LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON LIBRARY ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

LBJ Library
2313 Red River Street
Austin, Texas 78705

http://www.lbjlib.utexas.edu/johnson/archives.hom/biopage.asp

CLAUDIA "LADY BIRD" JOHNSON ORAL HISTORY, INTERVIEW I
PREFERRED CITATION

For Internet Copy:
Transcript, Claudia "Lady Bird" Johnson Oral History Interview I, 8/12/77, by Michael L. Gillette, Internet Copy, LBJ Library.

For Electronic Copy on Compact Disc from the LBJ Library:
Transcript, Claudia "Lady Bird" Johnson Oral History Interview I, 8/12/77, by Michael L. Gillette, Electronic Copy, LBJ Library.

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION

LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON LIBRARY

Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interviews of

CLAUDIA TAYLOR JOHNSON

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, I, Claudia Taylor Johnson of Austin, Texas, do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title and interest in the tape recordings and transcripts of the personal interviews conducted with me and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. A list of the interviews is attached.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

(1) The transcripts shall be available to all researchers.

(2) The tape recordings shall be available to all researchers.

(3) I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcripts and tapes.

(4) Copies of the transcripts and tape recordings may be provided by the library to researchers upon request.

(5) Copies of the transcripts and tape recordings may be deposited in or loaned to other institutions.

Claudia Taylor Johnson 6/20/02

Claudia Taylor Johnson Date

by Patti Howell

Allison Fawcett 5-10-2011

~~Archivist of the United States~~ Date

Assistant Archivist
For Presidential Libraries

Appendix A

Attached to and forming part of the instrument of gift of oral history interviews, executed by Claudia Taylor Johnson, and accepted by the ~~Archivist of the United States~~ Assistant Archivist For Presidential Libraries on 5-10-2011.

Mrs. Johnson's Oral History Interviews:

May 26, 1975, with Merle Miller
June 25, 1976, with Merle Miller
June 29, 1976, with Merle Miller
January 30, 1977, with Merle Miller
February 14, 1977, with Merle Miller
August 12, 1977, with Michael Gillette
August 13, 1977, with Michael Gillette
August 14, 1977, with Michael Gillette
February 4, 1978, with Michael Gillette
April 1, 1978, with Michael Gillette
August 6, 1978, with Michael Gillette
October 9, 1978, with Michael Gillette
January 23, 1979, with Michael Gillette
January 24, 1979, with Michael Gillette
January 25-26, 1979, with Michael Gillette
February 27-28, 1979, with Michael Gillette
August 19, 1979, with Michael Gillette
September 2-3, 1979, with Michael Gillette
September 9, 1979, with Michael Gillette
November 13, 1979, with Anthony Champagne
January 4-5, 1980, with Michael Gillette
January 29-30, with Michael Gillette
September 20, 1980, with Michael Gillette
September 26-27, 1980, with Michael Gillette
February 6-7, 1981, with Michael Gillette
February 20-21, 1981, with Michael Gillette
August 10, 1981, with Michael Gillette
August 23, 1981, with Michael Gillette
September 5, 1981, with Michael Gillette
November 15, 1981, with Michael Gillette
January 2-3, 1982, with Michael Gillette
January 10, 1982, with Michael Gillette
January 30, 1982, with Michael Gillette
March 15, 1982, with Michael Gillette
March 19-20, 1982, with Michael Gillette
March 22, 1982, with Michael Gillette

March 29, 1982, with Michael Gillette
August 3-4, 1982, with Michael Gillette
September 4, 1983, with Michael Gillette
December 30, 1984, video and audio interview with Michael Gillette
January 4, 1985, video and audio interview with Michael Gillette
February 23, 1991, with Michael Gillette
March 4, 1991, with W. C. Trueheart
March 8, 1991, with Michael Gillette
August 1994, with Harry Middleton (six interviews)
November 5, 1994, with Harry Middleton
January 23, 1987, with Nancy Smith
August 18, 1987, with Lou Rudolph, Jim Henderson, and John and Sandy Brice
August 19, 1987, with Lou Rudolph, Jim Henderson, and John and Sandy Brice
August 20, 1987, with Lou Rudolph, and John and Sandy Brice
August 1994, with S. Douglass Cater
March 22, 1985, with Louis S. Gomolak
July 16, 1996, with Jan Jarboe Russell
July 17, 1996, with Jan Jarboe Russell

INTERVIEW I

DATE: August 12, 1977

INTERVIEWEE: LADY BIRD JOHNSON

INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE

PLACE: The LBJ Ranch, Stonewall, Texas

Tape 1 of 2

G: Do you have any recollections of your grandparents at all?

J: Not of my mother's mother and father, because I think they both died before I was born. In any case, I know my grandfather on my mother's side did, and either my grandmother had died already or did within the next several years, because I never saw her. Of course, on my father's side, I did come to know my grandmother Taylor very well, although I never knew her as Grandmother Taylor, because Mr. Taylor was her third husband and after his death she married a Mr. Bishop. I knew her as Mrs. Bishop. I used to visit her out in the country in Autauga County, Alabama.

It was a country of red clay and green pines. Cotton was the money crop and the principal crop, some corn, some subsistence farming, many blacks. People were poor, but not that they ever thought of it. My life there was visiting kinfolks in little towns, and going to see Grandmother was always a part of it. She lived in a very simple farmhouse, where actually she lived for more than eighty-five years, having four husbands, thirteen children, and watching twelve of them grow up. That was a matter of great interest to

Lyndon. He used to ask me to tell him over and over, "How many husbands did you say she had?" And he knew darned well, because he had heard it several times. And, "How many children did you say she had?"

G: Did she ever talk about your father's youth?

