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

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Transcript, Claudia "Lady Bird" Johnson Oral History Interview XV, 1/4-5/80, by  
Michael L. Gillette, Internet Copy, LBJ Library.

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Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interviews of

CLAUDIA TAYLOR JOHNSON

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

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

- (1) The transcripts shall be available to all researchers.
- (2) The tape recordings shall be available to all researchers.
- (3) I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcripts and tapes.
- (4) Copies of the transcripts and tape recordings may be provided by the library to researchers upon request.
- (5) Copies of the transcripts and tape recordings may be deposited in or loaned to other institutions.

Claudia Taylor Johnson      6/20/02  
Claudia Taylor Johnson      Date

by Patti 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 XV      covering 1941-1942  
DATE:                January 4-5, 1980  
INTERVIEWEE:      LADY BIRD JOHNSON  
INTERVIEWER:      MICHAEL L. GILLETTE  
PLACE:              LBJ Ranch, Stonewall, Texas

Tape 1 of 1

J:        So the campaign came back to an end and Lyndon returned to Washington. I stayed behind, as I expressed it, "to sort of tie up some loose ends." We have a letter that I wrote him a few days after the campaign was over, that I look back on as expressing so well what went on. "For myself," I said, "I want to thank you, my dear, because I got to be in on it. You'll never know how much I enjoyed doing my little jobs: my funny shorthand and laying out clothes and running errands and everything."

          Then I went on to say about thanking the people who were in the campaign, and that is one of the major jobs of a political wife, is thanking. "The day they were closing up the sun room"--that would be in his headquarters at the Stephen F. Austin [Hotel]--"I went down to tell them all goodbye and thanks for you and also for me. They've all been grand: Julia Bryden and sweet little Rose Groos and that slap happy Jerry Wilke and Lela Scott [?] and all. They all say 'we' about the campaign. They don't think they work for you; they work with you. I've come to think a lot of them, bless their hearts." I think that's the way so many of the folks who worked with us in the campaign felt. It was a

"we" business. They didn't take this defeat as the end at all, it was just a chapter. I think everybody was priming up for the next go-round, bone tired but thinking about the future.

There was talk about whether Lyndon would try again in 1942. He used the expression, "There'll be another ball game." There was also talk about Governor Jimmie Allred having his go at it in 1942.

G: Did the two men make any sort of agreement with each other that one would run one time and one the other?

J: Not that I know of. However, as I've said over and over, I really never was terribly knowledgeable about all that went on politically. I don't think they did. But I'm quite sure they would not have run against each other.

So I stayed a while in Texas and visited with Lyndon's mother. The fall, as I remember it, after that tremendous tour de force in August of Lyndon working to get the draft bill passed, was rather something of a letdown. At one point he went to Mayo's for a checkup, and I went to New York on a city trip with Gene Boehringer Lasseter, and we did a lot of sight-seeing. She went to see a young man from East Texas who was destined to make quite a mark for himself in the world of music. He was Van Cliburn. Somehow I didn't go to this concert with her, but Van Cliburn and his mother and father were her neighbors in East Texas and she'd known them for years. We didn't realize that we were seeing the start of a meteor-like career, but she was.

Of course, though I have spoken of this as a constructive learning experience, I'm sure that there were down moments for Lyndon. One of the things that helped bolster him and buoy him up was a visit with FDR [Franklin Delano Roosevelt] soon after he

returned to Washington. I heard him talk about it afterwards, and always with that little thread of excitement in his voice when he spoke about being with the President. He made some speeches that fall. The tempo of the war kept on rising, but none of us realized the gravity of the situation, at least I didn't, and did not realize what hung over us. We spent some weekends down in Virginia with Charles Marsh and Alice. We went home to the district. Lyndon always got with the postmasters and I think that was one of the things he did that fall.

G: Why were the postmasters politically important at the time?

