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

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This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

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

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Claudia Taylor Johnson 6/20/02
Claudia Taylor Johnson — Date
by Patti Ponder

Sharon 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 XXII covering 1948

DATE: August 23, 1981

INTERVIEWEE: LADY BIRD JOHNSON

INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE

PLACE: LBJ Ranch, Stonewall, Texas

Tape 1 of 3

J: And so, as Lyndon recuperated in Mayo's, day by day more strong, but also more restive and wanting to get back on the job, things were not idle at home. There was a big program put on, I think it was June 2. It was a women's rally. Marietta Brooks was the state chairman of the women's division, and Claude Wild, of course, was the state chairman. Bess Beeman was the Tenth Congressional District chairman of the women's division. So they had a big meeting. I believe it took place in the Austin Hotel. Lyndon talked to them, by telephone, from Mayo's. Of course Marietta presided and Mrs. Sam Johnson was there as an honor guest, and also Mrs. Alma Lee Holman, who was the Democratic committeewoman.

John Connally gave a talk on the man, Lyndon Johnson, and then naturally they had some singing. There always is. This time it was old familiar Jesse James of KTBC fame. He sang a song that Bess Beeman had written, "When I'm Anywhere But Texas," and naturally, "The Eyes of Texas." In those days everything began and ended with an invocation and a blessing. Then there was just a plan of organization presented to the

women, the gist of which was that the district leaders--like Bess Beeman was the Tenth Congressional District leader--tried to get a county leader in every county, who in turn, tried to get a leader in every town, and then down to the precinct. So all the counties that were represented at that meeting got up to make their responses, who all they had been able to enlist and to give their testimonials.

The big news that happened while we were at Mayo's was about the helicopter. A bunch of Lyndon's friends, I would say led by Carl Phinney and General Bob Smith of Dallas, had gotten a hundred former servicemen to put in some money to get a helicopter to put at Lyndon's disposal for a certain length of time, I think it was about a month. They had figured that it wouldn't cost any more than a statewide network broadcast, and it would enable him to get to all of the little towns in Texas, or as many as possible, and save hours and hours of driving time. And besides that, it would attract attention. *Time* called it, I think, "the biggest gimmick in Texas politics since the hillbilly band and the free barbecue."

G: Do you recall how you first learned of the idea and what your reaction was?

J: I don't remember really, but I clearly remember standing in the backyard at Dillman and seeing it go right over and Lyndon lean out and wave. It turned out to be a highly personal machine, painted red, white, and blue and had "Lyndon Johnson for U.S. Senate" in as big as possible letters.

G: Had he flown in a helicopter before, do you recall?

J: I feel sure he had, somewhere in his war experiences.

G: He seems to have been very enthusiastic about the idea from the first. I'm wondering if

this was the case.

J: Absolutely delighted! I *really* don't know whose idea it was. I wouldn't be surprised if Woody [Warren Woodward] had something to do with it, or at least was one of those who got it going.

G: While we're on the helicopter, I have just a couple of questions. Did you ever fly in the helicopter during the campaign?

J: I do not believe I ever did. I don't think I was ever asked to. You see, the little thing wouldn't hold, but--there was one pilot and normally two passengers, at most three passengers. Lyndon, being a pretty big man, if you had one other person in there it was comfortable. If two scrouched in, believe me, it was tight going.

It was Woody's job, at least for part of the campaign, to go along on the ground in a car with the suitcase, and all sorts of things, and arrange where the helicopter was going to land in each town and where it could obtain the proper kind of gas. The usual thing was to land on the courthouse square if you could persuade the city fathers and the merchants around the square to rope off enough space. Here is where the advance man came in. Oh, he had to be a persuasive and busy fellow. He had to get the permission of everybody to do that. Or you could land at the fairgrounds, or at a football field, or perhaps at a park. There were lots of adventures connected with the helicopter. I remember in one case they were in East Texas, I believe at a place called New London, when he was going to land on a school grounds, and suddenly a swift hard gust of wind came up, as it was about to land, and swept it, almost into the school building. They barely avoided a life-threatening wreck just by luck, and the Lord, and a good pilot.

I think in the course of the campaign there were two helicopters and two pilots. The one that we became really quite close to, and have remained so ever since, was Joe Mashman, who got quite caught up in it himself. There were times when Lyndon would be so utterly weary and his voice would be so exhausted and croaky that he would say, "Tell them about me, Joe."

Another time, an adventure in the helicopter was when he was scheduled to land on the roof of a filling station of all things, which seemed a highly perilous thing to do. But it was done. It's remained a sort of a piece of campaign lore ever since.

G: I gather they had to be very careful of electrical wires and things like that.

J: Absolutely. I remember there was one time he was supposed to land in the middle of a fairgrounds, which was exceedingly well lighted with wires that ran around all four sides and huge, high posterns with lights on them. So you really had to come down right in the exact middle. It allowed for no wind or no human error.

G: Did being jostled about all day in that helicopter affect the candidate's health? Did it make him airsick at all?

J: No, Lyndon never had that problem.

G: What about the helicopter as an attention getter?

J: That was one of its main missions, naturally. It was to get the crowd. Well, one main mission was, as I said, to get him from town to town, from all those little towns that you couldn't possibly cover, this vast state that extends for a thousand miles from Texarkana to El Paso--or is it more?--and then from the Panhandle down to Brownsville, say, just as big. To cover ground and to attract a crowd were its missions. Also, interestingly

enough--and this is a sideline--it drew a lot of children, and therefore, a lot of women, because the mamas went out to take the children. Lyndon always was particularly interested in getting the support of women, a believer in their ability, as helpers, as voters. He made an especial appeal to them. This was perhaps an unexpected bonus from the helicopter.

G: It was not part of the original intent at the time?

J: Not that I know of, but it was a natural for children.

G: One has the impression that it was also an enduring tactic, because so many people seemed to remember the helicopter over the years and associate it with him.

J: Yes, it became a kind of a trademark. He called it the Johnson City Windmill.