J: No, actually she didn't. I would give anything in the world if she had, but, you see, I was little girl. I suppose my last visit to her must have been when I was ten or eleven, because I think she died when I was twelve, and I can' t say at that time that I was interested in my father's youth. I have certainly become so later on.

I've asked kinfolks about my grandmother. Her name was Emma Louise Bates, and she married first when she was about sixteen or seventeen. The Civil War was going on. She married a young man who was leaving within a week, or a month, to join the Confederate Army. He never returned. He didn't die gloriously at Robert E. Lee's side, but he died like so many of them, of disease and infection in the army camp. So that marriage terminated very early, and then in a year or so she remarried. I think his name was Lassiter; I'm not even entirely sure. He lived a couple of years, and an epidemic of yellow fever, which was fairly common, particularly during the Civil War years, and right afterward, raged across the country and he was a victim. He died, and here she was twice widowed and still not more than twenty.

Then she married Thomas Jefferson Taylor, and they had four children. She was pregnant with the fifth when it became obvious that he had a serious disease--I think it was a kidney ailment. I remember asking my kinfolks, "What happened next? What did Grandma and Grandpa do?" They said the doctor in Selma, Alabama, told them that

there was some marvelous new operation that could be performed that would cure this disease. He couldn't do it, nobody around there [could], but it could be done in Mobile. So they sold a piece of a farm, got in the buggy, parked all the children with kinfolks and rode in the buggy to Selma, got on the riverboat, and went down the river--I don't know what that is, perhaps it's the Tombigbee, perhaps it's the Warrior that goes through Selma [it is the Alabama River]. In any case, they went down the river to Mobile, had the operation; it was apparently successful. He got out of the hospital, and they started home. He began to run a fever, and by the time he got off the boat at Selma it was obvious that he was much more seriously ill. They made it as far as the relatives where they had left the children, and he died.

So here she was, about to have the fifth baby in two or three months, and with four other children, and a small Alabama farm to run. She managed it all right. She named that child after her husband, Thomas Jefferson Taylor, Jr., I guess. Anyhow, he became my father, and as you can see he never even knew his own father. When he was two or three years old she married a gentleman who had come a-courting in the beginning and between every husband--his name was Bishop--and lived to have another eight children. So my father, to whom I was quite close and admired very much, grew up with the limited advantages of a small farm and a life of a lot of work. He was an extremely strong physical specimen, and work was his passion, and his god. He was determined to get out of there and to do something with his life. Although, I must say, making money or acquiring enough to be comfortable, I would have to say that was the form his ambition took.

I remember in an old scrapbook that belonged to his sister, my Aunt Ida, I came across a record of their graduation ceremony from the little school in rural Alabama--I think the place was called Evergreen. She was the valedictorian, and he was the salutatorian. She made a speech on the value of good manners, and he made one called "A Good Investment." I wish I had copies of those speeches. Coming events cast their shadows before, because my aunt all her life was concerned with good manners, and had them, and taught them. My daddy all his life was concerned with a good investment and did manage to make many of them for most of his life, at least until the very late end of it. In his eighties he had some setbacks.

G: I've noticed in reading some of his letters that he was a good writer. He had a good writing style and expressed himself well.

J: Well, it's interesting to see the sort of a Victorian way in which both men and women--very formal, rather high-flown, rather exaggerated way in which they expressed themselves. But yes, he had feelings and he could express them.

But you were asking about my grandmother. I'd give anything if I had realized what an extraordinary woman she was and the experiences she had had. But as a six, seven, eight, nine, ten-year-old child, I did not. I just knew that that was one of the lonesomest places in the hills and hollows to visit that ever was, and that my grandmother did have good strawberries in the garden and a little pitcher full of cream on the table that I always loved to put on those strawberries, and that she had a gentle, serene, very quiet face, but didn't talk much. I suppose maybe once you've done all the work that goes with producing and raising thirteen children, perhaps you're too tired. But she was very quiet.

G: Your father must have been relatively courageous and adventurous to move into East Texas as he did, away from Alabama. Did he ever talk to you about his decision to do that?

J: Yes. It was partly the spirit of the times, "Go West, young man," you know. One heard that Texas had great opportunities and lots of land, and you could make money. And also [it was partly] a very casual encounter: his older brother, Uncle Will, was married to a woman who wrote poetry and published it in small magazines, women's magazines and in local papers, and perhaps a little more wider range. Anyhow, her poems brought her some fan letters, or at least pen pals. One of these was from Marshall, Texas. She turned them over to her brother-in-law, young Tommy, because this person writing appeared to be a young woman of about his own age, and she said, "You ought to answer this one for me." So he began writing to some young woman in Marshall, Texas. So that, just a sheer chance, was a part of his coming out here. But the real drive was the determination to get to a land of more opportunities.

Also my father was the last child of the Taylor children, and the eight Bishop children began to grow up and fill the house. As the Taylor children began to leave and make their place in the world, he wanted, too, to leave and make his place. Once he went and worked in the coal mines, for a dollar a day, for about a year. He did that long enough to buy himself a horse and saddle for his very own, and that was property in those days which was almost as much of a status symbol, I gather, and almost as much of a necessity for a young man as a car is now. So he thought he was equipped when he got his horse and saddle. And I don't think he had as rich and warm a relationship with his

stepfather as one would have liked. All in all, the seeds were ripe for him to leave home when he reached early young manhood.

I remember one time saying to my father, because for a man with as much property and as much money as he had, I sometimes thought he was a little too careful with it. I said something like that to him. He looked at me, not reproachfully, but in the sort of tone of voice that one did not ignore or forget, and he said, "I remember seeing my mother wanting to make tea cakes for us, the children, maybe one of us was having a birthday, and she couldn't because there was no sugar in the house, and she couldn't afford to buy it." Tea cakes were a delicious but very simple form of cookie. I really never forgot that, because if you have seen somebody you love do without something as simple as two cups of sugar, you know the value of money. He was determined that that not happen to him or his in the future.

