INTERVIEWEE: MRS. WILLIE DAY TAYLOR (Tape 1)

INTERVIEWER: DOROTHY PIERCE

November 29, 1968

P: Today is Friday, November 29, and it's eleven in the morning. We are in the White House West Wing, and the interview is with Mrs. Willie Day Taylor. This is Dorothy Pierce.

Mrs. Taylor, I know you've had a very long and close association with the Johnson family, and I would like to just begin this interview with asking you: first, when did you come in contact with the Johnson family, and what were the circumstances that this occurred?

T: In 1948 I was with the University, of course working my way through. In late May--I don't remember the exact date--I had finished my last final for that semester that day, and of course since I had quit work for about a month, was deeply in debt, and was planning to go home and start out the next morning looking for a job. That afternoon Ralph Shinn called me and asked if Dorothy Plyler had reached me; said she had been trying to get me about a job. I called Dorothy and she asked me if I would come to work the next morning in the Lyndon Johnson campaign for the Senate. Of course, I agreed to do it; that even saved me from having to look for a job.

I went down--because I was going to go to summer school, I wanted just a part-time job, and supposedly was given a half-day work. So during that summer I went to school from eight to twelve, reported to work immediately thereafter, and usually left about twelve or one that night. I found out most of my part-time jobs with the Johnson family have been about hours like that. Of course, if I hadn't enjoyed it, I still wouldn't be here.

P: Did you have occasion to meet Mr. Johnson or with Mrs. Johnson or the family at that time?

T: I didn't meet him for two or three days after that--I don't remember the exact time. Mrs. Johnson and the children did not come down until some time in June, as best I can remember it now. Luci of course was just walking and doing very little talking by then. Lynda was a nice, chubby little girl running around.

P: When did you first meet members of the Johnson family?

T: It was that summer some time, but I don't remember the exact date.

P: Do you recall the occasion and what the circumstances were?

T: No, I don't.

P: Do you remember what your impression was upon meeting Mr. Johnson, and did you know very much about him?

T: Well, I had known about him because I lived in his congressional district, but I had not known him personally. Also I had gone to school in San Marcos after he had left, and I had met his brother and sisters there, but I did not know them at all well.

P: And I also asked you if you recall what your impressions were when you first met him.

T: I thought he was very dynamic and was going places.

P: What were you doing in that campaign? How were you helping out?

T: Secretary. At first I was working with Roy Wade who was handling, I suppose you'd call it, public relations. And we worked on speeches and stencils and what have you, getting ready for speeches for him, and getting out releases after he'd been on a trip. Then the late hours usually were ended up with Walter Jenkins who would be going over all the mail. And as he would sign it, I would fold and stuff it; and we usually ended up by getting it to the post office around twelve or one at night.

P: And did you stay with the campaign until the election?

T: I stayed through the election. Then I stayed on in his office in the Federal Building until they left to come back to Washington in November and closed the office up.

P: That election of course is the one that Mr. Johnson won the nickname "Landslide Lyndon" with the eightyseven vote margin victory. What do you recall about the campaign?

T: Well, we were all working extremely hard, particularly during that runoff; and it seemed to me weeks before we knew the outcome. I'm sure it was only a couple of days. But first one return would come in, and former Governor Stevenson would be ahead; the next return would come in, and Congressman Johnson would be ahead--it was a seesaw affair up until the last minute.

P: Were you in doubt of Mr. Johnson winning that election? How did you feel about it before the actual voting day?

T: There were only two elections I have ever bet on in my life--both of those were that summer. I bet $1.00 on Lyndon Johnson, and I bet $1.00 on Harry Truman. And I thought this was a good time to stop while I was ahead, and I haven't bet on an election since.

P: Are there any particular events that stand out in your mind--that come to mind as representative of those days when you were working for that election?

T: It was all pretty hectic. One of the main things is how short we were on money. We knew we were going to get paid, but we never knew exactly on what day. And of course all of us were working with very small salaries, but it was the only income for most of us. One of the girls fortunately had retirement from the Army--she had been retired on disability--so that check came in regularly, and sometimes she was feeding all of us two or

three days before more money would come in so that we could be paid. But I don't think any of us really complained; that was part of the game.

P: How large was the staff?

T: I remember we had more Dorothys than anything else. There was Dorothy Plyler; Dorothy Nichols, who is still with the President and the first woman that the President ever hired in his office; Dorothy Meadows; and Dorothy Fincher. Then we did have one Mary--Mary Rather was there.

P: You mentioned about five women there; and you mentioned Mr. Wade and Mr. Jenkins.

T: Then Sarah Wade was the switchboard operator, and she was the greatest operator--she could find anybody anywhere anytime, and keep five lines going at the same time without ever getting confused as to whom she was talking to on any one of the lines.

P: Are there any other things that you particular remember about this '48 campaign?

T: And Paul Bolton was also there working on speeches, and the campaign manager--oh, his son is here now.

P: Do you recall that name?

T: Claude Wild--I believe he had the title of campaign manager. John Connally, of course, was the main one running things. Horace Busby was also there and was traveling with the Congressman on those helicopter trips. Then there were men out in the field who are still with him--Cliff Carter was one of the field men; Jake Pickle of course had a prominent role in it; Mike DeGeurin was also working. These were all young men who have been associated with the President at various times during his career as Congressman, and they're all still friends.

P: Did you ever go out on any of these trips, or did you primarily stay in the office?

T: I was in the office. I didn't make any trips.

P: Do you recall the publicity Mr. Johnson received with flying in and out on helicopters? Wasn't that pretty unusual for Texas politics?

T: That was, I believe, the first time a helicopter had ever been used. Yes, there was a great deal of publicity. And the field men used to vow that they would have to race in a car to get from one place to another ahead of him when he was traveling by helicopter. They would have to stay where he would speak until the helicopter landed; that they would have to take off to be there to meet him at the next point. You would have to be young and gay to have enjoyed it as much as we did; I don't know that any of us could take that now.

P: Mrs. Taylor, when did you next come in contact with the Johnson family?

T: This again I cannot remember exactly, but two or three times when he would be down there in the fall I would work for him part-time in his office, because I was still going on to school through 1949. Then I didn't come up here until December of 1950.

P: And how did that come about?

T: Well, the Senator had made me various offers through other people, but I really was not interested in Washington at all. In the fall of 1950, it looked like we were just set for an all-out war with Korea. And according to the Austin paper, the only person trying to do anything on earth about that war was Lyndon Johnson as the chairman of the Preparedness Subcommittee. So one day in a burst of patriotism I wrote him and said, "If your last offer still stands, if someone will meet me at the airport, if you'll have me a place to live, I will come up for a year." I received a wire, "Which plane will you be on?" So I was on one on December 20.

That was a rather hectic experience, too. I was so sure that I could

take care of the situation that I didn't ask anyone for help in getting reservations; I just checked and found out that they had two planes leaving at ten-thirty that night, one of them they said was straight through to Washington, the other one would make one change. The through plane was filled, but they put me on standby on that and gave me a seat on the second plane. Well, I got on the second. We changed at Dallas; we changed at Kansas City; we changed at Ypsilanti, Michigan--nobody could believe that I ever changed planes there coming from Austin to Washington.

