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CLAUDIA "LADY BIRD" JOHNSON ORAL HISTORY, INTERVIEW XVI
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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.

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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 XVI covering 1942

DATES: January 29, 30, and 31, February 1, 2, and 3, 1980

INTERVIEWEE: MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON

INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE

PLACE: Casa Leonor, Acapulco

Tape 1 of 3

J: Early February of 1942 found me settled in Washington, Lyndon gone, and a new life beginning. It was roughly divided between business school, which took up about five or six hours of the day [and the office]. I went to a very ordinary sort of a loft place and took typing and shorthand for about three hours and then studied for a couple of hours, and then [by] the time you went back and forth, it was a good six hours probably.

Then I was taking exercises. That's gone on and on throughout my life with very mediocre results I would say, but I had the instinct to make the best out of my physical self and to get fit and to lose pounds and inches. So every few years all through my life I've just made a high resolve to have continuous exercises.

Then, the third part of the day, the substance, the real thing, was getting to the office. I probably got there around anywhere from four to five o'clock in the afternoon, but it was not unusual to leave at ten-thirty at night. It's marvelous looking back on that period to wonder at the amount of energy one has when one is young.

There was a constant daily flow of letters between Lyndon and me. It's also marvelous to remember how quickly they came and went from--first he was in Texas and

then in California and all up and down the West Coast.

(Interruption)

In the office, there was O. J. Weber, who knew the most and did the most, handled all the departmental work, [and] Mary Rather, who knew all of our friends throughout our past and dealt with an enormous amount of mail with constituents. Nellie Connally soon moved in, first as a volunteer and then somewhere along the way as a paid worker. And to begin with, there was Charles Henderson, but he left before long for a bigger job, as I remember, I think in Senator [Tom] Connally's office.

My place in the office had to emerge by doing, because there was no job description for it. Of course, I couldn't vote, nor could I serve on the committees, but a congressman's office is largely a service organization. He deals with his three hundred thousand or so constituents and tries to lead them by the hand through the vast labyrinth of red tape that is the federal government. He tries to answer their questions. He tries to serve them, keep them current with what's going on in the district. Then secondly, we didn't want to let those people out there forget Lyndon, because here he was gone in active duty with the navy, but here was an election coming up that summer. This was February; I don't know just what the dates were then, but possibly May or June would be the last time to announce. We wanted to keep the lines open between us and all our constituents, so that his place would be there whenever he returned from active duty. That was a question mark, as the whole world was a question mark right then.

The first thing that we decided, of course, [was] that I was going to work without pay. Lyndon was strongly of the opinion that I should say so in every letter that I wrote:

"I am working without pay in the office." But that seemed an awful bald and ugly statement to me, so I cooked up something much gentler, like: "I'm contributing my time while Lyndon is away on active duty, doing what I can to help out in the office while Lyndon is gone." I read all the mail, signed it, "Claudia Johnson," as I remember, sitting at Lyndon's desk. I had a little typewriter moved in there and I would type a lot of the letters myself, a lot of the personal ones.

One of the first things that I did was to compose a letter to each of the old sturdy friends in each of the towns of the 10th District, the *jefes* as we would think of them. I would get a little help from Malcolm Bardwell on that. When Senator [Alvin] Wirtz would come to town I'd get help from him, both as to the list of friends and to the content of the letter. Every day I would send Lyndon a summary of what I was doing. Let's see, one of our friends also suggested that we watch the newspapers for births and deaths and golden wedding anniversaries and all that sort of thing and write the letters of congratulations or condolence. That first became Mary's job and then was transferred to Nellie as she joined the office.

Gradually, there came to be some more substantive things to do, but I'll get to that a little later. Those weeks emerged as sort of a watershed time in my life. I grew to have a sense of knowing how to do something and being capable of making my living if I had to. The first seven years of our marriage, although it had been highly exciting and my zest for life has always been at a high pitch, and Washington a vastly interesting place, still, we did not have a home; we did not have children. There was a sound base missing for me, whereas Lyndon had a very sound base, his work. I learned that I could do

something useful, and it's stood me in good stead ever since.

(Interruption)

Lyndon's letters were full of advice to me about things to do. First and foremost, keep up with the Texas delegation, pay calls on them, ask their advice, and at the head of the list, always in capital letters, the Speaker, Mr. Sam Rayburn. This I did with great pleasure every now and then, but I didn't want to overdraw my bank account with him.

I was living with Nellie at this time out at Buckingham, North George Mason Drive in Arlington. She was a delight to live with, giggling all the time. We had such fun. We would go home, bone weary, and cook dinner and have some constituents over, because our social life was not at an end even if our husbands were off at war, and our days were tremendously long and hard. I remember one night Roy Hofheinz came over. Oh, such fun we had. Then staff people, like the Philip Nichols would come over and we would show them our home movies. We had dinner number one and dinner number two--the things that we cooked best and the quickest to prepare. I'd say to Nellie, "What shall we have tonight? Number one or number two?" She'd go to the grocery store, and I'd go home and get started on what there was there. We would divide the work.

There were others who would take us out. When Everett Looney came to town, he'd take us to a big hotel or seafood cafe or some excellent place for dinner. So would Senator Wirtz. That was always cause for celebration when he would come. The Texas Ladies' Luncheons continued to be a large part of my life, and when constituents from home would come up--I think Mrs. Ben Powell and her daughter-in-law were the first two that came--I would take them and introduce them to all the other wives of the

delegation and feel that this was a little window on Washington that might interest them.

There were certain members of the delegation that were always very kind to me: Abbie Thomason, Mrs. [Fritz] Lanham, Lera Thomas.

One of the benefits that emerged during these months in the office was much more understanding and consideration for Lyndon. I had to change the gears of my mind so often during the day, from a problem of one constituent on the telephone to the letter that was next up on my desk when I finished. It was straining. By the time we finally left the office, which might be eight-thirty, nine, nine-thirty, to go out to dinner, I wanted somebody else to choose the place. I wanted it to be good, and if it wasn't good, I was likely to be mad at them when that was absolutely no fault of theirs. So I could much more understand Lyndon's late hours and sometimes irascible nature at the end of a long day. Very useful it was to me.

Reading the letters from Lyndon, and mine to him, of that time--now what, thirty-eight years ago? About that, I think--they are so evocative, I can almost taste and feel the way it was in those times. I spoke of Saturday, that luscious day when I would sleep until eight and then get up and go to the office and work all day. At any rate, it was your day to do with what you wanted.

Letters at first from Lyndon were high spirited and full of the work he was doing and with enough of a sense of achievement to be satisfying to him. I think he got some training programs going reasonably successfully in Houston and Corpus [Christi] and San Diego, and then gradually they began to come apart. Either the NYA [National Youth Administration] Washington office couldn't approve them or the navy wouldn't accept

them or the industry with which he was working, like Lockheed, would have some restrictions that made it impossible. It was a period of frustration for him and sometimes a sense of just aimlessness and lack of cohesion in all the forces all around him that went against the grain very much.

There were fun things, too. I remember one time I wrote Lyndon that I went out to the [James] Rowes' for dinner, long dress and everything, and it turned out in the next letter that I had had two dates: Tom Corcoran and a Mr. Howland and a corsage, and was highly pleased to report that for him.

Then in one letter I wrote that Margaret Brown was coming to town. Mrs. Herman Brown was one of the first truly intellectual people who had entered my life, I thought, a sparkling person. I loved my all-too-short years of knowing her. I'd invited some of my favorite folks: Mrs. Milo Perkins, Tharon, and Virginia Durr and Terrell Maverick and Mrs. Mitchell Palmer--she was the Speaker's current lady friend, and I was often out with them--and Mrs. Lanham and Jean Kintner; her husband was a high-up somewhere in the communications industry; I've forgotten whether it was ABC or NBC. And Elizabeth Rowe. I'd also asked Decca, which I thought would be very interesting to Margaret, because she had a glamorous background, as I said in my letter. She was one of the Mitford sisters, who at that time was married to a man named Romilly, who was also away in the war. She was the one who became a communist.

The business side of our life was pretty much left up to me in those days. We were about to move out of our apartment in Austin, and I was trying to get it either rented if I could, or the furniture put in storage. It's interesting to read back and see that it was

going to cost me twenty-five dollars to get everything moved in storage, and that would take up the first month's storage fee, and then five dollars a month thereafter. I wrote Lyndon that that wasn't bad, after all, for just one thousand dollars worth of furniture that had lasted us five years.

The more important thing at that time was the Alabama property, which was still in a very chaotic state, since Uncle Claud had not left a will, and his brother, Uncle Harry Pattillo, had been appointed by the court and was trying to find his way among the vast labyrinth of books as to who owned what. Uncle Claud had managed my Aunt Effie's property all of her life, of course, and I was inheriting from her, eventually, we expected. He'd handled my mother's until her death. Senator Wirtz said he would try to go back by way of Alabama, and of course I would go with him, maybe sometime around the middle of February, and if there was an inventory of the property prepared at that time, we would try to reach a settlement. I've forgotten whether we did it at the end of February or not. I do know that we certainly made several trips to Alabama, Senator Wirtz at one time certainly, and John [Connally] with him. We stayed in a hotel in Montgomery.

I remember distinctly a funny little incident. Everybody in the coffee shop where we were having our breakfast began to run to the windows and look out the windows and chatter, chatter, chatter. Only our waitress remained faithful and brought our food and put it down in front of us. We said, "What's that going on over there?" She said, "Oh, Clark Gable is stationed out here at Mitchell Field, and they see him driving up out there." Then she looked at John and said, "But you never mind for you to go. You're just as good looking as he is."

Gradually, the work in the office became so all-encompassing, and I felt like I could really make a contribution there, that it was out of balance with the time spent in business school. So I decided to dispense with business school. Maybe sometime I would get back to it later. I'd gotten fairly proficient on the typewriter, moderately capable in taking shorthand. It was about the last week in February I think that I quit business school and began to go to the office full time.

There were some substantive things that I could do, because, although O. J. Weber was infinitely more knowledgeable than I was, it might be possible for a cabinet officer, or a fairly high official, to talk to me on the phone, to let me put my foot in the door as the wife of the Congressman, when it wouldn't be for them to see a secretary whom they had never met. Lyndon knew a great network of people in the departments and simply having his name, and, in some cases, the fact that they were his friends, would get me in the door.

G: This must have given you a good opportunity to find out exactly how many people he did know throughout the departments and agencies, just going yourself and talking to them and discovering perhaps that he'd worked with them before. Was this your experience? Was it evident at this point?

J: I usually was pretty aware of who he knew beforehand. His letters, his stream of letters, were almost daily, and if I needed to do something, he could and did give me advice on how to do it. One of the most pressing things, one of the things we hoped the most for, was to get some unit of the armed forces stationed in Austin, because it would build the city then and later. What we seemed to have a chance for was an army air support

command. It is what later developed into Bergstrom Field. All during those early months of 1942 the plans for that were being made and pushed and urged. One of the things I did was to go to see Assistant Secretary of War for Air [Robert] Lovett on Lyndon's behalf to talk with him about this and what we wanted. He knew all of the reasons why; they had been told him by the mayor and delegations from that city in far more emphatic and substantive manner than I could. But with that being done, my request to him was to let the Congressman's office know a few hours ahead of time when they reached their decision, very especially if their decision was yes, so that we could notify the papers. So that it would emanate from the Congressman's office, and people would know that he was on the job, his deputy was on the job, still working for them. The number of telephone calls I had with Mayor Tom Miller about this would stretch from here to--a great number in any case.

G: Was there any problem getting that? Was another city under consideration or another congressman trying to get it for his district?

J: I don't remember the details, but it was always highly competitive, and the more aggressive mayor or corps of citizens working for it and the more reasons that you had--if it was an industry, your labor supply, the shipping available, perhaps the water available. There were always reasons that you could give. And also in wartime, many things could not be located close to the coast. At least there was such a rule in regard to lots of installations. Luling was just wild to get something and it would prove to be just a little bit too close.

