

INTERVIEW I

DATE: February 24, 1971
INTERVIEWEE: J. ROY WHITE
INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ
PLACE: Mr. White's office in Austin, Texas

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F: Now, Roy, we'll just relax on this thing and not be stiff. To begin with, when did you first get acquainted with the Johnsons?

W: I don't know whether that's an untellable story or not.

F: There are no untellable stories.

W: The first time I had ever met Lady Bird and the President, the then-Senator, was out at the Ranch when we were building the first guest house.

F: This is when he's in the Senate?

W: In the Senate. I can't date it precisely, it's in 1953, 1954, somewhere along in there. I had been working with Max [Brooks] on the remodeling of the old house.

F: At this time the old house was still the old house? It hadn't been redone?

W: No, it had been redone. I'd been out there with Max, and Max was taking the lead on that.

F: Was this how Brooks, Barr, Graber, and White got involved as a firm with the Johnsons?

W: Yes.

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F: Of course, I guess Max and Marietta Brooks would go back a lot in a personal [way].

W: Max's connections would go back much further. I'd rather you get his story.

F: Yes, I'll do that.

W: I could tell you but--

F: All I was trying to establish was that it was an easy lead-in to get this firm to look after the reconstruction of the house.

W: Yes. But prior to that I had done many things for the Johnsons. My first visit out there was on an inspection trip of the guest house, which had been started, typically enlarged before we finished the plans, so the plans I had were out of scale. I met Mrs. Johnson at that time out there. We were walking through the house, and it was under construction.

F: You're talking about the guest house.

W: The guest house. We were talking about various details and problems. She looked out the window, and she said, "Oh, my goodness, here comes my husband. We'll just have to stop now, Roy. I must devote all of my time to him." This was at the time of his recuperation from his heart attack, and Lyndon walked from the house over to the guest house in his jockey shorts.

F: I see. You felt like devoting a little attention to him yourself, didn't you?

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W: So the first time I ever shook hands with the then-Senator Johnson was, I believe he must have had slippers on or something, but he was in his jockey shorts and nothing else. I didn't know whether to laugh, cry, run, or what.

F: Or look.

W: Or look. But she was just as much at ease as if he was there without jockey shorts, with pants on. Anyway, that was very briefly done, and they just moved away. That was my first instance of the feeling that Mrs. Johnson drops things to be helpful to her husband. I don't know other instances when I talked to the President in those early days. Most of the time I was involved with Mrs. Johnson.

I prepared a report which I gave to them at Christmas time three or four years ago. It was a one printed thing, and I'm afraid it got lost in the shuffle at one time. But it gave the history of the construction work that went on at the ranch house. I have a copy of that. I think Dorothy Territo finally has the book. I had it bound. Somehow it didn't seem to go over too greatly, but I thought it was a valuable record.

F: You continued then with the other guest houses as they came along?

W: I don't recall what the sequence of events were. I believe the next thing that was done at the house was the addition of the office, what they called the board room. That was his office. Then some work, quite an extensive remodeling, in the construction of the new dining room and kitchen facilities, the addition of

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two bathrooms upstairs, creating two guest rooms for the--who was it that visited them out at the Ranch from Iran?

F: I think you're thinking of the fellow from Pakistan.

W: Pakistan, yes. At that time we had to build two bathrooms and finish out two guest rooms in about four weeks' time.

F: Were most of the jobs like this, sort of done on a short emergency scale?

W: It is always an emergency, and it always costs so much more than if it wasn't an emergency.

F: Is this because of a special need that arises, or just a failure to get at something in time?

W: This was a special need. The folks are always in a hurry to get it done.

F: Does the President ride herd on these jobs, or does Mrs. Johnson pretty well do the superintending?

W: She does. She does the actual riding until certain points when he can certainly take over in no uncertain terms. There are some spots here that I could tell you about later on.

F: I'd like to hear about them.

W: I think we're jumping.

F: All right. Are they great on cost construction? Do they watch costs pretty closely, or do they pretty well say, "Let's do it, and find out what it's going to cost after we've done it"?

W: I think they are certainly, and she especially is, great on wanting to know and trying to keep costs down. On the other hand,

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the very way they have had to do things there's no way to control. They do not visualize things too well, either one of them, and especially the President. He almost has to see it before he believes it.

F: When he sees it, is he always satisfied, or did it not come out the way he sort of expected it and therefore you're always improving and changing?

W: You don't hear anything very much if it's all right. If there's something that he doesn't like, you know about it in no uncertain terms.

F: Who makes the final decision in this? Does Mrs. Johnson, or does the President? Or is it arrived at by some kind of head-knocking?

W: I think that Mrs. Johnson would always do her best to defer to what her husband wanted. Now it doesn't sound like that, and he will say in a joking manner many times that, "This is what Roy White and Lady Bird wanted," that he had nothing to do with it, that they just do these things and they spend his money, you know, remarks of that sort.

F: Are they great people for sort of changing plans in midstream?

W: That's a little hard for me to answer. I don't know. From what I've said, you'd think they are. But generally when they find out that it's too much trouble to change or too costly or something, they'll stay along with what they've got.

F: You can pretty well lay out the practical facts of something and they will accept it?

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W: I try to, and they sometimes accept it.

F: Allowing for the sort of tension of the offices that he has held, is it much different from working with any other sort of a well-to-do family with positive ideas?

W: Yes, I'd say it would be.

F: Why?

W: I guess basically for the fact that it, as I said, is difficult for them to visualize just exactly what you mean. It takes maybe a little bit longer to get a point across. For instance, I had to do a full-scale drawing of the mantle in her bedroom before she really could see what I was talking about. I did two. I did one which we discarded, and then I did another one which was fine. Maybe I wouldn't have had to do that, maybe I could have done it easier some other way by further explanation, but it was just simpler to do a full-scale drawing of it. Many times I've gone over floor plans with both of them, and he says, "Fine, this is good, go ahead." All of a sudden after this is done they wake up to the fact the door's in the wrong place, or they never did want a closet there at all, or this is where his bed goes. All sorts of things come up that he does not have time to visualize. I think that's the great problem.

F: Do you get the feeling sometimes that after you have made some sort of a presentation of a plan that he goes on thinking about it along with all the other things on his mind? So that along in the middle

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of the night, or three days later or something, he's likely to get an idea that--in other words, he doesn't just come in and listen to you and then when you all have finished. . . .He doesn't drop the subject until the next time he sees you?

W: I was never in too close contact with the President on any of these things. I could count them on one hand, I guess. If he did have changes in thought, why, he passed them on to Mrs. Johnson, and she assimilated them and digested them and passed them on to me. I never knew whether it was his idea or her idea or just what.

F: When he had his heart attack, did that cause any changes in the arrangement of the house to make it easier for him?

W: I don't think so. I was not as close to the situation then as I became after he became vice president.

F: Did you have to make some extensive alterations then when he became vice president?

W: No, I think that the greatest alterations to the house were done while he was senator, except the big bedroom addition was done while he was president. But the addition of the office, the enlargement of the dining room and kitchen and various other things that happened were all done while he was senator.

F: When you made these additions, did you also keep in mind the out-buildings? Was there a conscious effort to make some kind of a pattern around the place, or did things just grow up as necessity dictated?

W: I didn't have too much control over the pattern of the place for a long time, and the house grew like Topsy. Fortunately, I was able

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evidently to do it so that it seems to have fit together pretty well. I don't mean to be bragging about it.

F: Was there a conscious effort on the part of the Johnsons to achieve what I think has been achieved, and that it is a very livable place? I've been out there with all sorts of visitors who have always commented on the fact that, "This is just a good place to live," in some surprise. They're expecting something a little more stiff, particularly while he was president.

W: I'd attribute that to their way of life; to his having lived and [been] born and raised in that country, the hope for comfortable things and certainly her feelings about it. I think they were both intent on creating a home and a livable place, a comfortable place.

F: Did the girls ever volunteer any ideas to you?

W: No, I don't believe so.

F: It was primarily Mrs. Johnson all the way through?

W: Only a few connections [with the girls]. I think I was called out to Luci's house once when they bought that place, and Luci had something to say about some changes she wanted made, some closet space.

F: Did you redo the Lewis place?

W: Yes.

F: Any story behind that?

W: Yes.

F: Let's hear it.

W: That was a project that Mrs. Johnson wanted hands off. I can tell

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you more about the Boyhood Home, too. She had been through some building programs, and she just was not in the mood, or had the time, or had the feeling for remodeling another house. I've forgotten the occasion, I was out there for something, and he picked me up once and ran me over to the old Lewis house. We galloped through it, and he made motions with his arms here and there and what he wanted to do, and that was it. I was supposed to take it over from that point.

