

AMONG FRIENDS *of LBJ*

Issue Number LVI November 15, 1993

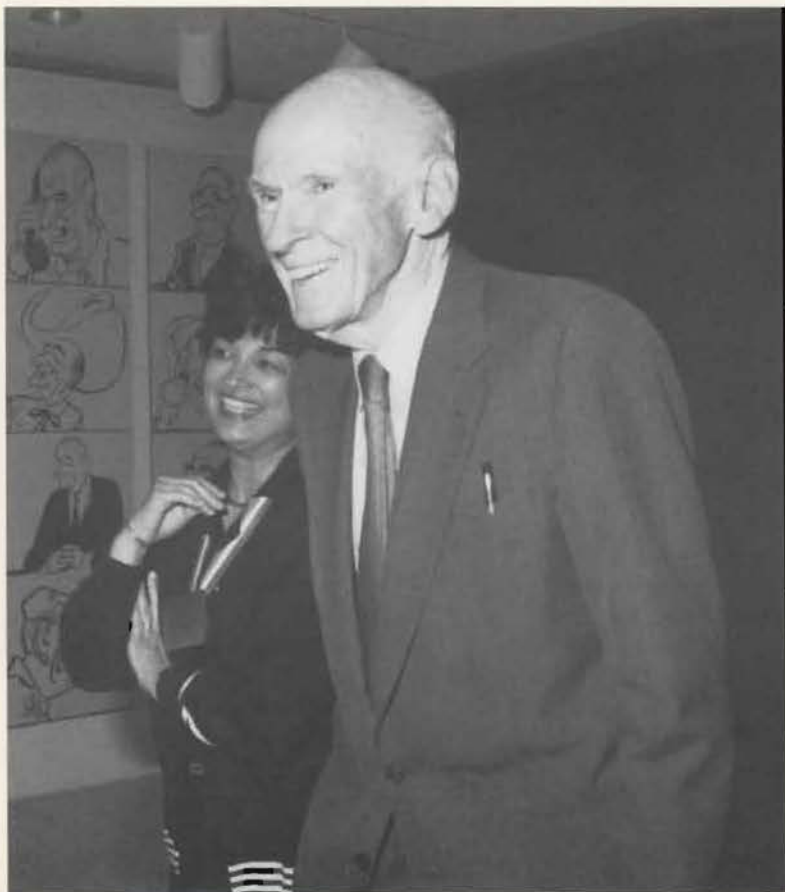


**Supper's
Ready**
(See page 2)



Mrs. Johnson rang the bell (cover photo) to announce that the barbecue line was open when she entertained members of the Library staff at the LBJ Ranch on a balmy October evening (above). The bell, an old fashioned school bell, was given to President Johnson by Secretary of Defense Clark Clifford on the last day of the Johnson administration.

(Barbeque picture by Bill Kennedy)



Visitors to the Library included former U.S. Senator Alan Cranston, of California, (left) who spent time as a lecturer at the LBJ School of Public Affairs. He was escorted through the museum by volunteer Susan Dimmick.

Early Decisions on Vietnam Discussed

A scholarly conference to explore the early decisions made by the Kennedy and Johnson administrations was held at the Library in mid-October. Papers were presented by 11 historians and political scientists. Participants included Larry Berman, University of California, Davis; Larry Cable, University of North Carolina, Wilmington; Robert Divine, University of Texas, Austin; William J. Duiker, Foreign Service Institute; Ilya V. Gaiduk, Russian historian; Lloyd C. Gardner, Rutgers University; William C. Gibbons, George Mason University; George C. Herring, University of Kentucky; John M. Newman, University of Maryland; John Prados, specialist on national security and military history; and Brian VanDeMark, U.S. Naval Academy.



Professor Cable was lead speaker at the conference, which attracted some 200 scholars from across the country.



The conference was organized by Lloyd Gardner (left) at the Library's request. Its effect was to document the continuity of basic policy between the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Dr. Gardner will edit the book that will result from the conference. David Humphrey, for 16 years archivist and senior archivist at the Library, helped Gardner with the organizational responsibilities. When he left to become a State Department historian, his assistance duties were taken over by Ted Gittinger, Library historian.

A surprise observer at the conference was General Nguyen Khanh who served for 12 months as Head of State of South Vietnam in 1964. The conference coincided with General Khanh's visit to the Library to conduct research. He lives in California.



