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CLAUDIA "LADY BIRD" JOHNSON ORAL HISTORY, INTERVIEW VI
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Transcript, Claudia "Lady Bird" Johnson Oral History Interview VI, 8/6/78, by Michael L. Gillette, Internet Copy, LBJ Library.

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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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- (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 Decker
Aaron Swett 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~~ on 5-10-2011.

Mrs. Johnson's Oral History Interviews:

**Assistant Archivist
For Presidential Libraries**

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 VI

DATE: August 6, 1978
INTERVIEWEE: LADY BIRD JOHNSON
INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE
PLACE: The LBJ Ranch, Stonewall, Texas

Tape 1 of 4

G: Let me ask you about some of the legislative issues first that the President dealt with while he was still working for Congressman [Richard] Kleberg. Do you know his position on the repeal of prohibition?

J: I am quite sure that he would have been in favor of repealing it. I have heard him tell frequently a story about it. It happened in his mama and papa's household. His mother was an ardent Baptist and a strong teetotaler. [Her husband] did drink. She very much disapproved and disapproved of her sons or relatives or anybody drinking. There was an election in which--for governor--Pat Neff was a strong teetotaler and in favor of prohibition. The off and on long-time governor, highly colorful figure, Jim Ferguson, Pa Ferguson, was running against him. Mr. Sam Johnson was the leader for Jim Ferguson in Blanco County and in that area. When the vote was finally counted he was just real pleased with the results. Jim Ferguson carried the area. There were only a few votes against him. He was talking it over in the household, Mrs. Johnson was busy putting dinner on the table and going backwards and forwards to the kitchen. He said, "I just knew that old"--we'll say Bill Strigler--"would vote against it. Never could trust him. I

can count" so-and-so and so-and-so, and he counted them up. Except there was one vote, he couldn't figure out who it was, that had voted against his great friend, Mr. Ferguson. Mrs. Johnson said as she was putting dinner on the table, "Well, perhaps it was mine, Sam." He said, "Do you mean you voted for Pat Neff?" "Why, yes, Sam. You know how I stand on prohibition."

Lyndon always told that with great relish, sort of as a mark of his mother's faithfulness to her causes, the Baptist Church and for prohibition. But he himself thought it was an undue interference in a person's individual rights and he was in favor of repealing it, I'm 99 and ½ per cent sure. I don't recall him ever saying, "Listen to this," and, "Remember this; this is what I'm saying. I'm against prohibition." But all of his actions and his philosophy and what I think he felt [showed it].

G: There was one occasion when Vice President [John Nance] Garner attempted to take over the patronage appointments of the Texas congressmen. I think it involved postmasters. According to Bill White, the President got wind of the idea, perhaps from White, or maybe I've got it reversed here. He found out about it and told White, and Bill White wrote a story on it and stopped it. Have you ever heard about that?

J: Yes, I have, but I really can't say much about it except that I know he felt that congressmen should have the right to pass on important appointments in their own areas, and it not just be the prerogative of any vice president or anybody else alone. Did that happen? I vaguely remember it, but I don't know whether it happened when he was secretary or after he became congressman. Which was it?

G: It was while he was secretary, but I believe it was 1933, rather than 1934 or 1935.

- J: I remember hearing of it only as a tale because I was not there then.
- G: Anything on his role in trying to persuade Congressman [Richard] Kleberg to vote for the soldiers' bonus?
- J: I remember he told often how he felt when he saw a ragged army of veterans, as he would describe it, in the Capitol. Apparently they made a march on the Capitol asking for the bonus. It was a time of really desperate need, as I recall. It seems to me that President [Herbert] Hoover was still in office and that he called out the army, and that it was--could it have been [Douglas] MacArthur? That's the way I vaguely remember it. It was MacArthur himself who dispersed them in a very curt military manner. Lyndon was deeply incensed and concerned what might happen next. He thought they got a raw deal in that that kind of exercise of power, then or in the future or some time, just might lead to--revolution is too big a word perhaps, but it would lead to explosive anger that would just be bad for the government and the country and the society.
- G: I've also heard that he persuaded Congressman Kleberg to vote for the AAA [Agricultural Adjustment Administration?].
- J: I'm sure he did. I mean I'm sure he would have wanted to and would have tried to, because his interests were very much concerned with the farmers.
- G: I guess right before he went to Texas to assume the NYA [National Youth Administration] directorship, the Public Utilities Holding Company Act was being debated in Congress. There's some indication that he had an influence here on Kleberg. Do you remember his talking about that at all?
- J: No, I don't. Is that one of the ones in which Speaker Sam Rayburn took a very active

part? I think I remember Sam Rayburn saying with satisfaction that that was one of the things that he was most glad he had been able to accomplish, and he and Lyndon sort of nodding their heads in agreement on it, but I do not remember actively Lyndon's talking about it.

On the line of his general feelings about farmers, agriculture in general, the way they were hard hit by the Depression, he had a lot of reminiscences and stories about how the Congressman's office was called on to help when the Depression was at its worst and farmers around the Corpus Christi district were being foreclosed on, indeed, all over Texas.

This Mr. Hayden [D. H.] Perry, who was a great friend of Lyndon's, I'm sure he had been friend and supporter to Kleberg, and that's how Lyndon met him no doubt. But he certainly became Lyndon's staunch friend, was for many years. I notice he showed up later on his board of public counselors or advisers or whatever you call it in the National Youth Administration. Mr. Hayden Perry was a big landowner with a lot of debts. When the Depression was at its worst they were just working some horrible number of hours a day, he and his family and every last hand he had, to try to keep the stock fed, because he hadn't been able to hire and pay enough people, and money was so scarce. Lyndon would tell a tale about setting the alarm clock to wake him up at four o'clock in the morning or something like that, and he wouldn't get to sleep until ten o'clock at night, worked just brutally hard. Lyndon asked him how on earth did he wake up. Why didn't he just sleep through the alarm clock? He said he did a time or two, but they found out if they put it under the dishpan, it would make such a clatter, it would really wake them.

G: One of the things I'm getting at here is that it's generally been conceded that the President was more liberal on this New Deal legislation than Congressman Kleberg was.

J: I think that is quite the case. Congressman Kleberg was a kind man and a warm--he was a nice man. But although he had lived close to the Mexicans all his life and talked their language and loved telling stories with them, I guess the fact is he hadn't been intimately exposed to hunger and deprivation himself. His general philosophy was that he didn't know how hard it was. Lyndon really was a very sympathetic person. He knew a good bit of it firsthand, but he was even more keenly attuned to it, even if he hadn't experienced it, than, well, a lot of people.

G: Can you recall any particular occasion where he persuaded Kleberg to vote for something that he was not originally disposed to vote for?

J: No, I can't, actually. Other people might fill in that gap. It may be that Gene Latimer or L.E. Jones or some of them could. I can't really, because you see, after we married, we were together up there in his job as secretary just from Christmas until, I guess, it was July when I went back home to visit my daddy. I can't say, and I wish I could, that I was as keenly attuned to what was going on in the Congress as I ought have been.

(Interruption)

G: Let me ask you about taking people on tours of historic places, which I understand you used to do when you were up there [inaudible], when you were in Washington.

J: Well, I soon found that that was one of the things I could do to help Lyndon. About what years now are you talking about?

G: During the Kleberg years. That would be in the spring of 1935, really.

J: Kleberg years. No, then at that point, that wasn't a part of my life as I recall. I was just learning it myself and going to all of them myself because my own experience in Washington was limited to about, oh, a week or less in the summer of 1934 when I went up there on a trip with Cecille Harrison, my roommate. I was just a born tourist all my life, so I went to all the museums. At that time the Corcoran [Gallery of Art] was it. I do not remember what year the National Gallery was built. I do remember the excitement in the voice of one of Lyndon's roommates at the Dodge, Bob Jackson, who worked for Senator Tom Connally. He had somehow through that position been exposed to a preview of what was going to take place, this great gift from Andrew Mellon and all the paintings it was going to mean, and the marvelous building it was going to mean. His voice was just full of elation and excitement; I don't remember what year it was though. All the national monuments--it all became familiar to me and part of my life.