Well, it *did* come about, Bergstrom Field did, and it was *high* excitement. I was

very thrilled to be a part of it and got a lot of credit, which I didn't deserve, from our kindly mayor, Tom Miller. But the thing he and I had the most conversations about was an abattoir. I didn't even know what an abattoir was. It appears it's some sort of a very sanitary, efficient place where farmers can bring their animals and get them slaughtered and butchered and ready for market. The city was growing and had to have such a place. Steel and other necessary materials were just really locked up by the War Production Board--I think that was the name of it--and you just had to get a permit for everything. So that abattoir occupied a lot of my late evenings and early mornings.

One of the most interesting visits that I had was to the British Embassy. It was at the time when Lord Halifax was ambassador. Of course, I didn't get in to see Lord Halifax, but I did get in to see one of his very amiable, nice assistants and discussed my constituent's problem with him. Our constituent lived in some British country and had a problem, and I just had to see about how we went about helping him. It was late in the afternoon, four or five o'clock, and this British gentleman offered me a cup of tea, and then he winked at me and opened his desk drawer and took out a couple of lumps of sugar and put one in his and one in mine. Sugar was already becoming scarce. I do not remember at quite what period of time this is. All those experiences meld together.

Certainly the most awesome visit that I had was to a man who has awed far more people than me, and that was the Secretary of the Interior, Mr. [Harold] Ickes. This was about one of the CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] parks in our district, which was a beautiful park and had a manager, whose title I can't remember, but he was a good friend of ours and we thought a very good public servant. Well, he was in danger of losing his

job, and I had to go and make an appeal for him. I think it turned out all right.

G: Do you recall what Ickes said?

J: He was very nice to me. I had the very firm opinion that he wouldn't let that man stay there thirty minutes just because Lyndon wanted him to stay, but I did gather that he would really look into it and see what his record was and whether he was worth keeping his federal job. I believe it turned out that he did stay.

One day I went to visit the Speaker in his office in the Capitol behind Statuary Hall. He began by saying, "You can call on me *any* time for anything that you want me to help you with. I've got a lot of folks around here, and I could help you in lots of ways." Then he said, "I want you to tell me something. Do you think it would hurt anything if those boys were to be ordered back here about the last of spring?" I said, "Yes, sir, I think it would. Why? Do you have any idea of ordering them back?" It was obvious it was on his mind, and he was getting a lot of other congressmen [who] were having to weigh whether or not they should go. He was thinking that he'd really like to have them all come back. I guess that was the first time that it entered my mind that Lyndon might return home, all of the congressmen who had gone into active duty might return home, at a fairly soon date and not just the big question mark, the end of the war.

But the real meat and bread of that whole period when Lyndon was gone were the letters from him, and I hope and believe my letters to him. I do know it was a time that strengthened me and that brought us closer together. We valued each other more and we understood each other more, because of this time.

One of the delicious things that happened to me at Valentine's was a gift from

Lyndon from a place called Gumps in San Francisco, a fantastic red velvet hostess gown with a lot of oriental design embroidery on it. Oh, it was so beautiful. He just loved to get me pretty clothes and extremely elegant, fancy clothes, far more than my life made necessary. But it gave him pleasure, and it gave me pleasure for many years.

There were other interesting things happening. I remember once at a luncheon sitting next to a lady in the Foreign Service who had spent her years in Singapore and Shanghai and all those places, "the faraway places with the strange-sounding names." It always just whetted my appetite for travel, so long deferred in my life has it been, but so early conceived as one of the main pleasures. Whenever I got an invitation to an embassy, I was very likely to go with my eyes out on stems. I remember going to the Mexican embassy. The [Don Francisco Castillo] Nájeras, I believe, were ambassador then. I went with the wife of--Gladys Dempsey from New Mexico, a very pretty society-minded congressional wife.

Meantime, we were considering moving back into my apartment. We told the Edwards that we would like to have it back April the first. I planned to ask Mary Rather to move in with me. It had been marvelous living with Nellie Connally, but it was possible that John was going to be back in Washington for a few weeks or a few months, and I did love my apartment. I remember when we moved there I told Lyndon, I, who had so long pushed and longed for a home, would just love to live in that apartment practically forever.

(Interruption)

The windows looked out onto Rock Creek Park, always one of the joys of my life.

Another one of the odd little vignettes about business and money is that when Lyndon told me that he thought it would be a very good idea if I would invite some of the women I knew up to a lunch at the House restaurant, for instance Libby Rowe or Mrs. [Josephine] Forrestal or Mrs. [Vanetta] Gingrich, Admiral [John] Gingrich's wife, and he thought it wouldn't be too expensive for me to spend as much as thirty dollars a month on that sort of thing.

Gradually, it began to develop that somebody in the office had to be named the secretary. I thought it ought to be O. J., because he knew the most and did the most. Lyndon decided that it should be me, and addressed letters to me in that way. So I progressed quickly, in about a month. However, there was never any lack of knowledge on my part as to where the real wisdom and experience lay, and that was in O. J. and Mary.

We continued to send Lyndon word about people in the district who were having a baby or getting a promotion or somebody in the family had died, so that he could send them a postcard. He did a lot of that in his spare time out there. And I daresay he had more spare time than he was ever used to having, because as the tone of his letters sank more and more into a state of depression, you could see that initiative and hard driving just could not be done in the anomalous job in which he found himself then.

G: This segment that follows will be recorded on January the thirtieth [1980].

J: So I spent the month of March 1942 working in Lyndon's office with the title of secretary, and there passed between us this constant stream of mail. Lyndon told me to start leaving wide margins on my letters, and he would write something in the margins,

his opinions or suggestions. He asked me to do the same with all the staff every day, to get them to have a one-page memo about what they'd done that day and what they thought about the office. He also gave me a lot of advice, like for me to approve or disapprove everything that requires a decision from the head. Don't hesitate to do one or the other, even if you're wrong. I can't say I was very aggressive. But he also said, "You can do more good by contacting people I ordinarily see in an hour than you can by staying in the office three hours." So he was anxious for me to keep up with all connections with friends, and this means on the Hill with the Texas delegation, among his friends in the department, and first and foremost and always, the constituents back home in the 10th District. One of his expressions was, "Don't let those fires go out."

He also asked me to keep a close tab on all the office expenditures. Oh, golly, how some of the folks must have resented that. They knew so much and I knew so little. But it's good to know that somebody is observing. There's nobody that cares quite as much about your business as yourself, and next to yourself, your wife or husband very likely, although we were always blessed with great staff. He did expect me to fill that role and keep a tight hold on the reins of how much was spent for everything from stationery to pencils to telephone calls.

The sort of social life that went on for me was the regular set-up of organizations that Lyndon and I belonged to, like the Texas Exes banquet. I remember Warren Cunningham took me to that. He was one of the crowd of young men around there who were just sort of waiting, who knew they would be leaving for the service in a few months. It was a whole time of waiting for all of us. Senator Connally was a speaker and

he came over to me and told me to be sure and come to see him whenever I needed some help. Then there was the Little Congress banquet, where I sat with Tex Norman, who had a problem in Washington then. Nelson Rockefeller was a speaker, and he inquired about Lyndon. Even then, as far back as then, he had nice things to say about him, and Lyndon admired him so much.

One of the efforts we were beginning in the office at that time was to try to get Tom Miller, Jr., the mayor's son, into Officers Candidate School, writing letters of recommendation and pursuing it.

The mood of the day among the general populace, as I recall was a mixture. For one thing, it was just a gung ho patriotism. Propaganda for buying defense bonds was just going at high speed. I, myself, got a very deep thrill out of taking some money that came to me from something that Aunt Effie had sent me for Christmas and a little bit of dividend from some investment I had, and bought a defense bond in the name of Lyndon Baines Johnson and Claudia Taylor Johnson. "I trust it will purchase one small and ardent gun" was the way I expressed it to Lyndon in a letter. But that was the way everybody felt, determined to get in their little piece of the answer.

As March wore on I began to look forward to getting back into my apartment in April and having Otha Ree doing the cleaning up and prepare us some good meals. Eating out at nine o'clock at night was palling a little bit. I had asked Aunt Effie to arrive April the first, and Mary was going to move in with us, and then Nellie until she knew what was going to happen to John. At least it was going to be in readiness for her to move in with us.

G: Did he come back to Washington, John Connally?

J: He did, off and on, and I cannot remember when.

G: I just wonder if he worked with the office when he was back in Washington.

J: No, it's my recollection that he did not. In fact, I really just can't remember when he came, but I know he did.

Also, we began to have blackouts, at least the first while I was there. I think it was on about March the third, and it lasted from eight o'clock at night until six o'clock in the morning. We had gone to dinner out in Georgetown, at least I remember some blackout when we had gone to dinner in Georgetown. We emerged from the dinner party. All the lights were out everywhere in the city. Our car was quite a ways away, and we walked in those dark streets. It was an eerie feeling, and we paused in the doorway of a church and all sort of giggled quietly to each other about how strange this was.

Almost every letter from Lyndon would tell me about some present that he had bought me, a purse, a blouse, some china. I'm trying to remember now what china that was. I think it was some grey china, a breakfast set that I used for years and years, and it has finally disappeared from the household. I remember at one time I wrote him and said if he just would use that money and pay off a debt to Mr. So-and-so, that [as] much as I loved him thinking about me, wouldn't it be good if we could feel free from obligations and absolutely without debts. That is something, a feeling that has continued with me all my life. Then we could feel that we are unencumbered and have no little drags on our mind.

Lyndon had a very good friend, a New York lawyer who was counsel for Paramount Pictures, Ed Weisl, who remained until his death one of our closest friends. Somewhere along the way he went out to California, where Lyndon was stationed, and on an off day took Lyndon through Paramount Pictures, introduced him to all the top people, had lunch with him, introduced him to some young starlets. John was along. Ed Weisl suggested that they let some of their good photographers take pictures of these two handsome young officers, so they took a lot. Those pictures, I think, are still the ones--those pictures in uniform--that record his army [navy] appearance and stay of that time.

One of the little starlets was supposed to look just like Bette Davis. I misunderstood Lyndon's letter telling me about it and thought that he had been out with Bette Davis, and I was really tremendously impressed.

A good thing that happened in the search for untangling the Alabama estate was that Aunt Effie's friend in Jefferson, Miss Bernice Emmert, found among all Aunt Effie's things there a letter and a telegram, an exchange between Aunt Effie and Uncle Claud where she had told him she wanted to make her will and how much did she have approximately, and was it all in absolutely good legal order. Uncle Claud responded to both questions, giving her the amount and that everything was in good order. So that was helpful. Senator Wirtz was getting ready to go to Alabama and meet with the administrator, Uncle Harry, and all the heirs, and so we felt a little more armed for the visit.

One of the good things about this period in our life was that Lyndon's mind was at

rest about his family. Sam Houston, ever since Lyndon and I married, I had known that Sam Houston was a concern, a worry to him. But at this time, he seemed to be doing just grand, and Lyndon was very happy about him and all the family for the first time in years.

But the tone all through March of the difficulty of accomplishing what he wished to do, in the work, that is, training more young men, grew more and more doubtful that he could be useful in it. He said, "I should be doing more. I should be producing and driving and working my damn head off." But it didn't seem to be possible where he was. He said, "I'm degenerating fast at this."

Back at the office, the thing that was occupying our mind most of all at that time was this air support command for Austin--what came to be Bergstrom Field. It actually came about in the middle of March, and it was almost a snafu. We just got in under the line, thanks to the real devotion of the Mayor, because the news leaked just at the last moment. The Mayor did get a wire from somebody who wasn't supposed to wire him. He held onto the wire and didn't issue it to the press, called our office. It was a weekend, as I remember, and difficult to get people. We just called and called and called until--we couldn't get Lovett; we would even have gone to Lovett--we finally found someone in the War Department who had said that that wire was not from the top and wasn't supposed to have been sent, but they would get off the real one right away, and that they were approving the site for the military installation in Austin. The Mayor did put it in the paper that the news had come from the Congressman's office. So we just slipped through.

