. I didn't know him as a personality as I think Bird got to know my father, because Bird's father had breakfast early in the morning and then would leave, come home for dinner, but then after dinner almost as soon as we'd finished eating, he'd go to bed because he got up so early the next morning. But what came through, nevertheless, was that anything Bird wanted to do, he was glad for her to do because--and this was the way he

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he differed from my father--he knew she would never do anything that he would object to. He had absolute confidence in her common sense, of which she had a great deal even way back then. I've never had much.

Some of the things Bird's father let her do, but my father wouldn't let me do, which I thought were great, weren't dangerous around Karnack, but would have been in Dallas, such as standing on a running board of a car--cars had running boards then--to sit on the hood as the car drove along. That to me was something because my father would never have let me do [that] either, even in the country. He was always afraid something might happen to me. But Mr. Taylor didn't think anything would happen, it never had, probably never would and never did. So, whatever Bird wanted to do, she usually did. Because she never wanted to do much that her father would have disapproved of. She never wanted much money or many clothes even at the University, she wasn't demanding, and her father knew it.

So, all I can say about him as a person is that he obviously adored Bird, even though he spent little time with her. It was clear that she was his favorite. She had two older brothers, and one of them was living close by--Tom, Tommy, Thomas Jefferson Taylor, Jr.--the other one, Tony, was in New Mexico at the time. But Bird was, to coin a phrase, the apple of his eye. I remember his--do you want to ask me something?--or shall I tell you about his store?

G: Yes, tell me about the store.

S: After I'd come to visit Bird there, we decided to go picnicking, to

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take a picnic lunch. And that was the first time I had visited Mr. Taylor's--

(Interruption)

First time I had visited the store, it was terrifically exciting to me to enter it, because the whole place was different from anything I'd ever seen and the smell was so special. You know, there was fertilizer, which really doesn't smell bad when it's in the sacks, and then there was tobacco smell, and then the smell of the--he had mostly clothes for the farmers around, and there's a special smell to overalls, you know--overalls and gingham dresses. And in the different things he had--mints, candies, cheeses, and the whole aroma. . . . Even at the back of the store--first time I'd ever seen that except, I think, in Norman Rockwell pictures--there were men around a table sitting playing dominoes.

G: Really?

S: Yes. Dressed in overalls and really playing dominoes, which to me was a glimpse of a rural America I had never seen. It just enchanted me.

We went to the general store to pick up our lunch, and Bird--I remember how this impressed me--her father said, "Just take anything you want, Bird," so she went all around the store picking up things for us to have and I thought, "Golly, how great just to go in there and get anything you want." Well, all we got, I think were crackers and cheese and sardines and some kind of, oh, round candy that you could suck for a long time, and cold drinks, that's all we got. But I thought it was marvelous--Bird could just go pick up here and pick up

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there, and say "I'll have some of this and some of that" and then--
imagine!--you didn't have to pay a penny for anything. That was
great.

Then we went out on the banks of Caddo Lake and had lunch.
Played honeymoon bridge with some greasy cards, and I thought the
greasy cards added a lot to the fun. I don't know whether it was that
time or another time we went swimming at Caddo Lake, because as you
know it's close to Karnack, and we skinnydipped. We were by our-
selves, you know, and [it was] the first time I'd ever swam without
anything on, and oh, my, the great feeling! It's so much easier and
you feel so smooth as you go in the water. But soon after I'd gotten
in the water, I saw a little snake and a huge something, and I said,
"Bird, that looks to me like an alligator," and she said, "It is, but
don't worry, if you don't bother it, it won't bother you." And sure
enough, it didn't bother us at all, and he never had and I'm sure he
never would, because later I swam in a lake in Florida that had
alligators and they never bothered anybody. In fact they seemed to
like human company.

G: Anything else on your visit to Karnack?

S: Yes. I remember there was a friend of hers there, and I've been
trying to think of her last name. Her first name is Dorris.

G: Powell.

S: That's right, Dorris Powell. Often we'd go over to Dorris's, and it
seems to me that Dorris did all the reading--I'm not sure--but anyway,
there'd be something to read, and we'd go over there and spend the

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afternoon, and either we took turns reading or Dorris read it--seems to me she read it all. Mainly Saturday Evening Post serials by Clarice Beulegen Kelland I believe. But we had real good times with Dorris, and then she would join us on, oh, different times in the evening. I don't remember what her husband did, but he seemed to be awful busy, too, so I don't remember him much at all. I'm not sure that we went out together at night any, but I think we did. A lot of the afternoons we spent together.

