

INTERVIEW I

DATE: March 18, 1987

INTERVIEWEE: ANITA P. WINTERS (With occasional comments by Melvin C. Winters)

INTERVIEWER: Ted Gittinger

PLACE: Mrs. Winters' residence, Johnson City, Texas

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G: Mrs. Winters, you say your maiden name was Bergman, and you were raised where?

W: Yes. In Johnson City.

G: Here in Johnson City. What did your father do?

W: He was a blacksmith.

G: I see. Was he the only one in town?

W: Right.

G: So he got everybody's business, then.

W: He sure did.

G: Were you a contemporary of LBJ's, then? Older, younger?

W: No, Lyndon was older than me.

G: I see. By about how much?

W: Oh, about maybe four years.

G: I see. So you were probably in the same schoolhouse with him at one time or another.

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W: I went through school with him, yes.

G: In all the schools? Was that the Albert school, too?

W: No, in the Johnson City school was the only school I went to school with him, yes.

G: I see. Was he through high school, then, when you began?

W: No, he was in, oh, I guess maybe the--see, we graduated in the eleventh grade; we didn't have a twelfth grade at that time, and he must have been in the, oh, ninth or tenth grade, I guess, when we went to school together.

G: How well did you know him when you were a child? Of course, he was three or four years older, as you say.

W: Well, you see, Lucia and Josefa, and Sam Houston and Rebekah, we were all--my sisters and brothers, we were about the same age to the other four, and we would go to their house, or else they'd come to our house, and play. After school we'd play baseball, or some child sport.

G: Did LBJ play baseball?

W: Oh, yes, he played baseball.

G: Was he any good?

W: No. (Laughter) He wasn't too good.

G: Some people say he wasn't as coordinated as some of the kids.

W: Well, it didn't seem to me like any of them were. You know, they just weren't very athletic-minded. But they would play, because other kids were playing.

G: What position did he play?

W: I think it was pitcher; I'm not sure, but I believe he was the pitcher. What he wanted, he got.

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G: And he wanted to pitch.

W: He wanted to pitch.

(Laughter)

G: What other pastimes did folks have in Johnson City in those days?

W: There wasn't very much pastime. We all had to make what pastime there was around here, and on Sunday afternoons we'd all get together--the Johnson kids--we'd all get together and we'd go to the river, and take pictures, and sit and talk. And Lyndon would usually always want to do the preaching, you know, he was the one that wanted to do the talking. (Laughter) And that was just about all we had to do around town, just walk and go places.

G: Did they call that kodaking?

W: Kodaking, yes.

G: How about fish fries; were they very common?

W: No. I don't ever remember any fish fries until we started them.

G: Can you describe what kind of a family the Johnsons were?

W: I'd say they were just an ordinary family; they were just about like everyone else around here.

G: Mrs. Johnson was regarded as kind of special in some ways, I gather.

W: Oh, she was. She was a very lovely person, and I guess I must have been in about the seventh grade, seventh or eighth grade, I'd go up there every afternoon, and she'd give me elocution lessons. And, of course, after that, then we'd all get out and play.

G: Did you have spelling bees and mathematics bees?

W: Oh, yes, oh, yes.

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G: How about Mr. Sam, now, the father?

W: Well, really, I didn't know too much about him, other than just being the father of the children. He was easygoing.

G: Was he?

W: Yes.

G: How did he and LBJ get along?

W: As far as I know, I think they got along just fine. Of course, kids, you know, he'd try and tell him what to do or something, and he'd take offense sometimes to it. (Laughter) But they were just always like father and son.

G: How did LBJ and his brothers and sisters get along?

W: Oh, I think they got along just fine. As far as I know, they were very cooperative.

G: Did LBJ's father ever spank him?

W: No, not that I know of; I don't think he could ever catch him.
(Laughter)

G: You mean he would have spanked him if he could?

W: He would have if he could have caught him, I guess.

G: Do you remember Miss Kate, the schoolteacher?

W: No.

G: Miss Kate Deadrich, I think her name was.

W: Well, now, yes. She was up in the higher school.

G: I see. What kind of a student was LBJ? Of course, you'd only know by reputation, I guess.

W: I think he was a pretty good student.

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G: Did you ever go riding in the Johnson's car?