The Gulf of Tonkin Debate

"Early Decisions" was the second conference on Vietnam to be held at the Library. In 1991 a Roundtable Discussion took place in which some 21 alumni of the Johnson Administration participated. On that occasion, Lawrence Levinson reviewed the Gulf of Tonkin incident. The following article is an expansion of that review, and was published in *The Sacramento Bee*.

On August 7, 1964, Congress enacted the Gulf of Tonkin resolution authorizing the commitment of American forces to Vietnam. President Lyndon Johnson maneuvered the measure through the House and Senate with astonishing speed. The vote in Congress, with only Senators Morse and Gruening dissenting, was to mark the beginning of a new phase in the nation's long involvement in the war against Hanoi. Within a year, pointing to this "blank check" congressional authorization, Johnson ordered the deployment of more than 125,000 U.S. troops to the battlefield.

To justify the resolution, the president cited an "unprovoked" North Vietnamese attack on August 4, 1964, against two American destroyers, the Maddox and the Turner Joy, while they were on "routine patrol" in the international waters of the Gulf of Tonkin.

Over the years, skeptical members of Congress, historians and military analysts have wrestled with the question of whether the August 4 attack ever took place. To Navy Captain James Stockdale (later Ross Perot's vice presidential candidate), who flew an air-support mission over the Gulf of Tonkin that night and had "the best seat in the house," it most assuredly did not. Sen. J. William Fulbright, who as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee was the floor manager for the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, concluded on reflection that LBJ had badly misled him. And, over the years, Hanoi has consistently branded the affair as a "big lie" to support U.S. aggression in Southeast Asia.

The popular view therefore is that LBJ led the nation into a bloody conflict under largely false pretenses, using a fabricated attack on American destroyers to launch a preplanned escalation of the Vietnam War. As a watershed event in recent times, the Gulf of Tonkin affair has come to symbolize the abuse of presidential power.

But there is another barely recognized side to the story that casts a much different light on the affair. Buried in the archives of the LBJ presidential library is a previously classified, detailed account of what might well have happened on that storm-tossed night of August 4. Two weeks after the Gulf of Tonkin episodes, John McNaughton, a distinguished Harvard Law School professor and a nationally recognized expert in the field of evidence, set out to reconstruct the events and to tell the story as if it were being presented in a courtroom.

McNaughton had come to Washington as the assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs and was in charge of the "Viet-

period, there can be no doubt that the August 2 attack took place. Photographs of the vessels in pursuit formation were sent to Washington, a North Vietnamese machine-gun bullet was recovered from a Maddox gun turret, and the North Vietnamese proudly proclaimed that their "heroic" patrol boats attacked an "American invader." The war museum in Hanoi, according to recent visitors, has an exhibit displaying the torpedo types used in this first assault.

The McNaughton report also found that two American destroyers were attacked August 4 in a calculated ambush 60 miles off the North Vietnamese coast in a running skirmish that lasted throughout the night.



Lawrence Levinson

nam desk." In preparing his account, McNaughton analyzed the masses of data that had been gathered in the field visits to the destroyers and the carriers on the scene. What he relied on most heavily were the ships' own radar tracking charts, and their quartermaster and combat information center logs, which he considered the "best evidence."

After plotting the position of the vessels with his protractor and ruler, McNaughton concluded that there were two separate attacks on U.S. ships in the Gulf of Tonkin. The first occurred in clear weather at 4:08 p.m. on August 2, 1964, where the Maddox was steaming 40 miles offshore. Although obscured in the accounts of the

The destroyers first traced hostile vessels "both on the navigational and the fire-control radars." After concluding from their high speed and small size that these vessels were "torpedo boats or gunboats," the destroyers believed they were heading into an ambush.

At 10:40 p.m. and 60 miles out at sea, "the attacks began." A torpedo was fired at the Turner Joy and "passed parallel" to the ship "from aft forward at a distance of about 300 feet. It was visually sighted by at least four members of the Turner Joy's crew." According to McNaughton's analysis, the "next two hours were a period of continued attacks by torpedoes and by small-caliber automatic weapons; of

Still Rages 29 Years Later

evasive maneuvers; and of efforts by the destroyers to make their way out of the Gulf of Tonkin."

As a young lawyer at the Pentagon, I prepared a chronology of events for the White House shortly after the episodes occurred. I was given free access to the cables and records of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, interviews with the flag duty officers, and phone and meeting logs at the White House as well as tapes of telephone conversations. What struck me as I recounted the situation on August 4 was LBJ's skeptical mood and attitude.