G: Dorris Powell, I understand, would serve as a chaperone on occasion.

S: That might very well have been, but she didn't chaperone us when we were dating there, and we did, and she didn't go with us. Maybe she did it at other times or earlier before I knew Bird.

Oh, yes, and something else about that. Bird's house outside of Karnack was called the Brick House, which is what they'd called my great-grandfather's plantation, obviously because both of them were made of brick. One thing that interested me, too, was that though they had running water and electricity and everything, they had a well on the porch. Just before you went into the house, there was this well, and it was the first well water I'd ever tasted. You could dip the bucket down, you know really, and get a drink of absolutely delicious water. So I always wanted to drink that water instead of what was in the house. And the electricity was run by a Delco battery, which had that special sound I had never heard before either. And in the mornings I'd be awakened--I got to [where I] used to like the sound of the Delco battery--I'd be awakened by the sound of the

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guineas. They'd circle around the house in the morning going "pot tracke pot tracke." I didn't like their sound! Those guineas, they'd see to it you didn't sleep late. And the Taylors had real cream, you know, real thick cream from a cow. But Mr. Taylor liked condensed milk better, I remember that. That really surprised me.

G: Well, let's talk some more about Mrs. Johnson at St. Mary's. Do you recall the courses that she liked and did especially well in?

S: She did well in all of them. As far as I know, she had an A average.

G: She took French, I think.

S: Yes, and liked it. I think history, too.

G: Do you remember a Mrs. Boyce [?]?--

S: No.

G: --one of the teachers?

S: The only ones I remember are Mrs. Alford for English and May Davis-Moore for what we called "Expression" and Drama. She hyphenated her name. We thought that affected.

G: What did Mrs. Johnson want to have as her career at this point?

S: I wouldn't be surprised but what she at that time already had decided she'd like to go into journalism. As I said, I know she liked history.

G: Did she?

S: Yes. I know she always liked history. I think that even then she was pretty sure she wanted to go into either journalism or history, and she did both later on.

G: Were some of the Dallas students at St. Mary's more society conscious than she was?

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S: Some of them were, yes, but most weren't snobs. I had some good friends among them, and I'm sure Bird did, too. But we saw few of them much outside of class. There was one girl particularly [that] Bird and I both saw a lot of, Harriet North. She used to go horseback riding with us, and she'd come over to my house a lot when Bird was there or I'd ask her as well as Bird. She was a day student like me. And we got to be very good friends, the three of us, and as I say, I already knew some of the day students so I saw them more than Bird did. There were two or three girls at St. Mary's who were very society-minded, but they didn't make anything of it that I recall.

G: Were there any social cleavages in evidence, though, between those that came from--

S: If there were, I didn't notice.

G: And you don't think she did?

S: With her being a boarder, if there were any boarders like that I guess she would have, but I didn't know--I cannot even remember any other boarders except Helen Bird. There were some wealthy girls, but I didn't think they were cliquish. Two I liked were Johnetta Woods and Puss Newsome [?]. I've heard from Puss since then. Johnetta married and moved to Mexico.

G: How about the Dallas Little Theater? Did you ever go to any of their productions or plays outside the campus?

S: I'm sure we did, but I can't say that I remember any plays at the Dallas Little Theater. Oh, I believe we did see Liliom there. You

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know they had good touring show companies then and every time a play came to Dallas, we went.

G: Well, now, she as a boarder was confined more to the campus than you.

S: Much more. And I don't know what the curfew hour was, but I imagine it was pretty early. However, I'm sure they allowed her to stay up to see a play.

G: Could she sign out, say, and stay with you for an evening or how--

S: Yes, I'm sure she could. She'd remember that a lot more vividly than I, because since I wasn't a boarder, the restrictions didn't bother me. But Bird must have been allowed to, because she certainly spent the night with me sometimes, and we did things together over the weekend.

G: In April, 1930 she rode a plane to Austin to look at the campus and see about going there. Do you remember that she flew down there in an airplane, which I guess was then not that common?

S: No, I don't remember that. I don't think I was at St. Mary's then. But I wouldn't necessarily remember it. I just knew she always wanted to go to the University.

G: Do you recall if her father consented to her going to the University now that she'd gone to St. Mary's?