W: (Laughter) Yes, one time Sam Houston and Josefa and I. The car was sitting out in front of the house, and it was rather new. Mr. Johnson--Sam Houston had asked him if he could have the car, and he said no, that he didn't know how to drive it. So Mr. Johnson went in the bedroom and lay down; it was beginning to get a little dark. It wasn't late, but it was dark. And Sam Houston came to Josefa, and he said, "Josefa, let's go riding in the car." She said, "Oh, you better not, because Daddy'll sure give you a whipping." Well, anyway, we got in the car. And in front of their house there was kind of a hill that went down, and there was a huge tree not very far from their house down the road. When we got in the car he took the brake off, and we just went scooting down that street, and he tore the top out. (Laughter) And when we were riding down we were wondering how we were going to get the car back to the house. So anyway, we got it turned around and got back up to the house, and we were sitting outside and Sam Houston looked up and he said, "Oh, Josefa, I see the stars!" And she said, "Yes, and when Daddy gets through with you, you're going to see more than stars." (Laughter)

G: Was it a convertible? It had a cloth top?

W: No, it was one of these old touring cars, I guess, that had those canvas tops on it. Old Ford touring--

MW: Model T.

W: Model T, I guess. But I didn't go in the house; I came on home. I did not go in the house and see what happened. (Laughter)

G: Did you hear anything about it after that?

W: No, I never did.

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G: Did you ever play in the corncob fights that they'd have?

W: Oh, yes. And we always would go to the Johnson's on Friday night or Saturday night to a snap party. I don't know whether you know what that is or not, but anyway--

G: I've heard the term.

W: We'd always go to Mrs. Johnson's and beg her to give us a party. So she'd say, "Well, if you all help me clean up, I'll give you a party." So, of course, a bunch of us would get up there and clean up so we could have a party at her house. We always had a nice big crowd.

G: Was there any rivalry between the German folks and the Anglo folks, between Johnson City and Stonewall, or Johnson City and Fredericksburg, and so on?

W: Not that I know of. I didn't pay any attention to it, if it was.

G: I see. Did you use to go to the dances that they'd have?

W: I went to Stonewall.

MW: I can tell you about that. (Laughter)

G: You're going to have to wait a minute, Mr. Winters. I've heard that sometimes there was a certain rivalry over the boys dancing with the girls, and so on. Did you see any of that?

W: Oh, well, that was a common thing.

G: It was?

W: Yes.

G: Did you ever see LBJ fight under those circumstances?

W: No, usually they'd always go outside and fight.

G: And the girls couldn't go out.

W: And the girls couldn't go out.

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G: I see. Let me ask you about LBJ as a young man, as you knew him in those days. What stood out about him; what would be noticed?

W: Well, I would think just his--he wanted to know everything, and he would try and find out everything that he could. I know when we would go to their house a lot of times--they had a huge old number three tub. I don't know whether you know what that is or not, but anyway, he'd turn this tub upside down, and everybody that would come up there, we'd have to go out in the backyard, and he would get on that tub, and we had to sit around and listen to him. He just talked about first one thing and then the other, it didn't make any difference what it was, he was always trying to tell us something.

G: Making speeches.

W: Making speeches.

MW: Making speeches.

W: And I shall never forget one time. They've torn this little house down, I think, now, that's in the back at the Boyhood Home. It was like a little shed, a small room down and then it just had a little loft upstairs, and it had a window cut in it, kind of big enough, and he always would climb up in this little house, and he'd stand up there and look out of there and talk to us, you know. Oh, he'd just preach like everything. And my sister [and I], we wanted to play, and we didn't want to listen to him talking all the time. So she got up behind him and shoved him out of the door, and broke his leg.

G: Oh, my.

W: And we always had to go up the Johnsons', anyway; Mrs. Johnson would call us and talk to Momma and she'd say, "Mrs. Bergman, would you please let the girls come up and play with the children?" Well, we'd go up there, and we'd always have to listen to him.

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So she just got tired of listening to him, and she just shoved him out the door. (Laughter)

So that made it worse; we had to go up there then every day and talk to him, because he was in bed. (Laughter)

G: Who treated him? There was a doctor in town, I guess.

W: There was a doctor in Blanco, and I think he was the one that set his leg.

G: I see. So he was laid up for a good month.

W: He was laid up for a while.