Well, of course, I made a start, developed a plan. I coordinated all of my work through Jesse Kellam. He was my intermediary. I would do things and I would send it to Jesse, and he would forward it on. Whether it got to the then-Vice President or to Mrs. Johnson, I don't know. But anyway I'd get back the answers. So we almost proceeded on that basis all the way through the development of any planning on that place, and there wasn't a great deal of planning. It was a restoration sort of a thing. At that time they were working this contractor up there who is excellent, Albert Weirich and his men. We just moved in over there and did what we thought ought to be done as we went along.

F: Did you pretty well keep the same construction team all the time?

W: Yes.

F: There wasn't a lot of changing around?

W: No, there was not. There were some instances in the last few years where some other people were involved. Dale Malechek's house, for

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instance, was built by someone out of Waco, I believe, and Stein Lumber company in Fredericksburg has done some work for them in the last year.

F: Did you ever get the feeling that some contractors or subcontractors wanted to take advantage of the fact that he was president?

W: No. Weirich was really employed, I believe, by them. I never quite knew what the arrangement was. He would buy materials, and I presume the company would pay for the materials, then pay Weirich and his workmen. They were essentially in the employ of the Texas Broadcasting Company.

F: Was something always going on? Were you always tinkering with something or always planning the next project?

W: I never was planning the next project, but I was always tinkering. I never knew what would happen next. I guess I've made trips up there every week for the last ten years, or maybe eight years anyway.

F: You've been several times around the world between here and Johnson City.

W: Of course now that they're back in Texas, why they're taking care of the details. I'm much further removed from the situation than I was when they were in Washington.

F: When he was vice president and president, did a lot of the working with you and the planning and the rearranging and so forth go on by telephone from Washington, or did they wait until they'd get home?

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W: Very little directly from him. He would pick up the phone and call me at most opportune moments and talk to me about things. It would surprise me every time. But a good bit of it for a while was by letter with Mrs. Johnson and through Ashton Gonella. But while he was president they would be down here periodically. I would always be called out there one day and come back home, and then get called the next day and sometimes come back home the same day and have to go back the same day. That was fine.

F: This doesn't pertain to Johnson, but it's part of the pattern. Does the fact that you and the remainder of your partners are in a sense the President's architect get you attention from places that you ordinarily would not receive it? Were other people trying to in a sense buy your services just because you did have a relationship with the President?

W: I don't know. I don't believe so. Max could answer that better than I could. So far as the kind of work I've done for them, which has been, well, you know what it is, small work, nobody has come to me and said, "I want you to do this because you are architect for the President." No, I don't think we've capitalized on anything like that.

F: Which came first, the reconstruction of the Birthplace or the fixing up of the Boyhood Home? Or did they sort of run together?

W: The Boyhood Home was first.

F: When did that start?

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W: This is what bothers me about ---

F: We don't care about dates. I mean, while he's senator or after he becomes--?

W: No, while he was vice president. I've forgotten the particular occasion. I probably can find it or look for it. No, that was before I started this thing [a daily record], that's right.

F: With the Boyhood Home, this was just a sort of updating and refinishing and so forth.

W: It was never intended as a restoration.

F: So you had no great problem of plans and trying to figure out what had happened in the past?

W: No. Here again was a project that Mrs. Johnson kept hands off, that's where my two or three very interesting stories come in.

F: Let's hear them.

W: But it was a direct word from him that I should make some studies as to what could be done with the Boyhood Home. At that time there was no plan for how it would be used, there was nothing definite as to what they'd do with it.

F: The Johnsons owned it still?

W: The Johnsons had acquired it. It had been sold out of the family, and they had evidently just acquired it.

F: It was just sitting there like any other house in Johnson City?

W: Yes. Incidentally, they did not have the full cooperation of Lucia and Rebekah, right away. In fact the big blowup, which I believe might have been hinted at maybe in Liz's book

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They had had a big free-for-all at Christmas time about the fence around the Boyhood Home. I think Rebekah kind of stayed out of the picture completely, and Lucia finally came back in and was very helpful in bringing things together and furnishing it. But that may have been the reason why Mrs. Johnson didn't want anything [to do with it]. She had that feeling, and she may have preferred not to have to be drawn into it.

F: What was this do you think originally? A matter of sisters feeling that he's pre-empting something that belongs to all of them?

W: I believe so.

F: This is something I've wondered at, and I've seen it in Sam Houston Johnson. Despite the pride in having your brother as president, is there also what you get in almost any large family when one child sort of outstrips all the others, a feeling of a little bit of envy or something?

W: I never was close enough to the family like that to know. I just don't know. The only one little instance I can quote is on the Birthplace bit, and we can talk about that later on.

But staying with the Boyhood Home, I did make some studies as to what could be done with it. As I said, it was a flexible sort of thing, no one knew what would happen with it. They just wanted to maybe take out a partition here and throw in a big room and make the room large enough for meetings of Johnson City people, or create a library there. Nobody knew exactly what, except that

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they did want an apartment for someone to live in the place, and they wanted a kitchen that would be adequate to serve groups of people.

There again I just almost was on my own until it came down to making some very definite decisions. I recall one time, which seems almost ludicrous, out of character, out of place or something, I had to go up to KTBC to talk to the Vice President about the color of the tile around his mantelpiece and bring selections for him to see. That disturbed me just a little bit to think that he'd have to take the time to do that. At any rate I went up and talked to him. We had a great conference. He picked out the tile color which was good, and we went ahead and finished that. I found old mantelpieces to replace the horrible ones that had been installed in past years.

I guess I must tell you about Aunt Frank's picture. I was told that he wanted to hang Aunt Frank's painting of bluebonnets over the mantel in what used to be the dining room. I believe maybe this was a hope from Mrs. Johnson, too. There was no place in the ranch house for it; it was too big. It would stretch from here to yonder. So I got measurements on it and checked the measurements over the mantel and it was still too big.

F: There was no hall that would take it.

W: It was an oblong sort of a thing about two feet high and about six feet long, and the bluebonnets just went on forever.

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I cut off one end of it and put it over the mantle. I don't know whether they ever knew that it was cut off or not. Of course Aunt Frank's dead, and I hope she forgives me. But that was one of my little private projects.

F: You tampered with art.

W: And there was enough left to have another bluebonnet picture which they could have framed.

Then the wallpaper story. I think I've told you this before.

F: No, I don't remember that.

W: Mrs. Johnson had kept hands off, but she'd enter into it of course. I believe she always comes into the wallpaper picture. So we came up to the point of selecting the wallpaper for the sitting room. It was the one room that remained just about as it used to. And I met Mrs. Johnson out there one morning. We had sample books galore, and the usual procedure and the confusion of trying to decide which one. We finally narrowed down to three samples of wallpaper. We sat them up on the wall: one, two, and three.

F: You're using books just like any housewife?

W: Yes, wallpaper books. Mrs. Johnson finally said, "Well, I believe this is the one we ought to select. I hope Lyndon will like this." That was, say, number three. "Well, fine," [I said] "I'm going back up to the Ranch on another matter. I've got to meet Dale, and maybe I'll get to talk to him."

So I went on back up, and I was with Dale in the car. The Vice President came up in the jeep with I believe Marie Fehmer and one of the

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other secretaries, or someone else was riding with them. At that time we were busy installing--I've forgotten what the remodeling project was, it was a small project, but he had told me in no uncertain terms to never build anything without putting Musak in it. And I had committed the unpardonable sin, I hadn't allowed anything for Musak. So he stopped me. He jumped Dale about something, I've forgotten what it was. Then he turned loose on me on this Musak and let me have it from here to yonder in no uncertain terms. He got through, kind of leaned back, then he kind of grinned at me, and he said, "Roy, now would you mind telling me which one of those samples up there of that wallpaper Lady Bird likes." So I told him number three. He said, "Well, I just wanted to be sure I'd pick the right one. I'm going to go up and look at them, and I'll pick number three."

F: Like a dutiful husband.

W: I use that as an instance because he can get you so on edge and can chew you out so thoroughly, and then he turns it off like that and turns the charm on and makes you feel all right after all.

F: He never himself seems to have any carry-over of that ill feeling. I mean, it's out of his system, and he's through with it.

W: I think so. It disturbed me for a while. I took Liz Carpenter back to town one day from out there, and I was concerned about the fact that I had gotten chewed out by the Vice President about something. She said, "Well, Roy, you are now a member of the group. You're

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fully initiated; you're a member of the group now. You haven't lived really until you've been chewed out by Lyndon Johnson. Now you're in. You're all right."