G: I have a note here that you also bought tickets for the Theater Guild and would go to the theater during this period. Do you remember?

J: Did I really? I went to the theater, oh, every chance. The theater was a long love of mine ever since I was at St. Mary's School for Girls in Dallas in 1928 to 1930. That, of course, was limited to the National [Theater]. I do not remember whether Olney [Theatre Center] was already in existence, but I know from the first time I heard about Olney, which is a summer theater, I've adored it always. Whenever it began, there I was.

G: When you were first married did you try to interest the President in going to the theater with you?

J: Yes, and a few times he went. I remember he loved a play called *Member of the*

Wedding. Then I took him and Speaker Sam Rayburn to one about the founding fathers. That may have been the name of it. I don't remember what year it was. But I just remember how excited I was being there in at least the illustrious company of the Speaker, and Lyndon, I forget at what point in his career he was then. I remember when he went to see a movie, John Steinbeck, *Grapes of Wrath*, his reaction practically embarrassed me because he was so angry and vocal and sympathetic and sorry about those poor folks.

G: I guess it had quite an impact on him.

J: Oh, it did. I'm so pleased that later on we came to know John Steinbeck and they really became friends. That was years ahead in the White House days.

G: Now, I have another note concerning Terrell Webb taking you to the Capitol, I think, and having a picnic on the Capitol grounds after you got to Washington.

J: Terrell is a very warm and friendly person. She decided it would be a nice idea to gather up the young wives of secretaries or young girls whom she knew who were in Washington, Texans. I think she had about half a dozen of us. It was spring. We had a tour of the Capitol, and I think we probably had lunch in the House Dining Room. I remember distinctly that we all had our picture made under the cherry blossoms out on the grounds of the Capitol. It may even have made the paper, but in any case, we all sent pictures home. I, at least, did, and I bet others did, to my daddy. It was a big deal for me, to be in the company of a congressman's wife and to be that close to that great big Capitol. I felt like I was on the stage.

G: I gather that during this period you also developed a practice of calling the President's

attention to passages in books and magazines that you thought he would enjoy.

J: Yes, yes. When I read something I would underline things that I thought he would particularly like, and then I would try to read them aloud to him at night or else give him the book.

We lived at a place called 1910 Kalorama Road. It was an exceedingly modest little apartment. It was just a living room with a dinette sort of table. Really, it was just two rooms, and a tiny kitchen, and a tiny little screened porch. There was no air conditioning. The screened porch opened off of the end of the living room. Lyndon was an especially convivial person, and I was, too. So we had an astonishing amount of company in that place, as I think I may have told you, because it was one hilarious time that was almost like a Marx Brothers comedy.

It was the custom of my life to have Aunt Effie stay with me for a sizeable part of each year. This began even in the first year of our married life. She came up and stayed several months. We really had one bedroom and bath, and this fairly nice-sized living room with a dinette table in it, and that tiny porch. At the same time Lyndon had invited his Uncle George. It turned out that he came right while Aunt Effie was there. So we put him out on a day bed on the little screened porch, and Lyndon and I slept on a studio couch, as it was called, in the living room. Then one of my Alabama cousins whom I had invited up to see the sights arrived. There were twin beds in one bedroom so that was fine; she could have the other one. There were five of us in that little bitty apartment, all using the same bathroom. But I didn't feel in the least bit deprived, and I don't think they did either. I have since thought about it.

G: How long did they stay, do you remember?

J: I imagine my cousin probably didn't stay more than a week. Uncle George stayed several weeks, and Aunt Effie stayed probably a couple of months. Because I know in the summertime I early formed the habit of going back home to see Daddy for two or three weeks. We tried to judge it--if we thought Congress was going to adjourn on X date, I would go down a little bit early, driving the car. We always had two cars, because I had had one when we got married and I insisted on keeping it, getting it up there. So I would drive a car down, and Lyndon would either drive his the day Congress adjourned or turn it over to a secretary and fly, as he later began doing.

In any case, this particular year--I think that must be the year, I could tell it from Uncle George's tombstone alas, but I think it must be the year that Uncle George and Aunt Effie and I and a pretty little white cat that Lyndon had bought me all set forth for Texas in the car. That was a funny trip, because Uncle George knew all the history of the Civil War, all early American history, especially the Civil War. He wanted to read every single one of those historic signs along the road. We'd barely get started before we'd stop and read another one. It took us five days, but we had a marvelous time. Aunt Effie just sat there rapt with admiration at his knowledge and at every one of the signs. The cat was scratching and jumping from front seat to back and trying to get out. It was a bit hard on the nerves, but yet very funny.

G: You were in Alabama I guess when he called you and said that he'd gotten the NYA job?

J: No, I was back in Austin.

G: Oh, I see.

- J: I'm trying to remember. Perhaps, could I have been at my daddy's? There would be no reason for me to be in Austin. I must have been at my daddy's.
- G: I had heard that you were visiting your Uncle Claud when that happened.
- J: I don't think so. It may be. But let's see, that would have been about July. I think I very certainly must have been in Karnack at my daddy's house.
- G: Okay. He stayed, evidently, until the end of July, just another week there in Washington, and then took the B & O to Marshall and met you there. Do you remember that? He arrived at nine in the morning, and then you went to Austin and got there that night.
- J: I can't say that I remember it precisely. I can certainly remember the thrill in his voice and the sort of triumph, like he was bringing me a diamond the size of an egg or something, when he said over the phone, "How would you like to live in Austin?" That was just sheer heaven and an utter surprise because he knew I loved Austin. When he was offered this job, and the fact that it was going to be in Austin, he knew that would just have me beside myself with pleasure. I just really practically jumped up and down.
- G: I've heard that one of the first things he did was to go see Governor [James] Allred.
- J: I'm quite sure it was. I think I actually remember that.
- G: Do you recall any of the specifics of that meeting or what he might have said?
- J: No. I think he felt that it was important to enlist the approval, or good will, or, hopefully, the assistance of the Governor in this new federal project. He and the Governor became friends. He liked Jimmy Allred tremendously, and I think Jimmy Allred liked him. All during that NYA period he was very anxious to have all segments of society and the establishment understand it, back it, help on it, as well as the people it was really

designed to serve.

G: He had an advisory committee.

J: That was really a blue ribbon outfit. It's surprising that he could talk those people into being on it. As I recall, many of them would come to the meetings and give their suggestions and their time.

G: Did he personally select these people?

J: Oh, you bet.

G: I notice in the files the initial list does not include Senator [Alvin] Wirtz, and yet he turns out to be on it and chairman of it. I'm wondering how he got on it and why he was excluded originally. You would have thought that would have been the first choice.

J: I don't know. As far back as I can remember he was our friend, adviser, and mentor, but I just can't shed any light on that. Lyndon had the greatest respect for his sound common sense and his ability to see through a tangled web where you might not be able to tell what was right from what was wrong, or everything was hazy and gray. But Senator Wirtz usually came up with--while not direction, because he just wasn't one to give directions; he'd just point out alternatives to you, and if you were halfway bright you'd know what he thought.

G: Why don't you look at the list here and tell me about each one in terms of what they meant to the President, and if you recall any of the specifics of their work on the committee, what they did in that connection?