G: Oh, my goodness. I've heard stories that one of his weaknesses was that when he was sick or hurt, he wanted a lot of attention. Is that true?

W: That's the reason why we'd always have to go up there, because we'd have to sit right at his bed, and he'd talk to us and make us do things for him, you know. (Laughter) That's what the trouble was.

MW: (Inaudible) That went on after he became senator, vice president and president. He'd call us; he had to do a lot of walking there after that heart attack. And he'd walk half a dozen; there'd be us, and the Moursunds and I don't remember who all. We'd have to go up there and walk with him at night. We'd walk down to Mrs. Oreole Bailey's house at night. He just had to have company when he'd walk. He wanted a crowd.

G: Is it too much to say that he would take it for granted that everybody wanted to do what he wanted to do?

MW: If they didn't, he'd twist their arms.

W: I guess that's what it was, because when we'd go up there, it was what Lyndon wanted, and usually that's what we had to do.

G: Did you resent that? Well, I guess some of you--

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W: No, in a--well, when we wanted to do something, and he didn't want to be with us, we would more or less resent it, because we'd want to do something else. But he'd want us to do what he wanted to do, which we'd mostly end up by doing it.

G: I see. Did you all play marbles?

W: Oh, yes. Marbles and mumblety-peg and--you know. (Laughter)

G: Was he any good?

W: He was a good marble player.

G: Was he?

W: Yes, and a good mumblety-peg player.

G: Do you remember the games you played? What kind of marble games did you play?

W: I don't know; we'd just put them in a row, you know, and then we'd shoot until we got them all out. And he was usually the one, and he'd kind of fudge, we called it. (Laughter)

G: Would he get that knuckle up off the ground?

W: No, he'd scoot.

G: Oh, I see. Everybody had a favorite shooter, I guess.

W: Oh, yes, a favorite marble.

G: Did anybody ever use steelies?

W: Yes. Oh, yes, we'd try and find those everywhere.

G: Sure. You could break somebody else's shooter with one of those, couldn't you?

W: Yes.

G: A lot of people associate LBJ with Kittie Clyde Ross, or Kittie Clyde Leonard, now. Were they more or less sweethearts at one time?

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W: I don't know if they were sweethearts, but I know that he went with her quite a few times.

Of course, I don't know about that, but I know he went with her.

MW: He talked to me some about that.

G: Did he?

MW: He was crazy as heck about Kittie Clyde for a long time. [Inaudible] Every time he'd come to Johnson City, he'd want to know something about Kittie Clyde, how she was doing, stuff like that.

G: Okay. Did you go to San Marcos?

W: No. I didn't graduate. I married before I-- (Laughter)

G: Of course you did. But you never started to San Marcos, is that right?

W: No, I didn't start.

G: I see. Of course, LBJ didn't start right away, either. He stayed around a while.

W: Well, yes, I guess so.

MW: He was going to--the two summers he worked for me out there, he was going to San Marcos then.

W: Yes.

MW: The two summers he worked for me out here on that [road], that's where he worked for me [inaudible].

W: Yes. Then he went to San Marcos, and--

MW: Yes. Now, I'll say this, that we had three children of our own, two boys and a girl, and he'd drill it into them, that they had to go to San Marcos. We had two that graduated from there. The oldest boy [inaudible]

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G: Do you recall anything about that period between the time he finished high school and the time he went to San Marcos? I think he and some other boys ran off to California for a while, didn't they?

W: Yes, he and two of the Crider boys.

G: And one of the Summys, wasn't it?

W: Yes, and a Summy boy.

G: Do you recall that incident, at all?

W: No, I don't. I don't really remember that.

G: Okay. Did he ever talk to you about going to California?

W: No. No.

G: Okay. I meant to ask about the dances that you folks had back in those days. I've heard rumors that you could find a bottle of beer if you knew where to look in those days.

W: (Laughter)

G: Is that true?

W: That's true.

G: What about wine?

W: That's true.

G: Mustang wine?

W: Yes. A lot of wine. (Laughter)

G: Of course, this is Prohibition, wasn't it?

W: Yes, it was. But I'll tell you, it was never in the dance hall. You had to get outside.

G: Were there any problems with drinking?

W: No, there wasn't.

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G: No drunks?

W: No. If there were, they were hustled outside pretty quick.

G: I see. Who would keep order in these dances?