F: You're one of the family. How long did you work on the Boyhood Home, roughly?

W: I don't know. I guess four or five months.

F: You made not so much an attempt to make it precisely as it had been when he lived there as you did just to give a sort of a feeling for the place at the time and make it sort of attractive?

W: Right. We did replace some Victorian gingerbread. That was about the only restoration actually that I did. From pictures I could tell that I could get the detail of the design. We had that reproduced and replaced.

F: Had there been a fence around it?

W: The white picket fence was dilapidated and practically gone. Someone down the line proposed that we put the cedar rail fence around it, which was probably the most expedient and economical thing to do, but which did not suit the rest of the family at all. They wanted the picket fence around the house. Maybe there were other things, too, I don't know.

F: Was it after this you got going on the Birthplace?

W: I didn't start the Birthplace until he was president.

F: Did you sense at the time that you were building, in effect, a national monument, a national historic site?

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- W: Yes, I think I did, because we wouldn't have gone to the trouble of documenting this thing quite so much if I hadn't.
- F: Were there foundations? How did you determine what had been there?
- W: This is my longest report that I can get you to hear, and I'll have to say it the way it is because there were conflicting ideas about the President's birthplace. In fact, Time magazine came out with a picture of the President's birthplace on the cover, which was a board and batten three-room shack on the site of the birthplace. But I had a call from Jesse Kellam in January.
- F: This is right after he's president?
- W: Yes, in 1965, to go out and measure that building, that old house. "The President wants it fixed up and painted and restored. Let him know what could be done with it." I said, "What is it, Jesse?" "Well," he said, "it's the birthplace of the President." "All right, I'll go out." So I went out, and I looked at that shack. I didn't believe it, but I went ahead and measured it, came back, and made some drawings of possibilities.
- F: It had been out of the family too for a while?
- W: Yes. I made some drawings of possibilities, and then I had to go back to recheck, as I often do. I was sad because if that was where the President was born, I was just disappointed.
- F: Did it have the dog-run?
- W: No. It was just a three-room shack with a porch on one corner of it, thin board and batten walls, no lights, no plumbing, no nothing.
- F: What is batten?

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W: Here's a board and here's a batten that you nail on top of it. The second time out I had a little more time, and I started poking around and saw some growth over to the west of this house, a line of weeds and stuff and trash. I went over there to look. I found loose rock, and I poked a little further and I found foundation. I poked further, and I found where a chimney was. Then I looked around a little bit more and found slab over what was evidently a well or something. Then I looked still further, and I found another foundation some distance away from this which, well, I didn't know what it was, I thought maybe it was a fireplace or something. I came on over close to this shack which was sitting over here and found some more stones on this side. That's all shown in this thing I'll give you.

Well, I just decided then and there I was going to do some measuring and measure the length of that stone wall that I'd found, the location of the well, the location of the slab here in front, the location of the other stone. So I did that and put it together dimension-wise. It came out a wall here and a wall here and a thing here and a fireplace over here, evidently a fireplace. I went back to Jesse. I said, "Jesse, you've asked me to remodel this house over here, and I don't believe it's the original house." He said, "Well, Roy, you go ahead and make your investigations. You do whatever you want to about this. You go ahead on that basis. I can't tell you what to do about the old house." In the meantime the magazine had come out saying that was the birthplace.

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I made my measurements, and I started talking. I guess Cousin Oreole was one of the first people I ever talked to. Cousin Oreole told me in no uncertain terms where the house was. Cousin Oreole was always a little bit confused about how far it was behind the creek, but she recalled it, she knew where it was. She took me over there and showed me. I showed her the foundations, and she was satisfied. She described the house to me. She told me where the kitchen was and the big room on this side and the big room on this side. Lyndon was born in this room, and the dog-trot in the middle. There was a well right back here in the corner with a pump on it, all sorts of things of that sort, and where the old road used to be. I had enough there then to feel like somebody must be confused, and I went back to Jesse.

F: How far was the shack from the foundation stones you found?

W: About two feet, right adjacent to it. And the material in the old shack was obviously out of an old building, some of the boards. I put together what I thought was a plan of this house and went back to Jesse. I said, "Jesse, this, I'm convinced, was the original house, and not this."

F: The President himself was too young, really, to have remembered, wasn't he?

W: Oh, no, he remembered it.

F: He remembered it?

W: I finally came to the realization that he remembered it, and that's the little thing that bothers me there.

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F: Let's get on with the story.

W: No, the fact that he remembered it, and yet I was told that this was the house. Maybe he didn't know that anybody had issued this order to restore the shack. I'm sure that was the case so far as Jesse was concerned.

F: It had started somewhere down the line.

W: Maybe so. In fact, Mrs. Johnson in driving by one day with me pointed over there, and she said, "I understand that's where Lyndon was born, in that little old shack over there."

But anyway, I finally had authority to go ahead and proceed with as much investigation as I could. The next thing I did was to talk to Rebekah. Lucia, I believe, wasn't available or something. Anyway, I talked with Rebekah, and Rebekah, well, this will give you enough of her reactions. We had a good long talk, and she said, "Now if Lyndon wants to say that he was born in a shack, well that's all right with me. But I was born in a nice house, and it didn't even have oilcloth on the dining room table." She said, "You can take it from me that I was born in a nice house." So I proceeded from there to others. I did finally talk to Lucia, and I talked to Aunt Josefa. I talked to Ava Cox; A. W. Moursund.

F: Does A. W.'s acquaintance with him go back that far? I mean would he have known personally?

W: No, I don't believe [so]. The only reason I wanted to check with A. W. was to clear some of these things because A. W. was pretty well in charge out there, in a responsible position. Of course I

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talked again with Jesse; with Lawrence Klein's parents.

F: Who's Lawrence Klein?

W: He's the man on the Ranch who does everything from fixing the leak in the faucet to working over the air conditioning system.

F: Just a general factotem?

W: He's everything, electrician, plumber, everything.

F: K-L-E-I-N?

W: K-L-E-I-N. I don't know whether you're interviewing people like that or not. I mean anyone in the ranch employ.

F: Yes.

W: But when I went to see his mother and father, another interesting little story, yes, they remembered the house completely. "It had a fireplace on the west side," the old man said. The old lady said, "No, dear, it was on the east side." They had quite an argument as to which place the fireplace was, and I finally discovered that there was a fireplace on both sides. I talked to Kittie Clyde Leonard, talked to Mrs. Ernest Hodges, Alfred Enderlin, various people in the neighborhood that remembered the house and remembered people that lived in the house long after the Johnson family moved out.

Then I began frantically trying to find photographs of the old house. I plowed through everything I could find. Finally in the book that the President's mother wrote--what's the name of it?

F: A Family Album.

W: A Family Album--I found a picture of an old house. But I could

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never establish whether that was the house or not. But by that time I had established the size of the rooms on each side through talking, and the width of the dog-trot. There were various opinions as to whether there was one big kitchen or a kitchen and a dining room. I had put together a plan and an elevation, and I still couldn't find the photograph. We finally went to work-- Albert Weirich did this work incidentally--had the house under construction, and through the mail one day with no comment, no letter, no nothing, from the White House I received two pictures of the old house before it was torn down in 1930-something.

F: You didn't know whether to be glad or sad, did you?

W: If I had just had it sooner, it could have been a closer reproduction. It's a reasonable facsimile. It's amazing how accurate it was. I found a lightning rod conductor thing on one side of the house still there with the wire attached to it, and when we got to digging on the other side of the house, we found the other one on the other side buried under the ground. So that fixed the width of the house and sort of proved it. It was within six inches of the wall of the house. But so far as photographs, the only thing I got was this thing after we had started, and it was too late to make any changes in the roof lines or anything else. Besides that, the man wanted it finished.

F: You had the usual deadline of yesterday? Was this your first run on a real sort of a historical reconstruction? I know you've gotten very active in courthouse squares and things like that.

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W: I believe it was, except for the Lewis ranch. Now the Scharnhorst thing is something else. We did work out at the Scharnhorst place, too, but not to the extent that we did in some of the others. But I'd done some remodeling and restoration work out there and had done the Lewis house. I had tried to recapture the spirit of the old school building, the high school in Johnson City.

F: Did you work over at Albert at the schoolhouse there?

W: No. Have they ever done anything with the Albert schoolhouse?