G: There have been stories told about him pitching his hat to the crowd from the helicopter when it was still in the air. Have you ever heard about that?

J: Yes, oh, yes, I have indeed. Somebody would retrieve it and give it back to him almost always. It could be that he lost some in the course of it, but I think maybe that was also a part of the intention. These campaigns almost always seemed to be in the hottest part of the hot Texas summer. He wore seersucker suits, for the most part, shirts as sheer as he could get, and sweated down three or four a day, as I have said. The hat--and people always did wear hats in those days--soon became very sweat-stained and dirty. To shake hands with three hundred people and then go on and shake hands with five hundred more--and those days were most terribly a crescendo of work and meeting people--resulted in a lot of beat-up old hats, a lot of shoe leather used up. To pack and repack and get his laundry to him was always one of my jobs, which, to some extent, I was able to

turn over to, or get assistance from, the men who traveled with him.

(Interruption)

But it wasn't the campaigning by helicopter that Lyndon first started doing when he got back home from Mayo's about the 5th or 6th [of June]. He first went to the big cities, made a radio speech in Houston. What he talked about was peace, preparedness and progress. *Always* he thought peace had to be kept by strength, by preparedness. He spoke of the 70-group air force, which he had pretty much rammed through. He spoke of standing up against even Truman to refuse to sell the synthetic plants that we had built under the hammer of necessity during the war at junk prices to--well, for instance, the rubber ones to the rubber industry. It's interesting to see his repeated references on water conservation. That's always on the mind of Texans; it's no new thing. But it's become so much more acute in the decades since then. But he was using expressions like, "It's like milking a cow without a bucket," "It rains and it all runs off," "We ought to be saving it all by building little dams and big dams, and by all the conservation measures that we are strong enough, smart enough, to figure up."

G: He really seems to have anticipated the terrible water shortage in the fifties.

J: Yes. He was a person, all the years I knew him, of considerable ability to look into the future, mostly with hope, sometimes with dread. He talked a lot about the possibilities of good from atomic power, and about the necessity to control it, and harness it to good purposes. He talked a lot about communism, too, because he always felt it was hostile to our form of government, and goodness knows it had said so often enough.

G: He seems to have favored aid to some of the east European countries, Marshall Plan aid

to Poland and the countries already under the influence of the Soviet Union. I just wonder if this caused him problems later on, or if he viewed this as an opportunity to woo these countries away from the Soviet Union.

J: I don't know; I couldn't say. I rather think that the latter could be true. He believed in the Marshall Plan. He thought we had the strength to help Europe revive and that all ships rise on a rising tide.

G: Another substantive element of this campaign that runs through a lot of the reports is the fact that big oil is against him.

J: Yes. First and last it was, although he had a few good friends in the oil industry. Sid Richardson was, for the most part, his friend. George Brown was, and although George was principally a builder, he had some interests in oil, I think. Wesley West became his good and staunch friend. But they were mavericks in a field that opposed Lyndon by and large.

Lyndon had voted for the Taft-Hartley Act. That put him in opposition to labor. But he was always careful to differentiate between labor bosses and the laboring man. He didn't want to drive a wedge between himself and the laboring man if he could possibly help it. He was very strong for the teachers and with the teachers, probably because he had been one, probably because of his kind of innocent and tremendous faith in education. He used the expression that we pay our teachers--brewery workers make more than our teachers, and yet they're shaping our children, our citizens of the future.

G: Was there within the campaign organization some disagreement over Taft-Hartley and how that should be used in the campaign? Did some individuals like, say, John Connally

favor using the Taft-Hartley issue while others preferred to play it down?

J: I can't say. I think that it would be absolutely natural for there to be, because it was a highly firebrand issue and those that were against it were so angrily against it. And yet I think the majority of Texans were for it. Lyndon was always--to my thinking--a moderate, middle-of-the-road person trying to bring into consensus. He didn't go out of his way to make enemies ever, and he was always ready to accept enemies back into the fold, almost always.

G: You talked about these issues, and I'm just wondering if he sought your advice or input during the campaign on any of these national issues. Do you recall making suggestions or suggesting that he play down one thing and play up something else or emphasize this or a new approach to that?

J: Well, no. I think any idea that I did that is highly overblown. He knew by osmosis pretty much what I thought about anything, and I can't say that I was ever deeply knowledgeable--facts one, two, three, four--on these things. But I did have visceral reactions to most of them, and those he would know.

So he went to the big cities. He went to San Antonio. There he did promise to make Texas the air capital of the world, and, to a sizeable extent, it's in place for that. And he went to Corpus Christi, which of course was pretty strong, friendly territory to him because of his old association as having been secretary to Mr. [Richard] Kleberg and having met just about everybody in the Fourteenth Congressional District, and because of the U.S. Naval Training Station--I think that was approximately the name of it--which he had helped get placed and kept there. In fact, I think he was in Houston again a couple of

times, and he went to the Beaumont-Port Arthur area, and there it was very well to speak of those synthetic rubber plants because I think whatever we had in Texas of that [nature] was stationed there, were they not?

G: Yes. Was there a certain strategy in the campaign dealing with the George Peddy candidacy? Peddy was a Houston lawyer and presumably had a large urban base.

J: Yes. I think always it was that Lyndon figured that he was not the chief contender, that Coke Stevenson was the target and that he and Peddy would appeal to many more of the same people, and that he never wanted to make those people angry or Peddy angry, and that perhaps he could inherit Peddy's supporters, if the primary turned out to produce a runoff between him and Stevenson.

So, the campaign was running out of that old building that I think I have described to you, in Austin. The women's division was an exceedingly active one, with Marietta Brooks as the head of it. They always worked under the men's division, and that always rankled. Marietta was busily getting a woman in each county. Mrs. Ed Cape, of course, came forward in Hays County as [the] absolutely ideal one, and Juanita Roberts undertook to be the woman leader in Jefferson County. When the war was over, she and Ray had divorced and she was back in--I forget whether it was Port Arthur or Beaumont.