The mail was running about fifty letters a day, that is, the regular mail, and in addition, there were such things as the baby books we were sending out, and then the congratulatory and condolence letters abundantly as we could gather them from the papers. We were getting ready for the big haul on the poll tax list with the agricultural bulletins, the once-a-year thing. I wrote Senator Wirtz and asked him to tell me all the things that he heard bad about the office. "I'd rather squirm now than later, and I'll try to get to work patching up the holes." And I wrote Bill Deason the same thing. They were two of the people I could depend upon to tell it to me straight.

And meanwhile there was getting organized a [petition campaign]. I'm sure Senator Wirtz was a key man behind it, and Everett Looney would have been helping, and all of Lyndon's old, strong folks from the NYA and the San Marcos school were getting organized for a campaign to sign petitions for him to run again, thinking that if they showed up with great huge petitions early in the spring, that would head off anybody running against him. Jake Pickle took a big hand in it. This was one of the earliest times that I remember him--oh, we'd known him *lovingly* in NYA days, but here he was in the political vineyard for us. And our letters to all the editors in all of the district were paying off with very nice little stories about me being in the office and about Lyndon being on active duty in the navy. Occasionally there would be a laudatory editorial about his doing that. Then there would be letters from his staunch friends, letters to the editor, in that column you know, saying we must draft him back to be our congressman again, even while he was off. So in those days we had very good relations with the press. Representing the 10th District, being in Congress, was a job that was just hand-tailored

for Lyndon. He loved it, and they loved him.

Meanwhile, Jimmie Allred had made up his mind that he would run for the Senate against Pappy O'Daniel, and Lyndon wrote a letter to the President telling him that we needed a capable fighting young man representing Texas and the Senate, and "many of us believe Judge James V. Allred to be that man." I know he meant it, and yet he was a little sad at closing the door for himself. But it was just no time for us.

G: How seriously did he consider running himself?

J: Not seriously at that time, to the best of my belief. I think he had to fulfill what he had said to a whole state full of people, that if he voted for war, to send their sons to war, he would go with them, and he did. He must stay there until, if it ever happened, the Commander-in-Chief called him back.

G: Of course, a lot of his supporters wanted him to run, Charlie Marsh being one. Do you remember?

J: Oh yes, indeed I do, and Charlie Marsh was the most persuasive of men. You just had to walk away if you didn't want to agree with him.

G: Did Marsh talk to you and try to persuade you to enter him in the Senate race?

J: I don't remember that he did, but we just knew it couldn't realistically be done at that time. The word now is you'd lose your credibility. That's not a phrase we thought of then, but it wouldn't be playing it straight.

G: The letters seem to indicate that he had signed two files, one for the Senate and one for the House seat, and he left for the South Pacific not knowing which race he'd been entered for and that it was pretty much up to Senator Wirtz and John Connally with

regard to which.

J: You're telling me something that I didn't even know. I knew that he would always want to go back to his House seat, but I didn't know this other. I don't believe that he ever really considered that more than some odd sort of insurance against some strange break.

Somewhere along into March, I myself, from my Washington vantage point, was getting disheartened. In a letter to Lyndon I talked about the Washington picture being very distressing to me, bickering and jealousy and smallness and sloth. "I wish we had several dozen of you. I think if there was some place the President could put you where you could make things move, ships or tanks or planes or supplies, I would say for you to get out of your present status, which the people back home interpret to be one of combat or preparation for combat, and get behind a desk where you could make lots of people function, and just let politics take care of itself." We geared up awfully fast, as you look at it in hindsight, but in the days as you live them there was a lot of jealousy and sloth and ineptness and just backing and filling.

On Lyndon's end, he was becoming more and more uncertain that there would be any satisfaction of accomplishment for him in what he was trying to do. As soon as he would get some training program set up, it would unravel at one end, either the navy end or the NYA end or the industrial company end. He was yearning for the time when his talents, energy, and ability could be utilized to the fullest extent. He used the expression in one of his letters that it gave him the feeling of "stale beer after champagne," what he was trying to get done. He was also wondering what would happen to him and whether he would be re-elected to his seat. He just said it would be anybody's guess, but he

would rather suppose an O'Daniel stooge will take us on soon.

G: There was considerable discussion in the press about this, and it seems like a movement among the editors to the effect that he should have no opposition.

J: Oh, you bet. We had lots of good friends among those country editors. The newspaper business was totally different then, lots of weeklies, lots of individually, home-owned papers. You went around to see them, and you knew them, and you got to be friends with them, and they believed in you. And they expressed themselves very fully in their editorial pages. Lyndon began to learn Mayor Tom Miller's way of doing things at the Austin newspaper. Mayor Miller never let the paper go to bed at night without him going down there to make sure everything was all right. And he'd often take Lyndon with him, and then Lyndon got to going himself, and was very good friends with Gordon Fulcher and Buck Hood and Lorrain and a lot of those folks.

His letters were also full of earnest imploring of me to continue with my exercises. When I read some of my measurements that he required me to send him, I can see why. I was just about as heavy as I am now. It was just deplorable. Thank heavens, there came a time in the middle years when I was fairly nice and slim. And he would tell me to "remember exercises and wave sets and smart clothes." He was always telling me that I wouldn't sell for what I was worth if I didn't pay attention to looks. Regrettably, I rather stubbornly dug my heels in and refused to admit that it was as important as he said, the way one looked. He was right and I was dull not to spend more time on it. I had an odd sort of feeling that it was frivolous and a waste of energy and effort, that you ought to spend your life working on higher things. That was dumb. Higher things there are

indeed, but you can just look your best with a small enough effort.

The effort to get Tom Miller, Jr., into OCS took me to see Jim Rowe and Tom Corcoran and just about everybody I could think of. Maybe next to Bergstrom it was one of the great successes when we finally got the word--I think it was maybe toward the end of the month--that we were going to be able to get him in. I had it tenderly explained to me by Tom Corcoran that indeed, influence could work against you rather than for you in trying to get somebody into OCS. That is, if the influence came from outside the army. On the other hand, if the influence was in the army, if the young candidate was a nephew of a colonel or something, that could be very helpful. It depends on what kind of influence. At any rate, he would work as vigorously as he could on it, and I think perhaps he is the one who made it happen late in March.

Ed Weisl did furnish Lyndon and John with a little diversion in those California days, going out to see the movies and how they worked. In the course of it, he met a young starlet named Nancy Gates, from Denton, only sixteen years old then, who was to figure later in our lives, a very lovely young woman.

The office was busy. We had a host of visitors. Roy Hofheinz was in and out working on his station in Houston. He wanted to get the license from the FCC [Federal Communications Commission] even though being able to get the material to build it was very doubtful. Preparation for a license was a long, slow affair, and he had it all ready to go, and they slammed the gate shut on any further discussion of licenses, is the way I remembered it. He just wanted to get it judged to whether he could have the license or not, and then he would take his chances. Martin Winfrey and Tony Buford and lots of

the mayors of the little towns [visited], wanting to work on some sort of installation to make their city be a part of the war effort in some way. Sometimes we stayed there until eleven o'clock at night getting out the yearbooks. Nellie was working hard taking care of the scrapbook and the congratulatory letters. She was especially good on writing letters to children.

I was looking at the Allred possibility of election. I did not feel in the least sad about our lost chances, and I was also sure, as I wrote Lyndon, that "I know the day will come," and I meant when we would be in the Senate, if we wanted to. I was, however, unhappy about the present mood and state of affairs, and Lyndon's lack of participation, increasingly so. I told him that everywhere I turned there was confusion and distrust between congressmen and the bureaus and a running around from one agency to another trying to find out whose job it is to do what. Confusion was the name of the game for a while, because there were lots of rules and regulations, and whose job it was to enforce what was uncertain. I began to wish more and more that Lyndon were back in charge of some agency or body that could speed up production and get people moving and with a core of young can-do men.

One night I went to a party at Mrs. Grey Bane's [?] that I described as being a "gathering of the clan" to which we used to belong: the Aubrey Williams and the Maury Mavericks, some others whose names are no longer so familiar to me: Mrs. John Corson, the Altmeyers, Mrs. Ellen Woodward. But all ardent New Dealers. And getting Aubrey Williams off in a corner and talking to him, and him saying that he really thought Lyndon ought to be back and working in a more productive capacity, and that he was going to

start talking to Harry Hopkins about it. He liked to see him back here and put him in Harry's outfit.

I went on to say to Lyndon that I wanted to go back to see Mr. Rayburn and tell him that my ideas had changed. Way back early in February he had told me, Sam had, that he wanted to consider asking the boys back, and what did I think about it? I had said no, if you remember, I hoped he would not. I was asking Lyndon if he would mind if I would talk to Mr. Rayburn about the possibility of Lyndon coming back assigned to something more useful. Of course, what Mr. Rayburn wanted him back for was to be right back at his job on the Hill and helping him corral some of the congressmen. But I was restive and I surely would like to start talking to Mr. Rayburn or to Jim [Rowe] or Ickes or Aubrey or somebody about a more vigorous place for him. I'm surprised at myself for being that aggressive.

I saw a good bit of Roy Hofheinz. Among the things he told me was that he and George Brown were trying to think up some ideas of starting a morale-building program to step up production in George's shipbuilding and other defense plants in Houston, like letters from a Houston boy in Java telling in pitiful terms about how badly they needed the guns or the ships, or medals to the workers who drive the most rivets or whatever it is, and pep talks to the workmen in the plants from an admiral or a general or a movie star or somebody. Actually, I remember one of my favorite pictures of those years is George and Herman Brown and their aged mother and Lyndon and Secretary [Frank] Knox of the navy and quite a few of them all lined up there. The satisfaction on their faces was so visible, and the Brown shipbuilding yards were receiving an "E" for efficiency from the

navy. Lyndon was about as glad about it as if it had been part his.

We were hoping that we could meet in New Orleans when the trip was set up for the Senator to go to Alabama to see the administrator, Uncle Harry, and the heirs. We were just waiting on Senator for a date. Lyndon was yearning to join us in some convenient spot, perhaps as he went from the West Coast back to Houston, New Orleans might work out.

Back in the district, a Mr. [O. P.] Lockhart, who was a strong friend of Senator O'Daniel, was complaining about Lyndon being off in the navy when he ought to be home working for his constituents, and somebody else better take over that job of really working for those constituents. Everett Looney and Senator Wirtz were going to bat for Lyndon in the papers, defending his service overseas, and saying that Lockhart was trying to defeat Roosevelt supporters within the Texas delegation. And that he couldn't call Lyndon back, because only the commander-in-chief could call him back.

I was presumptuous enough to write Lyndon a letter describing the merits of everyone in the office: O. J. Weber, Mary principally, Nellie, a couple of others who were just temporary. One of the things that strikes in my memory a note that I really understood--

(Interruption)

One of the things that I learned, or rather reinforced, because I already knew it, in this brief time in the office, was that to be in Congress you ought to have a heart. If not, if you didn't, if you didn't have a lot of sympathy for each individual case, you were in the wrong job. On the other hand, you sure did get some characters, freeloaders, who were

wanting something done that they were not entitled to get done that did not have merit on their side. But there were so many more constituents who just deserved a helping hand in guiding them through the red tape of bureaucratic Washington.

Roy Hofheinz did get to see Cliff [Durr], and he must have told his story so convincingly that Cliff believed in its justice. I think very soon that he would get his permit. Whether he could get the materials to build his station was at that time just a matter for the future.