S: Oh, I'm sure that he did or she wouldn't have gone.

G. Really?

S: Now that I think about it, I'm not absolutely sure. I don't think she would have wanted to go against her father's wishes, but I think that she may have had to persuade him.

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G: Well, anything else on her at St. Mary's?

S: Let me see if I've got anything down here.

Oh, yes, this is silly. I remember the school--well, you don't call it exactly a school song--anyway, the one we used to sing about St. Mary's, which is a giveaway. "Root-a-toot-toot, root-a-toot-toot, we're the girls from the Institute. We don't smoke and we don't chew and we don't go with boys who do. Our class won the Bible!"

Oh, I think we played tennis some. Golf, too. That goes back to those days.

G: Well, how did St. Mary's change her, if at all? Did it--

S: Since I didn't know her before she went there, I couldn't tell you.

G: Well, from the time you knew her?

S: All I know is--now perhaps you're right in saying she was shy at first--after I'd gotten to know her she was much more outgoing. No doubt about that. But I don't really think that had much to do with St. Mary's.

G: Well, anything else that this experience might have meant to her?

S: I think then was the time she became an Episcopalian. I'm not sure, but I think so. But that's the only thing I can say was a lasting influence; I think she already had established good study habits, which some girls acquire in a small school like St. Mary's. I guess that's the reason some parents sent their daughters there. But Bird already had those. So the only thing I know that St. Mary's possibly did, other than to influence her to become an Episcopalian, was to

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make her all the more eager to spread her wings and to attend a co-ed institution.

Let's see if there's anything more. Talked about the visits to the ranch house.

Oh, yes, there's one thing about when she was at St. Mary's, more about our house though and about our family rather than about St. Mary's. My mother always kept fruit and candy around for anybody to have anytime they wanted, and there was always something on the library table and something on the dining room table. And Bird was very fond of all fruits, grapes and cherries especially, and upon seeing a bowl of cherries, she would exclaim with delight, "Oh, you've got 'cheyz'!" And Mother and Father loved the way Bird said 'cheyz,' and always tried to keep some on hand. And I mention this "cheyz" particularly because now Bird doesn't talk like that, but we thought it was charming. And I admire Bird for the way she has worked on her speech. She now has just a trace of so-called southern dialect. Bird had a good, good--well, she had incentive, and I think she speaks beautifully. I loved the way she handled that program on TV not long ago--I think it was Dan Rather--well, it was on the presidency. I think she handled herself extremely well.

G: That was the NBC interview, I think.

S: Who was the interviewer, then, if it wasn't Dan Rather?

G: Was it David Brinkley?

S: Yes, David Brinkley. That's who it was. I just automatically thought of Dan Rather.

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G: Well, let's talk about her at the University of Texas now.

S: Okay. Bird loved it from the moment she got on the campus, I think. We were exchanging letters when I was still at Converse--I went there for a year after St. Mary's--and she said, you know, in effect, "Come on in, the water's fine. You'll love it." And so, the next year I did. By then I too had tired of being with girls all the time.

We began where we had left off, and we still enjoyed a lot of the same things we had done in Dallas, though with a lot more boys to do them with. We still went on picnics, and, oh, Bird was then as she is now, crazy about bluebonnets and wildflowers, and we loved to go on long walks in the woods and still loved the picnics and the cookouts, you know, all of that. And loved Barton Springs, sunning and swimming there. We'd double-date and triple-date very often. With Cecille-- then Harrison now Marshall.

She was very--a lot more than Cecille and I--conscientious about her studies. She wanted to have a good time, and she sure had a good time, but she never, never neglected being prepared for a class the next day or for an exam. And Cecille and I--Cecille was her roommate for a while--were not that good. But Bird was, and she was punctual, extremely punctual. Cecille and I weren't--especially Cecille. But if Bird was supposed to be someplace at a certain time, why, she'd get there on time, something that neither Cecille and I managed well. She was very well-organized then, as she is now, for class or whatever. But we did a lot of double and triple-dating. We went to Mexico one time. I remember the first time, it was in my--my uncle had lent

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my cousin and me a Stutz. He thought that would be a nice idea for us to share a Stutz, which of course was a very good car. But my cousin used it more than I did, because I had already bought an old car, as I'll tell you about later.