G: Port Arthur.

J: Port Arthur I think, running a tea house. Their job was to get the poll tax list from the county or district man always, and get a bunch of ladies over at a little social, and pass the list out and everybody would check, say, "I know this family," "I know that family," "I know that family," and then they would put their names by them, and they'd distribute

post cards and then they'd write them a little personal post card at the meeting, or else they'd promise to take X number of post cards home and do it there. Then everybody that was left over on the poll tax list, if they didn't know them personally, they'd just divide the rest up. The idea was to get an intensive, personal contact campaign, just an endless chain of personal greetings, and, where you couldn't do that, just to get a message in the hands of every voter, signed by somebody. Now, how well that worked depended of course upon the initiative and follow-through and devotion and organization ability of all of these women. Some of them were top-notch and worked like beavers, and some of them of course turned out to be more shy than we had thought or less diligent or got sick or went on a vacation. So it's hit and miss. But it's absolutely wonderful the energy that was poured into this on a volunteer basis, for nothing but love and affection and belief in the candidate. That is one of the places where I could be useful. I think the wife of every candidate, one of her main jobs is to thank, to thank the volunteer workers in the campaign office itself and to thank the women out all over the state. That was something, to the extent I could, I tried to do.

G: Looking back just in retrospect, was there considerably more activity from the women in 1948 than there had been in the 1941 campaign?

J: I think so. I think there was increasing women's activity from the time--very little when we first entered in 1937, to my observation or my own personal participation, and then beginning, I don't know when, probably in 1941, certainly by 1946, and increasing greatly ever since.

G: Perhaps the war had a good deal to do with that.

J: It did. Women got out of their homes by necessity, economic necessity, patriotic necessity, and did things, paid jobs and volunteer jobs.

Meanwhile, things were still going along in our Washington home. We had rented it, as we did, about, oh, fully nine years out of the eighteen that we owned that dear old place on 4921 Thirtieth Place, Northwest. The water heater went out and I had to correspond with Walter [Jenkins] to tell him to get a new water heater quick as possible, and tell him to [have] the renters pay for it and subtract that amount from the rent check. I don't remember how much I got each year. The figure three hundred dollars sticks in my mind for some years, and that means completely furnished, including linens and dishes and all that sort of thing. Well, I think I've described many times the size of the house.

G: Well now, Walter Jenkins did stay in Washington and run the office. He didn't participate in the campaign at all?

J: He participated. I don't remember at which point he came down to Texas, but I think--and of course the work of the office, you had to serve the people. My recollection is that he mostly was in charge of that, whether he at times left it, turned it over to other people. And our friends up there, they were active, too. We were always getting speeches or suggestions from Jim Rowe. There'd be word that Abe Fortas and Tom Corcoran and Ed Weisl are going to try to get us some contributions, and a lot of absolutely delightful, sarcastic, substantive letters from Jim Rowe especially.

G: LBJ seems to have had more support from labor nationally that year and more friends in the national organization than he did with the Texas labor organization. Was this the

case?

J: I really just cannot talk to that. I know that in spite of that vote on Taft-Hartley, he was always trying to address himself to doing helpful things for the actual laboring man. There's lots of things that cut across the lines: raising teachers' salaries, pensions for old folks--he had introduced a bill for that.

Very little is clear-cut in politics, and something that is endemic with a campaign is confusion, and jealousy, and backbiting and everybody wanting to get the ear of the candidate. That is another place where I could be mildly useful. If they couldn't get to Lyndon, I was a good deal more accessible and they could say, "Tell Lyndon so-and-so," and I would make little notes in shorthand on the back of envelopes in my purse or I usually had a shorthand book around with me. So I was a kind of a conveyor for those late nights when I finally got to see him over those endless cups of coffee that I would bring to him in the morning. Sunday was a kind of escape valve. Usually he managed to get home or someplace to rest on Sunday and plan strategy for the next week, if you can call that resting.

G: Normally he didn't campaign on Sunday?

J: I don't remember him campaigning on Sunday. It would be meeting with the chief supporters and evaluating what had been done and planning what was to be done next. (Interruption)

It was the middle of June when he began really using the helicopter. Here I really want to talk a bit about the advance man, that adventurous and sometimes luckless individual. I've already talked about that he had to decide where the helicopter was to

land, and how it was to get more gas. But he also had to arrange for a crowd in each one of those five, six, eight cities in which Lyndon was going to land. He dealt with our leader in that local city, who might or might not be highly interested and capable. So you would get out flyers or leaflets, and you would hire little boys to deliver one to every house, or maybe the women's committee there might do it for you. Or the women's committee especially was called on to make telephone calls to everybody. Then you would have a sound truck with Lyndon's name and some campaign material written on it, and it would tour around all day long telling about the candidate was going to land at two-thirty on the courthouse square, whatever the case may be, and come and listen to him, see the helicopter. You had to be careful that it was all right with the city fathers to use a sound truck, because some cities had ordinances against them. I remember there was some East Texas town where a strong friend of ours got such an ordinance repealed for one day so he could use the sound truck.

G: What town was that, do you recall?

J: I think maybe it was Lufkin, and maybe it was E. L. Kurth, but I better check that.

Then you better make sure that you covered the local radio station and got them to do two sorts of things: cover it as a news story, because indeed it was a news story, and also, if necessary, you might have to pay for some short spots saying that the candidate was going to land where and when, and come listen. Then you had to go to see the newspaperman--it was usually a local weekly--and you very much hoped that it could get out in the next one and not be deferred until six days later. Here you got varying support from the local newspaperman. He might be a strong Coke friend or sometimes a Peddy

friend. But so many of them had been softened up by Sam Fore in years past, and then Lyndon did have, generally, good relations with the press most of the time, although he sometimes complained.

G: There was a memo I think in your diary to the effect that you urged him not to be peevish about the newspaper stories and things like that.

J: Or petty or even talk about them. It wasn't a constructive thing that would make your life better in the future.