I got word from the Senator that he would be ready to meet with us in Alabama about the twenty-first of the month, and made my plans to go, notified Edwina and Uncle Harry and Tommy and Tony, and of course, Lyndon, and got all my plans and arguments in mind, and all my papers as well as I could. I remember I had a whole suitcase full of them. I remember when we finally got there on March twenty-first, and I got off the train in Montgomery and was going to go to Selma, I got in a taxi, went I forget just where, got out, left the suitcase! In terror discovered it a little while later, went back, found the taxi, found the man, recovered my suitcase absolutely intact. There were just so many nice people in Alabama just willing to give you a helping hand.

Along about this time, the middle of March, we began to get an appalling number of letters in angry language denouncing the action of labor. Labor was stalling; labor was talking about striking. Labor wasn't wanting to work overtime apparently. The situation was getting ugly, and Congress itself was increasingly the object of criticism and distrust. All the Texas delegation, with Lyndon away in the navy, I think just about all the Texas delegation came out for suspending the forty-hour week as long as the emergency lasted.

There was just a general atmosphere of scuttling a whole lot of the achievements of the New Deal, and yet you could sure see the reasons why. The very people that it had helped were fueling the fires for returning us to earlier days and days that had been oppressive for them.

Lyndon in his letters was concerned about Lockhart's actions in saying that Lyndon ought to either resign or come back. He wrote the Senator, and he told us that we ought to try to get Gordon or Lorraine or some of our good friends in the newspaper business to go around to the counties and the friendly papers and see if it was possible to get an article tending to show that Lockhart was just trying to play politics and trying to force Lyndon out of running for re-election to his job. He hoped that there could be some interviews with workers and farmers as well as with leaders. Keeping those home fires burning, keeping the lines open to the people back home was always uppermost in his mind during this time out there when there was so little in his achievements to consume his energy. A lot of the response warms your heart to read about it, even after all this long time. The folks of the 10th District, the publishers in the 10th District, cared a lot about Lyndon. An interesting thing is, that went on in every election right up until the last one in 1964. He carried the 10th District by about the same percentage, time in and time out, which was in the sixties.

It was about this time, when it looked like we might be able to settle the Alabama property and come into some ready cash, that I began to really look at houses in earnest. It was my Sunday afternoon vice. I would get the paper and I would write down the places that I wanted to see, and I would drive and drive and look and yearn. I described

one to Lyndon that I'd found, a whitewashed brick with a huge living room and a lovely fireplace, a master bedroom with four closets, and a private bath and three exposures, and two other nice bedrooms. Well, two interesting things about it: it cost fifteen thousand, seven-fifty, and the other is, we didn't get it. I wonder where it was sometime.

G: Do you recall what happened? Was it just a question of someone else buying it first or your not moving ahead?

J: Well, you see, this was in March, and Lyndon didn't really get home from the war until about--oh, was it late July or early August? In any case, we surely took up the question then. (Laughter)

G: In this early house hunting, was there any ground rules? I mean, if you had found one that you wanted to buy, would you have gone ahead and bought it, or would you have waited for him to get back?

J: No, I would not have been that aggressive. One, I would have waited until the money was in the bank from the Alabama settlement, and two, until he at least had had a chance to see it. Or, if he'd told me that he wanted me to, I guess I would have. But I wouldn't have tried to force the issue with him thousands of miles away. I was already thinking about what to do with the backyard and how we'd put a barbecue pit in it so he could fix some steaks for company. And maybe at least we could raise, as I said in one letter, "one crop of roses before the Japs and Germans get us, and one is better than none," which is something I've never changed.

Looking back over these letters I can only think how true it was in the midst of all the uncertainty for the country and all the irritations and angers, how true it was that life

was good, for me especially.

The Bob Poages invited me to dinner, and we had a delicious evening. He told me a lot about his problems as a congressman and a lot about how to handle our own office. He said, too, he was getting a lot of very angry letters about the labor situation. They were good friends and so devoted to Lyndon all of these years. I left about oh, nearly ten o'clock and went back to the office and signed mail. Gosh, it was good to be young. (Laughter)

I would have some of the newspaper people out to dinner. Tex Easley and his wife came out. I saw them actually just a couple of months ago in Washington. It's nice to keep friends for four decades. And there were always constituents from home: Mayor Will Rogers to tell me about the needs of his town and Everett Looney. Then my usual clubs went on: the Seventy-Fifth Club and the Congressional Club with constituents to give a glimpse of what Washington life was like. The angry letters about labor increased in number and in emotion. I went to see Speaker Sam Rayburn and showed him the sort of letter we were writing in reply. He said it was a fine letter. It seemed to me weak and inconclusive. I never was quite satisfied when we couldn't just come out firmly one way or the other. The Speaker said that he never had seen the country in such a state, which of course is just something I'm sure that he would have said many, many times; we've gone through so many waves of emotion. I took this occasion to talk to him about my earlier visit, and told him I wanted to take back what I had said about Lyndon staying quietly in the service, that I saw on every side so many jobs that needed doing and so much red tape that needed slashing and so much that I thought that Lyndon would be a

good man to do. I wish he were in the middle of the maelstrom fighting like hell.

G: What was the Speaker's reaction?

J: He said, "I wish to God I thought that was the way Lyndon felt about it. I'd go to the President and get him to order the whole bunch back here Monday morning."

G: Well, now, I gather the Speaker really wanted him back to help corral the other congressmen and line up votes, and more important, to help Democrats get re-elected again.

J: Of course, exactly. That's what he wanted. He was talking about all the things he had to do, and he said, "Now, see, if Lyndon were here he could do that for me. You know, I figure he has the heart and the head of a legislator, and a man with one-third the ability he has could be doing what he is doing in the navy." The last thing he said to me was, "Tell Lyndon I need him and need him like hell." So at least now the Speaker knew how I felt and how Lyndon felt.

G: There was also the possibility of his going to work with Undersecretary Forrestal I think, in the navy. Do you recall that? Did you ever talk to Forrestal about it?

J: I never would have dared to. I know that Lyndon and Forrestal had a close relation, a lot of rapport between them, and I know that Lyndon mentioned it in a letter or two and would have liked it. I really do not know anything about Forrestal's side of it.

G: There was another mention that maybe he'd go to work with Lowell Mellett's outfit.

J: Yes. Some of his New Deal friends had that in mind. I'm not sure where that originated. I knew that he would regard that as a good place to put his talents. Maybe not as much as some of the others though.

G: Do you recall what happened to that overture?

J: No, I don't. No.

The petition, you know, back in the district, the petition was already going around, getting signatures, and we would get reports on it every now and then. Mayor Rogers said it was going fine in his county. He said, "You just tell us whatever Lyndon wants us to do, and we'll get it done."

When we finally had our meeting in Alabama, it was really a pleasure to watch Senator Wirtz operate: always tactful and slow, but had his facts all lined up and very forceful and knew right when to move in. Aunt Effie had complete confidence in him. Uncle Harry was wary. He had been appointed by the court and it was not Uncle Claud who had made him his executor; it was the court who had appointed him. I'm not sure that Uncle Claud would have done it. But Uncle Harry was slow to be convinced about the rights of heirs. It all went with reasonable amiability, but inconclusive, but we felt that we were making strides. Senator Wirtz was unraveling the whole mixed up ball of twine. We felt good about it, but I cannot say that I walked away from there with my money to go and buy that little house. Although I kept on writing Lyndon about it, and telling him one of the main reasons I wanted him to have it [was] so we could have a place where we could eat at least and he could be free to work as hard as he wanted to, using all his talents, and not have to worry about whether we'd have a roof or whether we'd lose out at the polls, because then that would constitute a kind of freedom. I think for somebody in political life, oh, golly, that's the greatest bulwark you can have.

It was toward the end of the month that the joyful news was almost sure that we

would get Tom Miller, Jr., into officer training school , and it was thanks to the efforts of Jim Rowe and Tom Corcoran. It was mighty happy word to be able to pass on to Lyndon, who in this crucial time needed and depended on Mayor Tom Miller, and indeed cared so much about him.

Tape 2 of 3, January 31, 1980

J: April was one of those domestic traumas, moving--at least the thirteenth move of my life, maybe more--back into our apartment at Woodley Park Towers, which I just loved. Also, added to it was the trauma of losing my maid at the same time. Otha Ree said she wanted to go back to Marshall to teach school. Alas. But she'd been a sweet member of the household for the year or so that she was there.

So I got moved. Aunt Effie came shortly thereafter. I don't remember just when. Mary Rather moved in with me and Nellie was going to come as soon as she found out what was going to happen with her husband. Meanwhile, Lyndon, out on the coast, was going from Portland to San Francisco to Los Angeles to San Diego, backwards and forwards up and down the coast, and back to San Francisco and Portland. In the district the petition was being moved around in all the ten counties of our district, with Mayor Miller as chairman of the movement. The grass-roots heroes were Bess Beaman and Jake Pickle. Ed Clark was frequently in the picture, transmitting the numbers of signatures that had been received.

Also, there was brewing a sort of a fight for Lyndon's future between two giants in our life, the long and steady giant of Senator Wirtz, and then the meteoric--that catalyst that made things happen: Charles Marsh. Charles Marsh was firmly of the opinion that

Lyndon ought to run for the Senate, and he was going to make it happen whether or not. Senator Wirtz, on the other hand, just firmly believed that he should not. He thought people would think he was trading on his uniform and that would ruin his future political career. Also, he thought he had an obligation to Jimmie Allred, and a man must perform his obligations.

By April 8 news came that five thousand folks in Austin had signed the petition, that Burnet was going great, Blanco, of course, going great, and that there were a total of twelve thousand signatures over all the district.

(Interruption)

Aunt Effie arrived, sometime in April, I think. When she came, I always wanted to give her some of my time, to share some of the sparkle and the activity and the youth that went with my life. She had been a part of my life since I was five years old. This was an extremely busy time, and I'm afraid she got a small share. But whenever there was enough time, and, as the war progressed, it depended on the gasoline, but in any case, whenever I could, I took her driving. She loved to drive around in springtime Washington, particularly in Rock Creek Park. Lyndon, who was a great tease, came in one time and told her, "Aunt Effie, you know that the traffic is getting so heavy in Rock Creek Park, and the real estate is so high around here and the city is in debt, so they've decided they're going to sell the park for building houses and they're going to widen the road." Aunt Effie nearly collapsed. She bought it hook, line and sinker. He worried her for several hours before he saw it was really a serious matter with her.

G: That's a good story.

J: Sometime--I don't know whether it was April or May, but we had one of those fun little events. We put on a play. We had a recording machine, and we also had my movie camera. This play involved a silly little melodrama called, "My Mother Was a Lady." Nellie was the director; she also got all the props. I played the heroine, of all things, a young girl who had just gone to town to make her living in the big, wicked city. Mary was my mother. One of the young men--and Washington was full of young men then just poised, ready for Uncle Sam to say "come on"--played the part of the villain. Some of those that were a part of our group in those days were Warren Cunningham and George Prowse and, of course, all of the office staff. We were always very close to the office staff. This was an hilarious play. We still have it recorded in a movie. I had it complete with lights performed in one end of our living room at Woodley Park Towers. We had a lot of fun with that machine, both the movie [camera] and the sound. There was another one, "Twas a dark and stormy night when little Nellie went away." I forget who played in that one. Then, once we got Tom Corcoran playing on his accordion an Irish ballad, "Tim Tulin," [?] [and] one about the boll weevil, (singing) "First time I seen the boll weevil, he was sittin' on 'da square. Da next time I seen the boll weevil, he had all his family there, just a lookin' for a home, just a lookin' for a home." Odd that a Boston Yankee should have told the daughter of a southern farmer about this old boll weevil ballad. But it's one of the many things I learned from Tommy.

So the office days were busy. I was trying to find and break in a new cook. I was also looking forward to what was going to happen toward the end of the month: Lyndon came back. He came, I think, oh, about--he must have had nearly two weeks at home,

part of the last of April, and then left early in May. It was a hectic fortnight with so many people to see and so many decisions to be made, but a joyous time nevertheless.