G: One question that seems to emerge in the various descriptions of his moving to Texas is whether or not he married your mother before he moved here and then moved, or moved over here and then went back and married her.

J: He came to Texas first. Actually, he got off the train practically as soon as he crossed the line. I've often wondered if perhaps my spiritual home were more in Central Texas than it was in the land where I was really born and raised, East Texas. I wish perhaps he'd come a little farther, but he was always in a hurry, all of his life. Partly he wanted to get off and meet this young lady he'd been writing to. It turned out to be not a permanent relation at all. I think they liked each other better in the written word than they did when they met.

G: Did they remain friends, did you know, through the years?

J: I think they did remain sort of casual friends, and I think he told me who she was, but I cannot for the life of me remember now.

In any case, he looked the area over and decided to buy some land and start a country store. I do not know how he had any money for a nest egg, except I have a vague memory that he said he sold his horse and saddle, and he sold a small parcel of land that he had inherited, that all the Taylor children had inherited from their father. In any case, he was the sort of man who could and would make his way in a raw pioneer land, and he soon did buy some land and set up a small store. He began to go back to Alabama and try to persuade my mother to marry him. For many years I had in my possession and carried around with me from house to house in a little box, letters that he had written her. I do not know if those letters ever came to rest in the Library or not.

G: I think you'll find copies.

J: I hope so. Yes, there is a copy of his stationery, which had the familiar red fish at the top, "T. J. Taylor, Dealer in Everything." It used to say, "Dealer in General Merchandise." Later on he put a sign up above the store, "Dealer in Everything," and it would say, "Shipper of Fresh Water Fish."

There was a lake close to us, which became very much a part of my childhood, called Caddo Lake, a very scenic, interesting, wild, haunted sort of a place, not unlike the Everglades of Florida. [There were] huge cypress trees with big trunks and gnarled roots and hung with Spanish moss, and still, grey-green water, and some alligators, and lots and lots of turtles, and a few, I'm sure, water moccasins, but they never bothered me, and

lots and lots and lots of fish. Daddy used to have men who worked for him who would catch the fish, ice them down in barrels, and send them on the train to Fulton Fish Market in New York. So that is where that stationery came from with the red fish on the top of the page.

G: Your mother's family, I understand, opposed the marriage.

J: I'm not sure that they went as far as opposing it. She had had somewhat more advantages and more money than Daddy had, because Daddy was certainly just a fine, fresh young man at the threshold of life, with nothing behind him in the way of wealth and expectations to inherit.

G: I get the impression that it may have partially been just a reluctance to turn loose of a daughter, because neither your aunt nor your uncle had married either. I guess your mother married relatively late for that generation.

J: You know, I just don't know. I know that she was perhaps one year older than my daddy, and I just really don't know how old either one of them were when they married. My grandfather and grandmother Pattillo had four children: two girls, Aunt Effie and my mother, Minnie Lee Pattillo, and two boys, Claud Alfred, who as you say never married, and Harry Gordon. Harry Gordon married relatively early. Uncle Claud was the one who was always left handling the estate, handling the family land, and just taking care of the other members of the family as far as their handling their money affairs went. I have the feeling that the Pattillos may have considered themselves, rightly or wrongly, a notch more cultured or successful than this young man, although they both certainly came from a very rural southern background. My mother and her sister, Aunt Effie, had gone to

girls' schools. I don't know whether they would qualify as colleges or not; they were called, I think, seminary. In any case, he was an ardent courter and they did get married.

G: Did Aunt Effie ever talk to you about this stage of your mother's life, when she did make the decision to marry?

J: Not much. Various kinfolks would say that my mother loved to ride in the woods. She had a horse, and she'd just get out on it, go and just take to the woods, just sort of freely roaming around, which they thought rather eccentric of a young woman. But her father was an extremely eccentric man, my grandfather. I would have loved to have known him. He was what is called a character.

G: Why was he eccentric? What did he do?

J: He was a great reader. He was also a health faddist. He was an early believer in Dr. [John Harvey] Kellogg, who had a hospital, or what really I guess you would call it a spa, in Battle Creek, Michigan, and who began talking about orange juice, vitamins, sun bathing, exercise, before anybody else ever heard of it. Dr. Kellogg was a great vegetarian and inspired all of his believers in being that. My grandfather was an ardent believer. He also, I get the impression that he was a bit of a wild young man and a carouser, until it finally dawned on him that he believed he would settle down and get married and make some money. He just planned it all, and it all worked out for him.

G: I take it that your mother and Aunt Effie were also interested in this Kellogg.

J: Yes, it was really terribly sad. So much that Dr. Kellogg believed in has since been adopted by the world of medicine and by people in general. You know how much we talk about vitamins? Well he was just talking about vitamins all the time. At that time

everybody just fell out laughing, and they just thought all this was crazy about taking off your clothes and lying in the sun and getting all that exercise.

G: Didn't Aunt Effie take you there once?

J: Yes, she did, twice. Really, she wanted to go for her own health, so she just took me along, because after my mother's death she had come to our house to live and take care of me. So she took me everywhere. Not that I needed anything; I didn't, because I was quite a healthy young child.

G: Did you meet Dr. Kellogg? Was he still living then?

J: Oh, very much. He was a ruddy-cheeked, white-haired, white-mustached gentleman, quite elderly, but he would bicycle around just like fury about seven o'clock in the morning. Then he would get up and lead us all in calisthenics, everybody wearing some kind of rather remarkable bloomers, middy blouses or something, the women, and the men other suitable attire.

