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CLAUDIA "LADY BIRD" JOHNSON ORAL HISTORY, INTERVIEW XIII
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CLAUDIA TAYLOR JOHNSON

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This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

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

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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 XIII covering 1941

DATE: September 2-3, 1979

INTERVIEWEE: LADY BIRD JOHNSON

INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE

PLACE: LBJ Ranch, Stonewall, Texas

Tape 1 of 1

J: So February of 1941 was a rich and varied social life and intellectual life. One night we went to dinner at the home of Evalyn Walsh McLean, a very famous hostess of those days. This was a one and only time for a young congressional couple like us. First thing, Lyndon didn't like to go to parties, as I've probably said a dozen times, and kept on turning things down that I was wild to go to. And second, we were really pretty small fry to be invited there. But this time there were a hundred and six people, so my little diary says, and I remember course after course of rich, jellied, elegantly made up, beautifully presented things passed. I sat next to somebody named Grant Mason, a handsome CAA [Civil Aeronautics Authority] official. Afterwards we saw a movie. But what lingers in my mind is the sheer opulence of the evening. Walking through room after room of collections of various kinds of china, objects of art, a whole room full of china dogs. I think maybe it's called Staffordshire.

Isn't it rather remarkable that there I was at dinner where the guest of honor was Congressman Martin Dies, head of the Un-American Activities Committee and chief

huntsman of anybody with communist leanings, and not many days before I had been at dinner at the home of the Jim Rowes and Alger Hiss was a guest? Sometimes I did things that at least served to sharpen my mind and teach me something. I went to the Lend-Lease hearings with Elizabeth Rowe, and we listened to [James Bryant] Conant, the president of Harvard and to the bouncy little mayor of New York, [Fiorello] La Guardia. I remember [Wendell] Willkie passed me in the hall, one of the most vital, vivid men I've ever seen. He didn't look to right or left; he was moving just as fast as he could and preceded and followed by an equally determined coterie of men.

I went to Mrs. Hugo Black's to call on the regular Monday that one went to see the wives of the members of the Supreme Court. She was a beautiful and gracious southern lady, quite different from her sister, Virginia [Durr], but just as marvelous in her way.

And Miss Lou's [Rayburn] annual visit came to an end with a big farewell luncheon given for all the ladies of the Texas delegation in the Speaker's dining room. His dining room--and it was indeed his, for so many years--was the scene of innumerable gatherings, important and serious and light and convivial.

I went to the annual reception at the White House for the army and navy and met lots of admirals and generals and saw exotic Mrs. [James] Forrestal there. One of the interesting things that happened in those days was to go to dinner at the Bob Kintners, Bob and Jean. The conversation was always vivid and lively. I always had a sense of visiting, of being apart and different from many of the folks that I met, but that just added to the excitement of it.

Of course, the stellar event of that February was going to dinner at the White House. I wondered if it was going to be my first and last dinner there. This one was for the Duchess of Luxembourg, who was the President's house guest. I sat next to Senator Sherman Minton on one side and on the other Representative Joe Casey from Massachusetts, I believe. I remember how handsome he was, and his wife was equally good looking. They were Roman Catholics. They had a whole houseful of children, and I was so impressed, and a little bit envious, that looking so young they had so many.

Everything was managed just with watchmaker's precision and that stuck in my mind, too. After dinner, the gentlemen stayed at the table and Mrs. [Eleanor] Roosevelt moved us into another room, and she would pass from group to group and chat with us. Then finally we went upstairs and saw a movie, *The Philadelphia Story*. I remember because afterwards, long, long afterwards, I got to know the wife of the author, Mr. [Philip] Barry.

The women with whom I spent some time were, and still remain, my good friends: Virginia Durr, Elizabeth Rowe, Jean Kintner, Anita Williams, and of course, always Kittie Mae [Wirtz]. We would get together for lunch either at my little apartment or one of their houses. Without the men the conversation was less sparkling, but it always had warmth and breadth to it.