J: Just about all of the names are familiar to me; at least six or eight of the names are familiar to me. Of course Senator Wirtz was our closest friend. Miller Ainsworth of

Luling--he always cropped up in our life at every campaign. He was a staunch political friend, not a very close personal friend. But then we just didn't have many social engagements. I don't remember some of the others, except of course H. J. Latcher Stark is a big name in Texas. I think Lyndon was aiming mighty high to get him to be on it. Now Hayden Perry of Robbstown was really one of the staunch old friends of the Kleberg days, a wealthy landowner and cotton farmer and one that I've mentioned to you before--he was a stockman and a cotton farmer--how he and Lyndon became fast friends through Lyndon's help in the office of Kleberg back in the depths of the Depression. Beauford Jester, I knew that Lyndon knew and liked him, but once more I think a young man of twenty-six was aiming pretty high to ask him to serve on it, and I'm pleased that he accepted. Lyndon would mention to me that he had gotten these men, and I could tell by his voice he thought he sure had done a good day's work. He thought they could contribute to the strength of the NYA. I cannot say that I remember anything particular about the meetings.

G: Did he travel around and see them individually in person or did he call them or write them?

J: I feel sure he must have telephoned them and written them as well. If he was in their town, I bet you he went to see them, but I also hardly think he had either the personal money or any budget from NYA to go to see all these folks. Then of course probably one of the most outstanding on here is Bob Anderson, who figured in our life off and on many times since then. Later you will recall he was secretary of treasury under Eisenhower. He now lives in Greenwich, and I'm still in touch. I had a letter from him not long ago.

G: I guess shortly after that, or perhaps even before that, he hired Jesse Kellam and Sherman Birdwell to work for him.

J: They were very quickly come into the administration. I remember distinctly when I first met Jesse and Louise. They hadn't been married long, and Louise was extremely pretty, a fragile brunette, delicate and gentle. She had been one of the Bluebonnet Belles at the University of Texas. She was almost shy, almost timid, but very pretty and gentle and every inch a lady. Jesse was a handsome young man. Talk about the work ethic, he was vaccinated with it when he was born practically. He was a mighty hard working man.

G: I've heard that he met with them at an old post office cafe in San Marcos and persuaded them to come to work with him at the NYA. Do you remember that?

J: No, I don't remember that specifically, but that sounds like them. Jesse, I'm not sure what he was doing then, but he might have been in the state office of education, whatever the name of it is, state superintendent's office. He had been a schoolteacher and a football coach in Lufkin. Lyndon had known him, of course, at San Marcos at college, although he was older than Lyndon. He was a leader, and they had been opposed to each other in several, oh, I don't know what, maybe school elections, the sort of fraternities. They didn't have the real national fraternities at San Marcos, but they had something called the Black Stars of which Jesse was kind of the perennial president. So Lyndon, he couldn't get in the Black Stars because he wasn't an athletic star, and so he cooked up something called the White Stars, where what you had to be was to make very high marks in debate, edit the school paper, both of which he did.

G: That's great. Now you moved into Dr. Bob Montgomery's house, didn't you, on San

Gabriel?

J: 2808 San Pedro I think it was. Twice we certainly were extremely lucky in the days when we rented people's houses. And this was certainly an outstanding time. To my eyes that house was romantic and charming. I'd be almost afraid to go back and see it now for fear it had shrunk, you know, as things do when you remember them through the lens of the years. Dr. Montgomery and his wife were delightful, way-out people. He wore long hair and red shirts at a time when nobody else did, and of course got himself roundly criticized in university, especially by regents. But he was terrifically popular with the students. He could make the subject of economics sound like the most fascinating thing in the world, and people flocked to his classes.

Somehow or another he met and liked Lyndon. He had been called to Washington in one of those many temporary jobs that the New Deal gathered together professors from all over the country, all sorts of people. It was just a great pouring in of talent and expertise in the New Deal days. He went up there for a year, maybe longer. Anyhow, his house was going to be available to rent. He met Lyndon. They had plenty of opportunities and could have rented it to somebody else for more, I feel sure, but they decided they wanted to rent it to us. I remember him saying something about he wanted to think it would be a happy house, with nice things going on. Well, it was certainly a full house, because we promptly began to take in all the staff. As Lyndon would hire them; he would just say, "You can stay here at the house until you find a place." So the house sometimes was bursting at the seams with people who did move out in anywhere from three or four days to two or three weeks. But anyhow, it was sort of a stopping

depot.

G: You had Aunt Effie there, too, for a while?

J: Oh, yes. Aunt Effie came and stayed somewhere between a third and a half of a year with me all of my life, all the time until I got married--I mean, a great deal of the time until I got married, and then afterwards still as much as, say, four to six months a year at different spans. Say two to three months at a time, and then she'd go to visit various kinfolks in Alabama or her friend, Miss Bernice Emmert, in Jefferson, other friends. Then she'd come back to me.

G: Now, L. E. Jones and Bill Deason lived upstairs, too, didn't they?

J: I think I remember both of them being there. It would certainly have been a natural and likely thing to do.

The place hung out over the edge of a cliff, and it had at least two levels of garden. It had a great big vine of queen's wreath that grew up all over the house, and there was a sort of little sundeck off of the upstairs bedroom, and an iron balcony and railings and stair steps that went down into the garden. I felt that it was a thoroughly romantic house, and I was utterly charmed by it. I did most of the cooking, but I very soon acquired help who did all the cleaning and occasionally some of the cooking. Jesse Kellam, who had many a meal with us, as did many of the others, used to always say nice things about my biscuits and cream gravy and country fried steak, and said I could fix spinach in a way that he never had eaten it before, but it was real good.

G: I suppose that was a scene of many late night NYA meetings.

J: Yes, many, many late ones. Most of them were 100 per cent business, but every now and

then they would get off on a talking, laughing, or card playing spree. I remember one night after dinner when they were playing poker, I think, finally about twelve o'clock or something, I went to bed. It was a Saturday night, and the next morning I woke up rather early and Lyndon wasn't there. I went downstairs, and there they were just breaking up the game! (Laughter) I was furious at them for no good reason. I should have been delighted that they could let off that much steam and enjoy themselves that much occasionally.

G: I gather that they would get the Washington regulations and sit there at night and go over them and really work on the programs there.

J: And try to get the message to the young people, because oddly enough, they didn't come swarming to the door. You had to find them. A lot of them were kind of locked in the hills and hollows. You really had to go to them and get the message to them. Lyndon traveled to a lot of the schools and colleges to explain the programs. You see, it was a double-faceted thing. One was to teach skills: auto mechanic work, iron work, painting, carpentry, all sorts of work, to young boys; cooking, sewing to young women. That is, to the sort of people who, at the best, would get out of high school and never have any further education. Then the other side of it was to give small jobs to young men and women in universities, colleges, who couldn't otherwise stay, helping in the library, or as janitors, or as just anything, clerical work of any type. He went around to a lot of the schools to explain the program to the college presidents and administrators and win their aggressive assistance. He especially thought that he did well at Prairie View, I know he enlisted--was his name Banks?

G: W. R. Banks.

J: He enlisted his [assistance]. Oh, he was easy to get. That was a man that he really wanted to serve his constituency. He and Lyndon worked hand in glove. Prairie View was a very special place to Lyndon.

G: Prairie View had a very good program, I understand. The files seem to reflect that.

J: Lyndon felt that it did. He really felt that they struggled to keep their young people in school, and also to teach them a saleable, marketable skill.

G: The program was begun in August, and I guess the most urgent thing was to get these college-related programs off the ground by the time school started.

J: I'm sure it must have been.

G: Do you recall any of the details here? Evidently he was trying to get three CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] camps established, [one] in College Station, one in Austin, and one in Kingsville, so these students could go to school and work.