F: I don't know that they have. Was that post office at Hye always more or less in that sort of a pattern, or was that done to take advantage of the fact that we've got a president in our midst?

W: No. I remember that building long before I ever heard of the Johnsons, and that pattern, that design on the front, was always there. Now, they have kept it brightly painted in the later years.

F: But that has been about the only major change.

W: Yes.

F: Did the President take a good deal of interest in his boyhood home? Did he ever come around to see what you were doing, or did he pretty well stay hands off until you got through?

W: I think the period of time that it was done there was hardly any contact ever between either one of them. In fact, I don't remember that I saw Mrs. Johnson for such a long period of time.

F: You were pretty much on your own, working blind, weren't you?

W: Well, I really was except that I had Jesse to fall back on, and between us, we decided what to do. But I had to decide on material,

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colors, fireplace design.

F: Are you given any budget on that kind of thing, or are you just told to do the best job you can?

W: No. I have no idea what it cost myself. In fact, I have no idea what anything cost out there.

F: You were just given a job to do.

W: I only hear that it cost too damned much!

F: Is Weirich anyone that I ought to interview, or would he be pretty much a repeat of you?

W: I don't know. It might be a repeat. I think he's an interesting gentleman. He was involved in so many things out there that I was involved in, at least during the presidential years, well even before that. I think my first experience with Weirich was when the dining room-kitchen remodeling was done, and there I was working very closely with Mrs. Johnson and with Weirich.

F: Was the dining room set up with an idea of the view that you do have?

W: Yes. Mrs. Johnson wanted that picture window view.

F: Did that, as far as you know, determine what went outside so as not to impede the view, or to put something in there that was less than pleasant?

F: When that dining room was done the surroundings of the house had not been thought about too much. I think the improvement to that has come since he was president. They have done extensive changes in the landscaping around the house which came in at the time that the bedroom addition was done.

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F: Did they ever employ a landscape architect as far as you know, or did they just sort of work this out in harmony with what they had?

W: They employed Richard Myrick from Dallas, who worked with me. This was at the time of the bedroom additions in 1968, or whatever it was. She had Richard Myrick come in and confer with me and with her on landscaping and thinking on the entire surroundings of the house.

One, I guess maybe, interesting thing to talk about would be the old barn there that is still there. We finally got the shop out of the way, which was a green metal building to the west of the house where those oak trees are. We finally got that moved, and the President wanted the barn torn down--no reason for it to be there. I believe everybody, even including Mrs. Johnson, didn't want to tear the barn down. I had to speak against it as strongly as I could. Everyone always felt that the barn completed the package, so to speak. It did not have unpleasing lines. It looked like a farm building. It was being used for something else, I believe, but it seemed to fit where it was. Another thing, if it were torn down, you'd get the view of all the farm equipment and the hangar and goodness knows what all goes on behind that area. So up to the present time the barn is still there.

F: Is this the one that has become a sort of a theater?

W: No. That's the hangar.

F: You didn't do anything to the barn? You just pled for its retention?

W: We just left it alone. The hangar was done by others. I'm sure it was federal people who moved in and created the theater there.

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- F: When he became president of course he's got that problem of instant communication, not to mention world leaders coming there and so on. Did this pose any architectural rearrangement for you, to get in all those communication lines and everything else that went with it?
- W: Yes. We had to provide complete communication system, call buttons, telephones.
- F: I presume this was run to a certain extent by the Signal Corps.
- W: It was. So far as my planning it or designing it, it was out of our hands here. All we had to do was say, "We've got to have this here." I had to coordinate between what the Signal Corps--
- F: That's what I wondered. They had priority in where things went and how they were set up.
- W: Yes, sir. Absolutely!
- F: And you had to figure out how to keep it pleasing.
- W: Absolutely. In fact, I'm sure there were things that went on out there that I don't know anything about. I know that in his bedroom and in the bathroom there's this huge panel of everything that he needs right at his fingertips, I suppose even a hot line at one time, of course.
- F: Did you sort of get the idea of the landscaping that went on across the highway, Ranch Road 1, or was this a Johnson innovation? Or was this the friends of Johnson who got out and raised the money for the state park? How did this whole idea get going?
- W: The state park bit?
- F: Yes. This is part of the pattern. It's integrated, in other words,

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into the Johnson complex.

W: I think the start of the state park you would get from someone else.

F: That's what I wondered, whether you were involved in it.

W: I was involved definitely when it finally got underway, but you can talk to. . . . The name escapes me again.

F: Will Odom maybe?

W: John Ben Shepperd, particularly, about putting this together, Will Odom of course. Have you interviewed Will?

F: I haven't interviewed Will. I have John Ben.

W: I think you need to interview Will. Have you proposed it?

F: Yes.

W: You see, all of my things get tied down to little stories.

F: Yes. Good. Go ahead.

W: And this is one of the bad ones. I had been pulled out there the year before in July to address the conservation group in Fredericksburg about the old houses we'd found on the place. That was after it had all been put together. But the park had really not been started except to put a sign up saying, "To Be Developed." I had been pulled in to that extent, and John Ben Shepperd was present and a good many others. I made my little talk about what should be done with these old houses, and that was the end of that. I didn't have any idea that anything else would happen so far as we were concerned.

Then in January of 1967, there are so many things here that-- January 3, 1967, it must have been a critical period for him. I

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can't tie my notes down and my diary down to what was going on at that time. I don't know. But you'd go up there sometimes and you'd find an electric tension in the air that you could almost touch, a tenseness. We'd done the Krim house. We went to a New Year's party at the Krim house, moved from there to the Moursunds on New Year's Eve, 1966, and the President and Mrs. Johnson left early. He just wasn't with it. You just feel those things, you know.

F: And the whole party feels it, I imagine.

W: At any rate, on the third of January I was asked to go up there and meet with the President and Mrs. Johnson and others on the park situation. Will Odom, I think John Ben was there, people from the State Highway Department, people from the federal government. The National Park Service became involved here. I've forgotten who all was there. I've got it down. We actually met out there at the park area. The President had arranged for bulldozers out there. He wanted work started immediately on the park. We had little red tapes to tie around trees we wanted to save. Everybody was busy scrambling here and there, and he was quite rough.

F: He was the foreman that day.

W: But on that day we actually got underway with the park.

F: In a case like that, did he know what he wanted, or did he just want to see things moving?

W: He just wanted things moved. He just wanted things underway.

F: I don't care whether there's a plan or not, let's just do it!

W: No, there was no plan whatsoever.

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F: Just get in there and dig.

W: "We want a gate, the main entrance here. Build us a deer-proof fence over here and a deer-proof fence over there, and we'll find some animals to put in it! We've got to get this park started!" So it got started. There was nothing other than that done for several months until--I don't remember the exact date when Will Odom--I was notified that the State Parks and Wildlife Department wanted us to begin work on a visitors center and a master plan for the park.

F: This became a formal arrangement finally.

W: Oh yes.

F: Not just Roy White hanging around to make the judgment.

W: Oh no. This was Brooks, Barr, Graeber and White working through the State Building Commission.

F: On contract.

W: On contract, under the direction of the State Parks and Wildlife Department.

F: How did the National Park Service get mixed up in it? Because I remember Doug Hubbard being there.

W: The National Park Service came in with, I think you know about as much about that as I do, the grant from Rockefeller--which one is it, Laurance?

F: Laurance.

W: --for monies to be spent in development of exhibit material or media.

F: Was there any great problem of coordination on this, or did people

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pretty well know what they were supposed to do?

W: I had a tremendous amount of coordinating to do, and I confronted the State Building Commission with everybody I had to talk to on this thing. They allowed us a little extra fee for travel and so forth. Yes, there was a good deal of coordinating, but I must say that everyone was eager to work and worked together. It took a heck of a lot of doing. As you know, we finally ended up with Kirby Keahey in Washington and our Washington office becoming a part of this.

F: How do you spell Keahey?

W: K-e-a-h-e-y. He's one of our associate partners. Because of his nearness to the National Park people, closeness in Washington, and other reasons, too, why he came into the thing with me. But that was after the visitors center itself was built. We did the visitors center here in this office, the first unit. There I was working directly through the chairman of the Parks and Wildlife Commission, Will Odom. But Mrs. Johnson was most active, as you know, in that and in meetings we had and so on. You know as much about that as I do.

F: But you have a little different vantage point. I didn't contribute anything, I just stood around.

W: Yes, you did. I think you contributed a theme to the whole visitors center when you brought out the ethnic value of the area there. The whole thing is based on that.

F: Did the President show a great deal of interest in it?

W: Yes.