G: Do you recall anything about LBJ's meeting with President Roosevelt?

J: It's a big gap in my memories of those times, but I didn't. Somehow I just purposely tuned out of anything that I knew I ought not to be talking about, just forgetfully, or say anything in front of somebody that I shouldn't, whether it was privileged knowledge or whether it was just sounding like bragging. So, I really didn't ask many questions about what he said and did when he was with the President. I mostly knew from his manner. It would always put him on a high. It was about the last of that month that he received orders to go out to the South Pacific with four other officers on a trip to look over our armed forces out there and come back and report sometime.

G: Now, you wrote Bill Deason that that two-week stay in Washington had been very hectic for him, that he had had to make a lot of decisions, and it was sort of a shame to have him go out to the West Coast or overseas so exhausted. Do you recall what some of those decisions were?

J: Well, I know what one of them was. This is just an example how really methodical he was underneath all of his, what sometimes people thought were rash and exuberant and quick decisions. He sat down and made a will. And it's a very sensible thing for somebody to be going overseas to do. The office force witnessed it. It was handwritten. Then on that very day--that was May the first--he left, going by Austin where he did get to tell his mother goodbye, and then on out to [the West Coast], looking once more I think at those training bases he had tried to help get established in Portland and San

Francisco, and then actually leaving from San Francisco early in May, about the seventh, I think. Because it was on May the ninth that I got a letter. It came from a Lieutenant Commander Adams in San Francisco, no telling where he was, but they always had the APO, "Your husband arrived next destination safely." I think I didn't wait to write, I called his mother, I believe, and told her that. Then I wrote Bill and all our other friends.

In a letter to Mrs. [Ed] Cape, I wrote her that we were all ensconced in the apartment, Aunt Effie and Mary Rather and I. Nellie might come out any day; she was still at Buckingham until we know what was going to happen to John. We called our apartment Widow Haven. Also I said to Mrs. Cape, "Now that summer is here, I'm having visions of the cool green depths of the river down at your camp. Maybe sometime we can get back there for a plunge and a sunbath and a bridge game." That had been Lyndon's and my--one of our little respites. We had very little self-indulgent times of recreation, but to go out to the Cape's camp was one, and to go out to the sort of executive headquarters at Mansfield [Buchanan?] Dam was another, and take overnight friends and go boat-riding and swimming.

Many of the young men who were heading off to war would stop by the office to see us, and some by our apartment. I remember Mary's brother, Edward, arriving at the apartment door, looking so handsome in his uniform and how proud she was of him. The town was just boiling with people getting ready to go off. O. J. was among those who were wild to get into Officers' Candidate School and, heaven knows, deserved it. But he had an eye problem, and he got carrot juice by the case and kept it in the office, and he would be drinking a can of it every few minutes. There must be something to it, or

maybe their standards got lowered, because within a few months, he passed the test, and he was poised to leave us. In fact, before the summer was too far along we were really in a bind for labor. Jake came in and helped us out for a while. I do not know exactly when that was. But he was having a problem with his teeth, poor man, and in order to get in-- as I recall he had an awful lot of dental work done which later on proved unnecessary, but which Jake, with his marvelous sense of humor, was able to laugh at.

(Interruption)

One of the many things Lyndon did before he left in early May was to sign an official document that requested that his name be put on the ballot for the primary election on the twenty-fifth of July, 1942, as a candidate of the Democratic Party for congressman from the 10th Congressional District. We stated his age as thirty-three and his post office address as Johnson City. We always voted at Johnson City, ever since the first time he and I voted together in 1935, from then until his death.

Later in the month, as was my wont in all sorts of important things, I asked Senator Wirtz what I ought to do or say when I began to be questioned about how I was going to participate, or whether I was going to participate in the election. He told me it would be entirely proper for me to say that while I'm busy attending to Lyndon's affairs and he was off in active service, we could not be active in political races, but naturally stay by my friends. Since Allred is the only friend I have in the race, there's no question about whom I'm supporting.

Sometime in the middle of May Senator Wirtz filed the document that made Lyndon a candidate for re-election to his seat in Congress. In writing to me he says he

hoped I approved the action taken by him, and he said, I guess rather wryly, "I suppose this makes me a lifelong enemy of Charlie Marsh." At any rate, that die was cast long before, it seemed to me, the decision as to which office Lyndon would run for.

When Lyndon came back he told me about what those three weeks in May were like, going from Hawaii across the wide expanse of the Pacific, stopping at Suva and Noumea and several small islands--I think one of them was named Johnson Island--finally getting to Auckland about the twenty-first of May, and then on to Sydney, Australia, which became a kind of a base for him, on the twenty-third. Everywhere he landed, when he had time, he looked up the servicemen, particularly the enlisted ones. If he ever found any from Texas, if he had any frame of reference to them, he'd say, "If I get back before you do, I'll phone your family," and quite a few of those he did. When he got back he had a little list that he did write or phone. On some little tiny atoll out in the middle, he ran into one of his good friends, I think maybe it might have been Gene Worley. Anyhow, surprising encounter on a few acres in the midst of the vast ocean. (Interruption)

In June, we began to get headlines from home that would read: "Lyndon Johnson in Australia, Confers with MacArthur," "Johnson Unopposed for Congress," "Congressman Lyndon Johnson Will Have No Opposition in Democratic Primary Election." And some rather sweet, very personal ways of saying it in the country newspapers of our district, such as: "Disregarded Personal Danger and Joined With Our Sons in Fighting This War, When as a Congressman No One Would Have Criticized Him For Remaining Safely in Washington." "Hail and Good Luck to Him, Both as a U. S.

Sailor and Congressman," is the *Bulletin*'s greeting. It was sort of the last of innocence, that period, in my memory.

(Interruption)

In the middle of June, we had a crisis of our own. Mary Rather got real sick in the night. I remember how scared I was. I called the doctor, I think it was Lawn [?] Thompson. We rushed her to the hospital. She had an emergency operation for a cyst that had ruptured, or was about to rupture, and also her appendix they took out. She was very sick, and they told her she'd have to be out of the office a couple of months. And at about the same time, Uncle Sam's shadow began to loom long over Jake and O. J., so it looked like we were going to have a real busy summer.

About the same time Lyndon was having some harrowing adventures of his own. There was a story, so I wrote Mrs. Johnson, in the paper saying that he had been an observer on a bombing raid that took off from some Allied nation's base in the Southwest Pacific headed for Lae in New Guinea, but that his bomber had burned out a generator and had to return before it reached its target. I said in my letter of course, I was disappointed he didn't get to actually see the dropping of the bombs, but I'm glad he had that much opportunity to see the real activity.

When he got home many events had left a mark on him, a real deep wound in his thinking about our ability to run our country. That was one of them, because he felt that the quality of the planes was poor, and that we were sending men out to fight in inferior machines. He felt always that the people we sent out were top-notch, just great. Some of them not trained enough; we were sending out mighty young, raw sailors and soldiers and

airmen compared to the Japanese. I think that that was the trip that he told me about when he came back, that he spoke of as the "all-out raid," everything that the United States could muster in the Southwest Pacific at that time, and it was a grand total of about five planes. That, too, filled him with anger that this giant had no more than that, so quiescent had we been for years and years, no build-up.

He was with some people whose names he often talked about, then and for long after. Both of them were officers and I do not remember whether majors or colonels: [Lieutenant Colonel] Anderson and [Lieutenant Colonel Francis R.] Stevens. He liked them both very much. They called him "Johnny." The planes were all lined up, and they told him to get into one, and then he discovered that he had left some piece of equipment--maybe it was a parachute or maybe a camera or something--and he said, "Have I got time to run back and get that?" The officer in charge said, "Yes, get in the next plane. This one will pull on out." So he got the piece of equipment, got in the next plane. The one that he would have gotten in did not return. I believe that was the one that Stevens was in. Later on, when he returned to Washington, it was his sad obligation to go and see Mrs. Stevens. And just like himself, he helped get her a job. I think it was somewhere in the War Department. He took her whatever gear there was that her husband had left. I wish I could remember that more clearly.

G: I know that later on, during the White House years, he invited Stevens' son to the White House. Do you recall that?

J: No, I don't, but that would have been very much like him to.

And then there was another big adventure, all of which I did not know until

[later]. There would be fragments in the paper about it, but when he got back, I heard a lot more about it. That was when he was riding in a Flying Fortress with Captain Frank Kurtz of the United States Air Corps, the pilot. The plane was about to run out of gas, and they had to land in the rock-strewn desert of Australia. It just looked like the face of the moon and a terrifically bumpy, but safe landing. As they came piling out of the plane, pretty soon down the road came people in pickup trucks and old farm vehicles, and pretty soon there was quite a little crowd there. They took them to the closest village where he spent the night. One of his fellow officers said, "I believe Lyndon could have carried that district by the next day." (Laughter)

Someone, I don't know whether using Lyndon's camera, or how he came to have them, but anyhow, he brought back some movie pictures from the events in those days, including the landing on its belly of a plane that had lost the gear that makes the wheels go down, a very dangerous thing, but accomplished successfully. Once more, he couldn't say enough good about the nerve and character and ability of the soldiers, but there was a lot lacking, he felt, in the equipment and at the head of the service, a lot of haggling and indecisiveness and red tape at the top.

G: I gather there was some bickering among the various branches of the service.

J: Oh, yes indeed. Yes. Yes.

G: On the subject of the movies, there's some indication that he was very disappointed with them. I've seen them; they're fine movies. But did you ever get that impression when they came back, that he was not pleased with how they had turned out?

J: No, I thought he was [pleased]. At least we used to show them a lot at our house. Of

course, our house came along a little bit later than this time, but not much later, and we used to show them.

G: There's one letter from this period where you wrote to a friend that when you think of the possibility of him being captured by the Japanese you were reminded of "The Ransom of Red Chief."

J: I think that was a little naive of me.

G: Well, I think I know what you mean, but I would just like to hear you express that sort of scenario. Did you mean that he would have them all doing what he wanted them to do or something like this?

J: I think I was young and innocent and really didn't know what I was talking about, looking at it from hindsight and knowing all that you know now about what happens to prisoners of war. But then I really felt he was capable of handling just about anything that came along.

G: But you were expressing some insights on him and his ability to maybe influence people?

J: Yes. To maneuver his way in any situation.

Sometime in June I had a call from a fellow officer of Lyndon's who had seen him and was just freshly back in Washington, telling me there was some exciting news about Lyndon. He couldn't tell me himself, because he knew Lyndon would want to tell me, but I would be very thrilled when I heard it. I hadn't the vaguest idea what he was talking about. It turned out that when they returned from this raid over Lae and Salamaua in New Guinea that General [Douglas] MacArthur, to whose headquarters he reported several times, awarded him--and also Colonel Sam Anderson--the Silver Star. Lyndon's

read--the accompanying words were, "While on a mission of obtaining information in the Southwest Pacific Area, Lieutenant Commander Johnson, in order to obtain personal knowledge of combat conditions, volunteered as an observer on a hazardous aerial combat mission over hostile positions in New Guinea. As our planes neared the target area they were intercepted by eight hostile fighters." There were five of them. I think one had already had to turn back because of--or maybe Lyndon's was the one that had to turn back. In any case--"when at this time the plane in which the Lieutenant Commander was an observer developed mechanical trouble and was forced to turn back alone"--yes, that was it--"presenting a favorable target to the enemy fighter. He evidenced marked coolness in spite of the hazard involved. His gallant action enabled him to obtain and return valuable information."

Well, he sure did return with a lot of information, and he put it in the right ears, that is, the ears of the President, when he got back. But as far as him considering his part in it to have been anything substantive or important, he didn't. In fact, he wrote really a letter that I'm just real, real proud of, just saying under the circumstances he didn't think he deserved it and ought not to accept it. I don't think they paid him any attention. He talked to me later on about it, and I was torn between--I thoroughly agreed with him that this was a military thing, and that he, for his brief service, certainly wasn't as truly entitled to it as ever so many of those who didn't get it. But gee, I was real proud of it. I was proud that *they* thought so. He finally wound up, and I don't know how much later, getting the little thing that you wear in your lapel, and the ribbons. We still have them, and he regarded them with pride.

