

# *Among* FRIENDS *of LBJ*

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**Grandma Moses comes to the LBJ Museum.**  
Story on pages 2-3.

## **LEGACY OF THE SIXTIES**

**A special report on the Symposium held at the Library in May is  
inserted in this newsletter.**



# Grandma Moses Exhibit To Close in September

The Library's current exhibit, a rare show of Grandma Moses, will remain open until September 12. A number of her oil landscapes are on display, and some fascinating examples of her "yarn pictures," an art form much less well known. Not quite tapestries, but much more than the "samplers" which American needle artists once made as proof of their skill, these exquisite pieces could make an exhibit in themselves.

The Bennington (Vermont) Museum assembled this traveling exhibit.



"Baker Home," 1954. Oil on masonite.



Some of Grandma Moses' tools. Note the jar lids she used to mix her colors.





"Bennington," 1945. Oil tempera on masonite.



Some youngsters take advantage of the Museum's invitation (to adult-sponsored, approved groups) to embellish a replica of one of the paintings. Yes, the colors they use wash off easily.



One of the "yarn pictures."



# Dear Mr. President. . . .

During the Library's symposium on the sixties, historian Michael Beschloss recounted how he, at age eight, had written a letter to President Johnson. When Beschloss first visited the Library in 1977, he wondered aloud to an archivist if that letter, by some miracle, might be found. It was quickly recovered from the White House correspondence files. This is that letter:



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December 24,  
Dear President Johnson, 1963.  
I think it would be a  
great memorial to our  
Former President John F.  
Kennedy if you could  
get some large carving  
firm to carve his head  
in the Mount Rushmore  
Memorial of South Dakota.  
  
Michael Beschloss,  
Eight years old.  
of Flossmoor, Illinois.  
(a suburb of Chicago  
Illinois.)

January 21, 1964

Dear Michael:

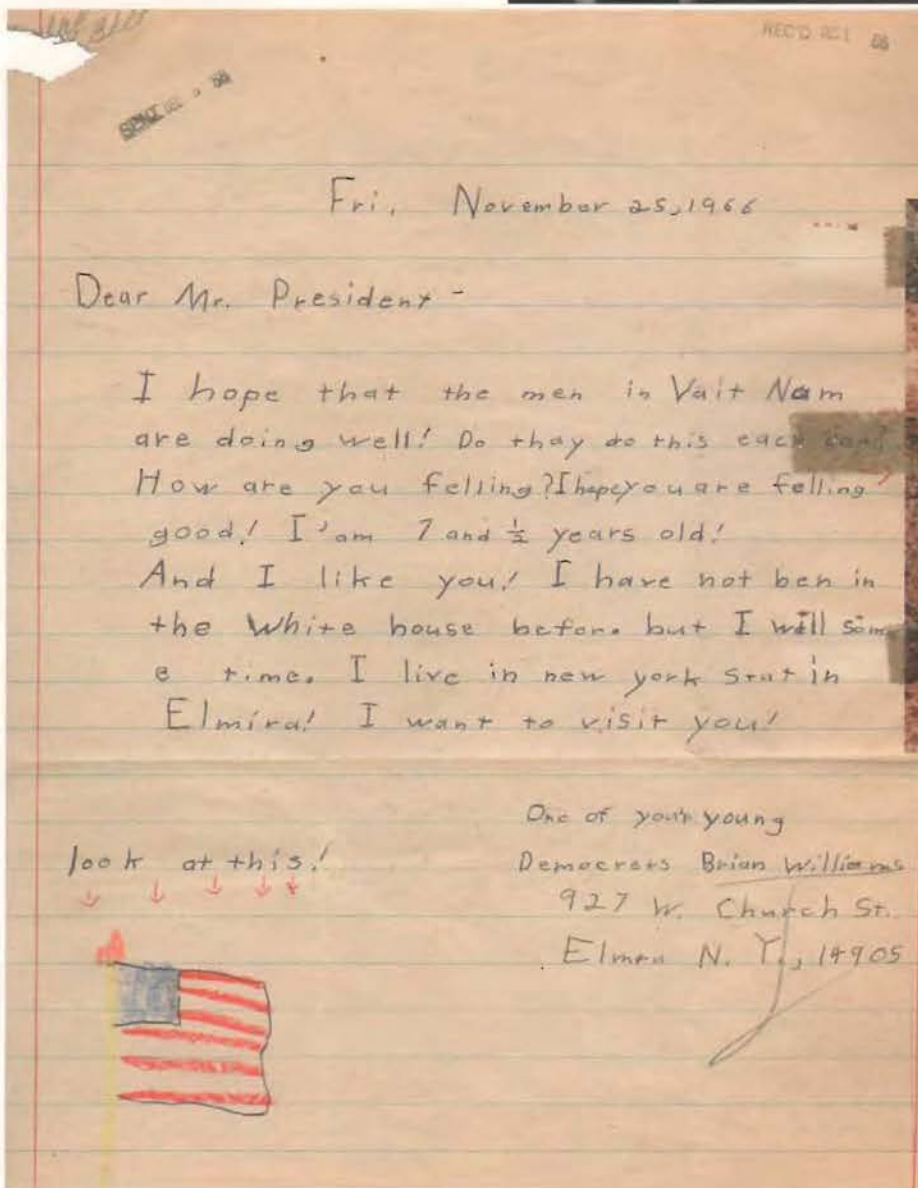
The President has received your letter and asked me to thank you for writing. It was thoughtful of you to send in your suggestion for honoring the late President Kennedy.