G: How long did you stay?

J: I think we stayed a whole month one summer. I learned a lot about the strange world. For instance, I found that those Yankees just thought that you shot off firecrackers in the middle of the summer. July the 4th came and there was a great shooting off of firecrackers, and everybody knows you do that at Christmas. At least that was the way I was born and raised, you know. When you find a different custom you always think that your own custom is the world's custom, and you are startled to see that they did it on July the 4th.

G: That's fascinating. Let's talk some more about your mother. I hear she was tall and

blonde and that she would wear turbans and veils.

J: Well, yes. I have a vague memory of her having some sort of illness and losing some of her hair, and from then on she did wear turbans a good deal. Most that I remember about her is that she walked very swiftly, and she would just be going around the house. She did wear white a great deal, and she would just be going through the house very swiftly. You see, I was only five, well actually five years and eight months old, when she died, so I do not have many memories of her. I remember that she was ardently interested in some election and went all over the county in a buggy electioneering for Mr. X, let us say, who had been overseas and had fought bravely and whose opponent was what was called a draft dodger then. And believe me, that was no thing to be if you aspired to a public office. It was considered rather eccentric of her to be so outspoken in politics.

G: Was she an advocate of woman's suffrage, too?

J: I do not know. She was a sort of woman whom apparently many people remembered as distinctive, and I am sure that had we begun talking about it some years ago you would have found her contemporaries who could remember her and tell you lots of stories about her. Because she was not one who melted into the background and was forgotten.

G: She doesn't seem to have been bound at all by the prevailing thought or practices there in Karnack.

J: Yes. She was really pretty alien to the scene there, because she was always sending off and getting books, lots and lots and lots of books, and she would go up East somewhere, to New York sometime, to Chicago sometime, once a year to listen to the opera. She loved grand opera. She had stacks and stacks of Red Seal records by people like

[Amelita] Galli-Curci, Madame [Nellie] Melba, [Enrico] Caruso--Caruso was her great favorite--Madame [Ernestine] Schumann-Heink. And I think one of a very latter day ones was, finally there was some American lady who made the grade; I can't recall her name right now. At any rate, she had more cultural interests than were readily available in Karnack.

One rather odd, pathetic thing that I recall is sometime as a little girl somewhere between, I don't know, six and twelve, anyhow, when I was already reading quite easily, I remember climbing up into a finished room, a kind of an attic, but it really was a finished room above the garage. Mother sort of took that as her place to store a lot of her books, magazines, papers, and things. I remember going up there and looking, and I found a number of catalogs about schools for boys and schools for girls. Indeed, she had already sent her sons, my brothers, to one or two of the schools that were mentioned there, to Raymond Rodden [?] in New York and to Los Alamos [Ranch] School for Boys out from Santa Fe. There was one or two about girls, though. Here I was only five years old, but she apparently was thinking ahead to the time when it would be time to send me off to school. Gosh, I presume she was thinking of something much younger than high school. There was one of them that was in Washington which was still in existence and a very high-class school in 1934 when I got there.

G: Do you remember which one it was?

J: I don't for sure. It seems like it was named National Park Seminary or something like that, National Park School for Girls or something like that [it was National Park Seminary]. And it was in a very wooded section, I think out in the edge, not in the

District of Columbia, but very close by. Lots of the buildings had different sorts of architecture from different countries.

G: I also get the impression, I think this comes from your brother Tony, that she was also interested in racial justice and conducted seminars for blacks and was interested in black religion, the spirituals and [so forth]. Do you have any recollection here?

J: Not that I can back up with stories. I just know that I've always heard that. I do know that she had an affinity, she had lots of good black friends, and they believed in her. But they believed in my daddy, too; they liked him mighty well.

G: That's interesting; it really is. One of the old letters indicates that she went to a meeting on Sunday night that Brother Crimm [?] was conducting. I think it was Brother Crimm, unless I misread the handwriting. I was just wondering if he rings a bell at all?

J: No, he doesn't. That was probably at Scottsville. If you've ever heard about camp meetings--do you know what I'm talking about?--sort of a summer, religious festival, where they'd have services morning, noon, and night. Families who belonged would usually have a house or at the very least pitch a tent, and in Scottsville close to us it was quite the thing to do. Most of the county families had a little house there, and they really would go and stay. There was a marvelous old tabernacle there; it's still there, a very charming old place, one of the prettiest cemeteries I've ever seen. She would always go. I do not think she was a member of it, because it was not Methodist. I think my mother was a Methodist. I know we always went to the Methodist church, and my daddy was a mainstay and support of it. Not that he was a very religious man. In my opinion, he thought it was a civilizing influence in the community and kept people from being so

rowdy and lawbreaking. So he supported it, I think, as much from community feeling as any religious feeling.

G: He helped them pay their bills, I understand.

J: Yes, living and dead he did. He left them something when he died.

G: Do you remember your mother as being a very religious woman?

J: No, I don't. That, too, is really quite a loss, not to remember more about her than I do. I remember one thing that's quite pathetic, that I didn't know then was pathetic. I remember when she was in the hospital, and I'm reasonably sure she did not recover, I'm really pretty sure it was the last illness, they took me to see her. I had been staying there at the house with my daddy and a black nurse and a black cook, and nobody directing them, and Daddy working all the time, except I'm sure for going to the hospital to see Mother. I walked in and Mother looked at me, and she said, "My poor little girl, so dirty." And she took a napkin off a tray or something and dipped it in a glass of water and cleaned my face. I can just imagine me walking in there grubby as can be and how disheartening that must have been to a woman who probably knew she wouldn't recover, or knew she might not have.