One of the things I always looked forward to most was going to dinner at Speaker Sam Rayburn's. His bachelor apartment was in the Anchorage, about the third floor up and one ascended in a tiny elevator, or walked. It was very simple, somewhat spartan, but so many good evenings we've had there, and the talk that would flow. His natural

instincts for being a host made everybody have a good time. He would have a meal sent over from across the street, where there was an excellent cafe. They took pleasure in giving him their best and taking care of him. I remember this particular time the Tom Corcorans were there, the Felix Frankfurters, and then, surprisingly enough, the Dick Klebergs and the Ewing Thomasons were always, of course, good friends of his. Ben Cohen was there. It was [an] across-the-board sort of a gathering, all of whom loved the Speaker, all of whom profited from their association with him, from a give and take, from a learning and sharing. He was a remarkable catalyst in that body, the House, and indeed in the whole government field for how many decades? A long, long time. He came during the last days of Woodrow Wilson, I believe, and the best of all times were when he would reminisce about the whole broad stretch of his life in Congress.

This was the month when our 75th Club had its luncheon in honor of Mrs. Roosevelt. I was on the committee that helped make the arrangements. Mrs. [Jerry] Voorhis of California, the wife of a very liberal young congressman, was chairman of the committee, and I remember feeling very important and hoping that it would get me over my sense of shyness by participating in club activities and making some of the decisions. One of the things I wanted to do was to take some movies of Mrs. Roosevelt at the luncheon, so I wrote her secretary and got an answer back that, yes, it would be all right. We decided to have it at the Kennedy-Warren, and it was going to cost a dollar seventy-five a plate, and I invited, as I always did, choosing very carefully because one was limited in the number of guests one could have, people from Lyndon's staff: Mary Rather and Nellie Connally and Juanita Roberts.

Another of the things I liked best was on the way to some dinner I'd be picked up by the Speaker in his great big long black car. I never had such a feeling of elegance and being taken care of. His chauffeur had lived in Washington for many, many years, had served other speakers or majority leaders, knew where everybody's house was, who all the hostesses of the decades had been, and could tell the most wonderful stories, if you happened to get picked up first in the rounds and could talk to him. His name was George. The Speaker very kindly took care of picking up the wives of several of his friends when the men would all go together from the floor of the House and join us at the dinners.

Another part of my life, one that began immediately when we went to Congress and never ceased it seemed, was to address envelopes. Lyndon had a great sense of putting any idle hands to work. Also he liked free workers. I, of course, was a free worker and so were the wives of a lot of his staff members. We enjoyed it. I learned so much. That was where I first found out that America was a melting pot, was to address the poll tax list of the Tenth District. Because you would come to communities where there wasn't a name you could spell; it was just full of Xs and Zs and Czechs, Poles, and of course, the ever-present Germans. The waves of immigrants that came in, oh, I guess from the 1840s on to the end of the century, a lot of them made it down to Texas and settled in groups that remained, to that day at least, sort of centered around their culture. (Interruption)

Episodes of this period in 1941, one of them was my enjoyment of that camera that Lyndon had given me for Christmas. Besides getting pictures of Mrs. Roosevelt at

that luncheon, I remember one time I went out to Fort Myer with the wives of some members of the delegation. The Texas delegation was extremely close knit. This particular time I went with Ann Worley and Frances Poage. We watched a show of military equipment: caissons, tanks, horses, acrobatic riding is what it seemed like to me. And it was a pretty far reach from the war that was soon to be upon us that was going to be fought with tanks and planes.

Another part of the fabric of that year was recurring problems with the LCRA [Lower Colorado River Authority], and Lyndon's exasperation and frustration with the way things were going, very much joined in by Senator [Alvin] Wirtz. It's sort of like having produced a child with high hopes and making great efforts to nourish and train and raise it, and then the child doesn't turn out as you had hoped. I cannot remember all of the facts or reasons, and so it's not something I better try to talk about, except that I know they were both--well, divided between being sad and angry about it because it wasn't fulfilling their dreams of cheap, efficient, public power as well as they thought it should.

G: I guess Governor [W. Lee] O'Daniel was making appointments to that board and maybe the personnel was simply not as sympathetic as they had been under Jimmie Allred.

J: That may well be it. I don't know. We always made a point, when they made their visits to Washington, of having them out to dinner.

G: While we're on the LCRA, do you remember John Connally being appointed to the board?

J: Vaguely I do, yes, and I think that would have been direct result of whatever pressure

Lyndon and Senator Wirtz could apply.