But it was a sensibly written letter. What he said to the Adjutant General when he got back to Washington was that General MacArthur had told him that the citations were being prepared just a few minutes before he was detached from his assignment and that a copy was handed him by a messenger at the airport. Then, to quote his letter: "I shall always be proud that General MacArthur considered me, even though not a member of the Army Air Corps, worthy of some commendation because I volunteered, as he puts it, 'for a combat mission over hostile possessions in New Guinea.' But my brief service with these men and its experience of what they do and sacrifice makes me all the more sensitive that I should not, and could not, accept a citation of recognition for the little part I played for a short time in learning and facing with them the problems they encounter all the time. The coolness for which the General commends me was only the reflection of my utter confidence in the men with whom I was flying. Please accept this expression in the spirit in which I have written it and inform the proper authorities that I cannot in good conscience accept the decoration."

Back at home, Abe Fortas was appointed undersecretary of the interior, and Senator Wirtz came and went from Washington on his business. We always saw him with great help to everything we were involved in. Somehow or another, we struggled along shorthanded in the office.

G: Anything on the President's illness on the way back? You know, he had, I guess it was pneumonia and lost thirty-eight pounds or something.

J: Not until he got home, and then he had lots to say about it. He wound up with high fever in the hospital in the Fijis, it seems to me, with a lot of strange doctors and customs that

he--well, he never felt so lost and helpless in his life. I forget the details but he practically got up and walked out of the hospital, I think. However, he was so sick that he was taken back to a hospital somewhere. At that point, he looked up into the face of somebody whose first words were so southern that he knew he was in the hands of somebody from his part of the world. This was a doctor from Alabama whom he just felt was his savior, and indeed, he did get him through some bad times, because Lyndon was all his life subject to chest troubles and respiratory troubles and pneumonia. He had pneumonia somewhere along this way. He also had dengue fever. In the course of the whole rather brief while, he lost about thirty-five pounds.

But this is not to say that the whole thing was awful. There were some moments that he remembered with gratitude and even happiness that took place mostly in--I've forgotten whether it was Sydney or Melbourne. But at any rate, the people of Australia were very hospitable to American soldiers.

G: Did he like the Australians?

J: Yes, he liked them, and it was a liking that remained and colored his feelings all the rest of his life. As often happens in wartime, a lot of good-hearted people would have the soldiers to their homes for dinner or entertainments, planned things for them. There was one such lady, Mabel Brooks, who later on was made a dame by the Queen, I suppose it is, or the King, who makes one a dame. She and her husband had an elegant home and a very cultured, fine way of life, and they just really opened their home to young American servicemen, and were particularly kind to Lyndon. All the pretty young girls in town would come to parties to laugh and chat and give them a little respite from the dirt and

danger of the war. There's a nice picture among these movies of Lyndon walking in a park with such a young lady.

Years later, when we went back to Australia in 1966, Lyndon said that he wanted to put it on his itinerary to be sure and see Dame Mabel Brooks, and we did. We went to her house. She was old by then, but still a commanding figure. Her husband by that time was really feeble, but they were both--we knew we were in the presence of what the Speaker would have described as very sizeable citizens. We enjoyed a visit with them, and once they came to the White House to see us, once during the presidency. He was a hand for keeping up with old friends.

So the weeks of the summer wore on. . . .

(Interruption)

What happened to all the letters I wrote Lyndon and any that he wrote me during that time, I don't know. I don't believe any of them survived in my hands. But I heard when he got back all about--well, much about the--contents of those days. That illness in the New Zealand hospital where this Alabama doctor whose name was Harris of Birmingham, took care of him was not completely over. He left the hospital practically staggering in late June. He staggered onto a plane and started returning toward Pearl Harbor, where he arrived on the twenty-sixth and went into the hospital again. I don't know how long he stayed. I do remember distinctly his impressions of Admiral [Chester] Nimitz, gained I don't know, I don't remember, from how much personal contact. But he was with him some. But he regarded him with a lot of admiration, which is not true of all of the top men that he met out there.

The last of his adventures--and there were at least three close calls in this brief time--took place when he was going to leave Pearl Harbor and head home for--well, I'm getting ahead of myself. President [Franklin] Roosevelt ordered all the thirteen or so congressmen and senators who were in the service on active duty to come back to Washington and resume their roles in Congress. That was just early, about the first of July, I don't know exactly which day. But in coming back from Pearl Harbor to San Francisco, Lyndon--and here my memory is not clear--but [in] any case he was about to go on one plane. For some reason, he changed it to another plane, and the plane that he was going on did not make it.

(Interruption)

I do not remember the precise moment of seeing Lyndon when he first came back. I just remember astonishment at how haggard he was and how much weight he'd lost, and feeling protective toward him. But he didn't want rest and coddling at home; he wanted to go right back to work and he asked very soon if he could have an appointment with the President. He went right on into his office and all the work at hand on all cylinders. There was about him something new and different and remote. He was so concerned and distressed and almost angry at the incompetence he thought he had seen on many levels in high management of the war and in the slowness in getting supplies and material to the men. He never had anything to say but great praise of the men themselves.

He saw a lot of newspaper people. There was a bit in *Time* about him. He reported to the folks back home over the radio. Sometime that month he flew to Texas and toured the district to thank them for signing the petitition and for believing in him to

continue to be their congressman.

(Interruption)

G: [His meeting with] President Roosevelt when he came back, do you recall any of the details of it or the impact of his conversations with President Roosevelt?

J: I recall some of the aftermath. I know that he took with him his--and he's bound to have told the President about the inadequacies in some of our materiel, and how good the Jap Zeros were, and the slowness with which things reached our men, and the ineptness of some of the top brass: indecisive, selfish, incompetent and bickering between themselves and between the services. That, I am sure, he must have talked about. What I remember later on from time to time is changes that were made out there in that theater of operation that he would hear about, see in the paper or hear about, and he would express satisfaction and relief about, thinking maybe I guess that he had been somewhat useful in carrying a message.

The main thing I can recall about that period is that he was different: remote, bitter, scarred, shaken. Because he just really thought this country was the most undefeatable nation the Lord ever created, and he was shaken. Determined, but he could see the dangers.

The other thing I remember about that visit to the President. He always had a feeling that you would stand in better and stand in longer with the top fellow if you had a low profile and were not too visible and not too chatty about it. There was a piece, a sentence, in some magazine or newspaper about he had had a four-hour breakfast with the President. He, thinking how the President would feel about that, was real put out,

didn't know where it came from. I haven't the vaguest idea whether he was there four hours or not, but it was certainly not something that he'd want to talk about, thinking of future usefulness.

(Interruption)

G: Do you have any recollections of the President's role or your role in the Senate race between Jimmie Allred and W. Lee O'Daniel?

J: Across this long gap of years I only remember how much I liked Jimmie Allred and how much I wanted him to win and how busy I was. To the extent I could, I'm sure I did anything I possibly could for him. Mrs. Allred asked me for some lists of people, Texans who were in Washington, and I'm sure I got those off as quickly as I could. I don't know just what Lyndon did, just that he was for him, both for himself and his quality as a statesman and as a believer in the kind of Texas and kind of world that Lyndon was a believer in.

I know that he was in Texas for a good part of August. I wish I knew just what he was doing. I believe he was no doubt helping Allred. I can't quote you chapter and verse.

(Interruption)

In early August, back in the district, he picked up his tempo of reporting to them, going to Taylor and Georgetown and Elgin and Dime Box and Lexington and Giddings, speaking to civic clubs and Lions Clubs and chicken dinners where people could buy a ticket, bringing them the message of what the war was like, what we were doing, what we were not doing, what he thought we had to do. And here, Br'er Rabbit was in the briar

patch; he was at home. He was rallying the troops. He was still intense and sober and grave, but he was more himself because he thought he knew what to do about this. He thought he could instill in the folks back home a fighting spirit to support the troops, to support Roosevelt, to bring that 70 per cent production level that we were only operating at up to 100 per cent and above that. He got out some pretty stinging blasts at some of the top brass, and it might be easy to think that this was unwise. But there was one sentence he used once somewhere in a speech about he wouldn't be worthy of their trust if he let his political future keep him from saying things that he thought, dangerous as they might be, ought to be said.

I hated to leave Aunt Effie and go down for a prolonged stay, but I did go down in early August. Congress was in recess. I made a small trip to Santa Fe, New Mexico, to see Tony. I can remember a good many times of going to see him and special reasons one time. I do not know whether this was the time or not. I'll try to look it up.

I opened an office in the old courthouse for Lyndon. He went out to Seattle and from Seattle, went on up to Dutch Harbor, Alaska, and the Aleutians on a special congressional mission. [Warren] Magnuson was along. There was something about the services were having some feuds up there and they were from the Armed Services Committee, the Naval Affairs Committee. They wanted to come to an understanding about what was going on up there. We have some pictures that have been a part of my life now for almost forty years of him all bundled up up there.

G: I've heard that they actually had to break up a fist fight between two officers of different branches of the service. Have you ever heard that story?

J: No, I haven't, but I do know that jealousy and bickering was rife between the services, and that was one of the things that just enraged Lyndon. Wasn't it just right after the war was over when we finally--with Forrestal--merged the services into the Defense Department? I guess all of this pot was boiling and finally that was the result.

G: I understand that when he came back he was placed on inactive service, inactive status.

J: Yes.

G: So then was he going to Alaska as Congressman Johnson rather than Lieutenant Commander Johnson?

J: I really don't remember. We ought to look at those pictures and see if he is in a uniform. I think maybe he was back in a uniform for that. Why don't you look?

(Interruption)

Toward the end of the month there occurred one of those occasions that Lyndon was at his best in and that he loved. He went to San Marcos to deliver the commencement address. It was to be the last time that Dr. [Cecil] Evans would preside as president, ending his thirty-one [-year] career, thirty-one years there as president of that institution. And he gave it all he had, Lyndon did. He was very sentimental and talked about the old gentleman. He said, "I had not been in Dr. Evans' vicinity long before I began to learn that the supreme essential in life is service, making the world a better place to live in, bringing help, enlightenment and advances to all our people, helping to make the democratic way of living the universal way."

He talked about how Dr. Evans would take those young farm boys, those rural Texans of meager background and turn them into the kind of people that were going to be

able to go out and match wits with the toughest that the Fascists and the Nazi world had to give and were going to be able to defeat it. He talked from his own experience when he would say that sometimes Dr. Evans would scrape up a loan of ten or fifteen dollars for tuition to help them through school. There was a time--I'm sure I must have told you this earlier--Lyndon lived for at least one year in a sort of a little attic room above Dr. Evans' garage. He said the roof was leaky, and he lived there with Boody Johnson. They just sort of scrounged themselves some army cot sort of bedding and put up a few nails and hung their clothes on it and he didn't charge them anything. I think he knew they were there the whole time, but at the very last of the year the treasurer of the school somehow discovered that they were up there and insisted that they ought to pay something for it. I think they didn't have to after all because of Dr. Evans' intervention. And of course, he was the one who had given Lyndon the job of sweeping the floors, janitorial work, and digging out campus rocks and working on the grounds, the very first job that had enabled him to start going to school.

So it was an occasion that Lyndon was relishing right down to his bones. And also it was an absolute prime setting to talk, at length, about the war, about all the things that we weren't doing that we must do, and to deliver a blast at both the smug people who said the danger was not all that intense and at those who were taking it easy and making money off the war, and at those that were just letting red tape get in the way of getting something done.