G: One of the things that I noted from her correspondence was that she formed a quail-saving society, to preserve quails.

J: Really? You know something that I don't know.

G: This is only from reading the thing, because they would eat boll weevils. She evidently would crusade around there saying that they would eat so many boll weevils per bird.

J: Oh, that's funny. I didn't know that.

G: Another thing that seems peculiar about her, at least judging from my impression of women at that time, that she would advise your father on business deals, when to sell cotton for such and such a price. That just seems hard to picture.

J: It does indeed. I can't substantiate that, and I certainly cannot deny it. Where did you get it?

G: It's in one of these old letters. I think she is writing to Aunt Effie, and saying that he was going to sell so many bales at such and such a price, "But I told him to hold off." I think she regrets the advice, but anyway the fact that he listened to her [is interesting].

J: Well, yes, that is pretty surprising that he did, because my daddy was a pretty opinionated and sure man, although also he was intelligent enough to know that he could be wrong.

G: Did he talk much about her after her death? Did he tell you what she was like?

J: No, and once more I wish to goodness that he had. I do have a memory of him saying to the preacher, and this must have been--how could I this young have remembered it? I don't know, but at any rate he was mad, is the only way to express it. Why did someone her age have to die? How did that fit in with religion? Why didn't God save her? I remember it and it has stuck in my mind all these years, and yet I can't say what preacher and what exactly were the circumstances.

G: That's interesting. She had the largest library in the area I am told.

J: Yes, she had quite a lot of books, and loved historical books. Also, I'm sure in every decade there are a host of books that tell you how to run your life better, and she had a share of those, too. But she also had a lot of the classics and a lot of historical books about the memoirs of characters in the French Revolution and in English court circles.

G: She would read to you, I understand?

J: Yes, she did. Nature stories, and myths and legends of the Greeks and Germans and all the fairy stories. I just thought it was the most marvelous thing in the world to know how to read. I just loved that. I'm sure I've mentioned it to other people, but I remember when I first discovered that my daddy could read. My goodness! I never saw him doing it, didn't know he could. He said something to me about, "I'm so sorry you're lonesome and don't have anybody to play with. Do you want me to read to you?" My gosh, it was just like he had suggested something magical; I didn't know he could. So from then on, he used to read to me. His tastes ran to the Zane Grey books and books about the far north by [James] Oliver Curwood and such as that.

G: I think you were quoted somewhere as saying that Siegfried was the first person that you ever loved.

J: Well, he was a very dashing character. The more you read about him though, from a grown-up standpoint you're not sure you like him all that well. Pretty tough guy.

G: Do you recall any of the books that you had read to you as a little girl having an enduring influence on you? Can you remember any particular book or any particular writer who you feel left their mark on you in terms of the way you would try to live or the way you would think?

J: No. I remember a number of them with affection, but none as having set the course of my life, no. Some of the ones that I remember with affection are no longer read by now, certainly no longer read the way they were written, and among them is Uncle Remus. And then there was a naturalist, I think his name was Ernest Thompson Seton, *Tales of*

the Wild Woods [*Woodland Tales*].

G: One of the interesting things is that both you and your Aunt Effie had a great love for wildlife and flowers and spring. Did your mother share this interest?

J: Oh yes, yes indeed. Aunt Effie was one of those gentle creatures that was really not meant for this world practically. She was a true eccentric, and her health was never good. I don't know how much of it was psychosomatic and how much of it was real. But anyhow, she was one of the most loving kinfolks that could possibly be, and a great storyteller, and her devotion was so complete. Her love of beauty and nature she certainly helped instill in me. She was a marvelous part of my life, both on the positive side and also on the negative, because I saw what an inhibiting thing it was, her poor health, and also her absolute dependence on her Uncle Claud to take care of her financial affairs, on me and Daddy to furnish her with a need for living, a place where she could perform, where she was needed. So it just made me feel I didn't want to ever be that dependent, or ever in poor health.

G: She wasn't very practical, was she?

J: No, no, she wasn't practical. She really didn't know a thing in the world about some of the simple things that a young child needs. I'm sure my clothes must have been bizarre and inadequate, and certainly she never gave any thought to appropriate companions or the business that so many people think of of putting in your path the "right people." Never in the world would [it] have occurred to her.

G: That's fascinating. We're just about out of tape for this first reel. I've got another reel, and I hate to start a new subject until we get there. After your mother's death you would

go to Alabama to spend the summers there with Aunt Effie, and she came to spend the winters in Karnack.

J: I think my daddy, feeling that there had to be some woman in the house to take care of me, looked around among the available women in the family and asked her. I think he had always had an affection for her as his wife's sister, but also he thought she was a pretty weak reed. But he thought that she would suffice sweetly and nicely for that job, and he asked her if she would do it. She said yes she would, if he didn't mind me being gone all summer, and she could take me back, and we could visit various kinfolks. Because, you see, the sad, just ineffably sad thing about her life was that she never did really have a home of her own after her mother and father died. She would just visit around. Now she was very comfortably fixed, in a moderate way, and the people that she visited mostly she was a big help to them, particularly to her niece, Elaine Fischesser, and also some to other nieces, Gus and Bernice, Louise. So she was a help to them.

Tape 2 of 2

G: I was asking you if you felt that Aunt Effie was a happy person, if she looked on the bright side of things?

J: Who knows? I am sure a psychiatrist would have a full time, make a real case history, but there were a lot of women like her in the South, spinster ladies who never asserted themselves or ran their own life. There was much happiness in her life. In her young days she played the piano, she did a little painting, she loved nature and the outdoors. Her devotion to me was so intense that I wished it hadn't been quite so much. Because you know, you don't want to be everything to a person unless you can be it always and

always, and it's in the nature of young people to grow up, and get married, and to some extent sever the bonds with those who raised them.