It was about this time I think that Welly [Hopkins] was reaching his decision to go to work for the United Mine Workers, headed by that well-known figure who was the *bête noir* of all the conservative part of the country in those days, John L. Lewis. But looking at it with hindsight, he was a champion the miners just must have needed at that time. To us it was very strange to see Welly, from Gonzales, Texas, and we thought of as a conservative figure, an establishment figure, ally himself with John L. Lewis. I remember we rode around all one Sunday and talked about it. I won't say that Lyndon was trying to talk him out of it. He was just trying to put it in the perspective of the folks back home and all of his past. But Welly did go with them, of course.

Another of the high spots of this winter was going to lunch at the [Harold] Ickes'. We went several times. It was always on a Sunday, out to their farm in Olney, [Maryland]. This particular time there was only the Speaker and the Wirtzes and us. I was always impressed by what a gracious, smooth hostess Mrs. Ickes was. She was very red-headed. She talked well and vigorously. Of course the Secretary took the lead, but she was able to hold up her end of it.

That very night, too, we had a Mexican supper at our house. Mexican supper for the Texans was just sort of a signal to, "Let's be us," and every now and then you just had an impulse that you just had to do it. Not that we wouldn't invite outsiders, too, because we did have to this one the Jim Rowes, and the Corcorans, but principally it was the Speaker and the Wirtzes and the John Connallys and us. Tom brought his accordion and played "Tim Tulen" [?] and "I Am a Dirty Rebel." And the Speaker gave an introduction

to the last song, "I Am a Dirty Rebel," and what a funny thing for this southerner to be hearing from an eastern man. I got it all down on a record. Besides my movie camera, I also had some sort of a recorder. That record went around with us for years and years. I remember unearthing it at various moves, and finally one time it was just in ripples from having been stored in too hot a place.

(Interruption)

I took a timid interest in the Texas Exes Club and in the Texas State Society. I remember that year I was on a committee with George Wythe to propose a slate of officers for the Texas Exes and we nominated John Connally for president and Ann Worley for vice president.

A couple with whom we spent some interesting times were the Milo Perkins. There was one night when we went there to dinner, Senator and Mrs. Lister Hill were there. The big subject of discussion was defense, [William S.] Knudsen was in charge of it, and the build-up, it was evident to even the most ardent New Dealers that we had to put all the muscle we could behind defense and pick up the crumbs, so to speak, for the domestic programs. I was always partial to southerners. It was a blatant and natural reaction. Senator Hill was one of my favorites. We saw a lot of John and Nellie in those days. They would come over for potluck supper on short notice and talk and talk.

The theater was a part of my life, too. It has been ever since I was in school at Dallas at St. Mary's. *The Man Who Came to Dinner* was the hit of that year that I remember.

(Interruption)

The problems of the LCRA continued as a part of our life. There was a Sunday, I remember, when Lyndon--who always went to work on Sundays. He didn't quit going to work on Sundays until well along into his career. I cannot remember exactly when, but it was a sort of a big change in our life when he did. Anyhow, he called me from the office and said that he was talking to all the LCRA crowd and he would like to bring them all home to dinner. There were about thirteen of them, I think. Happily, it didn't matter because I always had a smoked turkey if it was anywhere within six months past Christmas, because we usually received several for Christmas, and I had a half a ham in the ice box. So Nellie and I pitched in together and we put together a good buffet supper for them. Of course, the Connallys and the Wirtzes were there. I had that very feminine feeling of having put on a good party and being real proud of myself. It was one of Lyndon's delightful characteristics that he always noticed when I had tried very hard on something, and the result had been good, and he would just praise me afterwards and tell me how fine it had been and I'd just beam. It was obvious though that he was carrying the problems of the co-op on his shoulders, he and the Senator both, and were unhappy and frustrated about them.

The Texas Club and the Texas Exes and all of my little gatherings of women were a part of that spring. At some of those meetings we would make little talks, such as Mrs. [Morris] Sheppard would tell us about how she had chaperoned a bunch of South American girls to the Mardi Gras. Juanita, who was quite articulate, would get up and make a talk on the NYA [National Youth Administration]. As for me, I would be just full of tremors and just wouldn't have dared, but I recognized it as something that I was

going to have to tackle sometime. Anyhow, I was always proud of my folks who performed well. During this period of time I was using that movie camera a lot. I wonder where all those old films wound up.