J: Gee, I wish that I had been more aware of the real sequence and the real events. I don't remember that. I just remember the urgency, the need of speed, the feeling that it all had to get done yesterday. Their office was in the Littlefield Building. I remember what late hours they kept and how much they traveled. I remember how some of the young men were just kind of breathless and wondering, "What the heck do you think we are?" But they all soon became imbued with the spirit. If they didn't, I imagine [there] must have been a few of them [who] left. I don't remember. I remember one at least got kind of on a high horse about how much was demanded of them. But he was, and is, one of our best friends forever and ever, and that's Bill Deason. At one point, though, Lyndon said he

wanted to send him out to El Paso to be the director out there. Bill clearly felt that he was being sent to Siberia, because he had said that they were working too hard and too fast and that they'd do better if they worked a little slower.

G: Ray Roberts described it as a crusade, rather than an organization.

J: Yes, it was. That's not a bad expression. In fact, it's a very good expression. It produced that sort of a feeling that comes from working on a significant project and pouring out everything you can. That's a sort of a comradeship that was very special and lasted all their lives. In fact, one of the old NYA "boys," as we are still wont to say, now lives in Virginia, in Winchester, C. P. Little. When Chuck [Robb] got in this campaign for lieutenant governor--we kept up a little bit through an occasional Christmas card or something, I wrote him--he just came to see us and showed up at a lot of meetings. We had lots of fun.

G: Anything additionally about setting up the office to begin with or getting the thing organized?

J: No. I don't believe I can think of anything particularly pertinent.

G: It's a wonder he didn't press you into service down there.

J: It is. I often wonder how I escaped. I guess maybe I was being useful putting some dinner on the table for them. Or maybe it hadn't occurred to Lyndon that I could do anything.

But there are many names here that figured all through our life later on. Charlie Henderson. He and his brother [Herbert Henderson] were very important in our early congressional years.

(Interruption)

He [Kay Alexander] was the brother of Lyndon's brother-in-law, Birge Alexander; Ray Roberts, who's now a congressman, but a lifelong friend; Bill Deason, the closest of the close; C. P. Little and Fenner Roth; A. W. Brisbin; Tony Ziegler. All of them have remained a part of our lives.

G: I'm going to have to turn this tape over. I want to ask you about the freshman college centers.

Tape 2 of 4

J: You were asking me about this college idea of Dr. [Cecil] Evans. I can't say that I really remember it. But I remember Dr. Evans so vividly, and it sounds like something that he would have thought of. Because he's one of the real influences on Lyndon's life. He's the first person, first complete stranger, that ever wrote me a letter. He wrote me right after our marriage. Here I get this letter from somebody I never had met. He introduced himself as the president of this school where Lyndon had gone. Of course Lyndon then immediately began to tell me all about him. But he was telling me the sort of young man I had married. It was a beautiful letter. I wish we still had it, and I'm quite sure we don't.

G: I've never seen it.

J: But he was one of those people born to be a teacher, and also the source of a great lot of stories around the school, This was, of course, hard times. It was a small, unimportant school, teacher's college, but he was the most determined educator. He'd go off to these meetings or to talk to the legislature, whatever a college person had to do, and he'd always ride the bus, because he didn't have enough money. That's the cheapest form of

transportation. He would get back and be bone tired and very irritable, and everybody would stay out of his way. But yet everybody would know that, well, really that he was doing it all for the school and for them.

One of the things I'm gladdest about Lyndon was that in long years later when he retired with his tiny pension and was pretty hard hit because his wife was in a nursing home, and we were doing much better by that time--we had KTBC and we were doing very nicely--Lyndon hired him in sort of a job that he could do very well, but that really never would have thought of the job except for wanting to help him, and that was to listen to the programs and evaluate them from a public service standpoint, "Does this serve the good of the community?" and write us a little brief memo once a week or something. He paid him a nice modest sum for doing that.

G: How about the roadside parks? Do you know how this idea originated? Now this was evidently something that was completely novel that no other NYA program in the nation was doing.

J: I don't really, but I know Lyndon has always been very proud of it. He liked and respected the highway department because he thought they were an efficient organization and knew how to spend their monies well and get their money's worth. He liked anything that could give a skill and keep boys working hard out of doors. I daresay it sprang from the fact that he himself had worked on the road, not building parks, but just doing hard manual labor for a year or perhaps a year and a half. I'm sure you've heard that story. It took place some time earlier, before he made up his mind to go back to school. But I daresay that lingered in his mind, and the chrysalis of it may have been right then. But

anyhow, he was interested in youth. I don't think it's too much to say he was interested in the beauties of Texas and proud of it, and thought that would just be a nice addition to the highways.

G: Someone described a meeting, I think at your house, at night, at the home, and that one of the big proponents of this idea, one of the big supporters of it, was Herbert Henderson.

J: Oh, delightful. It could very well be, could very well be. He was a very inventive, creative person. In a different age he would have had the label of intellectual tagged on him--facile with words, delightful man. He had a big failing: he would get drunk and just actually sort of go off the deep end. Then a few days or longer later he would show up. There was a sort of a point of weakness at which he just fell out. But he was full of ideas, and he was a big asset in our lives. We were so lucky to have had him. I don't know quite how he came our way. Vaguely, I think, it may have been through Maury Maverick, but I don't know. He would have been the sort of person Maury might have known.

G: Supposedly, the President persuaded Gib Gilcrest to go along with this idea of the roadside parks. Do you recall any of that?

J: No, I don't. It very well may be that whatever credit is due should be equally divided between both of them. But in any case, Lyndon was always mighty proud of the parks and mighty proud of the NYA's part in creating them, and that he himself had a hand in it. I have a picture, and I'm so glad it was while Lyndon was still alive, that the highway department gave to me at one of these highway maintenance foreman's awards. It's made from a picture, but it was an artist's rendition of this picture of the first highway park,

which is built somewhere here in East Texas. It seems like it was sort of on the way to Luling perhaps, a nice sentimental thing to have. Another thing that I have that was done by the NYA that has great nostalgic value to me is some little pieces of copper, sort of a coffee service, a pot and several cups, mugs rather I'd call them, and a little tray, hand-crafted in San Antonio on the banks of the river in La Villita by NYA boys.

Every now and then the NYA comes back into our lives. I know when we built the Sauer House up here, Jesse Kellam decided he would go down to Mr. Wyville's [?] place and get some andirons for the fireplace. So he drew up a little design that had a Texas star on it and took them down there. "Nope, nope, couldn't possibly get them done by Christmas"--he wanted them for a Christmas present--"just too many orders, too busy. [I will] do it, but it would have to be lots later." Jesse somehow in the course of it introduced himself, and he said, "Are you Mr. J. C. Kellam that used to be with the NYA?" "Yes, I am." And he said, "Well, that's where I learned how to do this iron work. I'm one of those boys you trained, you and Mr. Johnson." Jesse said, "Well, it just so happens that these andirons are for Mrs. Johnson in a house that Mr. Johnson was mighty anxious to see built but didn't get to. It didn't get built until after his death." So that man said, "You bet I can get them done before Christmas." Then he went on to say how learning a trade and going into making that iron work had really been a great turning point in his life. He enjoyed his creativity and the skill it had given him.

G: I gather another innovative project was one that was actually referred to with the term "highway beautification," and it was planting trees along the roadsides on highways. Do you remember that at all?

J: No, I don't. I would have thought that was entirely the highway department. Was that a part of NYA? I didn't know that.

G: I thought maybe it was your idea.

J: No. I would like to say it was, but I can't.

G: Another related program, I guess, was an elimination of traffic hazards, and filling holes and ruts and putting railings along bridges and things like that. Do you remember any specifics about those?

J: No, I don't. I imagine he was just looking for low skill things that required more labor than material, in other words, something where he could use his budget principally for hiring young people.

G: I gather he was very conscious of how much it cost to put a boy or a girl to work. He wanted as little overhead as possible.

J: Yes. Yes. He was always conscious of money and irritated at the throwing away of it by any government agency or anybody. Of course, in later years he became mighty pleased to be able to have good clothes and good cars and other things himself, but it came along late in life mostly.