I got in here the next day about noon. There was no one there to meet me. By that time I was thoroughly disgusted anyway, so I finally found a phone booth and called Walter Jenkins and told him I was at the airport; if he wanted me, he could send for me; otherwise I was on the next plane back to Texas. He finally found one man there in the office who knew me--Ed Cozares. Ed and June Welsh came out to get me. My bags hadn't made all the changes I had made. So there I was just before Christmas with my arms full of Christmas packages that my kind friends had brought to the airport instead of giving them to me the night before where I could pack them. They brought me into the office without my bags; nobody had gotten me a place to live. Glynn Stegall got me a place to spend the night, and the airline got my bags in to me about five o'clock that night; and I spent one night in a tourist home there near the Capitol.

The next day it dawned on Mrs. Johnson or the Senator one that I was in a strange town, Christmas coming up, and they took me out to their house where I stayed through the Christmas holidays.

P: At this point, what did you think about the Johnson family?

T: Oh, Luci and I fell in love with each other on first sight, because I knew

of her little friend, Evelyn Coleman. Luci was the only person I ever knew who pronounced the "h" in friend. And so she and I became immediate friends.

Lynda accepted me, but she thought that I belonged more to Luci than I did to her.

P: What do you recall about your holiday visit to Washington, D. C.--this strange town--and staying with the Johnson family?

T: It was typical of our usual association. Zephyr, their long-time cook, had slipped on the ice and broken her leg the day that I went out there; it happened the afternoon just before I got there. Helen Williams, who is still with them, and Gene, her husband, were there; Helen was the maid and not too accustomed to cooking. She didn't think she could cook, but Helen is an excellent cook. The Johnsons had invited various guests in, so between Mrs. Johnson and Helen and me, we got the cooking done; we constantly were getting flowers, and I do have some talents but flower arranging is not one of them, but I arranged flowers because it had to be done.

But everything still went beautifully; it was a lovely family Christmas tree; guests in. And I don't think anyone was slighted at all during the time. Again it was a matter--when you're with the Johnsons, you do what has to be done; you just do it as a matter of fact.

P: Do you recall some of the guests of the Johnson family while you were there?

T: I believe that the Clark Cliffords came to call some time during the holiday; and Mr. and Mrs. Paul Porter. Then also a number of the staff members came out, because the staff was always family with the Johnsons. Liz and Les Carpenter came out to do an interview for Collier's, and I remember in the pictures so they were there for the interview, Dorothy Nichols, Glynn

Stegall, Horace Busby, Walter Jenkins--those are the only ones of the staff that I remember right now who were there.

P: After the Christmas holidays--were you working while you were there, too?

T: Oh, yes.

P: This was a holiday.

T: I went to work with him every morning when he came in.

P: What was the work day for Senator Johnson?

T: He was there by at least nine every morning, and he was there until things were wound up that night. He has always been a very hard worker; he thrives on hard work.

P: Does this lead to long and late hours?

T: It always did. But again we didn't mind it; we were getting a job done--we were going somewhere.

P: Mrs. Taylor, you have been with them and working with the Johnson family all this time--correct? In all the various capacities.

T: Yes. That one year stretched into eighteen.

P: That's right, you had only agreed to one year.

What do you recall about your first year here in Washington, working with the then-Senator Johnson?

T: Well, the first place that I worked was in the Preparedness Subcommittee, having UMT hearings; the hearings opened that month. And that was really long, hard hours.

P: What was your capacity?

T: Answering mail.

P: And you were dealing primarily with Korea, correct?

T: No, this was the Universal Military Training Bill -- the hearings on that. Of course, there were hundreds of letters; and I was expected to write

seventy-five or more letters a day, which I did and enjoyed. The only difficulty I had was that I believed so thoroughly in UMT that I was trying to convince everyone else. And Walter used to kick back letters now and then saying, "I told you never argue with a preacher. Just thank him for his views." Because I would know they were so mistaken, and if I would just explain things to him, that he would understand and be on our side.

P: And how long were you involved on the Preparedness Subcommittee?

T: Until about--I believe the hearings went on until about February. And after the hearings were wound up, I went back to his office where we were handling just regular office mail and stayed there until the MacArthur hearings when General MacArthur came back and the Armed Services held hearings on that. And then I went on the night shift.

P: What is this night shift?

T: During the day they would have the hearings. Then at night the lawyers would take the hearings for that day and go through them to work up questions for the next day, and I was on the staff that was working with them to prepare the next day's work.

P: So then your hours were late in the night and not during the day?

T: We'd go to work at night as soon as they'd begin to have the transcripts ready, because the hearings would have to be transcribed, and then the security people would go through to delete any security information. And then we were given the hearings to go through to prepare questions for the Senators for the next day's hearing.

P: Speaking of security, you must have had to have security clearances when you came here to Washington?

T: Oh, yes.

P: This was a normal procedure for a Senator's office, I would imagine.

T: I suppose it was for everybody. But because I began with the Preparedness Committee where it was military, where I was handling--I don't mean I was handling secrets, but I was where I couldn't keep from hearing them now and then.

P: Back on the UMT Bill, how did Mr. Johnson feel about that?

T: He was for it.

P: When Mr. Johnson becomes committed to something like that, is he sort of all the way 100 percent on this?

T: If he's for it, he is really for it, and will do everything he can to promote it--I don't mean that he's inflexible; he can still listen to reason.

P: Do you recall particular contributions that Mr. Johnson made during the UMT hearings that he was active in?

T: He was the chairman of the subcommittee.

P: I meant, there are certain events or things--occasions that Mr. Johnson said or spoke?

T: No, I don't remember those specifically.

P: Those are back a few years now.

On to the McCarthy hearings that you were working on on this night shift--

T: That was General MacArthur--not McCarthy.

P: Oh, I'm sorry.

T: General MacArthur, you know, had been recalled by President Truman.

P: Right.

T: And Armed Services held hearings then.

P: How did Mr. Johnson feel about this?

T: I don't remember having heard him express an opinion. You see, it wasn't the purpose for anybody to have opinions--they were just trying to get all the facts.

P: And do you recall any specific events that occurred during that time?

T: No, I don't. Just more long hours.

P: Where were you living at this point?

T: Over on East 2nd Street which is now--215 East 2nd, I believe it was, but that has all been torn down by now.

P: And did you visit with the Johnson family?

T: Yes. And Luci and Lynda would come over and visit me. One of my favorite quotes from Luci that I still use is that she came in the office one Friday and said, "Wi-Day, my mommy says you can't go places unless you're 'vited." And she paused a moment and said, "But if you were to 'vite me, I could spend the weekend with you." I "'vited" her and she did.

P: I understand that the girls quite often refer to you as Aunt Willie Day, or did.

T: No. Luci has always run it together where it comes out "Wi-Day." Lynda either says Willie Day or W.D.

P: And how did--I'd like to let you talk a minute and tell me about the girls, and how this relationship developed. You mentioned that you became fast friends immediately with Luci when you first came up to Washington; and I know of course over the years you've been very close to the girls and to Mrs. Johnson. I'd like to have you tell me a little bit about it.