(Interruption)

I'm sure there wasn't anybody who left those speeches complacent. I think

everybody was fired up, determined to do more himself and get his neighbor to do more. That's what Lyndon felt the home front had *got* to do. He was always a strong defense man, but seeing how weak we were, face to face with the danger, shook him, and it was an experience he would never forget.

Late in August, there was the runoff, and O'Daniel did defeat Allred. That was, to us, to me at least, a sort of a continuation of our own effort and so it was poignant and sad. Lyndon felt bad for the country, because he thought of O'Daniel as an isolationist. (Interruption)

At times in his life some of Lyndon's hardest work, and most useful work, and intense work, has been done in a setting of relaxation and sort of a vacation place. The first such that entered our lives was out at Buchanan Dam. There was a great big administration building there that had been built partly by the NYA. It stood on a hill and overlooked this lake which Lyndon regarded as a very loved achievement. We spent many weekends there, sometimes longer, with close friends and staff and people that we were working on. There were a couple of big dormitory rooms where they had a whole lot of army cots. If there were quite a few people, the men would take one and the women another, sort of dormitory fashion. It was a great big long table. The staff and I did the work of cooking. I don't remember that there was any working staff at all out there. In those days it was nevertheless a sort of vacation setting for us. We would go boat riding; we would go swimming when the work was done. We'd sit around on the front porch and listen to good tales, with the men sitting with their feet propped up on the bannister. I have lot of long, long memories of Lake Buchanan in that old building.

One of the most indicative of our way of life there--I'm sure I've told you this before and I can't really remember when it happened, but it happened all of our lives so I might as well just tell it one place as another--was the three fried eggs. I was fixing breakfast. Everybody sat down at the same long table, and I was bringing in the served plates in front of them. I asked Lyndon what he wanted, and he wanted a fried egg, sunny side up. I got it fixed and started in the dining room door, and he got called to the telephone. So I sighed and put it down, and about five minutes later I knew it was not in very good shape to eat. So he came and sat down again and I went back and cooked another egg. Just as he sat down and dipped his fork into it, the same thing happened. I really do not know why he almost never said, "Tell them to call back in thirty minutes." The telephone had an irresistible pull for him. Finally, I got the third egg in there, and he got called again. We all just burst out into laughter, and he said, "Well, this is the way our life is. Either you want to eat cold egg or you're going to have to just tell that phone to stay quiet for a while."

(Interruption)

G: This portion that follows is recorded on February the second [1980].

If 1942 was a watershed year because I learned to work by my months in Lyndon's office and acquired a new sense of self-worth and a new facet to life, it was indeed a watershed year for several other important reasons. We bought a home. I do not know whether it was September or October. My memory is that it was rather early, or sometime, in September, on a Sunday. I haunted the real estate portion of the newspaper and Sunday afternoon was the time to ride around and look at the possibilities.

Lyndon and John Connally and I were riding around to see one that had been advertised right off of Connecticut Avenue in Ellicott Hills, as it was called, at 4921 Thirtieth Place, N.W. We got out there, and it was a red brick colonial, center hall residence, with thousands of them in every city all across the United States, absolutely nothing distinctive about it. I had always held out for charm and something unusual. Yet this place--it was in delightful surroundings. It might as well have been on a dead-end street because at the far end of the street there was a great big embassy with huge grounds, the Peruvian Embassy. It was quiet, very little traffic. Right behind it there were woods. It had a nice long living room, or so to my eyes it seemed then, with a fireplace, a great essential, and it opened onto a big screened porch, which is what I think sold Lyndon on it. The screened porch looked down into a small but pleasant backyard with a huge tree and flower beds. The ad described it as ample closet facilities. Alas for that, one changes with the years. But at any rate, it looked good to me in September of 1942. There was a rather small dining room and an adequate kitchen, and upstairs four bedrooms and two baths, none of which were large. On the third floor there was a large unfinished room, but it was insulated, and it would be suitable for a playroom or perhaps--well, I envisioned all sorts of things we could do with it. And there was a double-car garage downstairs.

I wanted to buy it immediately, partly as the result of having waited so long, and partly because I thought by the time I finished doing what I wanted to with it, it would acquire charm, and it had so many basics. It was nineteen thousand, five-hundred dollars, and they didn't want to give occupancy until, as I recall, November. I walked out of the

house thinking that we had really agreed to buy it. As we drove down the street I said, "Lyndon, when are you going to give him a check?" And Lyndon said, "Well, we're not going to buy it!" And I burst onto tears, which were very angry tears, something I practically never did. And I said, "All I've got to look forward to is one more damn campaign!" And I really let him know what I thought of the fourteen or so moves we had made in the--let me see, how many years of marriage would that be by that time? About eight, close to eight. So, he looked shocked. John looked at him and kind of grinned and said, "I think you better go back and buy that house." (Laughter)

I was upset by my own outburst and went on back to Woodley Park Towers, and I got out and Lyndon and John went on away. I wasn't quite sure what for. What Lyndon did was to go back to the place and tell them, "Well, we'd been thinking it over, but we really did need a place before the first of November, and it would be pretty inconvenient for us to wait that long, and nineteen thousand, five hundred was a lot of money." The gist of it was that the people offered to let him have it by October 1, I think it was, for nineteen thousand. So, before the day was over, he gave them a thousand dollar down payment. We agreed to buy the house. Aunt Effie and I worked out a wonderful plan by which she would give me, as she knew she would at some time in the future in her will, twelve thousand dollars, which would reduce the amount we owed to about a six thousand dollar note I think, which we could carry, and which we did complete the next day.

So I was replete with satisfaction and looking forward very much to the moving in. At about the same time, several things coalesced and not in the order in which they

should have. Just before we bought the house, John Connally had been looking in the paper ads and had seen under "furniture for sale" what sounded like a delightful opportunity. Two elderly sisters were breaking up housekeeping after having lived in the same house for over fifty years, and everything was for sale. He went out, looked at the things, bought an item or two, and came back to us with the news that there really were some good things out there, and they were inexpensive, and we ought to go and look at it.

Well, I went. We were, at this time, living in the Woodley Park Towers, and the place was very adequately furnished and we had not, at this point, found that house on 4921 Thirtieth Place. We knew we wanted to be homeowners, at least I knew, which would require more furniture. But it was in the future. It was a dream only. I got out there and she had some rather delightful antiques. I looked longingly at some of them, and finally bought, I think, one pretty divided dish, which looks like hand-painted china, which I still use for serving hors d'ouvres, use and love, and a few more things, probably not more than--I think the dish was four dollars--probably twenty dollars worth of small items. I went home sort of beaming to myself.

Then I decided the next day I believe I would go back and look again and maybe get one or two more small items. I went out there, and these two ladies--we have ever since referred to all of that furniture as "the old ladies' furniture." Their name I have forgotten. I went out there, and one of them greeted me brightly and said, "Your husband has already been out here, and he's bought the living room set, and the dining room set, and the bedroom set." I sort of staggered backwards, and I said, "You mean John Connally, the other gentleman who told us about you all?" And the lady said, "No, isn't

your husband's name Lyndon Johnson?" And I said, "Yes." And it turned out that he had indeed, with us having no place in the world to put three extra sets of furniture, been out there, decided they were a bargain and bought them.

The bedroom set was a tall brass bed, very good looking as today's styles would have it, at that time not sought after by anybody. Then in the living room she had a short, tufted loveseat with claw feet of a high Victorian vintage and two matching slipper chairs I would call them. They're still in my life, the loveseat in a different bright plaid in my granddaughter's bedroom in McLean, Virginia, Lucinda's bedroom. One of the chairs [is] in the Sauer House. All have seen several recoverings. One chair somewhere through the years fell apart to the point that we disposed of it, and we shouldn't have. It is true we had no place in the world to put the furniture, and the old ladies wanted to move out right away to a smaller place. So, Lyndon talked to the owner of the Woodley Park Towers and he gave us temporary storage in the basement as I recall, and we hauled the furniture there. I was just rocked by his audacity, but I think it was not more than a week later that we found the house, so that problem all coalesced very well together.

G: Well now, what was your reaction to his having bought a whole house full of furniture?

J: Mad, because I hadn't had the say-so in doing it. I, a cautious and conservative person, [was] horrified by what were you going to do with three sets of furniture when you don't have any place to put them? As a matter of fact, he knew I liked it because I had just been chattering about it the night before and describing to him everything, and the price was incredibly cheap, like the sofa and the two chairs were seventy-five dollars, and I think that included a china cabinet, too, I don't know what kind.

G: That brass bed is not the one in the purple room, is it?

J: It is the one in the purple room. It has been with me in many houses.

So those two things made it a watershed year for me. The ad described the house as promising that it would provide many hours of pleasure and contentment, and that's just what it did.

G: Well now, had you done much serious looking before you found this house?

J: Oh, yes, I had. I had found several that I would have been willing, would have loved to have bought. I think I had written Lyndon a long letter about one of them. Yes, it had been my occupation for Sunday afternoons for months and months.

G: Had you taken him to look at any particular houses before?

J: No, I hadn't, because, you see, the year 1942 had been too full of turmoil and changes, and he was out of the country for a very great part of it. Well, he may have looked at one or two more, but this was quite possibly the only house he got a chance to see.

G: Had you settled on this particular area?

J: Not at all, but it did recommend itself to us very much, because within a few blocks you could get into Rock Creek Park, which was an easy and pleasant drive down to downtown Washington, put you almost onto Constitution Avenue where you could get to the Capitol within about twenty minutes.

G: Let me ask you one more thing about the house. Was the President as happy about having purchased the house as you were?

J: Quite soon he became so, and you would have thought it had been his idea all along, and he began to recommend it to all other young congressmen, whereas his opposition to

buying a house had been partly based on the fact that he felt the people of his district would consider him as having sort of deserted them, become a Washingtonite, planted his feet in Washington, whereas it was his philosophy and desire to leave home the very day Congress adjourned and to start heading on down to his district to tell them what he had been doing and why. He had seen, even at that youthful age, a good many people succumb to the Washington lure and not go home so often, and then they were finally beaten to retire to living in Washington or to take up some other occupation, perhaps being a lawyer or a lobbyist. He had a scorn for--home was really always Texas. We were just sojourning in Washington because of a job we had and loved.

G: Did he get to know his neighbors right away in Washington?

J: I certainly did, and it was vastly beneficial. Our next door neighbor on one side was a Dr. O. E. Reed and his lovely, gentle wife. He worked in the Department of Agriculture in an important capacity, and he knew so much about gardening and trees and grass and vegetables and flowers, and he helped me. Every day I would see Dr. Reed and ask him something. They were marvelous neighbors. Their children were grown and gone, but as was the way in those days, the war brought some of their children back home. A husband would go away to the war and the wife would come home, bringing one or two small children. So by the time our own came along, there were often little ones right next door.

Another neighbor, whom we knew only at a distance, because I think that was his way with the whole world, to remain at a distance, and it was good since he was who he was, and that was J. Edgar Hoover. But he and Lyndon always had *great* respect for each other. I remember when a part of my beat was to take constituents to the FBI, because

we *all* thought the government was sure getting its money's worth from that organization. The FBI had a very well-arranged tour for the general public, free, and I think they would also add a few little extra, more in-depth things for a congressman or his wife. My main beat was the Senate restaurant, sitting in the galleries, and taking them out to Mount Vernon and to Robert E. Lee's home in Arlington Cemetery, but high on the list was the FBI.

G: Did being a neighbor of the Peruvian Embassy result in any, say, extraordinary associations or any more frequent contact with that embassy than you would have been . . . ?

J: None at all. They were just as removed as if they'd been in another world. It just meant there was a beautiful wooded area with dogwood and azaleas. It reduced the traffic except on the days when they would have parties, which were not all that frequent. It was like a dead-end street, with a beautiful landscaped woods for your eyes to enjoy as you went by, but you didn't go in the gate. Later on, when Lyndon became a senator and an important senator, we did go to parties there a number of times.