Finally our luncheon, the 75th Club's luncheon, for Mrs. Roosevelt took place. On that dollar seventy-five that we were paying for our tickets we made a profit! I wonder what we paid for the luncheon? Anyhow, the profit that we made went to buy a wheelchair for a cripple that Mrs. Roosevelt had taken an interest in. Some of us--I forget who, it certainly wasn't me--had gone to her and asked her what charity or what good purpose would she like us to put the money to and she told us. That incident and actually that individual, because we learned a lot about him, have sort of stuck in our minds, how she could turn her attention to one person as just a beginning on a good cause.

Women's luncheons were very much the order of the day. What was it about those times that's different from these? But women seemed to have a lot more leisure time in the middle of the day. I guess the simple fact was that we all had help in those days, and so we would get together and go to lunch at places with names like Tally-Ho, or Iron Gate, or the Parrot, Collingwood and talk.

It was in early April , the ninth I believe, when Senator Morris Sheppard, that venerable figure in Texas political life, died, and in the custom of the day, I went over to Mrs. Sheppard's. We would all go, the wives of the delegation, whenever a family was stricken by death or misfortune of any kind and try to help out. On occasions like that you would take something to eat for all the family, because at the center of the tragedy

the people just seemed to be in sort of a state of paralysis and so their neighbors did things like bring food, answer the telephone, open the door, and meet the guests and receive the condolences, just anything you could to help. I remember after we had been there quite some while, it was beginning to get dark and time to go home and see about dinner. Some of us said, "Oh, but Mrs. Sheppard, several of us are going to stay here with you. We don't want to leave you by yourself." Her children, it appeared, had just not reached the house yet; they were en route. I remember she said, "No, no. You must go on and go back to your husbands while you have them."

Mrs. [Lucille] Sheppard was one of the most extraordinary women I ever knew. She was handsome in her--well, how many decades have I known her? Certainly since 1937. She was handsome all of those years, in the thirties, forties, fifties, sixties. I cannot remember when exactly is the last time I have seen her. She was married successively to two United States senators. I don't know of anybody else who has had that particular sort of life. One of the most interesting luncheons that I went to was one time when we prevailed upon her to tell us about her twenty-five years in Washington. It was the occasion of her twenty-fifth anniversary of coming to town. She had come as a young student at one of the elegant girls' colleges there. Her family had told their then-congressman sort of, "Watch out for their daughter," and he did. He paid her a visit. He was some years her senior and I expect that Senator Sheppard was all of his life a very quiet, gentle, judicious man and she was, I'm sure, quite lively as a girl. That soon turned into romance and marriage and the beginning of her long life in Washington.

Lyndon always regarded Morris Sheppard with a sort of reverential respect. They

were never close, but Lyndon had a natural respect for older people and what they presumably would have accumulated of wisdom in their lives. This applied in capitals to the senators. They couldn't have been more different. Lyndon was extremely masculine and aggressive and driving, and the Senator was as gentle and quiet as a lady is supposed to be. He, of course, had been the author of the Volstead Act and very opposed to drinking, although I'm sure he never lifted his voice at anybody, even a member of his family, who might have had some. Their relations were on a high level, if never intimate. (Interruption)

A recurring theme in our life that spring was the preparation, the going forward with the building of the Corpus Christi Naval Air Station, and finally it was dedicated sometime in March, I think. Lyndon early became a champion of strong defense. From his vantage point on the Naval Affairs Committee, he worked for everything that he could to beef up our navy, our whole defense posture. He became sort of one of FDR's [Franklin Delano Roosevelt's] champions in persuading the Congress to spend dollars on naval ship construction and fortifications on the islands in the Pacific. And all of the rather tentative feeble efforts that went into our defense, half-hearted as they were, because it seemed like FDR was not trying to get too far out in front of the folks, to take them along with him. He must have seen a lot farther down the road than the rest of us. Looking at it in retrospect, I can just hardly see how he kept himself in check and played that cool game.