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F: Did you have to alter anything in particular?

W: No. In fact, the design of the visitors center. . . I don't recall. I'm sure he saw it.

Another story.

F: Yes, let's hear it.

W: The location of the visitors center, the building itself. Who is the head of the National Park Service?

F: Conrad Wirth.

W: Conrad Wirth. He had done some studies on the park arrangement.

F: It had been thought about that far back.

W: That's right. That was turned over to me. There were two locations considered: one, Wirth's location, where it is; the other, the location where the State Parks and Wildlife people wanted to put it, which is over on the east side and not in view of the house. I had to write an evaluation of both sites and send them to Mrs. Johnson. Finally, I was asked out and met with President and Mrs. Johnson. The Krims were present, Dale Malechek, two of the Secret Service men, Jerry Kivett and I've forgotten who the other one was, and we looked at both sites. Mrs. Johnson was always in favor of where it is. The Secret Service men were aghast at the location, even though there

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were two deer-proof fences between the visitors center location and Ranch Road 1. We stood on that site and looked through the trees to where you see the front two-story porch of the house, and security did not want to put it there, because you've got a rifle shot straight into the house from that distance with a high-powered rifle.

I know just as sure as I'm sitting here that he knew then that he wasn't going to run for president, because he insisted that it go right there. I just have a feeling. That was my first feeling at all that [he wouldn't run].

F: Did you get it at the time?

W: I certainly did. Mrs. Johnson never did say anything except to refer to the fact that she would be so happy to be back in Texas, it was Lyndon's decision, and so on. But sometimes from the way she talked I'd get the feeling that she really wished he would, in her heart, maybe not run. But it was always up to him.

F: Did his announcement on March 31, 1968, that he was not going to run again change sort of the tempo of these various projects that were underway?

W: I don't recall what might have been underway at that time. I don't think it did.

F: Things just went on?

W: Yes.

F: What has it been like since he has been out? Because you had things under way that had to be wrapped up.

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W: Again, I just haven't had very much contact. It goes just as fast; it goes just as hectic. I got cussed out because I didn't have the swimming pool ready last summer, or whenever it was.

F: In the state park?

W: In the state park. Because Arthur Krim had built his in a month and a half time, and it was taking Roy White six months to draw the plans and another year to build it, words to that effect. I got chewed out from here to yonder on that one day after I had been in the very pleasant situation over at Fredericksburg with him at the opening of the park over there. That's what amazes you, you know. But of course that's when he was president. But since he has been home, there hasn't been a whole lot that I've had to do.

F: Were you the one who placed the swimming pool up there in the yard?

W: No.

F: Did you have anything to do with that balloon that went over it?

W: No.

F: And just as glad you didn't?

W: I'm being eloquent in my silence.

(Tape 2 of 2)

W: President and Mrs. Johnson had the group out in 1970, this was after he had come home, to review again all of the things that had to be finally put together at the park, artifacts and furniture and the things that the National Park Service were doing, markers and so on. Doug Hubbard was there. She [Mrs. Johnson] had her conference

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with the group first, and then finally he came in and gave a very good hearing, spent considerable time talking about not just that, but everything else out there, including the Nimitz place and the need to recognize Nimitz.

So Doug Hubbard finally came around to reading the wording of the material that was to be placed on these exhibits in the visitors center. Here was his desk, and here was his hat, and here were his things in his boyhood, and here was what happened while he was congressman, and here were the dinner plates, various items in that particular area. He finally came down to the last one, which ended the whole story. I don't recall the words exactly, I think I've got them somewhere, but it was a beautifully worded thing. It sounded a little sweet. He read it, and stopped. It referred to his bringing up in the country in that area, and he was close to the area and so on, had his feet planted in the soil. I don't know what it was. Well, you can find it, because when I tell you what it was you can find it right away.

There was silence. Mrs. Johnson said, "Well, Doug, I think it all sounds very, very well. I like it. I like everything but that last paragraph you read. It seems almost a little bit too sweet. It sounds a bit like 'twilight and evening star'." The President leaned back in his chair, and he said, "That's a quote from my address to Congress in 1963," or whenever it was. He said, "That's the way I ended my speech in Congress." Nobody

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said anything at all. Lady Bird finally said, "You know, on second thought, I believe it's just about right." But she had forgotten the quote. I wish you would find it for me.

F: I'll do that.

W: I don't know, I think I'm taking too much of your time.

F: No. Let's run down some of these bits and pieces you have there. You had sort of a competition between White House bathroom space and ranch house.

W: We were finishing the bedroom addition, which included the President's dressing room and bathroom. But it would take half a day to tell you all about that.

F: Take all the time you want.

W: No, I'm not going to do it. We had finally arrived at what to do. The project was under construction; it was then finally finished. One of the great requirements was that the shower have proper force of water. He wanted hard sprays, body sprays, and he had a number of body sprays at strategic locations in this shower. You'd turn it on and the force of the thing would almost blow you out, but that's the way he wanted it. So he'd come down and try out his bathroom, and it would be working just fine, "Boy, it was just wonderful!" He'd go back to the White House and tell them what they'd done, they had this spray that really was good, just about like he wanted it. So the White House people would get busy and change the shower sprays in the bathroom at the White House, get them all fixed up. He'd try them out; he'd come back down to the

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Ranch, "Gee, this thing doesn't have any pressure at all! Can't they find out what they did up there at the White House? That place up there is just great! It's just the exact pressure that I want! They couldn't do it any better! Roy, can't you get somebody to find out what they did up there?"

Actually, I did call back and forth. They changed it down here. He came back down, and, I give you my word, it happened three times. He went back up there and told them how great it was, and they changed it up there; and he came back down here and told them how great it was, and they put in more pumps and more pressure and had the thing just about blowing the shower door out. I think he was finally satisfied that they're about the same when it ended up, but it took about three times.

F: To get it all straight. You were out I think at Scharnhorst one New Year's, if I'm correct.

W: No. I mentioned being at the Krim place.

F: At the Krim place, yes.

W: That was the New Year's Eve that the Krims had just occupied the house. They'd been in it just two or three months, and they very kindly invited Mary and I to be with them that New Year's Eve and sort of have a party.

F: Did the Krims, so far as you could tell, come because they fell in love with the country, or was the President the type who was always selling people on his part of the world?

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W: I think honestly they fell in love with the country. Of course, I know that Arthur Krim had to be here a considerable amount of time. They started out with a minimum piece of property out there. It was always strange to me. But she loved it so well that they finally ended up buying the acreage they have. They consider it a retreat. I don't know how often they use it, but I think they really love the country. Their daughter came down quite a bit.

F: Go ahead with some of those--

W: A lot of this is Mrs. Johnson's.

F: Good.

W: Well, important or unimportant. Christmas wreaths. I was so wrapped up in the situation after the assassination and wanted to do something. I had been fairly close to them in various things, and that Christmas I decided I wanted to do something for them. I didn't know what to do. We had worked on the Lewis house, and we had worked on the Scharnhorst. One day I took two wreaths out and hung them on the door and just put "Roy" and "Mary" on them. That was my first conversation with Lady Bird of any sort after LBJ became president, and then we received a letter from him expressing their thanks.

She talked about taking these guests to the Lewis ranch on that cold, misty winter day and coming up on the house. It was just about dusk, and the light was on on the porch. She saw this wreath on the door, and she said it really did. . . She lapsed into a bit of sentimentality there, I believe, both of them. Little gestures like that would come out and make you feel like

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he's not so hard-boiled after all. She said, "I wish I could tell you who was a guest at the Lewis house, but I'm not allowed to." It was Sorensen, I think. I finally realized after some months. She didn't feel like she could say that the Sorensens were visiting there, I guess.

F: Did you pretty well have free run of the place? Could you go in almost anywhere you wanted to? Did you have keys to things?

W: I could go in then better than I can get in now, because nobody knows me much out there now except the old-timers. The new security officers don't realize who I am, and the gate's there, and you have to make yourself known. No, without the gates, and while he was president, you drove in and these security people finally came to know me. I'd always stop, but they'd just wave me on in.

F: What about going some place like the Lewis place? Would you have to go get keys, or did you have a key to it?

W: No. I had an "A" key for years. Kellam kept saying, "Keep it, it's yours." I finally sent it back to him about two years ago.

F: What's an "A" key?