Sincerely,

Juanita D. Roberts  
Personal Secretary  
to the President

<sup>x</sup>  
Michael Beschloss  
2229 MacDonald Lane  
Flossmoor, Illinois

Watching Beschloss recount his experience on C-Span, Brian Williams of NBC recalled that as a youngster he too had written LBJ. By phone he asked Beschloss if he thought the archivists could find that letter as well. Archivist John Wilson did. Here is what Williams wrote:





# With A Song in Her Heart



**Claudia Wilson Anderson,  
Archives Staff**

[This article is from a paper delivered by LBJ Library staffer Claudia Anderson, to a panel of the annual meeting of the Society of Southwest Archivists.]

Speaking of President Johnson, Mrs. Johnson wrote, "...as I began to see the things he was applying himself to, there emerged the interests that made my heart sing, the ones that I knew most about and cared most about. Those were the environment and beautification." She used these words when recalling President Johnson's "Great Society Speech at the University of Michigan, May 22, 1964, and her decision to adopt "beautification" as her special interest as First Lady. In that speech, President Johnson had clearly linked the country's natural splendor to his vision of the Great Society. Lady Bird Johnson took this vision and began to restore and transform the American landscape.

Lady Bird Johnson began to notice her environment very early in life. In her interviews and writings, she frequently refers to the East Texas of her childhood: Caddo Lake, "enchanted bayous," "picturesque gnarled cypress trees," and the "first wild violets" of spring. She speaks of a "love affair with nature" that began in childhood. Mrs. Johnson's mother died when Lady Bird was only five years old, and her mother's maiden

sister, Aunt Effie, came to Texas from Alabama to help. Mrs. Johnson credits Aunt Effie with instilling the love of nature. She says of her:

"She was the sweetest person, generally, but she had no idea of discipline, no idea of how to choose the right clothes or how to put a girl in the right society. She did, however, love beauty and nature, and she spent hours explaining how lovely the fields and meadows could be. She taught me how to listen to the wind in the pine trees and to the way birds sing."

As a young woman, "Bird" Taylor included vivid references to nature in love letters to Lyndon Johnson. Several of these letters were released recently in connection with the new "First Lady's Gallery" exhibit. One of them

includes this passage.