Then a big personal thing that happened to me in the spring of 1941 was to move to the Woodley Park Towers. For a good many years I had been thinking rather wistfully

about a house and about getting settled and having our future more--having something permanent in my life to look forward to instead of just another campaign. I've always loved houses and had a sentimental attraction for one's home seat, so to speak. The Woodley Park Towers was the next thing to having a house because the apartments were big and roomy and it sort of hung out over the edge of Rock Creek Park so that if you lived on the proper side of it you looked right down into a sea of greenery. Somehow or another, we did make that move in mid-spring into a spacious living room and a raised area at the end of it with bay windows all around where you looked down into the park, and two bedrooms--we always managed to keep the other one full--and a pleasant and capable enough, although rather old, kitchen. I came across a key to that apartment not many years ago. Physical things have a way of hanging around in my life.

(Interruption)

Of course, the death of Senator Sheppard pushed to center stage a big question in Lyndon's life. Should he take the leap? Should he try to make the next step? Did he have enough nerve to run for the Senate? I cannot say that I remember precise discussions with me, but it just sort of passed between us like osmosis. I knew what he was thinking. I had had many talks over the four Washington years with the Speaker about Lyndon's future. The Speaker sort of advised a cautious waiting game and told me about how long it had taken him to advance from this to this. He also said some things about in a few years he was going back to Bonham and raise prize cattle. I think he probably even mentioned the number of years and he missed it by a long shot. For much longer than that, I had had talks with Senator Wirtz about Lyndon's future. Also, I

thought I could see the outlines in Lyndon's thinking of after he had been in a job, whether it was being secretary to a congressman or head of the NYA or now as a member of Congress, of having probed the limitations and reached as far as he could in it and learned and done as much, and then a certain restlessness, a readiness to move on or to change course in any case. And always I think in the back of his mind there was this sort of--I can't call it envy, but awareness of the business world and of people who had gone into business and made a lot of money, sort of a self-comparison, and not envy, but wishing he could play that game, too, and thinking maybe he could play it pretty well. But the lure of public service was the stronger, deeper strain.

So here comes the death of this eminent, respected senator. It's wide open. Did he dare or didn't he? I'm sure he had long discussions with the Speaker, and with Senator Wirtz, and I expect with Charles [Marsh], and possibly Alice. I think when he came close to it, I'm sure he would have with John Connally and with others in his staff. He was a good listener, when he wanted to be. He did, at any rate, go to Texas to make a speech to the Texas House of Representatives, and I have an absolute wonderful picture of that which lives in my mind.

(Interruption)

The day was April 21, San Jacinto Day, dear to the heart of all Texans, and the subject was Texas independence and the future of world freedom. [In] the picture I speak about you see Coke Stevenson's dour face. He's listening intently to Lyndon with his pipe gripped in his teeth. He was the lieutenant governor. The governor was "Pass the Biscuits, Pappy" O'Daniel.

He flew straight home from Austin to Washington, and went right to the White House. He had a conversation with the President and came out and made his announcement on the White House steps. I do not recall his ever having talked over with me the pros and cons of such a race and any clear-cut decision. I think it was probably all in the making. I knew it was in the making. It is the sort of thing that I had talked about with Speaker Rayburn and with Senator Wirtz just in a philosophic vein about Lyndon's future and what route he might take. But the timing just came upon us very suddenly as far as I was concerned, in any case. It was evident from the moment he made the announcement on the White House steps that he had ardent backing from FDR, and that was carried out through advice and help from Jim Rowe and other friends in the administration.

He left--well, to divert just a moment--he called me immediately afterwards to tell me, and I was having a tea at home for an old friend of ours, Nan Wood Honeyman, who had been a member of Congress from Oregon when we first went up and with whom Lyndon had immediately formed a fond friendship. She was a delightful woman, had lived in the East and known the President and Mrs. Roosevelt. I think she had been in their wedding. When she came back after she was either defeated or retired, I do not remember which, from Congress, she would sometimes be our house guest and sometimes she would be Mrs. Alice Roosevelt Longworth's houseguest.

At any rate, I was having this little tea for her and Lyndon called me and told me that he was going to hit the cold water. He had announced for Sheppard's seat. It was not many hours afterwards, I don't know how quickly exactly, that he flew back to Texas to

get geared up and going. I drove down. Juanita Roberts came with me, and we stopped and did some sightseeing along the way. I clearly remember going--more leisurely than I ever had with Lyndon--through Andrew Jackson's home.