W: It opens everything, except I think the people at the house have the key to the bedroom area back there. I don't know, I never tried. It would open everything on the place, gates and houses and everything. It was all a master key. So I never had any problem getting around. Sometimes I'd get caught prowling around through the Lewis ranch or Scharnhorst. Once I was apprehended. I had driven down some roads and come back to the main house to

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check something for Kellam, and I was on the porch. This security man drove up and said, "Well, I saw a car over there, Mr. White, and I had to come find out who it was. Go ahead." But they were always on the ball.

F: Did they keep security people on the other ranches?

W: No, they did not. A security man lived at Scharnhorst for a while.

F: That was a convenience?

W: Yes.

F: Go ahead.

W: Let me tell you this. Christmas 1965--some time before Christmas, no, it was after Christmas, I'm sure--I was there for some purpose, I don't know why, but they always asked me to stay for lunch. This was one of those times when things were a little on the tense side. We were having lunch, Christmas carols playing over the Musak. People were quiet and rather subdued, but talking. The President talked by phone at the dining room table to--I don't know whether it was the Secretary of State or not. I don't know who he was talking to for sure, the Secretary of War. I'd always try to close my mind to these things, that's why I don't remember what happened.

F: But he would never act secretive toward you?

W: No.

F: I mean, "Roy's part of the team and--"

W: That's right. I just never tried to remember it, and I'd deliberately forget it. But I remember this particular time because

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it hit my sensitivity a little bit, and sentimentality and so on. Here were the Christmas carols playing, and it was a foggy cold day outside, people were at the dinner table and it was Christmas. He was talking to someone about Vietnam; his words were, "Let's hold off through tonight and wait until we talk to Bob," talking about "my B-52's," things of that nature. And then [he] hung up. There wasn't a word said, and the carols went on playing. All of a sudden he became gentle, soft. Lady Bird spoke up, "Dear, you're trying so hard." Nobody said a word. Finally conversation started up again. But it was just the sort of a dramatic minute there that kind of got to me.

F: Did you have to remind yourself though sometimes as much as you were around that you are dealing with the president of the United States? I mean did you forget that at times?

W: I've often wondered.

F: Your mother didn't rear you to run around with presidents.

W: It's hard to answer. I think sometimes I would forget it. No, I don't know. I've often pondered that question myself. I just don't know. I think there were times when he was so. . . . A time like this. Of course I was aware he was president, but I had no tenseness, no anything that day..

F: This is Roy White who just happens to be around, and they ask him to drop in for lunch in effect. It's not like being invited out.

W: It never was that way. I want to make that clear. My relationship was purely on a business level, except for some rare times when she'd

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ask Mary and I out there just because she wanted to, for supper or something. I was asked to the White House, and every time I was asked there was some reason for my being there. I don't know, it's hard to say, but I was certainly always aware that I was, amazingly, on speaking terms with the President of the United States. I never got around that. And with Mrs. Johnson. But there were times with her when we were building the bedroom addition, and she would be in Austin here and staying at Luci's, and she'd ask me to come by and pick her up and drive out to the Ranch. I always wondered why. Then I thought, "Well, she just wants to get away from the Secret Service people." They'd follow us on out, and she would be completely relaxed on the way out. Sometimes she'd talk and sometimes she wouldn't.

I remember one time after the Birthplace was done and we were walking around out there. She was there with Jerry Kivett and Woody--I've forgotten his last name. Anyway, we were talking about something rather seriously and animatedly, and all of a sudden she just walked on off and started walking down by the fences and sat down on the ground. I said, "Jerry, she must have something on her mind. Something's bothering her maybe." He said, "No, I don't think so, Roy. She just wants to be by herself sometimes. She's renewing herself." He said, "She does that quite often. She just walks away."

F: Who is Jerry Kivett?

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W: Jerry was her security agent, head agent; I believe he was the head of the group.

F: Go ahead.

W: I don't know. Some of these things seem so relatively unimportant.

F: They do a beautiful job of piecing out the picture though.

W: I'd have to refer to those things, and I don't want to take the time to do it. The image paradox.

(Reading from a diary)

Went back to the Ranch Monday after New Year's Day to meet with Will Odom, John Ben Shepperd, and groups from the National Parks Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission and with the President and Mrs. Johnson in reference to state park between Highway 290 and Ranch Road 1 in front of the LBJ Ranch. At which time I was a victim of circumstance again in two related and rather distressing situations, to which I have referred earlier but which I certainly do not intend to record. Anyway, it seems I am again wrapped into a package of old house material this time if things go as Mrs. LBJ indicated. Working with the State Parks Board as a consultant. Let's see --

(Speaking) I don't know, I don't find what I'm looking for.

F: When did you make your entries? At night, or just at spare time?

W: Spare time.

F: Did you have any regular pattern?

W: Sometimes I would catch up. When all of this was going on I made

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an intense effort to make entries at night, at the end of the day.

F: There must have been some times when you were dog tired.

W: Yes. That's why they're so brief sometimes. Sometimes I would catch up at the end of a week. I don't know how to tell these things except--
(Machine cut off)

He couldn't find his Newsweek magazine, and we were flying back from here on Air Force One. I've forgotten what the occasion was. It was the second flight I made with them. He was just raising Cain because he'd misplaced his Newsweek, and he was raising Cain with everybody concerned.

F: You have a notation about his wanting the Krim house finished by his birthday. Does that ring a bell?

W: Yes, that was just another one of the hectic situations that would develop. He insisted that that house be finished on the twenty-seventh of August, and it was started in June some time. It was almost impossible to finish.

F: Was there any particular ceremony connected with it, or he just wanted it done by his birthday?

W: He wanted it done so they could have a birthday party for him at the Krim house.

F: I see. You also have a notation about the workingman, going to bed at one forty-five.

W: I don't know what that was. Let me look up the date on that.

F: It's in 1966.

W: Where did you find that? It's 1967.

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(Machine off)

Ed Clark and his daughter, the McCrocklins, Jack Joseph, Mr. and Mrs. Howard Young--you know him. We were all guests in the house.

F: This is at the White House?

W: Yes. The President announced at about 1:45 a.m. that he was a working man who had a job to do, and he had to go to bed. That was the way he ended the gathering.

F: This is not the same occasion as when Carol Channing--?

W: Yes, that's the same time.

F: What was the story on that? Let's put that down, we need to get that.

W: What's that? Carol Channing?

F: Yes, the gadgetry.

W: Oh, he was just showing what could be done in the way of turning on lights and so on in his bedroom, and all of the buttons he could flip, and who he could talk to. I think there was some arrangement made where if he clapped his hands some of the lights would come on that he wants, electronic devices.

F: Did he seem fascinated by gadgets?

W: Yes.

F: How did he get on this Musak kick?

S: Well, he likes to have music, and of course the Musak, KTBC here in Austin--

F: Did he ever show any definite taste in what he heard, or did he just

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like something?

W: I don't know. It was always good to have music on. It was always too loud for Lady Bird and not loud enough for him.

F: I see. That sounds like any American household. What's the story on Luci's dog versus the sheep?

W: Oh, just a funny thing that happened at lunch time out there one day. This was Yuki. I think this was before Yuki became enamored of the President and vice versa.

F: He wasn't really the President's dog at first, was he? They kind of grew on each other.

W: I think Luci found that dog. I know you know the story of that. Yuki was caught chasing the sheep one day. The President just told Luci in no uncertain terms that he had a shotgun in the car with him and he almost shot him, and that she'd better keep him tied up or in the house or something because he was not going to have a dog around the place that chased sheep. Luci, in her sweet manner, said, "Yes, Daddy, I'll certainly see to it." But it was just an instance of his direct approach to his children. This was it, and if she wasn't careful she was going to have a dead dog.

F: What's the story behind climbing the steps over at the Jay Danz place?

W: The Jay Danz place is a place that you and I talked about. He would occasionally make reference to the fact that he'd like to get that place, and would I find out how much it cost and what we could buy

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it for. He never let it alone. Occasionally, we'd drive past it. The first time we ever went past it we were in the car taking the usual ranch road drive, and we drove on up to the Danz house, on into the yard, through the gate, and parked in front of the house. It was just a matter of his determination to do something. The security people would not allow him to climb those steps by himself, and he was determined that he was going to climb them by himself and really spoke quite sharply to them. He went on up the steps, and two of the security men stood underneath the steps trying to hold them up while he walked up there. He came on back down. He walked all through the house. The door was unlocked, and he just made a full inspection of the place.

F: It had loose boards and so forth, as I remember.

W: It was about to fall down.

F: The Secret Service was hoping they could get him back out before it fell.

W: He was just determined that he was going to go up there, and they really had words about it.

F: You evidently were with Arthur Krim shortly after the announcement the President wasn't going to run again, and he had some kind of reaction.