"We walked through the woods to the old Haggerty place—site of an old colonial mansion, now quite dilapidated and doleful looking. It always gives me a poignant feeling to go over there.... It must have been a lovely place—there are the tallest magnolias I've ever seen, and great Liveoaks, and myriads of crepe myrtle, and a carpet of jonquils and flags in the Spring."

The Johnsons were introduced by a mutual friend at the end of August in 1934. The next morning they met for breakfast, spent the day together, and Johnson proposed marriage. A week later, he returned to Washington, D. C. and his job as secretary to Congressman Richard



**Claudia Alta "Lady Bird" Taylor.**



Kleberg from South Texas. The Johnsons wrote a series of love letters over the next few weeks, and they married in November.

The letters show a young woman with a strong interest in the environment, but little enthusiasm for a life in politics. In another of her letters, she wrote, "Lyndon, please tell me as soon as you can what the deal is ... I am *afraid* it is politics.—Oh, I know I haven't any business—not any 'proprietary interest'—but I would hate for you to go into politics."

Mrs. Johnson has given the LBJ Library the picture albums that she kept from the time of her youth. Looking through the old photographs is great fun. Again and again, researchers can observe Mrs. Johnson

photographed against a natural background. A particularly interesting page from one of the albums displays two photographs. They are from 1930, the year that Mrs. Johnson came to the University of Texas at Austin. The first shows Mrs. Johnson being photographed in a field of bluebonnets. The other photo on the page is a shot of Gene Boehringer, the mutual friend who introduced the Johnsons to each other; she too is standing in the bluebonnets. Throughout the Photo Collection at the Library scholars can find pictures of Mrs. Johnson which highlight her surroundings.

During Lyndon Johnson's years in the Congress, documentation on Mrs. Johnson's activities is very thin,

but there are occasional nuggets in the Johnson papers. In researching his book, *Lady Bird Johnson and the Environment*, historian Lew Gould found letters indicating that Mrs. Johnson was an avid gardener in the 1940s and planted wildflower seeds at the Ranch in the 1950s.

In November 1963, Mrs. Johnson was catapulted into the role of First Lady. Throughout 1964, she peppered her speeches with references to the environment, though not yet establishing beautification as her agenda. But the time was ripe for such a campaign. Rachel Carson had published *Silent Spring* in 1962; President Kennedy had called a White House Conference on Conservation in 1962, and Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall published *The Quiet Crisis* in 1963. At the time of the assassination a Wilderness Bill and a Land and Water Bill were pending before Congress and had White House support.

Lyndon Johnson, who himself shared a love of the land, appointed the Task Force on Natural Beauty, which reported to him in 1964. During the 1964 campaign, Johnson frequently mentioned conservation themes in his speeches. The theme of natural beauty became clearly linked to the Great Society.

With the landslide election of her husband in November 1964, Mrs. Johnson began to seriously evaluate her own role in the new administration. She has spoken often about wanting to chose some of those things that made her "heart sing," and in 1965, Mrs. Johnson began her Beautification Campaign. The first priority was an effort to beautify the nation's capital. Mrs. Johnson headed the First Lady's Committee for a More Beautiful Capital, bringing together a number of philanthropists, community leaders, and experts interested in environment. Next was a visible campaign to clean up the nation's countrysides and cities. That year, President Johnson submitted the Highway Beautification bill to Congress. The bill, which many thought of as "Lady Bird's bill,"



Gene Boehringer



## With A Song in Her Heart *(continued)*



'NOW, ABOUT THIS BEAUTIFICATION PROGRAM-!'

called for controls on billboards and junkyards along highways. In 1965, editorial cartoonist Gib Crockett published a cartoon showing Lady Bird Johnson giving her husband a taste of the "Johnson treatment," for which he himself was famous.