Then sometimes arrangements would be made to address a local service club, just long enough to have a bite of lunch and meet that segment of the populace. You had to make the decision--the advance man did--on whether it was best to speak where you actually got out of the helicopter, or to jump in a car and go quickly to a place where you could draw a better crowd. Because that was the name of the game, to draw a crowd, to spend as short a time as possible, cover as many people as you could, shake a lot of hands, get in the helicopter, and hurry on to the next place. Sometimes they would crank in an hour or so rest in the afternoon; if he had a good friend in that town, he might do that. Of course, there was always a decision as to what town to spend the night in. Usually they would try to make that the largest town in the area and have a rally there, and really work toward a big crowd.

It began with, I think, maybe the first day just four or five [stops], went to Terrell and Canton and Lindale and ended the day in Marshall. Where I was known and was a part of it, I would sure try to be there. I think I was there every time he ever was in Marshall. At first he would keep on announcing that he was going to cover every section

of the state in this helicopter till that got pretty firmly established and repeated everywhere. The next day he went through a lot of my territory and I remember those scenes: Jefferson and Gilmer and Pittsburg and Daingerfield and Linden and Atlanta and wound up the night in Texarkana, where he had a really good rally.

So it would kind of jell into a pattern of six to nine stops a day, which was I think the biggest *tour de force* that we ever went into, certainly up until that time. The next one in 1956 [1954] was a breeze compared to it. I suppose 1960 and 1964 could be considered harder.

I mentioned that the helicopter had room for two people in it. That other fellow had to be a combination speech writer, bag carrier, coordinator; he just had to be everything. Mary Rather wrote that he had already worn out two grown men who took turns traveling with him. The first one lasted a week and the second one dropped out on the fourth day. "We've just rushed a third man to take over to Texarkana to take over there tonight." She said she would take on the last eight days of the campaign. I don't think that worked out. (Laughter)

He would have all sorts of things that he would demand from his advance man. For instance, if it was a real set-up rally covered by radio, at night, he'd want to make sure that the speaking stand was of a suitable height for him, and he practically had to do everything from squat to stand on tiptoe. Sometimes there would be a twenty-five watt light bulb way up on the top of the building, and then sometimes there would be real good lights right down over his speech. I think the one thing that annoyed him the most was to place him in such a position that he was far removed from his audience, because

he wanted that first row of seats right where he could look right down into the eyes of the people and grip as many of them as he could with his gaze, which he roved backwards and forwards across the crowd. Personal communication, intimate contact, was what he strove for and what he was best at.

Afterwards he would always shake hands, to the point of exhaustion. If I was there I would stand a little further on down the [line]. After they left him I'd be a little farther along and chat with them a little more leisurely. Because I was always telling him that he did it too fast, that to be just practically pulled past would hurt a lot of people's feelings. But he seems to have done awfully well at it. He did have some help from some staff members who would say, "Sorry, Congressman, that line's long; you're going to have to hurry," in a very audible voice, so the person shaking hands wouldn't try to tell him too long about how her cousin, Suzy, had known his grandfather back in 1911 or whatever the case might be.

G: In some of the helicopter campaigning, did he ever just fly over a small town and sort of speak from the air without landing?

J: I know that he did that in the case of some--on the railroad there were a bunch of men running one of these little repair car things, just an open car, couldn't have been more than four or maybe eight men on it. He hovered low and talked to them. And I know that he did it sometimes if there were a lot of farm workers doing something like chopping cotton, or a small group along his way, yes. I think perhaps he did it in some crowd, in some small communities where he couldn't land, or didn't have time to land.

G: Who were the advance men in this campaign? Do you recall some of them?

J: I remember that Woody--Warren Woodward--was one of the principal advance men. The years and events since have dimmed a lot, but I think that Mack DeGuerin and Harvey Payne and Sam Plyler and Dick Connally and probably Hal Woodward, Woody's brother, were also advance men. In some instances, a district man may have acted as an advance man. For instance, Lloyd Croslin was always one of the staunchest and most reliable district men. I expect he doubled sometimes, and so may [have] Cecil Burney in Corpus Christi, whose wife Kara, an extraordinarily nice and high-class woman, no doubt had a lot to do with his meetings.

So, the summer was the big *tour de force* of expenditure of energy. Every day saw Lyndon [in] anywhere from five to nine towns. Naturally he would try to cover the state. When he was in East Texas he'd try to cover all of East Texas and move back into the Central or North somewhere. After he left my part of the state, deep East Texas, he went on to places, sometimes the names one scarcely remembers: New Boston, Omaha, Mt. Pleasant--that was a good Saturday afternoon town, everybody spoke of it--Mt. Vernon, B-O-G-A-T-A--which from print you would think is BO-guh-TAH, but not so; it's buh-GO-tuh, and whoever would have heard of it if it weren't for Don Thomas now--and Clarksville and Blossom and Paris. I think there's something sort of romantic about the names of the Texas towns, as though we were reaching for some splendor. There's a Paris, Carthage and Athens.

Meanwhile, the session in Washington was winding on to a close--

Tape 2 of 3

J: The next day would be Honey Grove and Cooper and Commerce and Wolfe City and the

Speaker's hometown, Bonham. By this time we were up in North Texas, in Denison and Sherman. I just have mental pictures of all those stops where I would go. I didn't go nearly everywhere with him, because I did not travel in the helicopter at all.

The House was winding to an end, quit I think about the middle or last of June, taking a certain load off of him and enabling him to move some more staff down to help us out. Then he still went on covering North Texas, Decatur and Weatherford and Cleburne, Waxahachie--I never think of that without thinking of Senator Estes Kefauver at a later date--and Ennis, and Corsicana.

By this time Lyndon was really in the groove and enjoying it, I think, and sometimes speaking far too long for his own energies and I [would] sometimes for the crowd, although most of the time he could tell their mood and respond to it, and when they got restive he would cut it off. But, some of his folks--for instance, Joe Phipps, who was handling the sound mechanisms, as I remember, would send him a note and suggest that was enough, and he might or might not get heated. I used to send him notes, too, as I know I've told you lots of times. Often he would read them out to the crowd, to my embarrassment and their amusement.