One time a friend of ours who worked at a filling station--I got to know all the filling station people, because I had a series of old cars--we found out he was from Laredo and would like to go to Nuevo Laredo. So I said, "Well, let's go!" So I told Bird, and she wanted to go, and she had a date that would like to go. So then I talked to my cousin and asked her if she'd like to go down with us, and she said no, so I took the car for that Saturday I guess it was. We started off early in the morning, but that car which was supposed to be absolutely superb had engine trouble about a third of the way down. And we were there at whatever place it was--I don't think it was Cotulla. It was someplace, seems closer than that--I don't remember. But anyway, it took them a long, long, long time to fix it, and we spent the whole afternoon there while they worked on the car, but they did fix it, thank God. Then we proceeded on our way, but it was getting awfully late by then. By the time we got to the bridge at Laredo, if we went across we couldn't get back in time, they wouldn't let us come back. So we had a hasty consultation and decided, well, we were there, so we'd just go on across the bridge and stay up all night. Which we did. And the first place we went--I hope it's still there, but I'm sure it isn't--was a very swanky place. It was the Bohemian Club. Do you know whether they still have that?

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G: I don't know.

S: I hope they do. It was the nicest place, the best nightclub in town. And they had these colored lights that circle, revolve, and you could dance, you know, have something to drink and stay as long a time as you had money to pay for drinks. In fact, we stayed longer than our money lasted. Stayed, in fact, until it closed. I think that was about three o'clock in the morning, maybe later. Until it closed we stayed there, somehow managed to stay there. The boys didn't have much money and Bird and I had brought very little, but we managed.

So then we had to spend the rest of the night trying to find other places, so we went gradually down the scale. It got later and later, or earlier and earlier, whichever way you want to look at it. And the last place we went to as dawn was breaking was a hole in the wall, a cantina. It had one pianist, a Mexican boy who was, oh, in his twenties, early twenties, I guess, and I think the bartender, I don't remember the bartender at all. I remember the pianist, because he was crazy about American music. So he played American music for us almost the entire time, and we would stagger around--because we were practically dead on our feet--the tiny floor as we tried to stay awake. The pieces I remember the most were "St. Louis Blues" and "Minnie the Moocher." That Mexican boy played them over and over.

Then we closed the place down and left with undying friendship exchanged between the pianist and all of us because he was dying to come to Texas and wanted to go to the University. I don't think he had much of a chance. Anyway, we left just being very good friends

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and by that time, I think, some cafes were open so we could have some coffee and breakfast and then started back to Austin. Since we were young, it didn't seem difficult at all. After that--oh, I had never had a drink before I went to Mexico and I said that I never would--well, I mean, of anything other than--well, yes, I had had beer--I would never have a drink except in Mexico, because it was legal there, you see, and it wasn't here. So that made it perfectly all right.

But anyway, soon we wanted to go again, naturally. So we went several times after that with different boys, particularly one I know Bird remembers fondly and I do, too, Wayne Livergood, who had a new Chevrolet. It had a rumble seat, and Bird was usually in the front with Wayne and I was in the back with Bubba Hill. We went down there several times with them, and it's a wonder to me that we ever got home safely. Though he was an excellent driver, as were the other boys we went with, sometimes we had three couples in the car. They were all excellent drivers, but my God they went fast! But with terrific reflexes and we never came even close to having any kind of an accident.

G: Now who went on the first trip, do you recall?

S: On the first trip, as I recall it, were Charlie Warren and Bubba Hill. I think there were just the two couples of us. I think that's the way it was, but I'm not positive about it. I remember Charlie, because he was the one who was from Laredo. He could speak more than university Spanish, you know, he had grown up next to the border. He knew how the Mexicans were, and he knew just what to do and how to do it and

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warned us to be very, very careful about anything we said. Not to take offense at anything because if so, we could be thrown in jail and nobody'd ever know for a long, long time, if ever. After that, we went mostly with Wayne in his convertible.

G: What was his last name?

S: Livergood. He had curly blond hair. Very attractive and quite well off. So he usually could take care of us if the rest of us ran out of money. Very generous, sweet.

G: I gather another activity would be to rent horses at Steiner's and go riding.

S: We used to go--yes, we. . . horseback riding. We went up--I had taken horseback riding, in fact I did take horseback riding here, I think it was my first year, and got crazy about it. Ride then up Mount Bonnell right out in the country. Bird and Cecille and I used to ride first by ourselves and then later on--well, maybe [Hiram] King. I don't remember riding with him, maybe we did. Did she tell you about Mr. King?