W: It was really Mathilde who was trying to express to me her intense feeling about it.

F: What was her feeling?

W: She was just almost in tears. She told me, "I actually cried when

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he made this decision." Evidently she had no idea that he would not run. They fully expected him to decide to go ahead.

F: You have a notation on doing some talking at a luncheon in September, 1968, and the quote on the Milk Producers Council.

W: That was another silly thing. There was some discussion as to whether they should go to San Antonio to speak at this Milk Producers Council, or to attend it. What is the date on that?

F: That is September 2, 1968.

W: I'm not sure I recall exactly. (Reading) A brighter spot to remember. Someone asked what the San Antonio occasion was. The President answered, "Milk Producers Council."

(Talking) There was some discussion as to whether they should go because it was immediately after the Chicago convention. There was some discussion as to whether they ought to go or not, and the final decision was that they not go. Someone asked what the San Antonio occasion was, and the President answered, "The Milk Producers Council " and then looked at Lynda and Ashton, both very pregnant, and asked if they didn't think they ought to go.

F: Yes. I was brought up on that kind of humor. Were you present at the presentation of the Birthplace report? Isn't there some story connected with that?

W: I was asked to present the report on the Birthplace directly to the President. I went up to the Ranch and made the presentation and had my picture taken. Mrs. Jack Brooks was present and some others, I've forgotten, Lady Bird.

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F: The Congressman's wife?

W: Yes. They made a little business out of it. I stood there, shaking. This was really, I guess, the first time I had really been back to him for any conversation at all since he became president, and I was not at ease. But I stood there, grinning and trying to think of something to say. He looked up at me and said, "Well, Roy, haven't you got anything to say?" So that sort of relaxed me, and I made my little presentation. They both looked at it and were quite pleased with the report and everything about it.

That was the day that I had a never-ending parade of gifts. I had to talk to Mrs. Johnson about something. We sat there in the den, the middle room, you know. We were talking. He came through first with three books that he had autographed to me; one of them "With great respect and admiration," which sort of floored me coming from the President. So I accepted those gracefully. We went on talking. Before I knew it, he came back with another book that he had just remembered and gave me that one. Then later on he came back in with some pictures, and the pictures were all autographed to me, very nicely done. He brought those in. There was no end of. . . .

F: You left that day like you'd just won Bank Night, if I may date myself.

W: Finally, Mrs. Johnson had to go, and I was left there. I was getting ready to leave, and he was in the bedroom rummaging around.

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All of a sudden, "Roy." I answered, but he didn't hear me. He called again, and I said, "Sir?". He said, "Well, I called you, I want you to come here." So I went on in there and he was rummaging around in the top drawer. He was pulling out tie clasps and cuff links, little knickknacks, and he said, "Here, I want you to have these, too. And here's some for Max Brooks. Now, you tell him that's solid gold, and I want him to have it. I don't want to just give you all these things. I want Max to have something, too." And on and on in veins like that.

That was the same day we traveled down to Johnson City, I by car and he by helicopter. We arrived at the Johnson City Bank project, which we were in the process of working over and doing upstairs remodeling and creating apartments. There again is another ladder episode where we had to get upstairs to look at the bedrooms. There was no way on earth of getting up except a rickety ladder that was propped up against the wall.

F: Outside ladder?

W: Outside latter, and it was held together by bailing wire at the bottom. It just looked awful! I said, "Mr. President, there's no way to get up there. I'll go on up and report to you." He said, "No, I'm going up." The security people said, "No, Mr. President, we don't think you should go up." He said, "I'm going up." Of course, he went up. But they, again, actually held the ladder together while he climbed up. He had Mrs. Johnson climb the ladder, and he had Charlotte Brooks climb the ladder. Everybody

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had to climb the ladder.

F: There would have been lots of questions through the Secret Service if he'd fallen and broken a leg, wouldn't there?

W: That was just another time of his determination. Finally, after all of this had gone along and he'd presented all of these gifts and so on and hadn't said thank you at all, he'd just brought me things to keep and climbed the ladder and fussed about this, that, and the other up there and jumped on me about something after he got down, I walked away. He walked in the other direction. All of a sudden he said, "Roy." I turned around, and I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "I just want to thank you." He turned around and walked away.

F: Did he take a personal interest in the Johnson City Bank remodeling? Was this in a sense part of the general pattern of refurbishing in the area, or was this independent of the Johnsons?

W: I never have known quite his connections with the bank. I'm sure he's a stockholder. A. W. Moursund was involved in the bank, and Jesse Kellam and others there. He was certainly involved. They did want to rehabilitate the old two-story building that used to be a hotel and then a dance hall and then a moving picture place, various uses. I was asked to do that, which we did, and created the bank downstairs and the apartments upstairs. Most of that was done through A. W. and Jesse, but Mrs. Johnson certainly came into the planning and arrangement of the upstairs, selection of colors and materials and so on.

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F: Were these apartments for rent, or for the Johnsons, or guests?

W: I just never did know how they proposed to use them.

F: Now you've got that sort of a model senior citizens home there in Johnson City. Were you involved in that?

W: Yes.

F: What was the arrangement on that?

W: That was simply another contract directly with the federal government to create old age housing. It's partly old age and partly, I believe maybe six or eight units, for young people. But mostly old age housing. It was just a direct contract with this office to build.

F: The President wasn't involved in that?

W: No.

F: Did he tend though to show an interest in anything going on in Johnson City?

W: Yes, he did, and Mrs. Johnson, too. Of course she was definitely interested in the progress of this housing, and he was, too, evidently. They talked about it. They'd go over and look, and they were always complimentary about how it turned out.

F: I think having a president in your midst anywhere, and Johnson City would be no exception, would bring on a lot of people who would want to capitalize on it with junk shops and whatnot. I mean junk in the sense of cheap souvenirs. Did you ever have any hand trying to keep down the unwanted signs or the sort of cheap architecture, anything like that?

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W: Within the town?

F: Yes, within the area.

W: I don't know that I ever had any active part of it. I think that the people in Johnson City at that time were interested in improving the town themselves. It was sort of a spontaneous movement there to better the town; clean up, fix up, paint, take down signs. Really, they seemed more cooperative then than they have in the past two or three years. I think Fredericksburg has seemed to take over more, and Stonewall, than Johnson City has for some reason. I don't know why.

F: Did you ever sense a sort of dividing line between the Anglo-Saxonism of Johnson City and the Teutonic quality of Fredericksburg?

W: I don't know.

F: It's not something to generalize on?

W: I don't know that I ever detected it except that I've always felt that Johnson City was maybe, I shouldn't say it, but maybe a little envious of Fredericksburg. But again, I feel like Johnson City is set in its ways. I don't think they're going to do anything they don't want to do. Of course they got busy and set out pots and beautified the place. I wouldn't know how to comment on that.

F: What's the story behind the broken fenders?

W: That was just another jibe at Max and at me and at the office.

F: What was it?

W: I haven't even touched on the bathroom business, but the broken fender bit was a continuing jibe or needle that he uses on Max.

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When we did the KTBC studios down here we had to create some parking space, and it was created beneath the building, as you know. It was just a tight place to get in and out, and he's jumped us and Max many times about the fact that we didn't give enough turning radius there. Well, we couldn't do anything but make do with what was there.

F: You hardly had room to get in, didn't you?

W: But evidently people had smashed a fender, and I imagine he has at times going out of that place. That was just his way of needling, that along with the fact that when Max and Mr. Perry built the Commodore Perry Hotel they built the bathrooms too small. He had to sit on the commode with his feet out in the hall, as he expressed it, because there wasn't enough room to stretch his legs out. And the toilet paper holder was never in the right place. I've got dimensions for the location of the toilet paper holder.

F: You have? It has got to be a certain distance and height?

W: Yes. I've got it documented, and it has been passed on to no greater authority than Gordon Bunshaft in New York on the LBJ Library. I think it was my greatest contribution to the Library.

F: I see, to get the paper holder in the right place.

W: I was not involved too much in the Library after it got started. I think I've contributed to that extent.

F: There's some sort of story behind Bunshaft and his getting the complete treatment in the window locations.

W: I think Max ought to come in on some of this. You see, I was pulled

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into the Library business, I don't know why. I was a sort of a go-between, I guess, between Mrs. Johnson and the office, or Mrs. Johnson and the President and the office, or something. I just happened to get involved. Really, I think the first time that we ever knew anything about a library was out at the Boyhood Home. That's the first time I ever met Dorothy Territo, by the way, and the conversation came up at that time as to whether the Library should be built out there or in San Marcos or at the University of Texas.