G: Did any of the members of the Texas delegation help him as he traveled around in their districts, do you recall?

J: You know, that's a very important point. This being the primary, and no particular Democrat having been selected yet, my feeling is, strong as they may have felt toward him, they didn't get out and take the stump for him. One reason, they were at their own desks in Washington until late June. I don't remember it, to be precise.

On the broader scene, something that Lyndon had worked with Stu Symington on so vigorously actually got going, and that was the Berlin airlift. Republicans got together in Philadelphia, and Governor Thomas Dewey emerged from that as their nominee.

Lyndon went on in the helicopter but got stopped. Well, first he did Hillsboro and Meridian. At Hillsboro, all of Mary Rather's folks turned out. Her younger brother, Ed Rather, was kind of managing it, and Will Bond, a cousin, was helping. Ed's father-in-law was working with them. Then Clifton, McGregor, Marlin, which is the hometown of Tom Connally, and then Waco. Then strong winds came up, and he had to stop somewhere in the middle of that day. Sometimes he would attend wherever there was a crowd just for handshaking purposes, like a rodeo in Waco. He used to have a saying oft repeated, said his father taught him never to try to make a speech at a country dance, and then he would add himself, or a football game, that being past his father's time. But a candidate for office, wherever he can locate a crowd, if he can move through it with agility, shaking hands, can do some good without a speech, particularly if he can get a mention in the press.

The AF of L [American Federation of Labor] endorsed Coke Stevenson, that is, the Texas AF of L, and that was something of a blow. But Lyndon, somewhere along at that point, began to take out after Coke. He was never much one to attack his opponents, but I think seeing his real strength, he decided he had better. He just began to use a satire on Coke--who smoked a pipe, almost constantly--and asked him a serious, deep question. He would look solemn and take a few puffs and give you a kind of an answer that was a Mother Hubbard answer. And so Lyndon was exaggerating that in his little satire. He'd

say, "How do you stand on the 70-group air force?" And then he would mock Coke by replying something like, "I believe in constructive government." Somebody in the crowd came up and gave Lyndon a corncob pipe. Actually, before the campaign was over I think that happened about a dozen times. So he used those as props. They used to show up around the house for a long time. I think I finally emptied all the drawers.

The crowds got better. In the early days, sometimes he'd only have a hundred, at a stop at a little town, even in the helicopter. But he spoke of seven hundred at Athens and fifteen hundred at Jacksonville, this as we were winding into the last of June. Things were really picking up. Actually, the big towns did not see him in that helicopter; it was the little ones that it was useful to go to. [It was] useful at small and middle-sized, like in covering in one day Mexia and Teague, Fairfield, Buffalo, Centerville, Crockett and Palestine. That is about seven or eight towns. Also at night, he would have a meeting with some of the leaders in whatever town he spent the night, or even possibly a rally.

So he wound up back into East Texas in another swing with Athens and Frankston and Jacksonville, Rusk, Nacogdoches, Lufkin, and finishing in St. Augustine, that's Ed Clark's hometown, you know. I'm sure Ed was represented well there. Hemphill and Jasper and Woodville, Livingston, Huntsville.

Whenever we could get back to the old Tenth District there was a sort of a good velvet feeling, because you knew you'd see a lot of familiar faces, a lot of friendly greetings, that you'd have pretty competent help throughout. We did give one Saturday to the Tenth: Brenham--where naturally Reese Lockett and Dick Spinn would be the first two to meet him--Caldwell, Giddings, Bastrop, Taylor, Georgetown, McDade, to a

watermelon festival. Plenty of times those watermelon festivals figured in our campaigning, as indeed did chili suppers, besides the perennial barbecue.

He made *Time*. *Time* had his picture and a sizeable story about the helicopter. He flew over to West Texas: Llano, San Saba, Goldthwaite, Lometa, Lampasas, and then back into Central Texas through Belton and Temple. Time was giving out for the helicopter. I forget at just what point he stopped it. The original one he had for twenty days. There certainly was a second one in there. One was a Sikorsky and one was a Bell.

Before the month ended, he was in North Texas with Gatesville and Hamilton, Stephenville, Dublin, Comanche, and then down to Brownwood. That's where J. Ed Johnson lives, who was always one of his soundest supporters. And so, June wound to a close. The first three months are the most exhausting campaigning I've ever witnessed or been a part of.

(Interruption)

The amount of travel, the miles covered, the time consumed, in going over this huge state is just absolutely mind-boggling, and also the effort of a lot of people on his behalf. There was one man whose name I can't even remember, but I do remember that he sent out six hundred personal letters in Lyndon's behalf. He was just somebody that he met at a rally and believed in him, and we kept up with him through the fact that the district manager would write and tell us what all he was doing.

Some of the biggest events were when we would get a good editorial. Lyndon would have them Xeroxed, or whatever the process was called then, and sent around to cheer all the district men and county men up, and to see if they couldn't get them to

recopy them in their own newspapers. The *Dallas Times-Herald* with Tom Gooch and Albert Jackson at the helm, it was mightily helpful. We've had it both ways, with the press for us and the press against us, and as Lyndon said, "It sure is easier when the press is for you." Not that it was everywhere.

(Interruption)

There's no way in the world like politics to learn about human nature and to see it at some of its most generous and loving aspects, and willingness for patriotic reasons, for personal reasons, for love, to expend one's self on the behalf of a candidate. On the converse side, there's a whole lot of people that you think are strong friends that somehow will say, "Well, you know, I'm in business, and I just can't afford to make anybody mad in my town." You find it both ways. Lots of marvelous funny little examples. For instance, in one instance the district judge adjourned court so that everybody could go out and watch the helicopter land.