T: Well, Luci and I just understood each other from the beginning. Lynda was a little more distant; she and I didn't really become close until she had her illness in 1954, I believe it was; again I'm not sure about that date. And at that time I moved into their Austin apartment, and kept the girls there in Austin while the parents were out at the ranch.

P: Why did they stay in Austin?

T: To go to school there, because it was pretty difficult to get into Johnson City from the ranch to school.

P: So this would have been all through the school year of 1954?

T: Up until the first of January. The first of January, of course, we always came back to Washington. And that continued until after 1957--the Washington schools said they could go to school in Washington, or they could go to school in Austin, but they couldn't do both. So from 1958 until he became Vice President, I would move into their home at 4921 30th Place and stay with the girls in the fall while the parents were in Texas.

P: What do you recall about the girls during this period of their life? And what was the occasion of Lynda's illness?

T: I'm not just exactly sure of the technical name of it; they described it as being a cousin to rheumatic fever, so that she was not in school for two or three months. It's a matter where all the muscles and nerves quiver. Of course in a small child, that quivering would scare her, and she would come and say, "Willie Day, I'm scared." And it was a matter of just giving her loving assurance. And she was scared with everyone except Helen or her mother or me, but she wanted one of the three of us there all the time until she began to get better. That was when she first started going to St. Stephen's School, because they would let her go half a day until she was stronger; of course a public school couldn't have a student in that way.

P: That's St. Stephen's in Austin, right?

T: And she went there until January, and by that time she was much better. I think by Thanksgiving she was going full time.

P: She must have been about ten years old at this point?

T: Something like that.

P: And was Luci going to St. Stephen's, too?

T: No. I believe at that time Luci was going to Mrs. Huberich's school, who lived just down the street. And it was ages before I knew what Mrs. Huberich's name was, because all I heard was "Mishubrich." She went there her first two years, and then she went to Casis, while Lynda continued to St. Stephen's. And then Lynda went from St. Stephen's to O'Henry Junior High.

P: When you helped the family in this capacity, did you also work in the office, too?

T: Of course. The taxpayers were paying me for eight hours a day in the office, and I usually tried to see that they got more than eight hours a day. What I was doing for the girls was because I loved them. They repaid that by returning my love. And if for any reason I had to be out of the office to do anything for them, I saw that the taxpayers were given that time back.

P: You were very conscientious. How would you describe the girls then? Both their relationship with their parents and each other?

T: Oh, there was the usual sibling rivalry. They both loved their parents very much, and the parents loved them very much, and were unhappy over having to be separated from them. Of course I could never see any criticism of the girls; I always felt they were beautiful and smart. And when I look at some of the pictures that were taken at times, I thought, "Gee, I did love them if I thought they were beautiful then." I know they're beautiful now.

P: How would you describe their personalities?

T: Their personalities then were about the same as they are now. Lynda took

things very seriously; Luci was sure that everything was going to be all right--she loved the world and she knew the world loved her.

P: Was Lynda at this point academic, interested in her school work?

T: She has always been very conscientious about her school work. If I found an error in her work, she wanted to correct it and do it over to turn it in neatly. Luci was perfectly happy to just scratch through, and didn't really think it was worth writing it over.

P: How did the girls do in school there?

T: They were both good students--Lynda was a better student than Luci because she was more conscientious. Lynda is a perfectionist, and Luci isn't. Luci just knows things are going to turn out all right and doesn't worry too much about all the details.

P: Do you remember some events while you were taking care of the girls like that that happened in their youth and in their growing up?

T: No, nothing outstanding. They were just two normal, healthy, lovable little girls.

P: Did they get in very serious fights with each other as sisters and brothers do?

T: Oh, never anything very serious. They always loved each other very dearly. And if for some reason I was unhappy with one, the other one took up for the one I was unhappy with, so it was two against one any time anything went wrong.

P: Luci had a slight reading problem then when she was growing up, didn't she?

T: Well, we didn't know it was a reading problem until much later. There was an eye problem that since I was with them so closely I should have diagnosed, but I didn't. I knew that frequently she would want me to read her lesson to her and that she would grasp it much better if I read it than if she

read it. I thought it was just a matter of wanting a little tender loving care, and I thought it was worthwhile to give it to her, and I didn't realize there was some other difficulty there. Dr. Kraskin was the one who discovered that there was really an eye problem.

P: That was relatively recent, too; it was only a few years ago, I believe, wasn't it?

T: Yes.

P: At this point she would have been about eight or nine, I guess, in the '50's, early 50's, right. I'm getting my dates in my mind here.

Did she speak then, still dropping her "h's"?

T: Well, she had a lisp. Under pressure now she still has that lisp, but she has outgrown it a great deal.

P: She does speak beautifully before audiences.

T: Both of them have always been able to speak before an audience. Their father without any warning at all would call them up before a group when they were still quite small and ask them to say a few words, and they always would.

P: Do you remember any of these times?

T: No, not right now I don't.

P: Or anything the girls said?

T: They have both always insisted on speaking their own words and not someone else's. I know when Lynda was Azalea Queen, I believe it was, and someone had prepared a speech for her, and she got up most apol getic because she had lost her beautiful speech, and so she just talked. I have never been sure exactly where she lost that speech, and I've never asked any questions. But they both would have considered it insincere not to say what was on their minds instead of taking words someone else had written for them.

P: What were your thoughts and impressions, and how would you characterize Mrs. Johnson?

T: I would say she is the greatest lady I have ever known. She has marvelous self-control. And she has grown in so many ways. Any time she sees that a task needs to be done, she does it. If she doesn't know how, she learns how.

P: Did she, even when you first knew her, have that faculty for making people feel so at home and relaxed?

T: When I first knew her--the first few days, I called her Mrs. Johnson. And she said, "Willie Day, please don't do that. If you call me Mrs. Johnson, I'll have to call you Mrs. Taylor, and I don't want to do that. So please call me Bird." I called her Bird until she became the First Lady, when I just don't think that outsiders should be calling the First Lady by her first name; that is for immediate family and very, very close people.

P: Was she at that point taking her notes and keeping track of events as she does now? Had she started that?

T: No. To the best of my knowledge, she wasn't doing it very closely. I'm sure, since she is the type who likes to keep records to know where she's going and where she has been--I'm sure she was keeping notes of some type, but I don't think she started in keeping them seriously, just being sure it was done day-by-day, until she came to the White House.

P: We've really gotten, as far as time sequence, all the way into the '50's. Then you said the girls began going to school here in Washington; then did you stay here in Washington--

T: In 1958 they started staying full time in Washington; 1957 was the last year I went down with the office.

P: And so since 1958 you have stayed here in Washington except for your visits. Did you still, say, go over when the Johnson were out of town or had to go back to Texas? You said until in the 60's?

T: Until they left the Elms--until '63.

P: Until 1963, of course.