W: The people that owned the dance hall. You see, the Deikes owned the one at Stonewall, and they kept pretty good, close watch on all that stuff.

G: There's a story that LBJ really took a licking once at Fredericksburg for cutting in on somebody's girl. Did you know anything of that?

W: (Laughter) Oh, I heard something about it, but I don't know what kind of licking it was. But I know that he was pretty good at doing things like that, though.

G: Were there a lot of fights? I mean--

W: Well, I guess there was a fight or two every Saturday night that you'd go to the dance.
(Laughter)

G: Would he fight, if the occasion arose?

W: Yes, he would. Yes, he did.

G: He wouldn't back off?

W: No.

G: Okay. Let me go back to the Johnson family a little bit. There are conflicting stories about Sam Ealy Johnson's financial success or lack of it, depending on who you listen to, and that he died in debt and had had a lot of trouble. What was the Johnson's status within Johnson City?

W: Well, as far as I know, everyone thought they were just nice, respectable people.

G: Was Mrs. Johnson a good housekeeper?

W: (Laughter) Well, she was fair. (Laughter)

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G: Are you being kind?

W: Yes.

G: Okay. To what do you attribute that?

W: I guess she just didn't like to keep house.

G: What kind of meals did they have?

W: Well, just ordinary meals.

G: Tell me what an ordinary meal would be.

W: I guess you'd say just beans and potatoes, just a good substantial meal.

G: They ate pretty much the way everybody else ate?

W: That's right, yes.

G: Of course, nobody had refrigeration in those days.

W: No, that's right.

G: Well, how would you keep meat?

W: Well, they didn't. I think they'd just go buy it every time they wanted it. They'd just go buy it.

G: You bought it fresh and cooked it.

W: Yes.

G: Was she a good cook?

W: She was a good cook, yes. She didn't like to cook, but she was a good cook.

G: How do you know she didn't like to cook?

W: (Laughter) Well, I've been to the house a lot of times, and she didn't like to cook, and we kids would kind of throw things together.

G: The Casparises had a cafe in town, didn't they?

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W: Yes, they did, and it was a good cafe.

G: Was it?

W: Yes, it was.

G: Did a lot of people go there?

W: Yes. Yes, they did. They always had a nice crowd.

G: What was their best dish, would you say?

MW: Chili.

W: Well, yes, chili, I guess, but she'd also have stews or you could eat steak or something like that.

G: Does the terms Mexican T-bone mean anything to you?

W: No.

G: Some people say that was what LBJ called chili. (Laughter)

MW: It might have been. He sure did--

W: I know he liked chili.

MW: He sure did. He'd go to that cafe and say, "They have real chili," every time that they had chili he had it [?].

G: Now, you were building the road, or at least I think you said fifteen miles of it, Mr. Winters, between here and Austin, there about 1927.

MW: No, from Johnson City to the county line.

G: Okay, from Johnson City to the county line. Did a lot of the Johnson City kids work on that?

MW: Not a whole lot, I don't believe. We had--well, Buford.

W: Buford Stevenson.

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MW: Buford Stevenson and Lyndon were working on it some; that's when he was going to school. And there were several of those that would go with him. I had mostly niggers [inaudible].

G: I've heard that LBJ's cousins sometimes worked, including some of the girls, on the road: Cousin Ava and Cousin Margaret. Do you recall anything of that?

W: No, I don't.

G: Did you work on the road?

W: No, I didn't. (Laughter)

G: You were a telephone operator; of course not. Can you recall what LBJ used to talk about when he would give these speeches? Was it politics, or was it just anything that came to mind?

W: Well, it was just almost anything that came to mind. It didn't make any difference what it was. But you could tell that he was a politician, even though he was just a kid. That's all he wanted to do; he'd make speeches, and he was good at it.

G: Of course, his father had been in politics.

W: Yes.

G: When was the first time you thought LBJ was going to be a really successful politician?

W: I guess when he was a kid, I don't know. (Laughter)

G: It just sort of was always there, you mean?

W: It just seemed like it was always there, that that's what he wanted to be and that's what he was going to be. Knowing him like I did, he was just such a strong-headed person, and that's what he seemed like he had in his mind, and that's what he--

G: When he was at San Marcos, would he come home on visits?

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W: Yes, he came home. Now, I don't know. I think on weekends, or something like that, he'd come home.