G: I gather there was another project that involved research in Texas history. Do you remember that at the time? Going through old documents?

J: Not really, I don't. There was a lot of college-type work in libraries, [of] a clerical nature, because keeping boys and girls in school was a major part of it. I don't remember that one. But I think it's a good one, and I know it showed up all through the WPA [Works Progress Administration], you know, the artists' program and all that sort of thing, and

also in listing all of the historic old homes, which was under [Harold] Ickes in Interior.

So it's just one of the cultural footnotes to the Roosevelt days that I'm glad to hear about, but didn't really know about.

G: You know, in going through the files one gets an indication that the President was constantly frustrated by the time it took Washington and the state, the various state agencies, to certify and approve all of these different projects and get the youth on. Do you recall this as a day-to-day problem?

J: Yes, it was. He was in constant communication with whoever could move things and whatever state cooperation was required. He would know the man to go to to get it done and whatever federal cooperation, he was frequently on the phone trying to build a fire under, as the one expression was. Of course Aubrey Williams already had a fire built under him, a great big one, his own burning zest. But still you had to make the whole bureaucracy move.

G: How did he and Aubrey Williams get along during this period?

J: Just fine. At least that's my feeling.

G: Did you get a chance to see them together during this period?

J: Oh, yes, yes.

G: Aubrey came to Texas I guess, didn't he, once or twice? Or did you see him in Washington?

J: I remember seeing him in Washington in his own home a number of times. Perhaps by that time we were already in Congress I guess. But yes, he would come down here, and it was always a big deal when the director or any one of the higher-up people came. Then a

number of the other state directors would come to see us, to see how things were going, because Texas very soon became a sort of an outstanding example of what the NYA could do. I remember there was one woman director--I think she was from Kansas--who was actually here when Lyndon announced for Congress in February of 1937. She had either just left or else she was coming in and we turned her over to Jesse. But I remember her, so maybe she had just come and just left.

We had many other interesting visitors. Somebody whom Lyndon liked and admired and worked with at sort of a distance, Mary McLeod Bethune, came and toured the state. Lyndon was not with her. I think he turned her over to one of the assistants who toured the state with her. They looked at a lot of the projects and I'm sure encountered some of the mutual difficulties of a black woman and a white man in eating places and whatnot.

G: Did you get an opportunity to meet her while she was here?

J: I have often wondered whether I did or not. You see, I never knew really how important and dramatic this was at the moment. I felt it was. I mean it was important and dramatic to me, but I didn't have any sense of the historic interest of it.

Mrs. [Eleanor] Roosevelt came once. But I think that may have been after Jesse became director. At any rate, it would be interesting to go back and see when it was.

G: I accidentally steered you away from Aubrey Williams. What were they like together?

J: They got along fine, and they just sort of egged each other on. They were good fellow workers. Aubrey was, in my opinion, probably a good deal more liberal than Lyndon was. I think I'd say Lyndon was more pragmatic and more--well, each one had been

formed by his own background, I guess, is the best way to say it. But they had a lot of respect and liking. I knew Lyndon used to tell stories about Aubrey, and perhaps Aubrey did about Lyndon, too. I mean, you know, they interested each other and sort of shot sparks off of each other. I remember Aubrey and Anita lived in sort of in between Arlington and Alexandria, out there on that side of town, which was then country, real country. He had an old frame farm house and sort of a fruit orchard, apples and pears. He would have people out for Sunday lunch. It was always good talk. His wife was quite pretty in a sort of a different, foreign fashion. I don't know what her background was, but she certainly wasn't the sort of woman I'd been likely to meet in Karnack or Johnson City.

G: I've heard that one of the first things that the President did when he became director was to get a much larger appropriation for Texas than was originally designated by going right to Aubrey Williams and talking him into more money. Do you remember that or did you ever hear about that?

J: No, I didn't, but I am sure that would have been what he would have tried to do and been likely to do.

G: He would occasionally go to Washington for these meetings, and I think on one of these occasions he met President Roosevelt for the first time. Did he ever talk to you about that?

J: No, maybe he just saw him. I really thought that he only met him for the first time down in Galveston on that fishing trip. Maybe he did. I don't know.

G: I gather also that the President and Mrs. Roosevelt, when they were going to dedicate that

Texas Centennial exhibition in Dallas, stopped to dedicate a roadside park or an NYA project along the route. Do you remember that at all?

J: Not one thing. Isn't that too bad?

G: I think this was in June of 1935.

J: I remember at one time they came through Austin on a train and Mayor Tom Miller himself--he didn't get his wife or any little girl to deliver a big armful of roses--he himself did it, with great flourish.

G: Now I gather the President also had a friend in Washington with the WPA that he could go to, a fellow from Texas named Lawrence Westbrook. Do you remember?

J: Yes, I do.

G: Did they work together on any of these projects? Do you think he utilized that friendship to get fires built under people?

J: The name is familiar. Now I remember that he was a friend, and I'm sure that was the way it would have worked. I'm sorry I just don't have any specifics about it.

G: How much friction was there between the WPA in Texas and the NYA? I know initially it seemed that the WPA was trying to assert control over the NYA.

J: There was. There was a man named Harry Drought, I think, who was a member of an old and fine San Antonio family, I gathered, who was director of the WPA. Friction did exist and Lyndon did want it to be autonomous, and he was pretty aggressive and articulate in saying so and managed to keep it so. I think perhaps he and Mr. Drought sort of backed off and regarded each other with a good deal of respect, although certainly Lyndon was much his junior, both in years and in prestige, and actually in the prestige of the two

organizations, because the WPA was a whopping big thing.

G: Was it something that the two of them worked out between them, or do you think they enlisted allies or appealed to a higher authority?

J: I don't really know. There wasn't any enmity, but I think Lyndon was just determined for the NYA to be independent and for he himself to run it. I think they finally settled for that.

G: I guess one of the real problems was getting the young people certified in this, as their families had to be on relief. That was the first priority. Do you recall his efforts?

J: Yes. I do. It took a lot of red tape and just getting the word to all those people that this existed and letting them know that it could be an opportunity and serve them. You just really had to preach the gospel in every fork of the road, which astonished me because I thought as soon as it came into existence that the line would form at the door.

G: I gather there was one project right away where they had everything ready and even had the media there to kick it off, and no youth showed up.

J: Oh golly, I know that was frustrating to Lyndon, and I do remember that it didn't happen as quick as he wanted it to, thought it ought to. They had to find them. It didn't have a thing to do with the need, because the need was there. It was bleeding there. But just connecting the boy or girl and the job and getting all the red tape satisfied was not easy.

G: I gather that the size and distances of the state made it very, very difficult to administer that whole thing efficiently with one--.

J: Yes, and they used to have these regional meetings and then the statewide meetings. I remember some big joke about--at least they laughed at it later, they didn't laugh at it at

the time--calling a regional meeting for tomorrow morning at eight o'clock. Amarillo was about--how far is it? Amarillo and El Paso and Texarkana, all of them are anywhere from three hundred to six hundred miles away. Anyhow, Lyndon expected almost more than they could manage. But they did have a lot of staff meetings and a lot of heady talk about getting the job done.

G: Did you notice a definite change in the President now that he himself was in charge, as opposed to when he was working for the Congressman, where he was really an assistant to another man. Here he was really running a statewide program. Did that affect him in terms of his activity?

J: Yes, I guess it did. It was almost sort of like a maturing process. This is a dichotomy to say, but he had a lot of self confidence, but he also had a very practical knowledge of his own shortcomings. But he pretty soon thought this was a job he could handle, and he was pretty soon on top of it. In fact, they were some of the best years of our lives, and they were not really two years even. It was just from August of 1935 till February of 1937. What is that--a year and a half or a year and eight months?