G: Yes.

S: Bird met him through Gene Boehringer; I think she wasn't Gene Lasseter yet--he took a paternal interest in us. He met Bird first and then he met Cecille and me through Bird, so he'd ask the three of us to go with him. We'd ride out all around, chiefly, as I recall around Mount Bonnell and then stop and have supper with Mr. King. He'd have it all prepared for us, I guess he'd ordered it. Then he'd fix us his own special Tom Collins, which were delicious. Now, most everybody mixes

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them with the mix, but he did it all with lime juice and so on, the first Tom Collins I'd ever had, and then--for the summertime--it wasn't really summertime, but summertime it seemed in Austin--Mr. King's Tom Collins were absolutely delicious.

G: Do you remember Captain Aldridge?

S: Yes. Yes. I remember Captain Aldridge. One of the old Rangers. Bird and I went there to visit him several times, and I remember his showing us some of his--what do you call it?--I think it was erotica. Anyway--

G: Pornographic books?

S: For those days, anyway. Expurgated Mother Goose rhymes that could make them seem very, very, very naughty. The other thing I remember about him besides his tales of the Texas Rangers--and I remember this more vividly than his tales--is our picnics with him. And I remember Captain Aldridge gumming his food; he didn't have any teeth. He said he didn't need them, that he could gum his food just as well as anybody else could chew. So we sat by wherever it was outdoors under the shade of some big trees and he had sandwiches and such and Captain Aldridge gummed it all.

I don't know how Bird had gotten to know him.

G: Do you recall her pledging Alpha Phi sorority?

S: Yes, I do, and it's the one time that her father put his foot down. I do remember that.

G: What were his reasons?

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S: You know, I have never known. There are one or two reasons, I think. I don't know whether he didn't want her to do it because he thought that it was undemocratic for her to belong to a sorority or because he thought it was wasted money. I really don't know.

G: Did you belong to a sorority?

G: I didn't here. I didn't go through rush here. As a matter of fact, the Alpha Phis asked me one time, among others, and I said, "No, I'm not going to join a sorority." Oh, I had belonged to a club at Converse. And I did not like that idea, and my family--I didn't think I should afford it either. And I remember the girls saying, "Well, we haven't asked you to join yet," and I said, "I know that, but I don't want you to go to the trouble to invite me to anything because I'm not going to join." Well, anyway, I did later at the University of North Carolina, and I remember vividly what Bird wrote me because I thought it was the perfect thing for her to say. She wrote, "Oh, Emily, what a jeune fille thing for you to do!" Then I explained to her quickly that I did it because any daughter I was sure I would have could pledge it too if she wanted to, being a legacy meant you were automatically asked. That's true no longer. But I did join Pi Phi at the University of North Carolina, and I did think, though, that Bird was exactly right--it was certainly a jeune fille thing to do, only I was thinking as a prospective mother, and at UNC it didn't make any difference. Here it did. At that time it was quite bad, the attitude about belonging to sororities.

G: Here at the University?

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S: Yes, non-sorority girls didn't "rate" as much as those in sororities--sometimes were snubbed. That was not true at Carolina--it didn't make any difference whether you belonged or not, so you could join a sorority with an easy conscience. It didn't mean you thought you were better than anyone else.

G: Why do you think she pledged Alpha Phi?

S: I do know why, because our friend Helen Bird was an Alpha Phi at the University of Oklahoma and loved the Alpha Phis there, and there were two Alpha Phis at Texas I remember in particular who were extremely nice and attractive. I don't remember the names of either one of them. One of them was a beautiful blonde who married a millionaire. The one I got to know the best was a pretty, vivacious brunette, but I don't remember her name. But it was because of Helen Bird that Bird was especially interested in the Alpha Phis at Texas. And she liked them and they liked her.

G: And she decided after talking to her father that--

S: I think he just plain told her that if she joined he'd take her out of school.

G: Was it a disappointment to her, do you think?

S: I think initially it was, yes, I'm sure it was initially. But she sure didn't take it hard. She was sorry after she hung up the phone after her father laid down the law. I imagine that she, you know, presented her side of the case and he said no, that was something that he just would not permit. I don't know whether he put it that strongly, but probably he did, and Bird just said, okay. So she broke her pledge.

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We thought her father was unfair, because one of Bird's cousins was in a fraternity.