J: Oh, that was before the Hatch Act, and that was one of the congressman's chief political appointments was the postmaster. He tried to choose a very popular, efficient, outgoing person, somebody who could and would do a good job for the post office, for the government, and for the congressman. When you got ready to go home and make a speech in Lockhart or Luling, first person you wrote was the postmaster. He would set about getting the crowd and the date and the podium and everything. I don't know when the Hatch Act passed, but it surely made changes.

Sometime during the fall Herbert Henderson died, and a chapter closed in our lives. There was nobody subsequently quite like him in our office. He was a rare man.

Lyndon was very interested in all the defense plans; he was a strong defense man always.

G: I want to ask you one question about that selective service extension. We've talked about that and how important that was, carrying by one vote. I understand that President Johnson was the floor leader on that, working with Speaker [Sam] Rayburn.



J: Yes, he was the chief lieutenant, as I remember it, for the Speaker.

G: Have you ever heard any stories of how they passed that bill, people they got to influence congressmen, to persuade them, and how they turned the votes around on that? Or any one person that he might have leaned on in particular to get the necessary one-vote margin?

J: I wish I could. I don't. A sizeable part of it was just the drudgery of counting every last one of those votes and making sure day-by-day that every one of them didn't get sick, or if he got sick, just came in barely on his last gasp and voted, or that he didn't go home to his district for any reason whatsoever, no matter how important it may seem to him. It was just getting them there; physically getting them there was one of the problems. But of course, it also took a lot of persuasion and long, long talk, but I, unfortunately, was not a part of it and don't remember any of it.

I remember that sometime around about Thanksgiving my Uncle Claud died, in Alabama. He had managed my mother's estate, and then after her death, my share and my brothers share of her property. Then he had no wife or children, so it was always generally understood that we would be among his heirs, the Taylor children. He was a dear, eccentric, delightful part of my childhood, and I'm sure I've talked about him a good deal in the past. As I look, back I'm sorry I didn't spend more hours with him in my mature years when I would have appreciated him more.

I did not even go to the funeral. I don't remember why, but I think I must have just been recovering from an operation. I went to Baltimore, to Johns Hopkins, to have an operation in the fall. I don't remember exactly when, possibly in mid-October or

something. This was one of those gynecological operations because we at this point still did not have any children and we would like to have had some sometime. That's the only reason I can possibly think of why I wasn't there. He died suddenly; there was no warning, apparently in his sleep. There must have been some important reason why [I did not attend the funeral].

G: Now you did go down there later I understand.

J: I went down later, yes. Actually, I must have gone down in early December and stayed at Elaine's, my cousin Elaine Fischesser, in Montgomery. It was an opportunity to do two things: be with Aunt Effie at Elaine's, and work on Uncle Claude's estate. I had gone out to Billingsley on the morning of December 7 and spent the morning looking at his books in the huge old frame store, two-storied, high, vaulting, that topped a hill in Billingsley, where I had spent so many childhood hours climbing around all over the roof with my cousins and dragging toy wagons up and down the porch areas. Billingsley marked my childhood and was very dear and familiar to me. I was going back over these books and observing timber sales on the Alabama lands as far back as 1912, earlier ones written in my grandfather's hands, from 1912 to 1941 in Uncle Claud's hands, in recording the sales on these rolling, green hills of Autauga County and farmlands of Chilton County, cotton production--most of it was in tenant farms, and then some of it, the most productive crop really, was in pine trees.

G: Was some of Aunt Effie's money involved in this, too? Did he owe her?

J: Yes. Just about everything she had was, because my Uncle Claud handled his dead sister Minnie's property, his spinster sister Effie's property, and his own. He died without a

will, although he was a very careful, conservative, intelligent man. You just have to wonder how that happens to people. So the estate was really in a very considerable muddle. His remaining sibling, who was his brother, Uncle Harry Pattillo of Selma, became administrator, because I think the court made him administrator. He wasn't executor because there was no will. It was evident there was going to be quite a lot of dissension about how everything was divided up. We were all going over the books and trying to count the property, which I must say is a very muddled process. Then there were others involved, too, because my grandfather, Luke Pattillo, had married a widow who had two daughters and these daughters had numerous daughters. My dear cousin Elaine, with whom I was always very close, was the daughter of one of these daughters of my grandmother Pattillo; she was Aunt Susie's daughter. Oh, that's a long way about to say where I was and what I was doing on December 7, but at any rate, I was in Billingsley going over the books.