Others in the race were--well, at the time we got in I think we were actually the first. And it was pretty brash of us, because Lyndon had only been in Congress four years and he was just coming up on thirty-two, I think. He was thirty-one at that time. As the next few days went on, it was even more and more brash of us, because "Pass the Biscuits, Pappy," the sitting governor, announced, just a few weeks later, and also the terrifically well-known, very popular chairman of the Un-American Activities Committee, Martin Dies, and he was a national figure, far better known than we were. And a fine young man [also announced] who had been I think maybe attorney general, I'm not sure. At any rate he was a well-known figure in politics, had been a star football player. His name was Gerald Mann. He also had strong connections with the Bible Belt, so to speak. His nickname was "The Little Red Arrow." Each one of them had their formidable constituencies. It was really brash of a young congressman of four years' standing in the House and not quite thirty-two to imagine that he could win in a field like that. And yet, I remember 1941 as just about my favorite campaign. I don't know exactly why I should say that. Mainly it was still the rich wine of youth was running in our veins very strongly. We hadn't gone through a lot of searing experiences as we did in the next few years.

There was a very well-organized campaign. John Connally was the manager as I recall. He had a whole bunch of lieutenants that were just top-notch, so young and full of

enthusiasm and vigor. Roy Hofheinz was one of the leaders of that big and growing city of Houston. Well, it was a great time in our lives. It's rather better recorded in pictures than anything of the next number of years, quite why, I don't know.

G: Was there a campaign strategy?

J: Well, backing FDR all the way, strong national defense, reliance on what he had done with REA [Rural Electric Association], the whole complex of dams along the river which had brought cheap, hopefully, electric power to a big section of the state and flood control and soil conservation. That was the main theme of it as I recall.

(Interruption)

And so began a blitzkrieg summer of two months until June 28. Lyndon wore seersucker suits, which would be frightfully rumpled by the end of the day, and shirts that after about the second speech would get wet with sweat. I used to call days a three-shirt day or a four-shirt day, or whatever. That was one of my principal contributions was to follow him around, packing bags and unpacking them and getting the laundry done. He often rode on small planes, scary to look at, landing in just little fields. And sound trucks with advertising of Lyndon Johnson all over them were sort of the trademark of the campaign.

The scene was very likely to be the courthouse square. That's the way it was in the thirties, forties and up until television took over in the middle or late fifties. It was the politics that I knew and liked. We had county men and district men and the headquarters full of volunteer workers. Senator Wirtz resigned his job as undersecretary of the interior and came down to be the mastermind. I remember so many evenings late

at night sitting out on that back porch of his and talking about what to do for the next day.

John Connally was the tremendously able and effective director of the campaign. The press, as I recall, was handled pretty much by Gordon Fulcher and Buck Hood. Roy Hofheinz, who had a great sense of showmanship and as much vitality as Lyndon, was a star figure. I remember his introductions were just--it was a wonder to watch him, and when he would get going real good, a lock of that straight black hair would fall down across his face. Mayor Tom Miller in Austin, of course, wielded a strong and able hand. From the state administration, Ernest Thompson, who had been forever on the Texas Railroad Commission--Booger Red was his nickname, a character--he was a strong supporter of ours, I'm proud to say, because I had a lot of respect for him, and Beauford Jester, who was later to become governor. There was a women's division. Marietta Brooks headed it. Betty Long had a big part in it; I'm sure she had an office. We made our opening campaign speech in San Marcos and Dr. [Cecil] Evans, the president of the school when Lyndon was there, was at our side lending dignity, and Ed Cape, of course.

It was a summer of enormous effort. I remember the letter that I wrote Lyndon after it was all over [in] which I was telling him how much I had loved it and that I wouldn't take a million dollars for the experience. I characterized it as having had the thrill of living among people who were working at the very top of their capacity. I bet that's the feeling that people had in wartime. It was strong exhilaration. You were sure that what you were fighting for was right.