G: Did he talk about San Marcos and how he was doing, and so on?

W: Not that I know of, no.

G: Did he talk about that year that he spent in Cotulla teaching school?

W: Well, just when he'd talk to us about it, that he enjoyed it, and I think he was a pretty good teacher.

G: Did he talk about the town, and what it was like?

W: [Not] other than he just enjoyed living there.

G: Then he went from there to Pearsall, I believe, and taught for just a very brief period.

W: A very short while, yes.

G: And then on to Houston.

W: And then on to Houston, yes.

G: And I guess is best known for coaching the debating team over there.

W: Yes. Well, you see, his mother taught him that.

G: Do you recall him coming home just before he went to work for Congressman [Richard] Kleberg?

W: No, I don't.

G: Okay. Do you recall when he brought Lady Bird home the first time?

W: No, I don't remember that either. (Laughter)

G: When did you first meet Mrs. Johnson?

W: Oh, my lands. I guess it was--

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MW: Wait a minute. They married when we went down and met Lady Bird's daddy. But we were on our way to--

W: Karnack? To Karnack.

MW: When we went to Karnack.

W: They were married then.

MW: Then the four of us went on to where? Alabama, to her people.

W: Yes, to Alabama.

MW: Alabama. She had inherited a bunch of land up there; I don't remember what year that was.

W: I don't remember what year that was.

G: Can you recall your first impression of Mrs. Johnson?

W: Well, the first time I met her I liked her. She seemed to be a person down to earth, and she was just a nice person.

G: Some people have said she was shy in her early years.

W: Well, I didn't find her to be too shy. You know, she was reserved, but she was nice.

G: What kind of a match did you think they'd made? They were awfully different kinds of people, I think.

W: Well, I just really never had matched him with anyone. (Laughter) But I think she was a good match for him.

G: Tell me a little about their relationship. You observed them over a period of a number of years. What kind of relationship did they have?

W: I guess it was just a nice relationship. They just were congenial with one another.

G: Was he bossy with her?

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W: I guess he was bossy; I'd say he was.

G: Could she stand up to him?

W: Yes, she did. She was nice about it, but she usually got around it.

G: Well, how would she do that? Not many people could stand up to LBJ.

W: I don't know, unless she just kind of let it slide by. You know, just thought a lot of times before she'd say anything, or just--

G: Can you give me an instance when she contradicted him and turned him from his chosen path?

W: No. (Laughter) No, I think they did that when everyone was gone. (Laughter)

G: Well, that's a good observation in itself. How well did you know the children?

W: You mean Luci and Lynda?

G: Luci and Lynda.

W: Why, I guess I knew them pretty well.

MW: Let me interrupt there for a minute. When they first started to school, Lyndon and Lady Bird were off somewhere nearly all the time. When they got out of school, they'd come to your house, and you'd take care of them, and did somebody come up to meet them, or [inaudible]? When they were going to school, they spent a lot of time over here [?].

W: We were living across from the schoolhouse at that time in that little house--

MW: Right.

W: --while they were building this house, and of course, the grade school is just across the street from this house, and they'd always come over to the house to stay with me until someone came and picked them up. It may be six o'clock, seven o'clock, eight o'clock, or nine.

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G: This would have been what, in the early fifties?

MW: They were both little fellows.

W: Yes, they were--I guess Luci was in about the third grade, and Lynda must have been around in the fifth, something like that. They were small.

G: How would you compare their personalities?

W: They were nice kids; you know, just an ordinary kid.

G: Was one more outgoing than the other?

W: Luci was always more outgoing than Lynda. Lynda would usually always get the last word, but Luci was the one that was--she was a pusher. She's more like her daddy.

G: I see. Which one is the politician, or are they both?

W: Well, then I think Luci was. I don't know that I've ever heard Lynda say too much about it, or anything. But I think Luci ate it up; she liked it.

G: Did her daddy have a favorite, do you think?

W: I'd say Luci, but I guess it was because she was the baby.

G: Okay. When they acquired the Ranch, which was in 1950, I think, was it? 1950 or 1951, something like that. Did Mrs. Johnson talk to you about the plans they had for the place, what they intended to do to it, and so on?

W: Well, not much, other than just to fix it up; she wanted to fix it up nice. And I know they stayed with us while they were fixing it.