T: I was with the girls while the parents were in Texas at the time of President Kennedy's assassination. Lynda was in Austin at the University, but Luci was--I was out at the Elms with Luci. And that afternoon I went by the school to pick her up to take her home. That is one of my great peeves of all peeves; everything was just haywire that afternoon, as you can well imagine it was. The Johnsons had a new Chrysler--anyway, some new car that I was driving, and I always drove those new cars like I was handling glass anyway. George Reedy and I were in the Capitol at the time we got the word, and I immediately called about Luci and told her I would be by to pick her up. George had to get to the White House; you couldn't get a taxi, you couldn't get a White House car or anything. So I drove George and Tom Ellison, who was USIA reporter who had been told to stay with George--brought them by the White House, drove through that heavy traffic, and I am sure I broke all speed records getting out to the school to get Luci.

P: Were you worried about her--her safety?

T: No. I knew the emotional traume she was going through. At that time we didn't know whether the Vice President had been hurt or not. The word had come out that there was a possibility that he might have had a heart attack, because they saw him holding his left side. And also John Connally had been--Uncle John to the girls always--we didn't know how badly he was hurt. Everything was just panic.

But then after I got out there and got Luci--this is what I was mad about--after I had driven through that traffic, all that by myself, I got out there, picked up Luci, I was given a driver, I was given an escort to get me to the Elms when there wasn't any traffic--no problem at all.

P: This was just a hang up in communications at this point?

T: Well, there was no reason on earth why I should have been given an escort or anything else. But I said, "Now that I've managed this long by myself, why do I suddenly have all kinds of people looking after me?"

P: Wasn't there some publicity about driving with the children then and with Secret Service men, and their being fearful of being followed or something? Did that occur at that point?

T: Not that I know of. Of course, all I was thinking about was getting Luci home.

P: Was Luci very upset?

T: Of course she was just panic-stricken because she didn't know whether her father was seriously hurt. It turned out that her father was holding his arm because when Rufe Youngblood smashed him down to the floor to be sure he was protected--he actually was unconscious of the fact that he had held his arm, but it had shown on television and they had commented that they didn't know whether anything had happened to him or not. Just enough to get people panic-stricken over it.

P: By the way, to back up, were you with the Johnson family when Mr. Johnson had his heart attack?

T: That was on Luci's birthday in 1955, and I had been out there the Saturday afternoon for Luci's little party--she was sick, so she hadn't really had a party--just a few of us then. Then I had gone back home, and about eleven o'clock that night, George Reedy called me to tell me that the President

had had a heart attack--was in Bethesda , and that Mrs. Johnson wanted me to go over and stay with the girls. I offered to go that night; he said no, that she thought that it might disturb them more since they were already asleep, and if I came in at that hour--that if I would be over there in the morning by the time they waked up. I was over there the next morning by the time the girls were up. Mrs. Johnson stayed at the hospital with him, and I kept the home there.

P: Did you have to tell the girls where their father was?

T: No, they had been told by that time. As well as I remember now--I don't remember the exact detail, I remember the madness of the constant phone calls--people worried to death because for some hours nobody knew what the outcome was going to be. And there's one very tough, hard reporter in this town that I will never be able to get very mad at, because he called that Sunday morning, crying so he could hardly talk.

P: Who was this, Mrs. Taylor?

T: I think he'd prefer that it not be known, because he said, "This is the greatest man in our lifetime; just nothing can happen to him." And so now--oh, I don't know of any reason--Marshall McNeil. So now when Marshall get hardboiled and I want to get mad at him, I remember, "No, he's really a softie inside."

P: Did you think that Mr. Johnson was pressing himself too much--overworking at that point when he did have the heart attack?

T: No, he was just working like he always had.

P: Of course that's pretty hectic anyway. And this caught you completely by surprise, though. Do you recall, speaking of reporters and publicity, how you felt the press and the news media covered Mr. Johnson during his senatorial career?

T: I have always taken up for the press. I think they did a good job. But I understand that the press has a job to do, the Senator has a job to do--those will always be in conflict with each other. And any reporter who wrote that everything that he did was great and wonderful was not doing his own thinking. Because no man can do things that everybody will agree with all the time, and a reporter to be honest has to report both sides of the situation. And because reporters are human, too, they would see things differently at times. I think he has always had a fair--there are some few members that have always been--they were paid to be--hatchet men; and they had an editor to be responsible to, not the Senator.

P: Do you recall at this point any particular publicity or event that Mr. Johnson was covered during his senatorial life?

T: No, nothing specific. He always, I thought, got good publicity; the Preparedness Committee got good publicity on all of its reports. I don't mean to say the press was always friendly; they were unfair at times. I don't think more than a few of them were ever maliciously unfair, but as I say some reporters are hired as hatchet men--that's what they're paid for. They've got to be the devil's advocate.

P: Did you work in the 1954 campaign for his reelection?

T: I was with his campaign staff in 1954.

P: Did you have headquarters down in Austin?

T: I went down in early March to open the office.

Jake Pickle was the field man for the campaign. The President did not come in and make a speech during the entire campaign. I was kept busy all right because the minute--somehow the word gets around the minute the phones were connected in that office. There were calls coming in about every type of case imaginable: old age assistance, military cases, and then lots of people calling in about the campaign. One lady in particular, who had worked in his previous campaigns, called and wanted to work. And I said, "I'm sorry, we have no campaign." She said, "Well, just send me some literature." "I'm sorry, we have no campaign literature." She said, "Well, just send me some cards, some pins, something I can pass out." I said, "I'm sorry, we don't have any cards or pins, or anything." She said, "Well, where are Lyndon and Bird, or would you know?" She had been used to those hard-driving Lyndon Johnson campaigns and she couldn't believe that he did not have an active campaign.

P: And why didn't he?

T: Because he had campaigned in the fall of 1953, he had everything--the state was so thoroughly behind him there was just no point in it. And it would have just been giving his opponent recognition that he hadn't earned if he paid any attention to him at all.

P: And you felt pretty confident of his winning reelection all right in the primary?

T: We had an office pool as to the percentage of his vote, and I won the pool. That's how confident I was. I believe he won by 71.2 and I had guessed it 71.1; I don't remember the exact figures, but something of that nature. No, I always knew that he was going to be President. George Reedy and I started telling people in 1951 he was going to be President.

P: How do you think Mr. Johnson felt about that? Did he have aspiration to it, or did he realize that he might have an opportunity?

T: I don't believe he thought he really had a chance because he did not believe that enough time had passed for a Texan to be President.

P: Was this ever talked about in their home?

T: Not that I ever heard.

P: Did the girls think that their father might be President someday?

T: I don't know that they ever thought about it one way or the other. You know at that age there's so many things more important than being President anyway.

P: Did they feel any handicap being the daughters of the Senator?

T: They called themselves "de-priviledged" children because they couldn't have their parents all the time and couldn't have the normal home life that some of their classmates had with parents at home all the time.

P: Do you think that this affected them in any way?

T: I don't know that it did. Of course everything that happens to any of us affects us. But I don't know that it really hurt them any. I never missed an opportunity to assure them of how much their parents loved them, and that their parents wanted to be with them as much as they wanted to be with their parents, but that their father had a duty to his country and that their mother had a duty to their father.