G: I gather she was a favorite of yours and vice versa, even before your mother died?

J: Yes, she was. She was gentle and loving and told good stories, and I always enjoyed being with her. She had lots of good friends as we went through life, which indeed we did, from the time I was five until I was twenty-one.

G: Was she a surrogate mother to you--

J: Yes.

G: --in the sense of telling you what to do?

J: That is very open to question. She lived in the house and [there was] nothing that she wanted more in the world to do than to take care of me and help me out, but as far as being a disciplinarian or a real adviser, she wasn't, because she was just too weak a character. Which is not to say she didn't have influence, because she did, because I respected and loved her. But she was not the big powerful figure that my daddy was.

G: I guess you spent a lot of time down at his store for a while, didn't you, after your mother's death?

J: Well certainly some, because my mother died in September, and that was the height of the season for my daddy, for the cash crop of cotton. It is harvested in late August and September and October, and the people that he had been financing all year, the black families, would bring their crop in, and gin it, and turn over his part to him. They would settle up, so to speak. They would pay him for everything they had eaten all year and take the balance, if balance there was, praise heaven, and go into debt on the books if

there wasn't enough. It was just the most important time of the year; therefore, it would have been very hard for him to come home every night at six o'clock and sit down at the table with his little girl. So for a couple of months, at least, he did take me to the store a lot.

It was a huge brick building, sort of the business, social, everything center of that small community. He would sit on a high stool in his little office, which was separated from the main part of the store, and work at the books and telephone, and everybody that needed to see him would go back there to see him. I would just wander around, so to speak, among the dry goods and the candy cases, upstairs where they would have things like plows and mattresses and coffins, just the whole business of life.

I do remember one night, we must have spent a few nights down there, because we did have a bed upstairs made down for us. I would see those big, long, oblong boxes, and I would ask Daddy what they were. I could hear the slight hesitation in his voice, and he would say, "Dry goods, honey." And they were coffins, but he didn't want to scare me unnecessarily by a truth which would have been somewhat frightening to a five-year-old child who associated so much with blacks, who were superstitious and who were full of stories about ghosts and "hants," [haunts] as they called them. And indeed the house we lived in had plenty of "hants."

G: Oh, did it?

J: According to local legend. It was an old house. It was built before the Civil War, beautiful, old place really. My daddy bought it for Mother one time when she had gone back to visit her mother and father in Alabama, taking, I guess by that time, it was their

two little boys with her. It was before my birth, because I was born in the house, and so I don't know just when it was. I wish he had talked to me about when he had bought it. I think it had not been inhabited in several years, and it was pretty run down. They had to do a lot to it.

In the light of today I wish I had been on hand and knowledgeable and had done it somewhat differently, but it was a great old house, sort of Greek revival, with tall white columns and two small porches, main floor and upper floor. On the back side it was an "L" and must have had a Louisiana influence, because it had long, spacious galleries. It is said it had been built by someone who had come from Georgia and who tried to build it as much like their old home in Georgia as they could. Colonel Andrews was the name of the person who built it back in 1854, I think it was.

G: He must have been one of the first settlers of that area, I guess.

J: Well, that area, East Texas, was settled much earlier than Central Texas.

G: The house had numerous fireplaces, I understand.

J: It had a fireplace in every room, so we said; actually, as I count them up, I think it was six rooms that it had.

G: Let's get back to the store for a few things there. Was your dad pretty sociable down there? Did he have a practice, let's say, of sitting around the cracker barrel or whatever and chatting with customers or visitors?

J: He was always the boss, and always in charge, and always put the business first. I think he was sociable enough in terms of being approachable and always ready to have some words with any of the drummers or travelers or local people who came in, but small talk

was not his thing very much. He was business first.

G: I gather that the reason he would sleep down there a lot of times was because of a fear of thefts?

J: I think really that just took place during ginning time. The gin was close by, and during the ginning season, which was a couple of months in the fall, they would sometimes work until nearly midnight and then start again the next morning about five o'clock. It was just a terribly demanding period.

G: I get the impression that he made it a practice of taking in homeless people, and packing a lunch for them, and paying them to go out and farm. During the Depression he was very helpful to a lot of people this way. Did you pick up any stories in later years?

J: People used to walk the railroad track in those frightening days of the Depression, just looking for someplace where there was work. Or they would ride the rails, that is, just catch a free ride on the freight trains, and they would get kicked off if any of the train officials found them. But there were always more of them that could ride it than would get kicked off. [There were] a lot of tramps in those days, between 1929 and 1933, when [President Franklin D.] Roosevelt began to bring us some fresh hope. I am sure we don't remember. Of course you don't, you probably weren't born, but I don't remember how really bad it was because I was so young. I do remember Daddy did take in a number of people, but don't let's say it was altruism. There is always something that somebody can do, and he was always needing something done.

For instance, he put one man to painting the house, who said he was a painter. This was a very old man, though. He painted very slowly, and finally after he'd been

there about six months Daddy asked him, "Old Man, how much would you charge me to stay here and just paint forever?" Because actually he was, I think, a good, kind man, but he just also just couldn't stand to see waste. He always wanted to put everybody to work and then see that they did it.

G: Were you afraid of him?

J: No, but I was probably one of the few people who wasn't.

G: Is that right?

J: Because I knew how much he cared about me and how tender he was toward me. He was a very impressive man, and I am sure a great many people were afraid of him. But I always knew that somehow he cared very especially about me, and also that he was softer on the inside than he appeared on the outside.

G: He was a large man, wasn't he? I guess about six [feet] two [inches]?