G: Did you feel that you didn't have enough time together during this? I mean, it seems like he must have been working all the time. (Laughter)

J: We certainly didn't have much time together! But then, fortunately, I was always independent, fairly, and I did not feel deprived or mad at the job or mad at him. I always felt that each job we were in was a significant job. Mayor Tom Miller used to have a saying, something like, "Each of us is in search of the significant." It was satisfying, and it was significant. I wanted it to succeed. I liked being part of it, although I must say I

had a mighty small role. If I had it to do over again, I think I would have learned more about it and tried to be more a part of it.

G: You didn't feel in competition with his job?

J: No. No, I didn't.

G: You were back in Austin, too, and that must have made a difference.

J: Yes. I loved Austin, and still had my walks in the bluebonnets, played bridge with some ladies.

G: How did that year and a half affect you? Did that change you in any way, other than the fact that you ended up going back to Washington? But how do you think you grew or developed during this year and a half back in Austin?

J: Actually, I doubt if I grew and developed very much. I just sort of played a very supporting, minor role in the NYA and with all those young men. I think they became my friends as well as Lyndon's: Bill Deason, Ray Roberts, just a lot of them, Jesse Kellam of course. All of them were dear to me and very much a part of my life. I was crazy about the house we lived in. I did have a bridge club, which I enjoyed once a week or more, went to St. David's to church, at a distance saw something of the University [of Texas]. Senator Wirtz' daughter was there at that time, as I recall, Ida May. She used to bring her dates over to my house. I went swimming at Barton's [Springs].

G: Did you see many of your friends that you'd gone to school with during this period?

J: Yes, a little bit. I'm sure I saw something of Cecille Harrison. I think Emily [Crow] had already gone, probably to get a M.A. at North Carolina. But yes, I would keep up with a few of them, and of course I would still go back to Karnack and see Dorris [Powell] and

visit Daddy.

G: I gather that you would get a lot of visitors from the national office. Richard Brown came down one time, and they had a banquet for him. Dr. Mary Hays was your house guest on one occasion. Do you remember her?

J: Could she be the director of the NYA from Kansas? I wonder if that would have been her.

G: I thought she was with the national office.

J: But yes, I do remember there were quite a lot of house guests that were connected with the NYA, either directors of other states or from the Washington organization.

G: I've just got an assortment of things, and if this triggers anything let me know. In September, 1935, the President addressed the American Legion convention in Dallas. Do you remember that at all?

J: No.

G: And another thing that may well be significant, he spoke to the Baylor faculty and student body in 1937. Do you remember that?

J: Was that in January?

G: It was February 1937.

J: Yes, then that must have been days before he announced, because I have the feeling, I do believe it was February when [Congressman James P.] Buchanan died.

G: Yes. This was about four days I think before his death.

J: No, I don't actually remember it. I think I'm just wondering whether he was in Houston on NYA business and spending the night with his Uncle George when Buchanan died, or

whether his Uncle George picked up the phone and called him. I know that Uncle George was very quickly in the picture suggesting that he run for Congress, which showed an extraordinary boldness on Uncle George's part I thought, because this was a very young David setting out after some very large-sized Goliaths.

G: There was also a regional director's conference in New Orleans in 1936. Didn't you go on that, too? Do you recall?

J: I don't believe I did, because I haven't got the vaguest memory of it.

G: I think once the President even went out to New Mexico to look at some projects and sort of get a rest from things. There was a thread running through these files that they were trying to get him to slow down even then and not work so hard. Do you remember that?

J: I remember his fellow workers saying that, partly because they wanted to slow down themselves mainly.

G: How about you? Did you try to get him to slow down and not work so hard?

J: Frankly, no, I don't. The first time I began worrying about that was when he was running for Congress a few months later.

G: Here's a list of some of the staff. If any of that . . .

J: Oh, Bessie Bardwell. She is a sister of an old and dear friend, Malcolm Bardwell, who was secretary to Maury Maverick and a *long*-time political friend of the Kleberg days. I can just see . . . Malcolm would have been looking for a job for his little sister, and Lyndon would have been mighty glad to give him one. And he kept on after her to do a good job. Edna Dato, she was a crackerjack of a secretary.

G: How about Marie Lindau? Didn't she stay on after he was elected to Congress? Do you

recall?

J: Who?

G: Marie Lindau.

J: I declare, I don't even remember.

G: Really?

J: Here's Herbert Henderson. So he was in our lives in NYA days. I should have remembered that, because I remember him more specially in the campaign. You see, L. E. Jones. It's interesting to think back how certain people followed us. Esther Mae Kinney, I still hear from her. That's not her name now, but she was Mr. Kellam's secretary. She's living in Corpus Christi, and I still hear from her. She has the most voluminous clippings of things even now. I don't know whether she . . .

G: Anything else about the NYA that we haven't talked about?

J: I think we've pretty well covered it. I hope I've given a sense of the ambiance of the whole period, which was of youth, vitality, high hopes, and determination. I think just about everybody on there would remember it as one of the best years of their lives.

G: Do you think it gave the President more of an awareness of poverty than he had?

J: Oh, I'm sure it did.

G: And perhaps ways in which the federal government can step in and help. Did he allude to this experience in later years?

J: He often referred to the NYA all out of proportion of the one and a half years of chronological time, yes, and he learned a lot from it. It was a big part of a lifetime of experience.

G: I'm wondering if he saw, before he took that job, the need for coming back to Texas and starting here politically and really building a base, rather than continuing to work in Washington.

J: I don't know about that. I really hadn't thought about it. Because I must say, just speaking for myself alone, that I just simply didn't think ahead enough to know, nor did he ever say to me, that, "Some of these days I'm going to run for Congress." I remember the first person that said that to me was L. E. Jones, and that was before Buchanan died. We were just kind of riding along philosophizing. He said, "Well, you know he's going to run for Congress some day, I reckon." I just sat there with my mouth open. (Laughter)

G: Well, he, of course, did run. I'm wondering how well known in the district he was.

J: Hardly at all, and it was enormously presumptuous of him. Because as he himself expressed it, he was born in the smallest populated county of the ten counties. He was the youngest of the ten--I think it was ten--candidates. There was one candidate named C. N. Avery who had been a close friend and confidante of Buchanan, and had been a Washington lobbyist and working, I think, for the building material that the Capitol was made out of, the granite quarries and all sort of building material, native stone, who certainly knew his way around in Washington very well. Then there was a judge named [Sam V.] Stone from Taylor or Georgetown. Then there was a man named Polk Shelton, who was kin to everybody in Austin, who was politically savvy. He was just an enormously likeable and politically astute man some, I guess, possibly ten years older than Lyndon. Then there was a state senator named Houghton Brownlee, of a good old Austin family, very well known. I don't know who all else. But there was a sizeable

field of really important candidates, and they must not have taken him very seriously at first. It really was presumptuous of him, as I look back on it.

But he had enormous interest and zest. He had friends from the Fourteenth District who could really get out the message. I'm trying to remember whether it happened in both his race for the House and his race for the Senate in 1941. I expect it did. In any case, Mr. Sam Fore, who was president of the Texas Press Association--all of the small papers, the weeklies, whole lots of small papers in Texas--just traveled from town to town. He knew every one of those editors, and he would just tell them all about this young man in his highly colorful manner with every word underlined. I think that's what happened both times.

G: I guess originally there was some thought that Buchanan's widow might run.

J: There was, and we debated long and hard as to whether we ought to wait and see if she did. She was, everybody knew her to be, the quietest and most retiring of little women. I think Lyndon finally went on and announced before she had ever said, "No, I'm not going to." I don't remember. Perhaps you've researched it.

G: I think he went down to Buchanan's funeral in Brenham on Friday. Then all that weekend, I gather, you met with friends at your house to decide--

J: At Number Four, Happy Hollow Lane.

G: --whether or not to run.