Whenever he was in a section where there had been a marked need of REA [Rural Electrification Administration] and where they had gotten it, or need of farm-to-market roads and where they had gotten it, they knew who had been particularly active in that. It was Lyndon, and he got good crowds and good response. All of the things that he had--seeds that he had sown in the past bore fruit, especially and continuingly his association with San Marcos, the school where he went, and with the NYA [National Youth Administration]. He'd meet some of those in every town.

G: During this campaign, how did you see the choice between the two candidates? Did you see it as a choice between the young and the old? Or a sort of former governor, someone

who had been in politics for a long time? In your own mind, how did you perceive the choice that the voters would make?

J: Naturally purely subjective, but, to my thinking, the Governor had many of the attributes of the traditional Texan. Rancher, tall, lank, silent, conservative, well-known, all of those were some of his advantages. However, you'd be hard put to find anything daring, constructive, imaginative, at least I did not see him in that role at all. As coping with a changing world, as a man of today and tomorrow, I thought that was Lyndon, and certainly with youth and vigor on his side.

G: LBJ seems to have even made a point of the advantage of sending a young man to the Senate.

J: He did. He always made an advantage of youth, and we certainly had it until it finally caught up with us. Somewhere in the fifties I guess one could no longer speak of that. He almost never talked about his opponents. I must say he did get around to talking some about Coke in this as branding him by being, on the one hand, the minion of the extremely wealthy people, whom he referred to as the Houston Club, and on the other hand a very disparate group, the big labor bosses, and he was always careful to make a line between the labor bosses and the labor people. He would say, "And who are you all in the middle that I'm looking at out there? You're the farmers, the working men, the housewives, the average Texans." That is, cutting out his field, which really there were, of course, a majority of just folks.

(Interruption)

As throughout our life, it was really an unfair division of labor. I didn't work

nearly as hard, nor was the strain nearly as hard, but I did have a very divided life and a terribly full one. I'd spend hours down at the campaign headquarters thanking all the workers down there, doing my share of writing letters to people who had been helpful and urging others on, and bringing down cookies and coffee for a break, and either doing the things that needed to be done for two children, like taking them to the doctor or arranging to get some little friends over to play with them, or going to the grocery store and stocking up, the usual domestic business of life. Answering the telephone, being the go-between to Lyndon, passing on messages and/or advice, all of those are part of the grist for any political wife's mill.

(Interruption)

If the mood at the time that he went to have the operation in Rochester had been desperation, it gradually escalated in the course of June to enthusiasm and satisfaction and high hope. By July, I think everybody was just feeling full of--never assurance, but at least that they were there in the running, had a strong chance. July began with a slight difference in campaigning in that he made an early morning lengthy radio talk in whatever large town he was in, in addition to his stops at the six or seven helicopter stops. The first one, I think, was in San Angelo, where Houston Harte, his old friend--and it must have been balm to reach the hometown of any really good, longtime powerful friend--and W. A. Griffis were the two men that he looked to. Then he continued on to Big Springs and Lamesa and Brownfield and Levelland and Lubbock and Littlefield. He called it the busiest day of campaigning thus far.

In Lubbock, Arch Underwood was his standby, and I believe that was the home of

Lloyd Croslin. The format was still pretty much the same for the helicopter and the yellow ribbons marking out the field and getting the crowd. Somewhere along in there he went to the little town of Aspermont, and the local paper ran with considerable pride that he was the first state candidate that had stopped in Aspermont in the last fifteen years. Then when you'd get into a town where there was going to be a big affair, like the Cowboy Reunion rodeo in Stamford, and where a lot of candidates would appear, your format changed. You were one among several and didn't make a speech and shook hands and listened.

He'd usually make it home by Saturday night, and Sundays were the day to think, and rest, and assess, and talk to his campaign managers. By this time, the pilot of the Sikorsky, named Jim Chudars, was played out. He said he was going back to Connecticut where a helicopter pilot worked five days a week and flew thirty-five hours. That's when we met up with Joe Mashman.

Then Lyndon delivered an early morning talk on the radio in Austin, and one in the evening in Harlingen. At one time he made at least ten talks a day, and I've heard him speak of thirteen. The fact is, that when you get into the hands of any particular district manager, he may not see you again for a month, or maybe not at all during that campaign, and so he just--he knows that he wants to sell you, his product, to all the people he's been telling about you. He's proud of you; he wants to show you off. And he wants to add on one more service club here and one more ladies group yonder. So each one would wear you out, all in a good cause, all at great exertion to themselves, but soon as they waved you goodbye, they could go home to their wives and put up their feet and rest, whereas

Lyndon went on to the next town.

G: Was there any effort made to limit the number of speeches per district or per day?

J: Constantly, constantly, and often a losing battle, because as Lyndon would get overworked, his voice would get hoarse, his patience thin. He was a less saleable product. Some of his natural warmth and buoyancy would be gone. But it's hard for the local campaign workers to evaluate that ahead of time against the fact that they want him to see this one more group.

Things sure did cost different in those days. For instance, in Abilene you got out ten thousand circulars for twenty-six dollars. I don't know what that radio time cost, but we had it a lot better in our days in politics.

(Interruption)

[For] these radio speeches he had a man named Joe Phipps, who put him on the air with a brief description, always speaking of him as tall, confident and sunburned and making him sound like a typical Texan. Toward the end he began to state the number of speeches he'd made, the number of congressional districts, the number of towns he'd been in. The theme throughout was preparedness, peace, and progress. And then he would go on to beef those up by preparedness, meaning the 70-group air force, and a two-ocean navy, and a million-man army. Because that was the only way to get peace, what we all wanted. To sit down and do nothing was to play right into [Joseph] Stalin's hands and he would take just as much as he could get without fighting for it. We began to have real good crowds. They'd go from a few hundred to five thousand. Lyndon, it became obvious that he was getting more buoyant as time went on, if he could get any rest at all,

that is. He'd get the folks into the act by saying, "Anybody here seen any other candidate? Raise your hand." A few hands would go up maybe. He'd say, "How many of you have shaken hands with any other candidates for this job?" Then he would go on to say how he was going to try to see every last one of his future employers, and he thought anytime you hired a man for a job you wanted to look him in the eye and size him up, and that's what he was there for. He began to refer to Coke, without naming him most of the time, as a stand-patter and a sit-it-outter, just smoke his pipe and wait for whatever to happen, go on and happen.