At that time more preoccupied by the crisis in Cyprus than events in Asia, LBJ was acutely concerned about launching any warlike action against Hanoi unless he was assured "beyond doubt" by his senior military and civilian advisers that our destroyers were indeed attacked. It was precisely because of LBJ's reluctance to rush to judgment, and conflicting battle reports from the destroyers, that all of the available evidence was subjected to thorough scrutiny by the Joint Chiefs, the National field commanders, as well as by Defense Secretary Robert McNamara and by Deputy Defense Secretary Cyrus Vance. Volleys of questions were fired down the chain of command and to the captains of the destroyers. After several hours of detailed evaluation, LBJ's advisers concluded that an attack had taken place and so informed him.

In rapid succession, LBJ ordered a retaliatory air strike against North Vietnamese oil depots and PT boat launching sites. The Gulf of Tonkin resolution was submitted to Congress and approved within 48 hours.

Today, the Gulf of Tonkin affair still raises troubling questions. What was the North Vietnamese motive in turning loose wooden-hulled boats against a team of well-armed destroyers protected by carrier-based aircraft? Were the North Vietnamese provoked into thinking that our ships steaming up and down their coastline were actually supporting clandestine commando raids on Hanoi's coastal installations? Was the August 4 event a combination of confusion and fear on the part of the destroyer team overreacting to the earlier ambush on August 2?

Perhaps the most intriguing clues of all are locked in the files of the National Security Agency. There are a series

of still highly classified radio-signal intercepts used by administration officials as the "clinching proof" that our destroyers were attacked during the evening of August 4. Over the years, historians have unsuccessfully sought their declassification. Opening up

these materials to public scrutiny after almost three decades should no longer compromise intelligence-gathering methods and may shed further light on the events that led America down the road to war in Vietnam.



In the company of key congressional leaders, President Johnson signs the Tonkin Gulf Resolution.

(photo by Cecil Stoughton)

Evenings at the Library with . . .



Admiral Bobby Inman demonstrated the skills which distinguished him as Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency by giving his audience a round-the-world tour of trouble spots likely to present problems for the U.S. in the post-cold war era.



Betty Friedan, who a generation ago was a leading force in the women's movement with her book, *The Feminine Mystique*, is now ploughing new ground with her just-published, *The Fountain of Age*, which poses the proposition that the final years of life can be an adventure to be welcomed rather than a problem to be dreaded. She explored this idea in a dramatic presentation.



Ambassador Robert Strauss, who represented the U.S. in the last days of the Soviet Union and the early period of the Russian state that followed it, described for a full house audience the characters and events of that historic time.

Research Grants Awarded to Fourteen Scholars



Counterclockwise from left: University of Texas Professors Richard Schott, LBJ School, and Bruce Buchanan, Government Department, make recommendations for grants to Library and Foundation representatives Regina Greenwell, Larry Reed, Harry Middleton, Tina Houston, and Charles Corkran.

Following the Foundation's new policy of giving grants twice a year, the grants committee selected 14 recipients for the first half of the '93/'94 period. The funds, which total \$25,000, result from a grant from the Moody Foundation to help defray travel and living expenses for researchers using the Library's resources.

Those receiving grants-in-aid and the titles of their proposed subjects are: Randall Beeman, "Permanence and Sustainability: Agriculture in the Age of Ecology"; Robert Brigham, "The NLF's Foreign Relations and the Vietnam War"; Andrew Dunar, "Harry S. Truman: The Retirement Years"; Catherine Forslund, "Anna Chennault: China, Asia, and U.S. Foreign Policy, 1950-1985"; William Gibbons, "The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War, Part V"; Jill Jonnes, "A History of Illegal Drugs in

America"; Arne Kislenko, "U.S. Foreign Policy Towards Thailand, 1960-68"; Elizabeth Koed, "Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965"; Michael Krenn, "Civil Rights, Foreign Policy, and the Appointment of Black Ambassadors during the Johnson Presidency"; H.R. McMaster, "The Advisory Role of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Escalation of the Vietnam War, Nov. 1963-July 1965"; Harry Merritt, "John Sherman Cooper, a biography"; Christine Wing, "Security Policy and the Balance of Economic Power: The Case of the U.S. and Japan"; Thomas Zeiler, "America's Trade Regime: Texas, Prosperity, and Security, 1941-1961"; Julian Zelizer, "Political Culture and the Administrative State: The Case of Wilbur Mills, 1939-74."



Historian Robert Divine has now been appointed by U.T. President Robert Berdahl to serve on the grants committee, replacing the recently resigned Lewis Gould.

“Good News for Historians”



Opening the transcripts proved to be a media event, attracting considerable TV and newspaper coverage.