J: Speaker Wirtz was very much in evidence, and I was on the phone. I asked Senator [Wirtz] to talk to me for a while, and we went walking. I said, "Do you think he's got a chance?" Senator Wirtz was never one to tell it big. He would tell it exactly like he saw

it. He said, "Well, actually, he has a chance, and that's about all he's got, because it's not going to be easy and he may not make it. But this may be the best chance he'll ever have. It's a big gamble." But anyhow, he made me feel that it was possible. I just thought if Lyndon wanted this as much as he seemed to and was as determined as he was, that I'd just love to borrow some money on my own, from my own estate which Daddy was handling for me. My mother by that time had been dead a very long while, about eighteen years or so.

G: Did Senator Wirtz tell you then that money was a critical thing?

J: Oh, yes, we all knew that. On our NYA salary we certainly hadn't put by enough to launch a campaign, and we didn't have any rich friends. If Lyndon had thought he was going to be running for Congress any time that soon, believe me, he would have been making some rich friends if he possibly could.

G: Do you recall the first time he really decided to run?

J: I can't say that I know the moment. I know there was a lot of talk, a lot of people coming and going, that Uncle George figured in it fairly prominently, that Senator Wirtz was the strongest staff of advice.

G: How about you? When did he first discuss it with you?

J: From the very beginning I would think. It was right after Buchanan's death.

G: It was something that he thought of immediately then?

J: I think within, say, a few hours. I'm sure that a lot of his staff and friends and fellow workers sort of converged upon him and talked to him about it. It wasn't just Uncle George. I remember Bill Deason said, "Well, I don't have any money, but I have a new

car and I'll just turn it over to you." And he did. We practically used it up, drove it so far and so fast. Uncle George put at his disposal practically his entire savings. I feel sure we paid him back, I hope to heavens--I believe we did.

I called up Daddy and said, "Daddy, I think it's time I want to get some of the money Mother left me. We'll say it's a loan, and we'll pay it back when and as we can." You know, pay it back into the estate for our own later use. "How much you want?" I said, "We need ten thousand." He said, "Hmm? Sure you can't get by on five?" Lyndon was standing by me telling me he had to have ten. So I said, "No, we have to have ten." And he said, "Alright." And I said, "Well, can you have it in the bank for me in the morning?" This was eight or nine o'clock at night, not very late because you couldn't have gotten my daddy out of bed after, say, nine o'clock. In a slightly exasperated voice he said, "No, I can't." I just gulped. Then he went right on and said, "Tomorrow's Sunday." He says, "I'll have it there Monday morning at nine o'clock." (Laughter)

Tape 3 of 4

G: --was enthusiastic about the congressional [race?]

J: Oh no, far from it. Because his opinion of politics was rather dim. On the other hand, he had a high opinion of Lyndon. He thought if this was, peculiarly enough, the career that he wanted to follow, that he would probably do very well in it, and he'd be glad to back him. If I wanted it, if Lyndon wanted it, yes, he'd be for it. But he would have been far more glad to see him enter some field of business.

G: Did he try to dissuade him at all?

J: Not at all. But nevertheless, one knew what he thought. At least I'm reasonably sure I

knew what he thought.

G: How about his own parents? Did the President talk with his own parents before deciding to run?

J: I am quite sure he did, and I'm sure he talked at length with his father, because his father was enthusiastic from the very beginning, and marvelously helpful, within the limits of his physical strength at that time.

G: Can you recall any of the discussion between the two of them during this time?

J: No, I can't. But I can remember that Lyndon had told me, and I had heard from the family, let's see, I believe it was Lyndon's mother's father who had run for that office and had not made it, and that, well, there was a little sentimental background of that nature.

G: I gather money was one key consideration. You helped take care of that, and I guess other people, his Uncle George, contributed. What were some of the other decisions or major considerations that had to be considered when he was making that decision?

J: Well, first and foremost, I would think, was the size and caliber of his opponents. He was quick to gauge them and to know that they had a broader network of friends, in business particularly, and more experience. Then his very youth at that time was decidedly not in his favor. I believe he was twenty-seven. What was it, twenty-six or twenty-seven?

G: I think it was twenty-seven.

S: So he had no illusions about his chances. If he had been really aiming to run for Congress in anything like that quick he would have known the name of every mayor in the Tenth District. He would have known every *jefe*, as you would have said in the

Fourteenth District, that is, the *alcalde*, the chief, the big man, the fellow you went to talk to in each community. He didn't know that. He knew a lot of college officials statewide. He knew a lot of people the NYA had thrown him in contact with, but he hadn't worked in the Tenth District like he had in the Fourteenth. He knew the way to do it, but he hadn't been doing it that way because that wasn't the job at hand.

So he started from way behind. He didn't even know a handful of businessmen. I remember there were one or two businessmen that he knew and that were always on his gold star list from then on. One of them had a hardware store. Oh, gee, I ought to be able to think of his name, but he was a good old family of Austin business people. Somehow or another Lyndon met him, and he liked him from the beginning. Then I think he knew Mr. E. H. Perry. He knew him very early, certainly, in his congressional career and I think maybe even as he started in 1937.

I believe he made his first speech in San Marcos in the gym, sort of for sentimental reasons, because San Marcos was a town where he could claim some following. Governor Allred showed up on the front row. Oh, what a coup that was for us. He and his wife both came, and I can still see them there in my mind's eye. Also Lyndon used to tell a tale about how when he went to call on the Governor in his office and said, "I'm going to run for Congress, What do you think?" The Governor said, "Well, Lyndon, you never will get elected with that citified little hat you've got on. Here take"-- and I believe maybe he gave him his, or told him to go get one like it. So Lyndon promptly did and wore them from then on. But now, Allred was very nice and very helpful.

He immediately began to learn the people of the press. He would go down to the paper every night before closing to see what was going to be on tomorrow's front page about it. He quickly made one or several influential friends in each of the towns in the Tenth District. That is where he came to know this lady I was telling you about, Mrs. Emma Webb. She and her husband were both lawyers, an unusual circumstance in Central Texas in the 1930s, and very strong civic leaders, both of them.

G: Was there ever, in addition to Mrs. Buchanan, another candidate that they felt might run that they didn't want to run and that was a consideration? Someone like, let's say, Tom Miller, if he had decided to run? Would that have [affected his decision]?

J: Gosh, that would have made it tough. I don't remember that. I don't remember that there was any. Well, that does ring ever so faint a bell. But no, I don't remember its being a likely happenstance.

G: How about issues? Did the President seem to feel that he stood apart from the other candidates on issues right away, or was this something that developed later during the campaign?

J: He quickly pre-empted the field of being the most Roosevelt of the candidates. He did it both deliberately, as a choice, and because he really felt that way, in my opinion, because Texas was not a forerunner in any liberal sense. Actually, one of the causes that he came out for right away was one that he said that he was the only man that was ever elected on that, and I'm sure that's entirely true. I still felt that it was a weak link in the chain, but at any rate, he won. Anyhow, he came out for the Roosevelt proposal to unpack the Supreme Court, or pack it, whichever way you want to say it. His friends said it one way

and his enemies another. But anyhow, you remember the nine old men on the Supreme Court, as Roosevelt described them, who kept on thwarting all of the legislation that he got passed. He had some kind of a scheme to increase the number on the Court, I think it was. Of course it did not pass. But anyhow, Lyndon came out in favor of it, is my recollection.

G: There was a poll taken during the campaign that showed that people in the Tenth District were overwhelmingly in favor of that court-packing bill.

J: Isn't that amazing? Isn't that amazing? I wouldn't have believed it.

G: So it proved to be good politics from that standpoint, and of course this was a winner-take-all thing. But I'm just wondering if maybe they felt that way because they linked the Court's negativeness with the failure to get those dams finished on the lower Colorado, those rural electrification dams. The Court evidently was in a way holding up these sort of projects.