I did get to know my neighbors because, as the years went on, I found myself collecting for the Red Cross in three or four blocks surrounding me and got to know everybody by name and by the amounts they gave. It was a very interesting experience. Some people were so gracious and so generous, and some were not. It frequently followed that they had had an experience with the Red Cross that it had helped some of their family and then their eyes would light up and they would invite me in and talk about it and give me whatever they could afford. I think I did that about five or six years in a

row, all the war years.

G: Were there any neighbors that you yourself were particularly close to, say another lady there in the neighborhood or a housewife that became a close friend?

J: No, not really. For a while there was a family who lived close by that we would occasionally see something of socially, but our friends were likely to be those in the line of work, that is, in the Texas delegation or the whole Congress or the Senate, or the press, or visiting Texans from home.

(Interruption)

One of the interesting facets of working in Lyndon's office was the letters you would get from people who were anxious to do something for the war effort, something of a scientific nature. There would be some shortage that we faced and they knew how to solve it, they thought. It was very hard to tell a crackpot from a person with real good vision, and I was not always sure. I got a lot of letters about a plant in West Texas, guayule I think it was, and certainly much more of it over in Mexico, that could be made into synthetic rubber. You will recall that with the Japs taking over the whole Indonesia area, it looked like we were going to be just mighty short on rubber or just out of rubber, and how do you run a war and all those vehicles that have to roll without rubber? That was really, in fact, one of the achievements of this country was the production of synthetic rubber within two or three years I expect after war was declared. I know it was a short time. It's always given me hope that maybe we can somehow produce something that will solve our present dilemma and shortage of gas and oil. But a whole lot of them were funny and visionary and crackpots and some of them, who knows? They might

hold a key to the future.

Another very good thing that happened to us that fall of 1942 was hiring Zephyr Wright, who was a part of our lives for twenty-five years. I went to Texas in the last of August sometime and I don't know quite how long I stayed or whether I may have made another trip down there. But it was certainly early September or at least sometime early that fall, that while visiting Daddy at Karnack, I did drive in to Marshall and go to see Dr. [Matthew] Dugan at Wiley College. There were two colleges for blacks in Marshall, quite a distinction. Another interesting distinction was that Dr. Dugan was for many years the only man in Marshall who had a Ph.D. (laughter), which solved the dilemma for some of my fellow citizens because they could call him "Dr. Dugan," whereas, since he was black, they would have had a little difficulty in calling him "Mr. Dugan." He was a very sensible, practical, capable man. I liked him. He and Lyndon had worked together in the NYA, and so I already had an introduction to him. Then the fact that I was T. J. Taylor's daughter was another introduction.

So I went to see him to ask if he had any graduates that he might recommend for going to Washington to cook for me. He told me about two or three and I went to see them. As soon as anybody asked, "Do you have six o'clock dinner?" that was a sign-off for me, because we had dinner whenever Lyndon came home, and I don't remember that he *ever* got home by six o'clock, and I just must adjust my life to his whether I was the cook or I could hire somebody to put up with it. Then he recommended a woman named Zephyr Black, whom I went to see, and liked, although she was pretty hesitant about whether or not she wanted to venture to a faraway place of Washington. I called her

reference and her reference said she was a wonderful cook, and that she was sorry to see her go. But she had left her about a month ago, so I didn't have the feeling that I was taking anybody. I asked Zephyr what's the most people she'd ever cooked for in a party, and she said, "About a hundred." (Laughter) And knowing the family for whom she'd worked, I knew that they would have been giving some very handsome parties. So I hired Zephyr, and she returned to Washington with me. I am almost sure that we went together in the car. There were many such trips through the years. I would drive the car. Lyndon would fly after life became pretty compelling for him. Sometimes he would get one of his secretaries to go with me, preferably a young man, but young men were getting scarcer by the moment. I expect that was one of the many trips where I drove all the way.

In any case, we got ready to move into the house, and as I recall, moved in about November first. There was a room in the basement for Zephyr, and as I look back on it, it was not a tenth as nice as she deserved, but at that time both she and I thought it was an all right room, and I fixed it up with bright spreads and plenty of lamps and pictures. I was very realistic in telling Zephyr what sort of family we were and how my husband's job, I felt, was so important that I had to adjust my hours to his and therefore the staff's hours. And that didn't faze her a bit. She just felt like she was ready to do and dare.

G: What was the President's first reaction to Zephyr, do you know?

J: Very good, I think. He and Zephyr became very good friends. I remember one time she had some kind of a special party, a birthday or something, and he got some champagne and put it in the icebox and got it good and cold and then opened it up himself and poured

it into champagne glasses and walked down the steps and took it to the guests.

(Interruption)

Interestingly enough, there was a very nice young black man whom we also hired temporarily, because we didn't have adequate place for him to stay in the basement, but he was with us for a while as a sort of a houseman and butler and I ran into him in Chuck Robb's campaign in Culpeper, Virginia. That is where he had come from. He was one of the substantial citizens of the community. He came up to me and greeted me and we just talked about Zephyr and old times and it was a very pleasant meeting.

G: Was this John, was that his name?

J: John was his name, and I cannot at the moment remember his last name although immediately when he came up to me and introduced himself I remembered, because he looked remarkably unchanged from all those years back to 1942.

Tape 3 of 3

J: Lyndon's standing in the Texas delegation was rather evidenced by the fact that he was one of the four congressmen who talked on "Texas Forum of the Air." Sam Rayburn, of course, was the leader, and there was [Wright] Patman and Ewing Thomason and Lyndon Johnson describing the events in Congress, its record, what it was doing for the war effort, speaking for the Texas delegation and urging the people to go to the polls.

Sometime in early November we made still another trip to Alabama. This time Aunt Effie went with us, and John Connally met us there. I remember sitting in Uncle John Will Pattillo's house with John outlining to the heirs the various paths we might pursue, the alternatives, Aunt Effie's claim against the estate. He was wonderfully

persuasive.

The estate was finally all resolved with a fair degree of amicability and fairness to all concerned, we thought. I don't remember the exact date when it took place. There were so many people involved, because Uncle Claud had a brother, Harry, with two daughters; a sister, Effie, with no children, but it was generally known that I would be her heir, at least to a sizeable extent; a dead sister, Minnie, who left three children: Tommy, Tony, and me. And then Uncle Claud had two half sisters: Aunt Susie and Aunt Ida, both of whom had a number of daughters. Uncle Claud was very loving and generous toward them, and should have been, because they were mighty kind to him all the years of their lives, especially Elaine [Fischesser].

In any case, the fall of 1942 had still one more important event for us of a business nature, and this was--I don't know quite how we came across it, but we heard about a little radio station, KTBC, in Austin, that was going to be for sale. It had three absentee owners. One of them was Bob Anderson of Vernon, our old friend who goes back as far as the NYA days when he had been on Lyndon's advisory board. They paid little attention to the station. It was part-time, low-capitalized, only nine employees, in debt to everybody in town, went off the air at sunset, had everything against it.

(Interruption)

It was within our price range. All we had to do was to persuade the owners and to persuade the FCC that we would be competent holders of the license. So somewhere in there, and so dim it is now I don't know quite how, but I think probably Wesley West had lent the owners some money and held a sizeable note against it. And so he would be a

party to the decision. That's my vague memory of it.

In any case, it led to us getting acquainted with Wesley West, who had been an ardent critic of Lyndon in his elections, as I remember. A very conservative man, a conservative family. Somehow Lyndon met him, they became friends, and I believe it was that fall that he began going out to Wesley's place out in Blanco County. It may have been later. Anyhow, they have a hilarious tale about how they went out there, about four men, before Mrs. West, Neva, had finished furnishing the house. She did not have it stocked with blankets. It was fall' a cold norther came sweeping down. The house got cold as ice. They got up and took all the curtains down and wrapped themselves up in the curtains. (Laughter)

We were successful in managing the purchase of the station. The figure seventeen thousand comes to mind somehow, and *all* of that is a matter of long, long record, so I'm not going to search for it right now.

G: Was the station originally affiliated, or did it share time, with a University of Texas broadcasting outlet, do you know?

J: If it did, I don't recall it.

G: Do you want to talk a little about your at least exploring the possibility of buying a newspaper?

J: Well, we had thought of that, too. Lyndon loved--he was greatly attracted by the communications industry, and he would have liked most in the world to own a paper. We soon found that they cost more than we could ever hope to put together. We even considered buying the little *Jefferson Jimplicute*. It was close to home. We certainly

could have managed to buy it, but it's just as fortunate that we didn't.

G: Did you go to Jefferson and talk to the people at all?

J: I think Lyndon made some inquiries. I don't think he got very far down that trail though, because he had a natural feel for--he had lots of vision about what was going to grow and prosper and expand. Perhaps he could foresee that with all the charm that it did have, that Jefferson was not going to be a rapid growth place.

G: Did he consider starting a second newspaper in Austin?

J: No, not so far as I can recall. That, too, see, would have been a venture demanding huge capital.

So the year ended with us trying to nurse this through the FCC and getting along with an office staff that was rapidly dwindling. O. J. pretty soon was off to the war. I believe maybe we might have gotten Jim Blundell in there for a while. I think Jake Pickle, who had helped us briefly--he had been on Lyndon's patronage, that is I think he had served as a policeman, and came up to the office and worked after hours. But I think he, too, was soon gone.

Lyndon became a friend of Lieutenant Commander H. V. Bird in BuPers [Bureau of Naval Personnel], through Bill Deason I think, and he remained one of our strong navy friends throughout the war. His name was H. V., but it was inevitable that he soon got called Dick Bird.

There were rumors that Lyndon might be appointed secretary of the navy. I don't think Lyndon ever thought it was anything but sort of a nice newspaper story. Or that he might go to London on some sort of business related to the Naval Affairs Committee. I

think there might have been more to that, but it did not develop.

G: Do you have any idea why the trip didn't develop?

J: I don't know, I just don't know.

Our district got a magnesium plant in Austin. Everybody in the district was trying to get in Officers' Candidate School or was gearing up to get off to the war in one way or another. Lyndon talked over the radio to the people of Australia, promising both our soldiers out there and the citizens of Australia that this country was going to put together the kind of planes and the kind of materiel and send to them, that we could all, working together, win the war.

Late in the year, Lyndon went out to Portland, Oregon, for the scrapping of the battleship *Oregon*. The collection of scrap became a big thing early in the war, and everybody was saving everything, even scrap aluminum, and being very careful of rubber and gasoline. We still have a gavel from the wood of the battleship *Oregon*; at least somewhere around the house it sits on a shelf.

Ep Hoyt, Palmer Hoyt, was I think editor-publisher of the *Portland-Oregonian* at that time. He and Lyndon became friends then, or perhaps they already were. Then, I think, he came to the Office of War Information in Washington.

The movies came of Lyndon's time in Australia, showing a plane landing on its belly, showing him with various officers getting in and out of planes, a nice one of him walking in a park with a pretty girl, one of the map of all the route that he flew. They were about thirty minutes of high excitement for us as he would give a recitation of all the events. We showed them at our house on 4921 Thirtieth Place, N.W., to all our

friends, the staff and visitors from Texas, folks from the Texas delegation, and the press. We early got into a habit in that house of having lots of company, very casual company, but it soon was a center of good friends getting together to plan, work, and sometimes just to relax and have fun. We discovered that Zephyr was a top-notch cook and we would invite the Speaker out for country sort of suppers, with cornbread. I can't remember whether he was a black-eyed peas and greens man, but all the things that he had had--fried chicken, that he had and loved--the things that reminded him of home.

G: Did you stop cooking regularly after Zephyr came to work?

J: Oh, you bet I did! I learned to cook when we married, and I cooked when I had to, and I just did everything that I thought I had to. But if I could get somebody to do it for me, I was not going to keep on cooking. Obviously, I had found such a person in Zephyr, and she remained a very valued and wonderful part of our lives for over twenty-five years.

[End of Tape 3 of 3 and Interview XVI]