Library Opens Telephone Conversations

The Library opened the first group of telephone calls recorded by President Johnson in the White House. They included 275 transcripts of conversations held in the Oval Office during the last week of November and the month of December 1963.

The conversations, originally intended to be kept closed for another 25 years, were opened in accordance with a law passed by Congress last year requiring the release of all materials connected in any way with the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

Because the assassination dominated the nation's attention, including the President's, in the weeks following, the Library determined that most of the materials in the collections from that time could be considered to be related to or influenced by that event. The transcripts thus released represent about half the telephone conversations taped during that period. The actual taped conversations, both transcribed and untranscribed, will be made available in the near future.

The materials were generally regarded by scholars to be of great

benefit. "A Godsend," one historian said. Robert Dallek, author of *Lone Star Rising*, the first of a projected two books on LBJ, called the release "good news for historians." Robert Divine of the University of Texas said the transcripts would be of "great benefit to historians and the public."

The reason, as U.T. historian Lewis Gould articulated it, is that in most written materials, "it's hard to locate Johnson. The man himself is elusive, but isn't elusive on the tapes." George Christian, who served as the president's Press Secretary and who was present at the Library when the transcripts were opened, echoed that assessment. "The telephone transcripts," he said, "reflect how he did business as president."

The conversations recorded in the transcripts reveal Johnson as an energetic president touching all bases to keep the country unified in those traumatic weeks. Many of the calls related to his efforts to put together a commission—ultimately known as the Warren Commission—to investigate the circumstances of the assassination.

The transcripts were made available both at the Library and the National Archives building in Washington, D.C.

The new 36th president called the man who would one day become the 38th president on Thanksgiving Day to wish him a happy holiday and ask him to serve on the Warren Commission. Congressman Gerald Ford agreed, and when asked where he was, replied, "At home." "In Michigan?" Johnson asked. "No sir, in Washington," Ford answered. "Well, thank God somebody's in town," said LBJ.

Lady Bird's "Last Hurrah"

Ground Broken for New Wildflower Center

The permanent home for the National Wildflower Research Center, a project launched by Mrs. Johnson 11 years ago, began to materialize with a ground breaking ceremony in October. The complex of buildings, gardens and

courtyards, on a 42-acre tract in Austin, will be the headquarters for the effort to promote the use of native flowers, shrubs, and trees where feasible. It is scheduled for completion by early 1995. Mrs. Johnson, saying

she has had "a lifelong love affair with nature," proclaimed the new center to be her "last hurrah," as she turned the first shovel of earth, breaking ground.



NORTH ELEVATION



SOUTH ELEVATION

Artist's rendering of proposed Wildflower Center.



Larry Temple

Larry Temple was one of six alumni of the Johnson administration who addressed an Elderhostel group visiting the Library. The group of older Americans dedicated a week to steep themselves in the history of the Johnson administration. Other speakers included George Christian, Walt Rostow, Liz Carpenter, Harry Middleton, and Eleanor Butt Crook. Ted Gittinger, Library historian, and Dave McNeely, political correspondent for the *Austin American-Statesman*, also spoke.

LBJ Political Cartoons: The Public Years

An exhibition consisting of 135 original cartoon drawings selected from the Library's collection of 3,900 went on display in the museum. The drawings follow Lyndon Johnson's public career beginning in the House of Representatives through the Presidency. The Great Society is given a searching look, as are many of the controversial problems of the 1960s, including the Vietnam War.