P: Did they just sort of take this in their stride--his position which was

very important in the Senate and his power and his influence in politics?

T: I don't know that they even realized how much power and influence he had. Of course to every child their father is the most important man in the world, and whether the rest of the world recognizes it or not, they know it's true.

P: Mrs. Taylor, during his vice presidency--well, let me back this up--in 1960 during the campaign did you work in that campaign?

T: I was with the Democratic Policy Committee then, of which he was chairman. And of course I was with the girls here at the same time I was in the office there. I was kind of the back-up man--the one when they were out on the campaign and they needed something looked up or they needed a copy of this or that, I was the one who was always there to try to back them up in any way possible and to try to keep work going in the office. I don't mean to imply I was the only one in the office; I wasn't. I was just one of the small wheels there.

P: Did you think in 1960 that he had a good chance to win the nomination for the presidency?

T: Oh, yes, I was just sure he was going to win it. I wanted him to get into the race much earlier than he did, but he has never asked my advice on political matters very much. I think the saddest thing to me about the whole convention was the morning after the nomination. The delegates who came to me with tears in their voices if not in their eyes and said, "But we meant to switch to him on the second vote; we had only pledged our vote to the Kennedys for the first roll call."

P: Were you at the convention?

T: Yes.

P: What do you recall about the convention atmosphere and the events that happened?

T: It was the usual hectic thing. My work was closer with reporters. I was with George Reedy and George was always his press man. And the main thing I remember about both the convention of 1960 and the convention of 1956 was ours was the only suite where reporters could always get coffee. Other places poured liquor; we poured coffee. So what I did was wash dirty coffee cups throughout the conventions. Every morning we'd have a huge urn of coffee with the heater under it delivered to the office first thing in the morning. And because of space, we'd only have about a dozen cups and saucers. But reporters would come in in waves and I'd serve one wave and they would go out and I'd rush to the bathroom, rinse out cups and saucers and get ready for the next group. I'd just as soon the Health Department did not know that I was not sterilizing them; I was just rinsing them out and serving somebody else.

P: You mentioned the 1956 campaign and convention and I should have asked you about that one. Did you think that Mr. Johnson had a serious possibility then to win the nomination.

T: I didn't think so; I felt it was too early for him.

P: Did you have your mind on 1960 as being more probable?

T: Yes. He needed more time to get better known and of course just being put in nomination there gave him nationwide publicity.

P: Of course he was a favorite son I believe in that campaign. Did he go to Texas to win that position? I know he worked actively in the convention--

T: Yes. I didn't go to Texas. That is something you'd have to ask someone who was with him in 1956.

P: You stayed here in Washington?

T: I just don't remember how it came about that he was favorite son. One thing about that '56 convention, the greatest nomination speech I ever

heard was lost to posterity. John Connally was going to put him in nomination and various people had been working on a speech for John. And it wasn't coming out right. I was back in our press room there in Chicago. Dorothy Nichols, George Reedy, Booth Mooney--I believe were the four in there--and John said, "What I want to say is . . ." and gave the exact speech that he wanted to give. Dorothy and I both started in taking notes and we became so fascinated we just stopped writing. So that speech is just lost to posterity. He gave a good nominating speech afterward, but it wasn't anything like as good as the speech he gave to just the four of us.

P: Do you recall during this period meeting Speaker Rayburn?

T: I don't remember when I first met him. I'm sure it must have been that first year I was up here because he was in the Johnson home quite frequently.

P: How would you describe him?

T: A very stern, forbidding, softie.

P: Just to draw on your long contact while I'm thinking on this area, who would you consider in your opinion has, during the development of Mr. Johnson's career, been most influential on it and have been very close advisors to him?

T: Mrs. Johnson and Speaker Rayburn and John Connally.

P: You answered that so very promptly.

T: His mother also had a great influence.

P: Did you know her?

T: Yes.

P: How was Mr. Johnson's relations with his mother?

T: It was a beautiful relationship.

P: Why do you say that?

T: Well, they were so fond of each other; they understood each other much better than parents and children frequently understand each other. He always felt that he could talk with her about everything and she always had complete confidence in him. He could just do anything; I'm sure she knew he was going to be President.

P: Did you have many dealings with Mr. Johnson's brothers and sisters?

T: No, not too much. More with Sam Houston than I did with the sisters because Sam worked in the office.

P: And do you think Sam Houston Johnson was sort of in the background because of the prominence of his brother?

T: Yes, and Sam Houston also idolized his big brother. Sam was also--has a very good political mind. The President would frequently call on him for advice and would listen to him.

P: And Sam Houston Johnson--did you ever think he might go into politics publicly himself?

T: No, I never did think so. He preferred the background to being on the stage center. Speaking of Mrs. [Rebekah] Johnson, one of my most embarrassing moments, but this will show you what a wonderful person she was--it was in Austin when I had the girls in Austin. I don't know, they were seven or eight--don't remember what age--and we had Mrs. Johnson over for dinner one night and Luci was feeding Beagle at the table. As a matter of routine, I said, "Luci, do not feed that dog at the table." Luci's response was, "Well, Daddy does." My response was one I had used thousands of times about other things where I would not criticize her father. I just said, "Luci, I had nothing to do with bringing up your father; I do have with you. Do not feed that dog at the table." Mrs. Johnson said, "Willie Day, I'd like you to know her father was brought up

better than that." First time it had dawned on me that I was criticizing really her father in the presence of the person who had brought up the father, because it was just a routine answer for me and the one Luci expected to hear. But the fact that she was so understanding, that she was just wanting me to know that she had tried to bring up her father not to feed dogs at the table.

P: And so the senior Mrs. Johnson did come to visit you all in Austin and stay with the girls, too?

T: No, she lived there in Austin and the girls would go over and visit with her, and spend the night with her frequently.

P: And how did the girls get along with their grandmother?

T: Oh, they both just adored her. She was Ma-Day. And Lynda was--I don't mean that Mrs. Johnson showed really any partiality, but Lynda being the first grandchild, the first granddaughter, was really more or less a favorite, and Lynda felt that Ma-Day belonged to her. And Luci felt that Mr. Boss, who was Mrs. Lyndon Johnson's father, belonged to her. Luci felt that she belonged to the Taylor side, and Lynda to the Johnson side.

P: How has this carried out in their relationship with their parents? I don't mean in terms of partiality, I mean does one relate to father or mother more than the other one does.

T: No, I don't really think so. Both of the children have been able to talk to either parent at any time about anything; there's always been a close relationship there.

P: I have heard, and I don't know the validity of it, that Lynda is particularly close to her mother, and Luci is particularly close to her father.

T: Probably Lynda is a little closer to her mother than Luci. But no, I don't really know that you could say that; they're just two different girls with two different approaches.

P: What did you think inspired Luci's conversion to Roman Catholicism?

T: I just don't know. She'd been interested in it as a small child. For one thing I think she liked the form and the discipline. She and Beth Jenkins were close friends and Beth was a Catholic.

P: Were you surprised when that happened?