G: Oh, they did?

W: Yes.

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MW: They spent a lot of time over here. They had done all that work up there. Remodeled it and did all the damn fences, built all the roads [inaudible], and had the dam built. I done all of it.

G: You were the overseer of the whole--

MW: I did the whole thing. He pushed it on me to get it all done, everything.

G: Were they in a hurry?

MW: Oh, he was always in a hurry. (Laughter)

We built fence up there with me building it by car light, at night. And he'd get out there and drive staples until three or four at night.

W: I never shall forget, one night they were spending the night; I think they'd been at the house a week. We were living across the river in this two-story house. And Lady Bird had--I think she went to Austin. And you and Lyndon came in about four, something like that, and we went on up to the Ranch. And Lady Bird wasn't there, so we went on up to the Ranch. And I had shown her where the key would be if she ever came in and we weren't going to be there. So we came in, I guess it must have been about nine o'clock, and when we drove up Lady Bird was at the house, and she couldn't unlock the door, and she was climbing through the window. (Laughter)

MW: She got stuck in that window.

W: And she'd gotten stuck in the window, and all we could see was just the back of her.

(Laughter) Lyndon said, "Yep, that's Lady Bird. She never could unlock a door."

(Laughter)

G: Did you have any trouble getting her unstuck?

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W: (Laughter) I think he finally had to go back of her and take her out of the window, and then we finally went and unlocked the door.

G: How long had she been there?

W: I don't think she'd been there too long.

MW: She hadn't been there too long, but she was in a bad position, I'll tell you that.

W: And it was rather high for her to get into, and I don't know how she'd got--

MW: The house we had over there was just across the bridge; it was a great big old tall two-story house, and they just lived with us. Hell, they stayed in that upstairs there nearly all the time. I don't know how long (inaudible).

G: I think it was at least eight or nine months, wasn't it, before the Ranch was ready to be lived in?

MW: Yes, they were using that most of the time. They'd come and go when they wanted to.

G: How did they work it with schools for the children? Did they just leave them here during the school year?

W: No, they took them to Austin. And I think they had help in Austin, and they stayed in Austin.

MW: They had a home in Austin.

G: Was that Willie Day Taylor, then, that was taking care of them?

W: I think so. I think that--

MW: I believe it was.

W: --Willie Day was one of them, I think.

(Interruption)

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G: It's no secret that LBJ's brother, Sam Houston, and a couple of his sisters, at least, were somewhat of a problem for him later on. Did he ever talk to you about this? Did he mention how he handled it, or--?

W: No, not other than--he knew that I knew that he was having trouble with them, but he'd just say, "Well, we'll do something about it," or something like that. But I just didn't want to talk to him about it.

MW: [Inaudible] Josefa was the youngest sister.

W: No, honey. Josefa wasn't the youngest; Lucia was the youngest.

MW: All right, Lucia. But Josefa was the one that was giving all the trouble. And she'd come out here to the house, and get drunk, and borrow money, and I don't know how much money I had given her and loaned her every once in a while. And Lyndon found out about it some way or another, and he said, "Don't ever give Josefa any money. Don't do that. If she comes down there drinking, don't let her have anything to drink any more." Stuff like that, I remember all that. But she'd come out here and [inaudible].

W: She'd been out here a lot of times, and she'd be so looped--

MW: We'd put her to bed.

W: --that I'd give her coffee or try and have her eat something, and then put her to bed and let her rest a while.

G: Was that the chief problem, was it, the alcohol?

W: Yes, the alcohol. She was smart--

MW: Boy, she was.

W: --in her way. But in the last few years she just let the booze--

G: Well, she died in 1961, I think. Is that right?

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W: Yes.

G: On Christmas Day?

W: Yes.

G: Do you remember that?

W: Yes, I do.

G: Tell me about that day.

W: I don't really remember all of it, other than that they called Lyndon and told him that she was dead. And the night before, we were up there.

G: At the Ranch?

W: At the Ranch. And she was there, and she was--it didn't seem like there was anything wrong with her, or anything. But then when she went home and died in her sleep that night, well--

G: She died in her sleep?

W: Yes. They called and told him, and--

G: Do you know who discovered her?

W: No, I don't. I don't know who found her, whether it was her husband, or what.

G: How did LBJ react to that?