G: Winston Taylor?

S: Yes, Winston. And I didn't think it was fair that he was allowed to join a fraternity and Bird wasn't. I don't think Bird thought it was fair either, except of course Winston's father wasn't Bird's father, he was Bird's [uncle]--Winston was a cousin. Nevertheless, I think Bird's father was unreasonable, but it didn't make all that much difference to us after a little while. I know Bird wasn't angry--I think probably disappointed, something like that. I never saw her get very angry.

G: Anything on her interest in the theatre while she was at UT?

S: Oh, yes, we went to everything. All the Curtain Club's plays and plays put on by touring companies. Anytime there was a play, we went. Once we went over to San Antonio with Gene Lasseter to see Of Thee I Sing. And, oh, we just thought that was the greatest thing we had ever seen. And one of the funniest. It was a good production.

G: I guess Bird lived at the Matthews boarding house. Did you live there as well?

S: I lived there my last year at Texas. At first I lived in a boarding house recommended by a friend of my mother's whose daughter had stayed there and liked it.

G: Tell me about the Matthews boarding house, if you will.

S: Mrs. Matthews--I believe she was a widow--was French, very frugal, very neat, just left you alone. By the time I came she had great

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respect for Bird, and so any friend of Bird's had a pretty easy time. Mrs. M. never imposed on your privacy. She just figured that you were old enough to be able to take care of yourself.

One thing she did for me that I remember was when a boyfriend of mine killed a deer--I'd chickened out on going deer hunting with him--and he brought me some venison anyway. Mrs. Matthews was overjoyed--she was a great cook, and she fixed a venison stew that was some of the best eating I've ever had. That's the only time I remember Mrs. Matthews doing something particularly nice. But she enjoyed it, too. She liked to cook and was proud of her skill.

G: How many girls stayed there?

S: Oh, not many. Let's see, Bird and me and Cecille and there was one girl who was an architect. I think she had only two or three rooms to rent.

G: Now, Mrs. Johnson wrote for the Daily Texan, I understand. Do you recall that activity?

S: I know she wrote for it, but I'd have to say I don't remember the articles she wrote. I know she was a great admirer of two of the journalism professors--DeWitt Reddick in particular. I told Lois, my sister, when she came here and majored in journalism to be sure to get him, because Bird had thought he was so great. I think Bird admired another one named Thompson.

G: Maybe so.

S: I think it was Thompson.

G: Was she a good writer?

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- S: Oh, yes. Bird's always been a good writer. She could do what I have never been able to do--that's to write succinctly and clearly.
- G: I have a note here that says that Mrs. Johnson desired to become a drama critic for a New York newspaper.
- S: That doesn't surprise me at all. It would be combining two of her greatest interests--drama and journalism. I think she would have been a good drama critic, too. I tried to get her to open a newspaper here after she and Lyndon came back to Austin. I thought it'd be a great thing, and she could have been the managing editor. That was before the LBJ Library, I guess. Anyway, I thought she could be the managing editor and Liz Carpenter would write for her, and she could find the best people in the country and we'd have a great newspaper here to compete with what was then the one paper, the American, the Austin American. She could have done that, she could still do it. I mean with her ability, she could do it.
- G: Anything else on Gene Boehringer?
- S: Gene was from Karnack and had known Bird, I'm sure, almost ever since she was born. She was a great friend of Bird's most of the time Bird was growing up, although Gene was older, considerably older, I think, than Bird, but Gene's sister [Emma], I believe, was one of Bird's classmates at Marshall, and Gene's brother was the Bo Boehringer whom Bird used to go with and who I thought was so charming. Gene and Bird stayed friends all the time I was in school here. Gene at that time was working for the Railroad Commission, and so she knew a lot of interesting people. So through Gene, Bird met a whole lot of--well,

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she met Mr. King for one thing. He was in oil; he was vice president of Sinclair. And she met--I don't remember the names of the others, but I got to know them off and on--one of them was in Dallas, so when Bird came to Dallas, she'd see whoever that was as well as me and my family. It was through Gene that Bird met Lyndon, I believe.