J: This was an interesting thing, too, which I did not know until I was a mature woman, had been married some time. I said, "Daddy, you have such a fine physique. Have you ever had any real illnesses?" He sort of laughed and he said, "When I married, I was a tall, slim reed and my chest measurements--I forget what he said they were, but anyhow, he was not as splendidly developed in chest and biceps. He said, "Your mother sent off and got some dumbbells and some Indian clubs," I think he said, "and she'd put a quilt on the floor and she'd have me doing exercises." Isn't that something?

G: They must have had good rapport. Could you confide in him pretty well?

J: Not very much. I wasn't the sort who could have in anybody very much, but yet every now and then I would have a most remarkable bit of advice from him. I remember one

time when I was about to graduate from college, I was just very casually talking, I wasn't even meaning what I was saying, "I might do this, I might do that, or I might just come back here to Karnack to stay." And my daddy just erupted, "Oh, no you won't. You're going to get out of here. There will be better things for you to do." Which sort of astonished me, because I knew how much he liked Karnack. He had spent his life in it. Also, he must have respected it a considerable amount or else he wouldn't have stayed there all his life. But I was very pleased that he could see that there might be a bigger world out there, and that I might be able to fit myself for the bigger world, and that maybe I better have a look at it.

G: I gather that he was one of the leading exponents of that area as a recreation area, as a commercial area, that he would, even before the age of automobiles, take people out by wagons to Lake Caddo.

J: Well, he never passed up an opportunity to see a natural resource or something and try to make some money off of it. He did finance some of the people who had the fishing camps and who were the guides on Caddo Lake, and he did sell a lot of fish out of the lake. He did protest bitterly when the legislature finally stopped them from fishing with nets. He said, "The fish are going to eat each other up. They are cannibals, and if we don't catch them and eat them they're going to catch each other and eat each other." I have no idea which is true. I am sure that we have to have conservation practices, and maybe if he had gone on unhampered he might have caught more fish than [the lake] could stand.

G: He was a director of a bank in Jefferson, Rogers State Bank. Do you remember going to

Jefferson with him for these board meetings?

J: No, I didn't even know that he was. He was the biggest landowner in the county. He did have more blacks working for him, I think, than anybody else. He was a man to whom all the politicians came to call and try to get his good will and his help, although he never had much interest in politics, much admiration for it. The bankers did think very highly of him, but I didn't know that he was on the bank board.

G: Do you remember his attitude toward Prohibition, of which I guess Homer Price there in Marshall was the big advocate? He owned the *Sentinel*?

J: Oh, really? No, I don't. I would expect that he would be against it. I rather think he was against it. I do not know for sure. He could probably have seen it either way, because his church and his sister, Aunt Ida, would very much want him to be for Prohibition. By that time my mother was gone. Wasn't that passed in when, 1924?

G: Yes, I guess so. Maybe earlier than that.

J: I really don't know.

G: There was a big fight in Marshall, I understand. Also, I was going to ask you about if you have any recollections of the Ku Klux Klan in that area?

J: Oh, yes, some frightening recollections. Not frightening to me personally, but to think that people would behave that badly. I remember one time Daddy got some notes from them, but he paid them no mind. I think they called him a "nigger lover" or something like that. That was something you had better not be if those folks caught up with you.

G: Why do you think they did that, because he had blacks working for him?

J: Everybody had blacks working for them, but I do not think my daddy was ever cruel. I

think he was just about as just as he could be in those times and in that setting with black people. There were some instances of, I am sure, just of downright cruelty on the part of whites toward blacks, and I have the feeling that the lower they were in culture--the white people--the more likely they were to be prone to doing it.

G: Any other recollections of his civil relationships or roles in the community here that you remember? No politics?

J: No, except that they always came to see him. I'm sure he thought about them some and evaluated them, but he just didn't think that it was a profession that he would have ever sought or aspired to.

G: I believe that his sister wrote at the time of your marriage, "I don't believe I ever saw two people that had a more perfect understanding of each other," than you and your father.

J: Oh, how nice!

G: Did you feel this way?

J: I guess I did. I liked him *tremendously* as well as loving him. You see, he lived a pretty narrowed life, particularly after my mother's death, I think, in terms of having intellectual "grist for the mill," being sparked, having experiences that make you think and grow, and yet I think he was always capable of that. I remember one time we were talking about his youth and his education, which was meager, just a high school graduate--I mentioned to you what his speech was on--and he made some very simple statement, sort of wistful, that wondered how much more he could have done if he'd had more education. It would be so easy for a completely self-made man to think, by gosh, he did it all and he didn't have to have any education. Why should the next fellow have to have it? But he was

aware that life could have been wider for him.

G: He did appreciate education---

J: Oh, you bet he did!

G: --to send those boys off, or to acquiesce in it.

I understand that Antonio was like your mother and seems to have almost a poetical style about him.

J: Yes. He's a delightful person. I'm really just so fond of my brother Tony.

G: And he also seems to be a favorite of her back then. She recognized this in him. Was Tommy like your father much?

J: In many ways yes, but Tommy was really the nicest one of us. He was such a good person, and he didn't quite have my daddy's toughness. He was physically very much like my father--a great big man about six feet three, very handsome, I think.

I remember one time when I was just a little girl and I was about half asleep and I was lying down on a pallet in the hot summertime. He came in and leaned over and kissed me on the fore head and said something about "my little sister." I mean expressions of tenderness like that. I knew my daddy felt like that, but it would have been hard for him to do it. Tommy had a very tender streak in him. During the Depression, I think by that time, he had a business, which Daddy had helped set up for him in Jefferson, the Jefferson Wholesale Grocery Company. I'm sure that he was the first person that anybody who was collecting for any church or any needy cause, he'd be the first person they would call on and the most helpful in the community of Jefferson, one of the most helpful.