T: No. I had known she was interested in it and my attitude was that it was her decision to make. I just wanted her to wait until she was old enough to be sure because at twelve and thirteen, you know, they're all going to be everything, not necessarily for two days in succession.

P: Was she interested in it as early as that?

T: She was in a way interested in it by the time she was six or seven, but as she got older it became more serious.

P: Could you describe the two girls in terms of their attitude toward their religion?

T: No, I don't believe I could. I think both girls are completely sincere in the religion that they have chosen, that is, the one they see as the right answer.

P: Do you feel the Johnson family is particularly religious?

T: Yes, I think they are. Not particularly denominational because you notice they go to all churches. After all, all the churches are trying to get us to the same place. It's just a little different in the form. And I don't think that either one of them think of the form as extremely serious. It's the road you take in getting there that's important.

P: To go back to politics and Mr. Johnson's career, who do you consider were his closest political friends? You have mentioned, of course, Speaker Rayburn and John Connally. During his senatorial career, what other--

T: Senator Russell. President Johnson has always admired Senator Russell greatly; he thinks he's a great man.

P: Were there others?

T: Senator Stennis he's been rather close to. In fact he was respected by all the members of the Senate and liked by most of them. Of course, nobody can be liked by everybody; that is, if you're anything more than a wishy-washy little sponge.

P: During his senatorial career, what in your opinion was the highlight of it?

T: I don't know that I could pin it down to any specific instance. He was just a great leader, and he tried always to do his homework to know--to be able to distinguish between the possible and impossible. He knew his fellow Senators, and knew who would help in getting through the things that were important. He had to make judgments as to what things were important enough to really fight for and others that would be better to postpone until a day when the fighting would be better.

P: A lot of things have been written about Mr. Johnson's persuasive personality, or what they call the "Johnson treatment." Did you ever see this in action and can you think of a good event that typifies this?

T: Mary McGrory wrote an article about him that I thought did a beautiful job of it. Mary has always been a flaming liberal and still is. And she asked for an interview with him and was granted one. I saw her before she went in; I saw her when she came out. She was just floating on air: "Oh, that poor man; that poor wonderful man. I wish there was something I could do for him. Could I go out and bake some cookies or anything I can do?"

P: When was this; do you recall?

T: I still have a copy of the article I'll give you. I don't remember the exact date.

P: It was while he was still Senator, though?

T: Oh, yes, it was fairly early in his days as Majority Leader.

P: What do you think were some of the biggest problems during that time or hardest things Mr. Johnson had to do during his senatorial career?

T: Getting other Senators to work with him, selecting the things that were of major importance to the country, and working to get those bills passed.

P: Were you surprised when he accepted the Vice President position at the '60 convention nomination?

T: I was surprised, but also I saw that there was nothing else he could do.

P: Why do you say that? He had a very powerful position, of course, in the Senate.

T: He had been asked by the leadership of his party to take this position, and you don't say, "You either play my way, or I'll pick up my toys and go home." When your party asks you to do something when you have asked them for their backing all these years, when they ask you then to do something you take your responsibility, too.

P: And you say that you were surprised, though, just in the fact that Mr. Kennedy had asked Mr. Johnson to--. In what capacity did you serve Mr. Johnson during his vice presidency?

T: Still just about the same as it had always been.

P: Did you come over here to the EOB, or did you stay in the senatorial office?

T: George Reedy had an office in the Capitol, and I was there until after the Vice President became President; then I moved over to the EOB for two or three months. Then I moved over to the press office.

P: Do you think it was any kind of a handicap to Mr. Johnson in his approach to things to serve in the capacity of Vice President?

T: No, I don't think so. Of course he didn't have the--power isn't the right word--he was under someone else's direction as Vice President, whereas as Senate Majority Leader he had been the one in charge.

P: What do you recall about the vice presidential years from '61 to '63?

T: Oh, again, it was still just long hours and hard work and still interesting.

P: Bringing this up and along in time, and I know there must be many things that you have worked with or had contact with in the form of stories that you recall about the family or about Mr. Johnson. And I've heard you have a very good memory about these things.

T: Well, those things are things that are theirs to tell and not mine because it was happening to them.

P: Are there ones that you were involved in that you could tell me?

T: No, not too many things. I was just one of the "they also serve who stand and wait."

P: But you were very close to the family, and I know that some of this must have affected you whether it was, you know, against him or for him.

T: Well, it gave me a great sense of pride in that I felt I was being given a privilege to be close to people who were doing things and were going places, that I in my own way was serving my country by doing anything that I could to make life easier for them, to give them more freedom and peace of mind so that they could devote more of their time to doing things for the country.

P: Did you stay in Washington during that time? You didn't go on any of his travels or anything like that?

T: I went around the world with him on that first Asian trip.

P: Did you really? Can you recall some of the events that you saw in his capacity?

T: That was I think the longest any group ever went without sleep because we were virtually playing one-night stands. And of course each country would want to give him all honor and glory. And of course we had a large contingent

of press with us, and George Reedy would ride the plane with the Vice President and I was with the press plane. We tried to keep communications that way. And it was a matter of landing somewhere, parades, and going through all kinds of receptions, things like that. And then the staff would have to stay up most of the night getting ready for the next day's trip. It was still wonderful.

P: Are there any particular incidents that stand out in your mind regarding that trip?

T: It was on that trip that we met Bashir, the camel driver. And he was invited over. Then we went to Viet Nam. We worked two nights in Viet Nam and were taken out on field trips. Of course they didn't let us get very close to the fighting. And the adulation of the people of those countries for the Vice President was simply marvelous. And he would stop the parade and get out and shake hands with the people because they were so eager to see him. And of course that gave you a very warm feeling--a feeling of great pride that these people did love our country that much.

P: How effective do you think Mr. Johnson was as a sort of our foreign representative and diplomat for this country on these trips?

T: I think he was a great help because he is so outgoing, and those people had never been allowed to get close to anyone of any importance before and the fact that he would get out and go among them and shake hands with them made them feel that America was a friendly country, that we did want to be helpful to them.

P: Of course that's almost a bygone era when our public officials can do that. Do you think Mr. Johnson was ever taking any security, or was not being cautious enough regarding his security and safety?

T: Oh, that's not for me to judge. I'm sure the Secret Service didn't think

he was being secure enough. But they get paid to worry. And I thought that it was marvelous that he did show that friendship for those people.

P: Did you ever think during his vice presidency that something could happen to him?

T: No, it never occurred to me. I just think of him as being indestructible.

P: I'd like to continue on now. We have talked briefly about the assassination and of course you're staying with the family at that point. How did Luci react to her father suddenly becoming President of the United States?

T: I don't know. That afternoon it was not a matter of her father being President; that afternoon was worrying, "Is my father all right? Is Uncle John all right? I'm sorry the President was killed." But the fact that her father was now the President, if she ever commented on it at all I don't remember it. The main thing--the house, of course, was a hubbub because up until that day the name Lyndon B. Johnson had been in the Washington telephone directory ever since he had first come here--of course one of the first things they had to do was to get the phones changed into White House phones. Then the Secret Service had come out and checked the house all over thoroughly to give it security clearance although they had been in there. He had had Secret Service protection as Vice President, but had not had that strict a surveillance. They checked out the whole house with sounding devices because this, of course, could have been part of a massive plot.