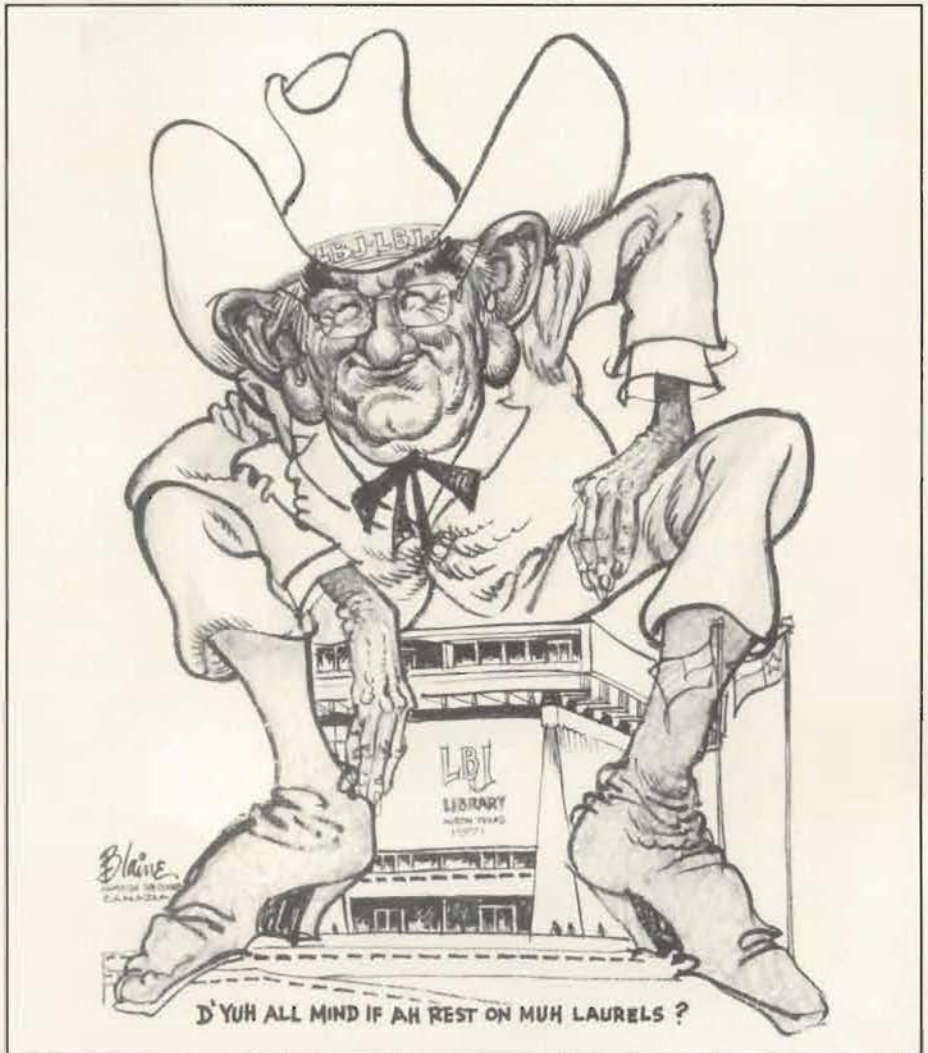
Caricature of LBJ
Made at Chelsea Potter, England
Glazed Terra Cotta
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. R.E. Chambers,
1966

Fischetti



"SUNRISE... ALL THE FOREIGN TROUBLE MAKERS GOIN'
TO SLEEP AN' ALL THE DOMESTIC ONES WAKIN' UP"

Cartoon by John Fischetti; Publishers Newspaper Syndicate, 1967



D'YUH ALL MIND IF AH REST ON MUH LAURELS ?

Cartoon by Blaine of Hamilton Spectator, 1971



Cartoon by Blaine of Hamilton Spectator
(date unknown)



Cartoon by Blaine of Hamilton Spectator
(date unknown)



The Library is undergoing redesign of its permanent museum. The redesign will proceed in three places. The first, already begun, will portray the decade of the 1960s, and is scheduled to be completed by May, 1994. Work will then begin on the second phase, covering the years 1907-1960, and the third, which will be an enlarged display of head of state gifts.

President's 85th Birthdate Observed



As has become traditional, LBJ's birthday was commemorated with speeches, wreath-laying ceremonies, and refreshments. The 36th President would have been 85 on August 27.

Liz Carpenter, with Brig. General Robert E. Gatliff, Commander of the 12th Flying Training Wing at Ran-

dolph Air Force Base in San Antonio, and Mrs. Johnson placed President Clinton's wreath on President Johnson's grave at the LBJ Ranch. At the LBJ Grove in Washington, Fred Korth made remarks. In the Library, volunteers passed out birthday cake to visitors.

Coming Events

Nov. 22: An evening in Old Austin with Liz Carpenter, George Christian, Sue McBee, Cactus Pryor, Texana Faulk Conn, and Emmett Shelton will look back at what life was like in this town before World War II.

Dec. 13: Christmas Program—Karen Kuykendall and Standish Meachem in "Love Letters."

Jan. 20: An Evening with Michael Beschloss.



AMONG FRIENDS OF LBJ is a publication of the Friends of the LBJ Library

Editor: Lawrence D. Reed

Research Assistance: Charles Corkran, Gary Yarrington, Phil Scott

Photography: Frank Wolfe, Margaret Harman

Staff Assistance: Yolanda Boozer

The LBJ Library is one of nine presidential libraries administered by the National Archives and Records Administration.