G: Who was Antonio named after?

J: I think maybe that was just one of my mother's sort of poetical flights.

G: It was Antonio and not Tony?

J: It was Antonio, and he wasn't named after anybody. I was named after my uncle Claud--Claudia, and Alta in the hope that I would be a tall girl.

G: Oh, I see. And he wanted you to go to Harvard Business School, I understand.

J: (Laughter) Yes, and he used to send me business magazines, which I'm afraid I did not profit by.

G: What was he like?

J: Uncle Claud also was eccentric. He was a dear, wonderful man, but he, too, was not quite of this world, although he was saddled with this world all his life. He could quote Cicero and Plato and a whole lot of Greek and Roman philosophers whose names I barely know. He knew a good deal of the practical side of the farmland that he was supposed to administer and its capability of growing pines and how to market the pines. He knew a lot about that. But his real interests were, for instance one thing, he kept on wanting those blacks, who lived dirt-farming, just as poor as they could be, he kept on preaching to them to raise a little garden, "Keep yourself some turnip greens, collards, lettuce," all sorts of green things, green beans. Because they were likely to subsist on a little hog meat and flour biscuits and molasses and just never see a vegetable or certainly not a fruit. So he kept on trying to diversify their diet and encourage them to keep a cow. Well, they would just laugh and laugh because, you see, Uncle Claud had the misfortune to have bad health all of his life. But why should anybody know better than if they had

bad health themselves to aspire to better health for themselves and others.

Anyhow, I'm afraid I, too, was one of those guilty of sometimes laughing at Uncle Claud, who did so much preaching, but who was not himself a great big, robust, six feet four, tough man like my father.

G: Did he actually sit down and try to persuade you to pursue a business education or become interested in the stock market?

J: He would talk about it some and give me the opportunities, but no, I guess that I was too young and too unreceptive. And it's too bad. I wish I had availed myself of far more of many opportunities that he made possible for me.

He would do all sorts of nice things like take the children, four or five young cousins, all within an age range of three or four years whom I would be visiting there in Billingsley. I was his niece, and sometimes there would be other nieces, but very frequently they would be just cousins. He would take us on picnics and take us to swim in Mulberry Creek. He was sort of a soft touch in a way. He liked the young folks, and he was kind, and he wanted to help do for them the things that he thought would make childhood and summertime a happy memory.

G: That's a good place to talk about some of your early traveling, I guess, Billingsley, and Prattville, Wetumpka, Montgomery, Rabun Gap, Georgia. Do you remember your trip to Rabun Gap?

J: Oh, very well.

One of these cousins that I was speaking of, the older one, Josephine Pattillo, had married a young man who was a school teacher and who got the job of, I don't know

whether the word is principal, or superintendent, of a school at Rabun Gap. Rabun Gap, high in the mountains of Georgia, close to the boundary of North Carolina, was just one of these pockets of Appalachia where people still use the early English expressions. They and their parents and their grandparents from the beginning of time had been living in those mountains, and they just had not associated much with the world. And this school was not entirely public; I don't remember for sure, but it was financed either by a church or a foundation, and maybe it had some public school portions. A house was furnished to the superintendent, and he and his wife lived there. It was beautiful countryside. They would invite the kinfolks to come. It was much cooler than Billingsley, very scenic. It was an adventure.

So Aunt Alice, who was really my cousin, but I called her aunt because she was much older, would load up her children and me and Aunt Effie--or if Aunt Effie weren't there sometime, anyhow she'd load us all up--and we'd go visit there. We did it two summers. We'd go on picnics and exploration trips into the mountains. I noticed here a number of pictures of it. That's where I first became acquainted with, and began to fall in love with, mountain scenery. These are some of the people. You see there that rude cabin, and this is what the views would look like from the top of the mountains. This is a double exposure, unfortunately. It would be spring or early summer. School would just be out for all of us country dwellers, which would make it late May or early June. The mountain laurel, which is a form of wild azalea I think, would be in bloom, lovely pink calico blooms, and all of the shrubbery and a form of rhododendron all over those mountains. It was just absolutely beautiful, and very wild. It was just genuine

wilderness.

G: You also made a trip to Colorado, I understand.

J: Well, yes. My Aunt Effie always made friends at these sanatoriums where she went in search of better health. One was the Adams family who lived in Newton, Kansas. We went to visit them two summers, and they took us to Colorado with them. We went to Mount Manitou. It's either in or close to Colorado Springs; I think it is in it. And I remember seeing the Biltmore [Broadmoor] Hotel and kept thinking what a big, magnificent place it was, although we lived in much simpler fashion. We went to the Garden of the Gods and had a picnic and climbed all over--fascinating scenery.

G: You called her Weh, I think.

J: Weh. There is no sensible way to spell "Weh."

I think when I was a very small child, before Mother died and she would visit mother and me and all of us, I probably called her that then.

G: Was it an attempt to pronounce Effie?

J: I guess so. Effie-Wehwie. Wehwie got abbreviated to Weh.

G: And she would call you Bammie, I think. Was that for Alabama or something?

J: No, no. No. It's ridiculous, absolutely ridiculous, but southerners were likely to call children by a pet name. She'd say, "She's just a little lamb," speaking of me, and that got shortened, ridiculously enough, to "Lambykins" and finally to "Bammie."

G: I'm glad to know the derivative of that.

J: It's quite silly, quite silly.

G: That's something that we never would have arrived at.

How are you doing time-wise? Am I taking too much of your time?

J: What do you have, a quarter of three?

G: Well, I have ten til.

J: I expect that I had better go see. I do not have to leave for quite a little while, but I think that I had better stop a while and go see what's going on.

[End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview I]