P: What did you think about that when it happened?

T: Shock. I wanted him to be President, but not that way. I wanted him to do it under his own power.

P: Did you think that he might continue on from the vice presidency to the presidency? That would have been '68 if Mr. Kennedy had been reelected.

T: Yes, I was planning on him being elected in '68.

P: You did mention that after that you came over to the EOB briefly and then you moved here into the White House in the press office originally with Mr. Reedy and now with Mr. Christian.

T: Yes, I was George Reedy's hair shirt from 1951 until he resigned in 1966. He left the press office in 1965 when he had the operation on his feet, and he wasn't physically up to coming back in the press office, but he came back and worked as an assistant until he resigned in May, 1966, I think it was.

P: And then I think Mr. Moyers was in there?

T: He came in as press secretary in 1965.

P: And that was until '67, I believe it was, and then it was Mr. Christian. You've had a lot of contact with the dealings of the press from the senatorial days on forward. What is it like working in the President's press office? What are the demands on that?

T: I think it is our responsibility to get the press any legitimate information and it's also our responsibility not to let them hem us up and get information to which they're not entitled. And sometimes it's hard to draw the line as to which is which. And also it was not my decision to make as to what should be given out and what shouldn't. I was sometimes guarding to see that I didn't give out something I happened to know, but had not been authorized for release.

P: It is said about his press relations that they are not good and that the press has been extremely critical. How do you feel about that yourself?

T: I don't think they are any more critical of him than they have been of other Presidents. If you go back through history, Presidents since time began have always had trouble with the press. The press has always had

trouble with the Presidents. It's just something that goes on all the time; they really expect it. President Kennedy had his trouble with the press, too. It's really unfair to President Kennedy to make him the little tin god that some people try to make of him. I think he would have resented it more than anybody. They tried to pretend that he never had a disagreement with anybody, that the world universally loved him.

P: Did you have occasion to meet John Kennedy or Mrs. Kennedy or the other members of the Kennedy family?

T: I had met John Kennedy in the Senate; I don't remember that I ever saw him in person in the presidency, except, you know, just a mob scene. And Mrs. Kennedy I never met at all.

P: How would you describe the relations during the vice presidency between Mr. John Kennedy and Mr. Johnson and their various staffs?

T: I think the two men got along beautifully and understood each other. I think they had a nice relationship. The staffs for the most part had a nice relationship at that time as far as I remember. I don't remember any great disagreements between any staff members.

P: You don't feel that there was any friction between just the fact that the vice presidency could not, you know, shine like the presidency could, and that Vice President Johnson wasn't delegated enough responsibility or authority as Vice President?

T: Well, I don't think so. I think the Vice President was consulted on most major affairs. I think that has just been built up out of perspective since then. Of course the Vice President remembered constantly he was number two; he never attempted to assume the number one role.

P: Do you think that was difficult for Mr. Johnson?

T: Oh, I'm sure it was; but he's a big man and he could do it. A smaller man would have had much more trouble than he did.

P: A great deal has been written about his personal relations with his staff and that he is a very hard man to work for. You have worked for him as long and longer than a great many people. Do you feel that there is any validity in this? And how would you describe him as a boss?

T: If you don't understand him, yes, I can see it would be very difficult because he has a habit of blaming the person nearest when something goes wrong. But if you will just take into consideration, all right, you are being reprimanded for something Joe Blow did, but John Smith is going to be reprimanded later for something you did. So it's going to average out.

P: How would you describe his working relations with his staff?

T: I think most of them adore him. It's sometimes a little hard--he can speak rather harshly but he doesn't take himself seriously when he does. I remember on one occasion--I don't know what it was about--he had said something very harsh to me that I thought was unjust and I didn't say anything, but tears came in my eyes. And he looked around at me in complete astonishment, and tears came to his eyes. And he said, "But Goddamn it, honey, I told you I love you." And so when he loves you, you're part of the family When he yells, he's not yelling at you, he's yelling at events over which he has no control. He does prefer that you act with semi-intelligence; he greatly dislikes stupidity and sloppy work, but as Gene Williams once described it, "Mr. Johnson's not hard to work for; Mr. Johnson just wants things done right."

P: Do you think Mr. Johnson's organization of his staff is particularly unusual? Does he seek to balance various political philosophies?

T: He probably does, but not to an extent that I'm conscious of it.

P: To what would you attribute a fairly high percentage of turn-over during the presidency of his staff members?

T: I don't know that it's been any greater than it has in many other tenures of office. He still has a number of people with him he had through the years and those who had left him are still close. No one ever really leaves; they're waiting to come back. Like George Reedy came back when he wanted him back in March; just gave up his own business and came back. Horace Busby has left and come back anytime he's needed; Cliff Carter has left and come back any time he was needed; Mary Rather came back when she was needed.

P: His very energetic and sort of absolutely never wearing out, has that been a hard demand on his staff?

T: Well, it's better if you're nice and healthy; that you started out with a good strong constitution. The only thing is that he has never asked any staff member to work as hard as he works. I've always said that that is the day I will complain; when he expects me to do as much as he does; then I will complain, and in the meantime I won't.

P: To bring this up to the present, Mrs. Taylor, what did you think his chances were for reelection in 1968?

T: I'm still positive he could have been reelected.

P: Did you have any inkling that he might withdraw as he did on March 31? It has been said that he had prepared that remark as early as giving his State of the Union address at the first of this year in '68, and that he deleted it at that time.

T: In January of 1951, I was out at the home and came in to work with him that morning and all the way in he explained to me all the reasons why he was not going to take the position of Democratic Whip. About ten o'clock that morning, I was told that he had accepted the position as Democratic Whip. So, the fact that he's--I've heard that he's going to resign, I've

heard all the reasons why he's going to resign at least once a year since then, and so I took the fact that he was not going to run again the same way I had taken all of the other statements as to why he was going to resign, or why he was not going to run.

P: Do you think this is an indication of some sort of indecision or is he just still keeping his options open?

T: He's keeping his options open and he's weighing things and just thinking aloud, if you do this, then that'll happen or will the other happen, constantly thinking about what is the best way to do things for the country.

P: Do you think, then, that in other words when he says he's not going to do it, he may more or less be talking aloud in terms of what he feels at that moment and that this is not his decision?

T: That he's weighing what should be done and the alternatives.

P: Has his approach to not wanting things to get out ahead of time contributed to what is referred to as the credibility gap in the Administration?

T: It probably has; the fact that he wants to keep things; he just doesn't like to make an announcement until he's sure of things.

P: In your mind what has contributed most to what is called the credibility gap? Do you think it's Lyndon Johnson's personality?

T: I think probably part of it is trusting the wrong people, and I'm not going to enlarge on that with names.

P: And on March 31 were you just looking at the speech as the rest of America was and caught completely off-guard?

T: I was in the office taking phone calls and I didn't have time to--after the blast was out, between trying to answer telephones and talk to people crying on the telephone, talk to sobbing secretaries here, to tell them, "Yes, yes, everything is going to be all right, now answer that phone."