Besides the courthouse square, one of the unforgettable scenes--and the courthouse square, of course, was duplicated two hundred and fifty-four times across

Texas. But an unforgettable scene of action was Wooldridge Park, which was where you always had a traditional big rally, full of banners and flags and Mayor Miller doing the introduction and war bonds being--they weren't war bonds then, because we were not really in it, but defense bonds they were called--were being sold. Mayor Miller had bought up a bunch and was giving them away to the person who had the lucky ticket. Herbert Henderson was clattering away at his typewriter in the most incredible cramped spaces and unlikely places, like on a bouncing airplane with a typewriter on his knees or sitting on the edge of a hotel bed when every square inch was full of working folks. I remember the headquarters in the Austin Hotel. There were some delightful young women: Rose Gross [?] and Jerry Wilke. It was a high time in our lives. There were so many of us who were young. And all together.

Harfield Weedin was the master of ceremonies at the major rallies. He was a young comer, a radio commentator, tall, black-haired, dramatic appearance, great voice. He located a singer called "the Kate Smith of the South;" Sophie Tucker was her name. She must have weighed about three hundred pounds, and she really could belt out that "God Bless America."

Bumper stickers on cars and posters that you put up in store windows or tacked on trees told your story. That was often one of my jobs, to take bumper stickers around and a hammer and a bunch of nails in the car and tack them up on trees and highly visible places, or ask a merchant if I could leave one in his store window. My jobs were hardly very demanding cerebrally, but I did get tapped at least to make small speeches when Lyndon couldn't get to a place, and especially if it were in the Tenth District, which we

considered our personal fiefdom. Our attachment to that never wavered in all the years in office, and that was always the first thing we looked at, to see how the vote went in the Tenth District. So I didn't mind standing up in Brenham, for instance, and telling the people of Washington County how much they meant to Lyndon and how much he needed them and making a very small speech. That and packing bags and the unending effort to get him to eat fairly balanced meals at somewhat sensible hours. And also to thank, thank, thank. If I had to say what the job of a political wife is, that would have to be in capital letters first and last. There are so many people, who give so much, over and beyond anything you could pay them for, and often some of them, the hardest workers, didn't get anything. They just did it for love. And I could come along and thank them and express our gratitude with a great big pitcher of lemonade and cookies for the volunteers in headquarters or just telling them or writing them.

Pappy O'Daniel appointed Andrew Jackson Houston as interim senator. He must have been in his upper eighties I should think. He was the last surviving son of Sam Houston. He just made it to Washington and got sworn in and I think died about three days after.

There was a sad moment in that campaign when a letter that Welly had written to a whole bunch of friends, asking them all to help Lyndon, and it had been written on the stationery--

(Interruption)

One of the outstanding and never to be repeated facts of this campaign was that we had a great press. So much of the press was with us. The *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*,

Amon Carter came out for us. All of the Harte-Hanks papers came out for us and were strong supporters. All of the Marsh-Fentress papers were for us. One of my favorite stories about Charles Marsh and about the campaign in general is Charles Marsh dictating a long wire to Gordon Fulcher over the phone telling his papers what to say in endorsement of Lyndon. [He] finally got it finished and he said, "Now, Gordon, send that to every one of our papers. By the way, I think it would be a good idea if you also sent a copy to all of the weeklies and all of the dailies in Texas and just suggest that maybe they might want to look into him and perhaps they might want to endorse him, too." Gordon was saying, "But Mr. Marsh, but Mr. Marsh," and Charles was just going right on over him like a steamroller and finally Gordon got to say, "But, Mr. Marsh, that wire you dictated, it would cost thousands of dollars to send that to every paper in Texas, every little weekly." And Mr. Marsh said, "Gordon, when are you going to learn not to bother me with details?" I don't know where the money came from, and I don't know whether the wire in fact ever got sent to every one of them. But I rather bet it did.

In any case, Lyndon has often said that he's run a campaign when the press was for him and when the press was against him, and it sure was a lot easier when the press was for him.

But I never did finish that story about the letter that Welly wrote asking his friends in Texas to support Lyndon. It was on United Mine Workers letterhead in very great big letters. He was the senior counsel. One of these friends of his [who] was evidently a Gerald Mann supporter, took the letter and gave it to Gerald Mann, who held it up in one of his speeches and talked about it for the whole course of the speech and

said that the CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations] endorsed Lyndon Johnson. Well, the CIO was, to put it mildly, extremely unpopular in Texas, considered very close to being Communist, and John L. Lewis was a *bête noir*. So it was an association which was hard to overcome. That it should come to us through that dear, gentle, sweet friend Welly was sort of a wry and sad thing.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview XIII