To highlight conservation and beautification, Mrs. Johnson made several trips to scenic areas of the country. Her journeys had the added dimension of supporting the Johnson Administration's "See America First" campaign, which was designed to help with our foreign balance of payments deficit. The files at the Johnson Library document these trips, but at a recent symposium at the LBJ Library, Liz Carpenter told a story about the wilderness adventure in Big Bend National Park which is not to be found in the papers. That account and the relevant photo are included in "The Legacy of the Sixties," the insert to this newsletter.

When the Johnsons returned to Texas from the White House in 1969, Mrs. Johnson did not stop lobbying and campaigning for the environment. She worked on the beautification of Town Lake in Austin; she sponsored highway beautification awards for Texas Highway Department workers, and she founded the National Wild-

flower Center. With co-author Carlton B. Lees, she published a book on wildflowers.

Because of Mrs. Johnson's many and continued contributions, there is still great public interest in her life. The Johnson Library has used its web site <<http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu>> to try to make information and primary source material on Mrs. Johnson more accessible to the public. The web site includes a short biography of Mrs. Johnson, a web exhibit featuring the new First Lady's Gallery in our museum, and oral history interviews with Mrs. Johnson's social secretary Bess Abell and Secretary



**Lady Bird Johnson, holding daughter Lynda. Washington, D.C., spring of 1946.**

Udall, who talk about traveling with Mrs. Johnson.

In September of 1934, in another of her love letters, Bird Taylor wrote, "Today I discovered two of Mother's old carved stone flower pots, muchly covered with dirt and accumulation of years of debris. So I scrubbed them up until they're nice and new and now I'm going to put soil in them and plant lavender hyacinths and red tulips! It is more fun making things look prettier and renovating old things!" The holdings of the Johnson Library show how she took this simple philosophy and began renovating the American landscape.



# Former Astronaut Visits Library

Astronaut John Glenn in 1962; Senator John Glenn, 1999.



Senator John Glenn recently toured the Library and the LBJ School of Public Affairs. The Senator is cooperating with Ohio State University in establishing a John Glenn Institute for Public Service and

Public Policy, and was in search of ideas for buildings, facilities, and staff. He was escorted by Michael Gillette, formerly of the Library staff and presently head of the Legislative Archives division of the National

Archives and Records Administration in Washington. Dr. Gillette reports that it is a real experience to travel with Senator Glenn, who is recognized everywhere and immediately becomes the center of attention.



Pleasantly surprised Museum visitors get a bonus: shaking hands with an American hero.



# An Evening With Goldberg



Whoopi Goldberg was at the LBJ Library on April 28 to interview Mrs. Johnson for Lifetime TV. Doing double duty, that evening she spoke to an overflow crowd in the LBJ Auditorium.

"Some of you may know," she announced, "that before my name was Whoopi Goldberg, it was Caryn Johnson. But very few know that it was really Caryn *Baines* Johnson. And with me is my brother, Clyde Baines Johnson. . ."

That was as far as Ms. Goldberg got before the audience erupted in laughter.

Speaking seriously about the problems of today's society, Goldberg commented on our lack of real communication between real people, a shortcoming which is getting worse despite the apparent boom in communications. She cited a humorous and telling sign of the times: "Young people don't know who Martin Luther King is, or John Kennedy. They do know who John Kennedy, Jr. is because they've seen his picture; he's the hunk on the skates."

(The tragic loss of John Kennedy, Jr., of course, was then still in the future.)

On disciplining children: "I grew up in the projects, where they had twelve floors. And if somebody's mother caught you doing wrong on the fourth floor, by the time you got home to the sixth floor not only did your mother know but the whole neighborhood knew. Today? No discipline. We see children on television talking to parents in ways that in those days would have gotten you filleted, just filleted. I love Bart Simpson, but . . . he needs his butt kicked."