W: Well, of course he hated it, just like a brother would [for] his sister.

G: Where was the funeral?

W: In Stonewall.

G: It would have been just a couple of days after Christmas, then, I guess.

W: Yes.

G: Did that cast a pall over that Christmas season?

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W: Well, sure it did. I don't think we even went up there, did we, after that?

MW: I don't remember.

W: I don't think so. I don't think they had, you know.

G: Was it unexpected? I mean--

W: Yes, it was unexpected, because being as she was there that night and in good spirits and she seemed to be all right. But a few days, or maybe a week or so before that, she was here at the house, and she just seemed to me like she was just not feeling good. And of course, I couldn't tell too much about it.

G: But had she had a history of liver trouble or anything of that sort?

W: No, not that I know of. She could have had, but she just didn't say anything about it.

G: So it was pretty unexpected.

W: Yes.

G: Well, of course Sam Houston had something of the same trouble.

W: Yes, he did.

G: Do you have any recollections or reflections on that?

W: No, I don't.

G: LBJ, of course, would drink his share of the scotch.

W: Well, he didn't drink too much. He'd have a highball or two, and that would about--

MW: I never did see him drunk.

W: I never did see him, you know, just *drink*.

MW: He just wasn't a drunkard.

W: No.

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G: They say that he drank more when he was vice president. Was that true, in your observation?

W: Well, I would say yes, it was. But I know when he became president, he was very, very easygoing on it. He didn't drink much at all.

G: As long as we're on the subject of the vice presidency, did you notice that he was restless or discontented when he was vice president?

MW: Very much so.

W: Well, yes, he would be. I know when he'd come to the house, he was jumpy, just like he wanted to do something or go somewhere, do something.

MW: This is off the record, now.

(Interruption)

G: Was he a practical joker? Did he like to--?

W: Yes, he liked to joke. He did like to play jokes on you, but he didn't want anyone--

MW: Returning them.

W: --returning them.

G: Well, what kind of a joke would he play? Can you think of an example?

W: Throwing water on you to--or just almost any little old thing, stepping on you or pushing you, you know, that it'd be a shock to you or something.

G: Did you ever go riding in that amphibious car that he had up at the Ranch?

W: Yes.

G: Would he drive into the water?

W: Yes, he did.

G: Scare you?

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W: Yes, it did. (Laughter)

MW: The first time (inaudible), we had a place up on the lake there at Sandy Harbor, and he came up there (inaudible), and he got that dadgum car--I don't remember where I was at, but he called us to come to the lake.

W: Yes.

MW: So we went up there, and they had that little old car sitting out to the front. And he said, "Melvin, I want to take you riding." And I never thought anything about it. I got in the car with him and we rode up and down the road, and directly he just headed into the lake. And goddamn, I began to holler, "Don't do that! Don't do it!" And he just hit the damned water, and he got the biggest bang out of that. That damned car was floating, you know, and it would run around like a boat in the water. And he had the biggest kick out of that.

W: I don't remember who it was that was with me and Lady Bird, and one or two others; he wanted us to go riding in it, you know. And of course we all got in and went with him, and he started going toward the lake, and of course Lady Bird knew what it would do. And I got up a little further on the seat, and looked and looked, and I said, "Oh, don't go in there; you're going to go in the water!" And he said, "I don't have any brakes!" And he was just a-stomping, you know. (Laughter)

MW: He'd get a big kick out of that.

W: He said, "Oh, I don't have any brakes! We're going be drowned!" (Laughter) Of course, then we'd hit the water; well, it just kind of bounced and went up, you know.

G: I've always wondered if anybody didn't jump out on the way down.

W: (Laughter)

MW: [Inaudible]

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W: I know Lady Bird would say, "Now, Lyndon, you shouldn't do us that way." Of course, she knew.

G: Would he play pranks on people who were not Texans, taking them hunting, for example. Would he find a way to play a trick on them, give them a gun that was too much gun for them, or something? Tell a tall tale about Texas varmints or something else like that?

W: I don't remember him doing that. (Laughter)

G: Give them a jalapeno pepper to eat, maybe?

W: Oh, he'd do that! (Laughter)

G: Would he do that? Well, he liked hot food.

W: Yes, he did; he liked hot food.

G: Was he forbidden eating it, or--?