So there wasn't time for me to get my own personal emotions involved because there was still a job to be done that had to be done right then.

P: You had stayed on, then, in working in the press secretary's office. Is this a normal procedure through announcements and things?

T: Any time he's speaking, there's usually someone here because the phones immediately begin to ring; people calling in either for him or against him, thinking that's the greatest statement anybody ever made, or the man must be insane to say that. You get both sides of it. But that night there were more people calling in crying saying, "He can't do that; he's got to run again." Everybody was grabbing phones; the switchboard just got so jammed up that we couldn't get all the calls through. Everybody who possibly could was on a phone taking calls and trying to reassure people that the world hadn't come to an end, or at least just taking messages that we promised to pass on.

P: When did it sort of hit you--what he had done--and what did you think about it?

T: Well, up until after the nomination I was just sure that there was some miracle that was going to happen. I had no earthly idea what the plans were, but I just couldn't see his not going back for four more years.

P: What do you think most influenced him to take that course of action?

T: I think just what he said, that he could be more effective and could come nearer assuring peace by not being a candidate than he could by letting the country be torn apart--

(End of tape)

INTERVIEWEE: MRS. WILLIE DAY TAYLOR (Tape 2)

INTERVIEWER: DOROTHY PIERCE

(Continuation of Tape 1)

P: Mrs. Taylor, we just finished the other tape and we were talking about the March 31 speech in which he withdrew. Do you think he achieved the reasons that he gave for withdrawing? Has it been worth it?

T: Only history can judge that because I'm so badly biased. I think he would have done better by staying in because he's the only person I can see leading this country, but I'll admit that that's bias on my part.

P: How do you think the family felt about this--the girls and Mrs. Johnson--did they ever talk to you about it? Would they have liked him to stay?

T: The girls at the moment felt that their father was letting their husbands down, because they felt sure that nobody but their father could be President, and both their husbands were in Viet Nam. But then after they had had time to think about it, I think they became reconciled to the fact that their father had usually been a pretty wise man and that he probably knew more about what he was doing than they did, and that it was his decision and therefore it was the right decision.

P: And Mrs. Johnson?

T: Mrs. Johnson I think felt that it would prolong the life of her husband for him to do that.

P: You mentioned an area here--there are so many, Mrs. Taylor, that I did not ask you about--and it's both the girls' marriages while their father was the President. Those were quite exciting events in there--there are not too many of them happening during the history of the presidencies.

What do you recall about either one of them? Did you have any activities connected with them?

T: I think they both made marvelous selections. They picked exactly the right man for their particular temperaments. The boys they married are as different as the girls are, but they each made the right selection. They have both always shown marvelous judgment in friends, though. Never gone through any hippie wild stage where you had to wonder what was going to happen next. They have had extremely high quality friendships.

P: Did you think Luci was a little young to marry?

T: Oh, yes, I thought she was too young; I wanted her to get her degree first. And I explained in great detail that I thought that, but her parents had given their permission and there wasn't anything I could do about it.

P: Did you have any activities concerning publicity and press demands regarding either one of the girls' marriage?

T: No, I took leave and handled the wedding gifts.

P: What do you recall about those? I know there were a great many.

T: Oh, there were hundreds and hundreds of them. And of course you expect nice gifts from family but the most touching things were sent in from small children or old ladies--handmade gifts that people who didn't know them sent them because they felt that they knew them and they loved them.

P: Did the girls keep all these things?

T: Yes, there will be some of the things shown in the Library; it'll show typical gifts that they received and some of the foreign gifts will probably go on display because those were really not personal things. They were not given to them because they were Luci and Lynda; they were given to them because they were the daughters of the President. But most of the

gifts from the public were because they felt that they knew and loved the children themselves; not just because they were the President's daughters.

P: I just have to include this question. Patrick Lyndon is such a hit with his grandfather, obviously. How would you describe the President's responsiveness to his grandson and his relations with his sons-in-law, too?

T: He has a very warm cordial relationship with both sons-in-law, and I think if he has fifty grandchildren, they each one will be an adored one and each one have its own special side.

P: There seems to be so many things I should ask you about, Mrs. Taylor, on this because I know of your long association, but I would like to ask you one question now. When you first knew Mr. Johnson and comparing it with the present day, the President, how would you compare the early man you knew and the now President of the United States? How has he changed?

T: Well, he is the same basic man, but of course he has grown--any man grows as he gets older--matures--he has more experience on which to base his judgment.

P: Do you feel that Mr. Johnson is an intellectual or has an intellectual approach to things?

T: I have never been quite sure by what is meant by "intellectual" approach. In fact I have--my hackles kind of rise at the word intellectual because I think it has been misused so much until the word really has no meaning now. I think he's an extremely intelligent person and so many of the so-called intellectuals I've found strangely lacking in common sense.

P: Has Mr. Johnson always used the telephone as much as he does now? He's known for his telephone communications everywhere.

T: Since 1948 he has, but before that I don't know.

P: To conclude our remarks, Mrs. Taylor, I would like to ask you how you

think Mr. Johnson will be rated over a period of time once he does leave office?

T: I think he will be rated extremely highly. Most of the things that have been unfavorable, if you'll stop to look at it, have been nit-picking things. The fact that he picked up the dogs by the ears once I don't think is of great consequence, although it did receive a great deal of publicity. I think the things that he's been criticized for the most are things that will make no difference at all in history, whether he says "Amurica" [Texas drawl] or not will not affect history one way or the other, any more than President Kennedy's saying "Cuber" [for Cuba] is going to change anything in history. I think the things that he has done for this nation will show a greater importance as time goes on.

P: During his presidency have you traveled with him on any of his many trips?

T: Yes, I've taken two foreign trips with him and a few domestic, but I haven't traveled a great deal with him. Again, it's a matter of being a backstop here.

P: And it was in regard to his press office?

T: Yes.

P: How would you assess his press relations abroad?

T: I think everything has always gone rather smoothly. He has been down in countries at the same time the country was down, whether--slashing out to find somebody to blame for it. When something goes wrong for you, you'd much rather be able to blame a neighbor for having caused that trouble than to say that you had done something stupid on your own part. That's just human nature, and I think that the same thing with his press relations abroad. When things get tough at home then they were looking--and since this is the most powerful nation, it's much easier to blame the President

of some other nation than it is to blame things around your own home.

P: With your near seventeen years of contact with the Johnsons and the First Family, how do you think they will be remembered?

T: I don't know; that's hard to judge because I know I'm biased; I know I cannot give a completely objective opinion. But I think all four of them will be dealt with kindly by historians.

P: Are there any events that we have not discussed that I should ask you about? Things that have left strong impressions with you over the years?

T: I don't think of any right now. If you think of things later, I'm always here.

P: I want to thank you very much. You've been most cooperative and helpful.

T: I've enjoyed it; I just wish I had been more the center of things and could have given you more accurate history.

P: Telling a little about what happened and who was there is helpful. Thank you.

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By WILLIE DAY TAYLOR

to the

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Director, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library for Archivist of the United States

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