## Colorful Addition to Glassboro Exhibit



**LBJ and Kosygin at Glassboro, June 23, 1967.**

Former LBJ staffer Sherwin Markman, visiting the Johnson Library for the first time during the sixties symposium, stood before the newly-installed Glassboro exhibit and recounted how he had done the advance work for the President's impromptu New Jersey summit with USSR Premier Kosygin. The meet-

ing took place in the campus home of Dr. Thomas Robinson, president of Glassboro State College. Given hardly a day to prepare the home for its important visitors, Markman literally worked around the clock, barely finishing in time. In a humorous footnote, he recalled how the LBJ Library and Museum acquired the

furniture which is displayed in its Glassboro exhibit.

After the meeting, President Johnson told Markman to get the table and chairs which LBJ and Kosygin had used, and store them for an exhibit in the Library, then in the planning stage.

The chairs belonged to Dr. Robinson's family, not to the college. Markman told Mrs. Robinson of the President's request. She was adamant; one of the pieces was an heirloom and she was not about to give it up.

Markman offered to have a perfect replica made to replace it. No dice, said Mrs. Robinson.

The harried aide relayed the refusal to the President, and suggested that a replica would do just as well for the Museum exhibit.

LBJ came down on the side of historical authenticity. "Get those chairs," he said.

Now desperate, Markman appealed to Mrs. Robinson's mercy, to no effect.

He appealed to her patriotism. He appealed to her sense of history. He appealed for two solid weeks.

He got the chairs.

A tape recording of this entertaining account is being added to the Glassboro exhibit in the Museum.

## University of Texas Offers Courses on Texana and the Presidency

Two semester-long evening courses with interest to LBJ and Texas history buffs will be given through UT Austin's University Extension in the fall of 1999. Dr. Patrick Cox will offer "The Making of Modern Texas" on Wednesdays, 6-9 p.m. (\$414). This will cover the "new Texas" of the modern period, including the development of the major metropolitan areas of Houston, Dallas, and Austin; The University of Texas, the growth of state government and the evolution of selected industries, such as the oil business,

the high-tech sector, and NASA.

Dr. Jessica Chapin will offer "Alamo: Poetics/Politics of an American Shrine" on Thursdays, 6-9 p.m. (\$414). This promises to be a fascinating look at the way the Alamo has captured the imagination of generations of Americans in scholarly works, novels, children's books, and popular films (From John Wayne's *The Alamo* to *Pee Wee's Big Adventure* to John Sayles' *Lone Star*.) The course will trace the Alamo's transformation from a granary in the 1870s to the sacred shrine that has

formed the centerpiece of tourism and downtown revitalization in contemporary San Antonio.

Dr. Bruce Buchanan, a widely-recognized authority on the presidency who often does consulting for the national media, will offer "The American President" on Wednesdays 6-9 p.m. (\$414). He will examine the development of the presidency, current presidential operations, and ways to evaluate presidential candidates. He promises to take a look at the Clinton presidency, as well.



## In Memoriam

George Reedy, 1917–1999

President Johnson's press secretary, 1964-1965



When the Library staff learned of the tragic loss of John Kennedy, Jr., they searched the archives for items to assemble a remembrance to him in the Library foyer. They found crayon drawings, which the boy the world knew as "John-John" and his sister Caroline sent to the Johnsons in November, 1966.

## Coming Events, Fall, 1999

- September 22 An Evening with Helen Thomas
- September 29 An Evening with President Larry Faulkner, President, University of Texas at Austin
- October 20 An Evening with "Mr. Speaker, Sam Rayburn."
- November 3 An Evening with Ambassador William vanden Heuvel
- December 7 An Evening of Cowboy Poetry and Music

## LBJ State and National Parks Coming Events:

On August 27, the 91st anniversary of the birth of President Lyndon B. Johnson, the National Park Service will host a wreath-laying ceremony at the Johnson Family Cemetery on the LBJ Ranch. In honor of this observance, ranger-guided bus tours of the LBJ Ranch will be free all day.

On Saturday, August 28, the National Park Service will observe the President's birthday with a presentation of the colors ceremony and refreshments at the Visitor Center in Johnson City. There will be special tours of the LBJ Boyhood Home.

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

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