At those days the discriminatory freight rates were a sizeable point of contention. Lyndon fought against them for a long time, and in the course of trying to equalize them he fought for a deep water port in Corpus Christi and intracoastal canals. Those were evidences of government spending, as well as that big naval air base in Corpus Christi, that he spoke of when he was combating Coke Stevenson's reference to the big spending of government. All those things had added to the economy of the region and therefore people were glad of them. I think he waxed most eloquent when he talked about bringing lights and blacktop roads to every farm, and making a realistic quote "pension" of fifty dollars for the elder citizens, an increase in teachers' salaries of four hundred dollars a year. He always came out strong for the Marshall Plan. He would outline to them in his speech wherever he was going to be that day and what time, and call on them to get their friends and kinfolks and go out and see him in the next town, whether it was Sinton or Refugio or Beeville or Kenedy or Yorktown, Cuero or Victoria. The number of places he would go to kept on ranging from five to nine a day, ten was a terrific day. I've often

heard him quote that fact of thirteen.

Back in the office there were old-timers like Marietta Brooks and Bess Beeman, and they would be cranking out letters to everybody they knew through their club work, or however, in the towns that we were going to. Willie Day Taylor had joined us, I believe, for the first time in that campaign, as had Sarah Wade, who was manning the switchboard, no doubt one of the most hectic jobs anybody had. Of course, old-timers like Mary Rather and Dorothy Nichols, Dorothy Plyler, and a lot of volunteer workers that just came in for a few days or a few hours.

G: You mentioned Houston Harte, and I want to ask about the big publishers in this election, particularly Jesse Jones and Amon Carter. Do you recall President Johnson's efforts to get their support in this race?

J: Amon Carter was Lyndon's longtime friend and supporter, and I remember many good exchanges with him right up until the time when Lyndon didn't go to see him and kind of ask his permission to keep on being a Democrat and support Adlai Stevenson in 1952, I believe it was. Because I think that was the year when Amon Carter went for Eisenhower, and Lyndon stuck with the Democratic Party, regarding it, I'm afraid, without too much hope of being winnable, and worked for Adlai. Up until then, they were close.

He and Houston Harte were close from the minute he entered politics until his retirement from politics and Houston's death. He and Rhea Howard of Wichita Falls were always close, and were until Lyndon's retirement. Jesse Jones, there was a certain distance, which I don't think Lyndon tried to bridge, although he had great respect for

him. But Lyndon was too closely affiliated with President Roosevelt, and Jesse Jones, who indeed had been, had reached the point where there was a coolness between Roosevelt [and himself] and that extended to his boy Lyndon, so to speak.

G: What about Charles Marsh? You don't hear much about Marsh in 1948.

J: He is still there, still working for us. Every now and then we would get some marvelous pithy memo from him. Yes, he remained Lyndon's friend.

So, once more, he covered the state in another helicopter, going from one congressional district to another. Apparently, he didn't have to take any time out for illness on his own. He did stop to attend the funeral of Uncle Sterling Price in July, I think it was about the sixteenth, and got Everett Looney, I believe, to substitute for him. He had two marvelous friends named Looney, Everett Looney in Austin, and Judge J. C. Looney down in the Valley in Harlingen [Edinburg].

The Democrats had their convention. Gee, I guess I've sometimes made the statement that Lyndon attended every convention from 1928 until he left office, but I don't believe he attended this one. At any rate, Truman was nominated and Alben Barkley was nominated for vice president. That was on July 15, and I can't for the life of me remember whether he went.

G: I don't think he went to that.

J: On July 17, he wound up his helicopter stumping through the small towns, having made three hundred and forty-eight speeches and been in twenty out of the twenty-one congressional districts, and said that that was the best week of the campaign, that weekend that ended just one week before the first primary. Because he was, reasonably

enough, going to save the second, the last week, for working in the big cities.

It was our campaign manager Claude Wild's sage advice, and certainly Lyndon's feeling, to avoid antagonizing the Peddy people by telling them that he couldn't win, therefore they better throw their support to Lyndon. On the other hand, just to say nothing bad about Peddy, make friends with his supporters where possible, so that to leave the ground open in case there was a runoff, and it was Stevenson and Johnson, so that the Johnson people could approach the Peddy people with hope of getting their support. It looked more and more like Lyndon was way ahead of Peddy; he did not worry about him. On the other hand, I don't think Lyndon ever was--he probably said so, but I really don't think he ever thought that he would win without a runoff.

In the last week of the campaign a little girl named Nancy Gates, who was a starlet from up in North Texas somewhere, came down and spent the last weekend, the last week with us, and sang. Then there were some other entertainers whom I don't remember. But Nancy did remain a part of our life, and we still see her from time to time.

He spent that last week going to the big towns: Fort Worth and Waco and San Antonio and then Houston, a big day in Houston, with little side trips to Pelly and Goose Creek and Baytown and Pasadena. And then Friday in Dallas, in the suburbs. There, there was a big luncheon given in my honor by the Dallas women's division, and something quite important happened for us when former-Governor Jimmie Allred and Miriam Ferguson came out for us and urged the election of Lyndon as senator in a radio broadcast from Austin. Now, they had both let us know earlier that they were for us; I

think this is the first time that they announced it. They were kind of saving that, I guess, for the ammunition for the last.

(Interruption)

In the course of these months he had lost twenty-seven pounds. He had reiterated over and over the statement, or rather the man who put him on the air in his speeches, that he was young and energetic enough to do the job, experienced enough to know how to do it, and he had spoken of his major opponent, Coke Stevenson, as a do-nothing, sit-it-out candidate, with no platform and no promises.

G: In the last week or two of the campaign, he indicated that there was an anti-LBJ whisper campaign going on by the opposition. Do you recall this, and what evidence you had of this, that there were rumors and innuendos being circulated?