I remember one of the things that I thought was great was visiting the just discovered Longhorn Caverns and it was Gene, since she was connected with the Railroad Commission, who arranged for Bird and me to go. I don't remember Gene going but it seems to me just Bird and I drove down to that place, is it Bastrop?--to see the caverns before they were officially opened. And they had, well, they called them convicts then, working opening the caverns. We were met by an official, I suppose, and then our guide took us around and we went into the caverns--and although I have claustrophobia, those caverns didn't bother me, because just part of them were open. And it was a real treat, particularly as we knew we were among the very first to be able to enter the Longhorn Caverns. They were beautiful.

The thing that impressed me the most after that was having lunch with the convicts. They were all delighted to have some ladies with them, and I was pleased with the lunch they had. It was a very good, substantial meal--maybe there were too many carbohydrates--they had both beans and potatoes, too, I think. But it was a good lunch, and we went down the line with the convicts to pick up our lunch on trays, and we sat at a big table with some of them. In fact, we played cards later with one of the young ones and had a good time. He was quite

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nice. I never did find out what he was in there for, but the one who had served as our guide was there because he had killed his wife, but the man in charge said it was under extenuating circumstances because the man had caught his wife in bed with somebody else, so they didn't really think that killing his wife was a terrible crime. So he was allowed special privileges such as taking us around. He was extremely nice to us and even after we found out that he'd killed his wife, we weren't the least bit concerned. And the young man we played cards with we liked a lot. I don't know what crime he'd committed.

G: Was Mrs. Johnson interested in politics while she was a student?

S: As a journalist, yes--maybe more informed than especially interested. Even then Bird had a mind of her own as regards politics whereas I was still echoing my parents' opinions.

G: Would you have categorized her as a liberal or a conservative or a--?

S: She was a whole lot more liberal than I was.

G: Really?

S: Yes. And a whole lot more tolerant. I used to think then that anything was either black or white, and people were either good or bad. Bird was never that way. Never. And I can remember one time I was talking about somebody that she liked, and I said, "Bird, how can you like so-and-so because he's married but he's playing around with lots of other women?" And she said, "Yes, but that's just one side of him, but. . . ." and then she told me the reasons she liked him--and they were good reasons--I began to like him, too.

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And I can remember in early days when Roosevelt was running, and after he first got elected, and my father, like so many, unfortunately, wasn't for him at all. Certainly my uncle wasn't. My father was quite conservative though I didn't realize he was unduly so at that time, I just thought he knew the answer to practically everything. But anyway, he was anti-Roosevelt in the early days. Bird certainly was not. And I remember soon after Lyndon was elected to Congress, we were talking and I confessed I really didn't admire Roosevelt, and she said that was all right, because so many of her very good friends in Washington held different views; then said, "If we like them, we like them." And Lyndon was that way, too.

I didn't become really pro-Roosevelt until the last year I was at the University of North Carolina when Mrs. Roosevelt came down to see The Lost Colony, the historical outdoor show about Sir Walter Raleigh that I had a minor part in. And Mrs. Roosevelt came down to Roanoke Island and rode down to the play after she'd got, I guess, to Elizabeth City or Norfolk. She rode down to the theatre with the CCC boys, who played most of the crowd scenes and helped with scenery or whatever. Mrs. Roosevelt came down on their truck to see the show instead of riding with the director, who later became my husband. Then after the show--this is what made me really change my mind about Mrs. Roosevelt and all she and FDR stood for--she came backstage after the show was over, spoke with the leading actors, Sir Walter Raleigh, Eleanor Dare, and John White, the lead dancer and so on. Then she said she wanted to talk to everybody, and she did. Everybody

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including me who had such a minor part. Her friendliness impressed me, I could tell it was genuine.

The other thing [that] impressed [me] was they wanted to take pictures of her, and my father and my uncle thought that it was terrible the way that Eleanor Roosevelt always was getting her picture taken. And when the photographers were there, as of course they were, Eleanor Roosevelt, obviously to be nice, said, "All right, take a picture if you want to." So they took one. Then of course they wanted to take another, and another, and another, and it was obvious she hated having her picture taken. She was doing it only because they needed the pictures, she thought. And, then, almost the first time in my life, I realized that my father wasn't always right. Mrs. Roosevelt didn't like to have her picture taken, it was just a thing she had to do. And that's the way Bird is.

G: Was Mrs. Johnson interested in campus politics, student politics at UT?

S: We all were, to some extent, so I'm sure she was. I don't remember her being especially interested.

G: No experiences? Do you remember her campaigning for a student candidate there or anything?

S: If she did, I don't remember.

G: Let me turn this off for a second.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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