(Interruption)

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G: In the court-packing bill, do you recall tying the judicial reform bill to the fact that the Court was balking on these hydroelectric dams?

J: No, I can't say that I specifically do. The impression was around. It was certainly in Lyndon's mind that the Court was thwarting a lot of the Roosevelt program, that much good social legislation was just being stymied by it, and that Roosevelt wanted, and he wanted, to just change that. It was daring of him to espouse it, and I'm surprised to hear you say that there was, really, a poll that showed that the populace favored it. I have

always thought, really, that they elected him in spite of that and not because of it. But he really thought that it--well, he knew that his whole stand for Roosevelt was a big reason why he got elected, and he thought that that facet of it, too, helped.

G: Of course in a field of eleven candidates, I guess, he would get the pro-Roosevelt vote, because he was . . .

J: He quickly came out--let's see, it seems to me . . . I guess I'm getting it mixed up with 1941. Yes, I am about to get it mixed up with 1941, so I won't.

G: You're thinking of Roosevelt and Unity, or one of the campaign slogans?

J: I'm thinking of a picture made with him and Roosevelt on the White House steps, but that did not take place until 1941, for the race for the Senate.

G: How important was Senator Wirtz in strategy such as this? Do you recall if Senator Wirtz had any input on coming out for the court-packing bill?

J: I don't. I remember him as being sort of overall head of strategy, and there would be meetings at night at his house. Less frequently he would come to our place, Number Four, Happy Hollow Lane, it was, I think, maybe Number Three, the simplest little frame duplex, a dull little place that we rented for five years. Senator Wirtz was our brain trust. I don't remember him on this particular issue. He was an amazing man. Generally I think of him as a conservative. He was a corporation lawyer. On the other hand, he had a strong populist streak. I just plain don't remember whether this Court idea, whether he agreed with Lyndon or disagreed with him but let him go his own way without too much [opposition].

G: Do you recall any other issue or important turning point in the campaign where Senator

Wirtz played the role or was important?

J: I'm just conscious of his presence and of his advice at every turn. I can't give you a specific instance. I remember the back porch of his house and sitting there with just him and Lyndon and Kittie Mae, his wife, and having a drink and talking until late. I remember meetings with a bunch of men over there, sometimes over dinner, sometimes just late-night meetings, some of which I went [to] and mostly not.

Actually, my part in it at that time was trying to give Lyndon a good square meal whenever I could catch him, which wasn't often enough, because he would leave very early. He would often eat in some country store, something like sardines and crackers and Vienna sausage and cheese and coke. I'm sure that it was a concerting six weeks of that which caused him to wind up with appendicitis. At least that and fatigue must have played a part in it. And then trying to make sure that he had clean shirts readily available, because I became aware that when he worked terribly hard, made speeches which were likely to be emotional and a lot of hand waving, long hours, tenseness, striving every moment, that he could sweat down three or four shirts a day. That, I'm sure, is a matter of health and fatigue. But in any case, it happened. The main thing I could do about it was try to keep him in plenty of clean shirts.

Then I answered the phone a lot, and gave him a lot of messages, and was a sort of conduit for many messages to him, spoke to all the people who crossed my path, like the postman and the laundry man and the grocery fellow and the dry cleaner, and my bridge club ladies. I'm sure I must have written notes to my rather limited number of acquaintances.

G: You didn't travel with him?

J: No, I didn't, and I'm sorry I didn't. But first, I myself was rather shy and didn't want to project myself into it, unless I was asked. And second, Lyndon had a manager, Claude Wild, Sr., who was a tough, canny, able guy. I liked him and respected him, but he didn't want women in politics. No, sir. (Laughter)

G: Was this *apropos* of you in particular or just everyone in general?

J: Just the whole bunch of them. I think he liked me well enough, because I didn't get in his hair or insist on getting into it, not a bit.

G: Whose decision was it to bring Claude Wild on, do you know? He was not there originally, was he?

J: No. I don't know, but I think maybe Jimmy Allred may have had a hand in it. I cannot honestly say, but he had recently managed a successful campaign for somebody whom we knew. I can't remember how he came into our lives. Jimmy would be a natural possibility.

G: Wasn't Wild paid quite a bit to be the manager?

J: I should think he would have been, but I don't know for sure.

G: I gather also that if you'd lost, that you could still go back to the NYA job, that there was an open door there.

J: I expect we could have. I don't know. Well, I would think so, although, gee, on the other hand, had we lost, I'm sure that the winner might have made enough trouble for us that we couldn't, because it was a sizeable federal job. But we really didn't think about what we would do if we lost.

Anything else?

G: I was going to say, that was quite a gamble.

J: Oh, yes, it was extremely brash of us.

G: Were you reluctant to do it?

J: No, I wasn't. Because I guess I didn't have enough sense to know how very little chance we really had. When Senator Wirtz assured me that we did have a chance he was utterly straight forward and clear-headed about it. He said, "You don't have anything but a chance, but it's probably the best chance he'll ever have, may be the best chance he'll ever have." So I can't say that I was loath to do it at all. I thought it was pretty exciting.

G: Next time maybe we can go into all the specifics of the campaign on just a week by week basis.

J: Well, such as I remember. I'll be glad to tell you anything that I remember. At least I became well acquainted with the names of all the ten counties, the county seats and some of the people in each one. But as for knowing the issues in depth or indeed being present at many of the speeches, I wasn't. I remember a few little vignettes.

G: Do you want to talk about those now?

J: Well, let's see, just four o'clock, isn't it?

G: Yes.

J: I expect perhaps we had better quit because any moment a man, his name is Mr. Barrs-- you've probably heard of him, at the National Park Service--is going to come. He's been wanting to come all summer, and I have been waiting to fit you in when I could and so these are the three days. I did have Barrs coming tomorrow, but I want to get back into

town tomorrow morning early if I can, so I asked him to come later this afternoon.

Listen, why don't you take a swim, and then I--go get--(Long silence)

G: --excuse me. It's on.

J: And in case I've given you that impression, that we did nothing but work during those NYA days, or during those first congressional years, it's not so. We had lots of fun.

One of the most fun times we had, one of the first real recreational activities I can remember us doing--and I don't remember quite the date; we may just have been in Congress a year or so--but it was we would go up to Buchanan Dam, where there was a great big administration building that had some meeting rooms and some bedrooms, sort of dormitory-like space, lots of cots, and a big kitchen. People could reserve it, people with a connection with the LCRA [Lower Colorado River Authority]. We did that a number of weekends. I remember Senator Wirtz'--[I] remember a picture of him and Lyndon and, I think, Jesse was bound to have been there. It'll be fun to get those old pictures and refresh my memory.

And that was one of my first long, continuing battles with the telephone, which makes me think we may've been in Congress by that time, because we would all get around the breakfast table. Everybody would come when he got ready, and the wives would usually just prepare the breakfast for their own husbands, or maybe just, sort of three or four of us join together and do it.

I remember Lyndon wanted fried eggs, and I brought him a couple and put them down in front of him, and about that time, the phone rang for him, and he went to get it, and talked and talked and talked, and by the time he got off the phone and started back to

the table, I knew those eggs weren't going to be fit to eat, so I quickly prepared another couple, sat 'em down in front of him. Same thing happened all over again. (Laughter) That happened three times before I finally got him to sit still and eat.

And we would go riding on the lake. The more adventurous of us would swim. We would play cards. We'd sit out on the front porch and watch the sunset and put our feet up on the rail and tell stories. And we were all very young, and life was good. It was a happy time. I'm going back to that old building someday and see if it still looks as inviting as I remember it.

G: Well, anything else before we shut down?

J: I believe not. I'll just see you again later on in the--

G: Thank you. You've given generously of your--

End of Tape 4 of 4 and Interview VI