J: I don't really. I wasn't as bothered by them or as sensitive to them as other members of the campaign group were, as Lyndon was. I know that they existed--I mean I've heard about it, but I can't say that it was ever said to me personally.

In talking about peace and preparedness, Lyndon always coupled--

(Interruption)

--our economic impregnability along with our military impregnability. He was a great believer in the economy must be strong, business must be strong, in order to get done all the things that he hoped could be done for the country.

Once more, as had been some years ago in Rosebud, there was one of those little incidents where some black people got in the line, came up at a speech, and Lyndon of course always invited everybody that was there to come up and shake hands with him.

Lyndon shook hands with them, and he got some pretty angry response from it. Isn't that strange looking at across the years? He would just answer them and tell that person that yes, he had asked everybody to, and that they came up and of course he shook hands with them. That is difficult when such a question comes from your own supporters. Somehow you feel better about making an opponent mad than you do about making a friend mad, but you have to just tell them that that's the way it was.

G: Did LBJ see himself in this campaign as the most likely candidate to win black support? I mean, he'd been identified with President Roosevelt, and he'd been active--

J: I wouldn't say that black support was any considerable factor in politics of those days. There always were a few black people who voted, but they were likely to be of a college president type, the local mortician, or minister; they were rare individuals. The poll tax, the general unfriendly attitude--you see, it was certainly the case in many states and I think maybe in Texas, that if you wanted to vote you had to give evidence that your poll tax had been paid every year since you were twenty-one. That could get pretty formidable, and pretty expensive.

G: But didn't he get large black votes in Houston? Didn't Roy Hofheinz really manage to turn out a lot of the black precincts there and in some of the other urban areas? Do you recall that in 1948?

J: No, I don't. I do recall that Roy worked for us, and that he had a particular night close to the end of the campaign, in which he gave free [radio] time to candidates for office.

G: Yes.

J: And we took advantage of it. I don't know whether our competitors did or not.

Tape 3 of 3

J: So, we wound up that last week--and it had been [an] ebullient month--with a certain satisfaction, never assurance, but hopeful and feeling good about it.

Well, we were in for a shock. We went, of course, as we always did, voted late in Johnson City, and then went in and thanked everybody at the headquarters, for all their long toil. Then we went to a hotel suite to listen for the results. So many campaigns and so many waiting-out periods have gone through my life I cannot honestly at the moment remember the scene. But it very frequently was the Jim Hogg Suite at the Driskill Hotel, and I think maybe that's where it was. Walter Jenkins would have set up a blackboard. There would be a number of telephones. People would be telephoning in the vote in such-and-such a town or such-and-such a district as Johnson this, Stevenson this, Peddy this, and we'd write it up. Then another district would be phoned in. And then the Texas Election Bureau would send a total. We'd be listening to the radio, listening to the telephones, writing up on these blackboards. I would be ordering up coffee and sandwiches, or, as the night wore on maybe scrambled eggs and bacon. People would be coming and going.

The outcome of it was a staggering difference in favor of Coke Stevenson. He wound up with 477,000 votes, and Lyndon 405,000, and Peddy a very respectable 237,000. So we woke up to a situation of being 71,000 behind our opponent in a runoff. Could we pick up that many? The bottom dropped out. We were as low as I ever remember. We met that afternoon at the house, Dillman Street, with some of the old regulars: John, of course, and Senator Wirtz would be there, and Everett Looney, Charlie

Herring was, I think, several others. I don't remember everybody. We all sat around and talked about what to do next.

G: Do you recall LBJ considering dropping out of the race?

J: Oh, yes. As I have mentioned, that happened more than once in our political life, in times of really impossible tasks, apparently impossible. He was depressed; he was exhausted, depleted. So was I. I wasn't depressed, no; I was exhausted and depleted, but mad. (Laughter) I just wouldn't have any part of dropping out. I don't think he ever really was going to do it or wanted to do it. I think he wanted to see how much would we be willing to put into a second go-around against those formidable figures. I made myself a rare speech. I said I would rather fight and fight and put in everything we could and get all the more money and all the more hours and lose by 50,000 than lose by 71,000. If we could reduce it to 40,000, let's strive for that, and maybe we could bring it down to 25,000 and just possibly, barely, we might win.

G: You were talking to the group of people here?

J: Yes. It was a slough of despond. It was bleak. But there are also moments of levity. Thank the Lord we were still young.

G: Excuse me. Can you recall any other discussion that took place at that meeting?

J: Oh, I'm trying to so much, but I can't really. For one thing, Lyndon had to leave almost right away because President Truman had earlier called a special session of Congress.

G: Did he see this as a further setback, the fact that he was going to have to be away during the critical campaign period, or part of it?

J: I don't know. I expect he did. I personally think it might have been a good thing,

because it took him away from the scene for a while. It removed him from spreading his feeling of despondency and gave him a chance to think it over.

G: Well now, by this time you had a lot of the returns and you could see where Stevenson had won and where you all were strong. Did this tell you where you had made mistakes, or where he felt that he hadn't put enough effort in? Or did you see any sort of key to succeeding if you were going to succeed, in the runoff?

J: I am sure that he and some of the pros examined it from that viewpoint. I did not because I did not understand it all that well.

G: Do you think that they saw that they didn't spend enough time in the cities? Since Stevenson had carried the big cities, that they needed to devote more effort to that?

J: I think it very likely may have been so, although I personally don't think going up against an incumbent governor, a longtime well-known public figure, that one out of twenty-one congressmen would have made the dent he did make if it hadn't been for all the drama and what was it, three hundred and eighty-seven speeches. I cannot think of a better way to have conducted it.

G: Did they set out to woo the Peddy votes right away? Here you had two hundred and seventy-some odd thousand votes--

J: Large, big, juicy morsel right out there. I am sure we did, because that had been Claude Wild's strategy all along.

[End of Tape 3 of 3 and Interview XXII]