F: Did there seem to be any inclination at the time one way or another?

W: As I say, I tried not to listen, and I don't recall. I don't know whether there was or not. But I came back and told Max they were talking about a library. Of course we have never approached them about doing anything. The approach had always come from them, and finally we were contacted. At any rate, after these trips that Max made with Mrs. Johnson to look at libraries and to look at architecture by other architects, which I was included, I was happy to do it. I have never known whether Max feels I contributed anything, but at any rate, I was asked.

F: You contributed time at least.

W: I was out at the Ranch on the day that--well, I'm starting off on another story, but I'll tell it first. I was out at the Ranch on the day that Mr. Heath and the President, and probably Jesse Kellam was there, and Moursund and Max and I and Mrs. Johnson, I've

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forgotten who else. . . . Max had prepared these books of illustrations of the various architects. You see, he wanted a name architect. It was already determined that Max would be the architect, but he wanted a big name architect. We had narrowed it down to three, one of which--I guess this can go on tape--was Philip Johnson. But I don't know whether it can or not.

F: We can hold it or scratch it. You can look at it and see how it looks. Go ahead.

W: Anyway, I've forgotten who found the picture, but there was a picture of Philip Johnson sitting cross-legged on the floor in his silken pajamas and a recipe for something made out of pansies that you eat. He was in this Chinese atmosphere or something or other and barefooted. Bill Heath said, "Well, Max, we ought to show this to Lyndon. That ought to cinch one thing." And they did.

F: And they cinched it?

W: Well, I don't know. They laughed about it. They were just laughing about appearances. They all admitted that Philip Johnson was a great architect and so on, there was nothing derogatory about it. I don't know what Bill's opinion was, but from that I presume it was something. At any rate, the picture was shown to Lyndon. Whether it had any effect or not I don't know.

But that was the day it was narrowed down. I may be wrong. Maybe there were three other people other than P.J. I don't know. But anyway that was the day that they finally made a decision to have Skidmore and Merrill as architects.

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F: When they first went to Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, was Bunshaft the man they had in mind, or was it just the firm that they were interested in?

W: No, it was Bunshaft, I think. For one reason, Max knew Bunshaft. And for another reason, the buildings that she looked at, one in particular in Hartford, Connecticut, Connecticut General Office Building I believe out in the country, was an S.O.M. project done by Bunshaft. She was struck by the cleanness of the building and design and straightforwardness, beauty of material and so on, and the landscaping, everything.

F: I took a trip with you out once to the Balcones Research Center to look at those pieces of travertine, granite, et cetera, that were out there like so many gravestones. Did you participate at all in helping decide which facing would be used?

W: I've never known sometimes why Max wants me to go look at something, because I never know whether what I have to say means anything or not. But I was out at that time, and I don't remember what we agreed on. I was just there to make a report. I've forgotten who else was there. Was Max present, do you remember?

F: I don't remember.

W: It may be that I was filling in for Max at one time. But I've not been directly involved in the Library after it was assigned to Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill. I had nothing to do with the design except to sit in on conferences.

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One thing that I have been involved in is the re-creation of the Oval Office. I did reproduce that at a slightly smaller scale.

F: Did you go to Washington and measure and so on?

W: No. Max had done some measurements. We had photographs, and we had the working drawings of the original Oval Office, which were changed somewhat. But from those things we put together the detailing and repeated it just as accurately as we could.

F: Going back, we were going to talk about Bunshaft getting the complete treatment and the window location problem.

W: After that firm was decided on, of course arrangements were made for Bunshaft to come down here to meet the President and Mrs. Johnson.

F: He didn't know him?

W: I don't believe; I'm not sure.

F: Barely, if at all.

W: Yes. So we did that. We appeared at the ranch house, and I was asked to be present. I think it was dinner. Anyway, we got in the car. As is usual, the President started out on his, what I call the full treatment. You've been on those, I imagine, haven't you?

F: Yes.

W: And he gave Bunshaft--talking old times and showing him the various parts of the Ranch and driving over ranch roads and bouncing across fields and looking at the views and coming by the Birthplace house. They finally ended up at the Boyhood Home in Johnson City, where he really made his final spiel of his life history and gave him the whole works, the letter to his mother or from his mother, I've

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forgotten which it is. But on the way over there, we left the Birthplace house and stopped by the guest house that they were building. This was a prefabricated sort of a--no, it wasn't prefabricated, it was built by a group of people that specialized in this particular type of construction. It wasn't quite a prefab situation. It was a cedar house, thick walls. They had made arrangements, I believe, with the people from Oklahoma for these people to come in and erect this house as a guest house. That's the first house you come to after you pass the Birthplace. They were in the process of building that house, and the President wanted to get out and look.

So we all got out and trooped through the guest house. There was one question that had never been resolved, as to whether to put a window over here and a window over there, or no window over there and two windows here, some confusion about location of windows in the front bedroom. It still couldn't be resolved. All of a sudden, the President just turned around to Gordon Bunshaft, and he said, "Now, Gordon, which would you do? Where would you put this window?" Gordon had to stand there and give his reasons for what he thought ought to be done, spell it out just as if it was a fifty million dollar project he'd got involved in. It was funny, and we laughed about it later. But the upshot of the whole thing was that the President put the window where he wanted to to begin with and not where Gordon said to. But he had to pull Gordon in.

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F: It had some expensive advice anyhow.

W: Yes, sir.

F: One more story, and I think I'm going to let you rest for a while. You went hunting one early morning at the Scharphorst with Gordon Cooper and your son and so on.

W: The only interesting thing to that is a very personal sort of thing. James and my son-in-law, Jim Fielder--

F: James is your boy.

W: James is my boy, and Jim Fielder is Mary Jo's husband. I don't know how it was arranged, but anyway we ended up at Lewis ranch to deer hunt one weekend.

F: Are you a hunter?

W: Oh somewhat. By the way, I bought a ranch. I'll tell you some time. That's got something behind it, too. But we went to the Lewis ranch and James and Jim and I stayed in what they call the cowboy house down at the gate. We had had one call from--gosh, was that when he was vice president or president? What's the date on that, do you have a date?

F: I don't have a date.

W: When did Gordon Cooper--?

F: I'd have to check that out. That doesn't matter.

W: He was vice president, I believe. He had come by the house the night before and checked in with us and welcomed us and so on, which I thought was real nice for the Vice President. The next

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morning I was in the bathroom, very busy, it was before daylight. Jim was in the kitchen cooking bacon, and James was dressing. The horn blew outside. It was, I guess, five-thirty or six o'clock, something like that. Jim said, "Mr. White, the Vice President is out here." I said, "No, you're just trying to get me off the pot." "No, I'm not kidding you, the Vice President is out here."

So I got up as fast as I could and walked on out. He was out there with one of his secretaries and Gordon Cooper and Gordon Cooper's wife, and it seems like one of his children was along, if he has a child. There was a child along. Anyway, he got me out there and introduced me to Cooper and wanted to know if we were ready to start hunting. I said, yes, we were just going to eat breakfast. He said, "Well, where do you want to hunt?" I said, "Well, are you getting ready to go to hunt, too?" He said, "Yes, we're going on across the road. Where do you want to hunt?" I said, "Well, Mr. Vice President, I don't know. Where are you going to hunt?" He said, "Well, I didn't ask you that, Roy. I said where do you want to hunt?" And I said, "We thought we'd maybe stop at that first deer blind." "Okay, I just wanted to know where you'd be so I wouldn't shoot at you. We're going to hunt somewhere else, and we'll see you down the line. You go on and stop at that blind, and James can go down the road." He spotted James somewhere else.

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We went ahead. I sat and sat and waited and waited, and nothing happened. I finally heard a shot, so I decided I'd walk on down the road to where I thought James was. And sure enough, James had shot a buck. It was up on the side of the slope there. Just about that time the Vice President came along in the car, an open topped car, and wanted to know if we'd gotten our buck yet. I said, "Yes, James just shot one." "Well, where is it?" I said, "Up on the hill." "Well, why don't you get it down?" I said, "We were just starting up there." He said, "Wait just a minute." He called the security office somewhere, and we waited. The security officer, two of them, came up there with James Davis and brought the deer down to where the man could see it and see what kind of a shot James made, how big it was, and all about it. He just wanted to be a part of it.

F: Did he do any hunting himself, do you know?

W: Yes. That [hunting episode] has no particular interest that I can see, but it was just something that happened to us.

F: Right. Well, let's cancel for right now. We're not through.

[End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview I]

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