W: Not that I know of. (Laughter) If he was, he ate it anyway.

G: I've heard that he spiced his sausage so hot that Mrs. Johnson wouldn't eat it. Is that true?

W: I don't know. He may have.

G: Did he make deer sausage, or have it made?

W: Oh, yes, he had it made.

MW: He had them make it by the plane load. I know one time down here he had I forget how many pounds, over a thousand pounds of that damned sausage made up down here. D. J. made it.

W: Yes.

MW: Put it on a plane and took it to Washington.

G: He liked to give away the produce off the Ranch.

MW: He gave it away [?]

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W: Yes, yes, he did.

G: What all would he produce, besides venison and eggs and so on?

W: That's all I know of.

G: Milk? Did he have any milk cows?

W: The hands may have had; they may have milked them. But I don't know. Every time I was up there, it came out of a carton. (Laughter)

G: Well, then, I guess no butter then, either.

W: No.

G: Did he have a vegetable garden?

W: Yes, they'd have vegetables, but it wouldn't be a huge garden, you know. It would be just--

G: Did they make preserves on the Ranch?

W: Yes, I think Zephyr did, while she was there. But I don't know that they fixed too much.

G: Peaches and apricots?

W: Peaches and apricots and pears.

G: You went hunting with him a good many times, I imagine.

W: Well, we'd go dove hunting. But deer hunting or anything like that, I never did go.

G: Are you a good shot?

MW: Very good.

W: I can hit. (Laughter).

G: Don't be modest, now.

W: Well, I can kill what I shoot at.

G: Well, that's pretty good. How good a shot was LBJ?

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W: He was a pretty good shot, too.

MW: He was a good shot.

G: What kind of gun did he like?

W: Well now, for deer hunting I don't know, but dove hunting, of course he wanted a shotgun.

Tape 1 of 1, Side 2

G: But a pump or automatic, or--?

W: It'd be a pump; I think that's what it was, a pump.

MW: [Inaudible]

W: Yes, I wish we still had those.

MW: I gave them away to my family. And he had a plaque put on every one of them.

[Inaudible]

G: How many guns did you exchange over the years, do you think?

MW: I don't know. That thing there was full of them at one time.

G: You're pointing at a gun case now--

MW: The last one's gone.

G: --that looks like about a dozen slots in it.

W: Yes.

MW: Gave shotguns and rifles, some of them were--

(Interruption)

--engraved in the middle, back on the sides, down on the handle.

G: Tell me about his horses a bit. Was he a horseman?

W: Yes, he was. He rode real well.

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G: Did he have a favorite horse?

W: Yes, it was a palomino, wasn't it?

MW: Yes.

W: It was a beautiful horse.

G: Did he have a horse named Lady B? A Tennessee Walker?

W: A Tennessee Walker.

MW: Didn't you have a picture of him on a horse somewhere?

W: No. Somewhere, but I don't know--

MW: Isn't it out there in that room out yonder?

W: No.

MW: I don't [inaudible].

G: I've asked Mr. Winters this, and I'll ask you your opinion. What kind of a driver was he in an automobile?

W: He was a good driver.

G: Was he good?

W: Yes, he was. He was a very good--

MW: Very good driver.

W: --careful driver.

G: But fast.

W: He was fast, but--

MW: He was a good driver.

W: But he was a good driver.

G: I've heard stories that he would dare Mrs. Johnson to stay up with him. Is that right?

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W: (Laughter) I don't remember. One time we were coming from somewhere; I don't know where, and we were in two cars, and he told her she'd better get ready, because he was leaving. (Laughter) And she said to me, "Oh, Good Lordy!" That was her main standby; she'd say, "Oh, Good Lordy, we're really going to have to drive!" (Laughter) But I guess he must have been a good baby [?], because he didn't drive too fast.

G: Did you ever go on airplane trips with the Johnsons? I know they had you up to Washington, but I mean when--

MW: Yes.

G: --they were present.

W: Oh, yes. We'd--

MW: There's a picture over there of *Air Force One*.

W: We went to Washington on *Air Force One*. And where did we go in that helicopter, from their ranch to Austin to some speaking or dinner or something that they were having? We went on that helicopter.

G: Were they good fliers, good travelers?

W: Yes, they were. We both have plaques that we have been on--he gave us each one a plaque that we had been on the helicopter.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I

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