All of a sudden, into Uncle Claud's, office there burst a man whom I can only describe--this sounds cruel, but he was thought of as the village idiot, sort of. He was a perfectly nice person but of low IQ, but good natured and very affable and mighty talkative and just went around talking all the time, in fact. But he said, "Lady Bird, the Japanese have bombed Pearl Harbor! We're going to war!" I thought, "My goodness, he's just really gone too far this time. That can't be true." I simply didn't believe it. However, it shook me up, enough that I pretty soon packed up all my records and went back in to Montgomery, and sure enough, it was true.

G: How did you find out there? Did you hear it on the radio or something?

J: I must have heard it on--I do not remember whether I had a car radio or not. I certainly knew it the moment I walked into Elaine's house because all of Elaine's family, all the other cousins and relatives, were just well informed, bright as could be, just jumping at the news of the day. In fact, we had had long discussions about all of the situation with Japan the night before and that morning at breakfast before I drove to Billingsley. I remember, with appropriate dismay, how I had said it was absolutely unthinkable; just look up on the map. That little old bitty bunch of islands fragmented over there, sitting in the middle of the ocean, how could they possibly attack us thousands of miles away. But so much for that kind of assurance. There was my cousin, Edwina, a lawyer, a very able woman, who was head of the pardons and parole board, and my cousin Elaine and Aunt Effie and various people. They were all just chattering away and listening to the radio and excited and scared and uncertain and confused, as we all were.

I began to try at once to reach Lyndon on the phone, and I must have tried for hours, but I got him, before the day was over. Understandably enough, all the phone lines were terrifically in use, but I eventually got him. I remember the excitement in his voice and the anger in his voice, and just the flat statement that they have destroyed our navy at Pearl Harbor. Well, it wasn't quite that bad, but Lord knows it was terrific enough. I am not sure what he said right then about his plans. I think he said he was going down the next morning and ask for active duty, because he had said during the campaign repeatedly, "If I vote to send your son to war I'm going with him." I believe he said that on the phone to me. At any rate, I know he lost no time in going down to report for active duty with the navy. He had been in the reserve for some years. He told me to

come on back to Washington, which I of course was going to do anyhow, because everybody wanted to be at their home base to await whatever was going to happen.

But the next morning I did go back out to Billingsley for one wind-up time. It was in front of the old courthouse in Prattville, in the shadow of the Confederate monument, that I and ever so many of the assembled townspeople of Prattville heard FDR's voice make that speech about this day will live in infamy and heard him announce-

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G: Was there a loud speaker system?

J: There was a loud speaker hitched on to the outside of the courthouse, because I dare say, in that poor rural section of Alabama not nearly everybody had a radio. In fact, probably they might have been pretty scarce.

G: Do you recall your reaction to the speech and the reaction of those [around you]?

J: Oh, sure. Tense, excited, and yet a kind of exhilaration. "Well, here we are. Now we know where we stand."

G: I gather it was a unifying experience.

J: Oh, indeed it was, absolutely. God prevent, but if ever again we're in a war, may it begin with something like Pearl Harbor or the Alamo, or else we'll go through that same eroding effect, what took place in the Vietnam War, for instance.

So, I went back to Washington. There had always been a recess at Christmas of the Congress. It was uncertain this time. I don't remember exactly the series of decisions about when and whether there would be. I just remember that Lyndon got put on active duty with the navy, that he got some uniforms; he got in the process of getting uniforms

in any case.

That we began to make plans for the office, which he was just going to leave open and functioning. John, I believe--John Connally, I think, had already left or left right soon. At any rate, it was obvious he wasn't going to be there because he was going to have active duty with the navy. And although Walter [Jenkins] would be there maybe a little bit longer, it was obvious that the strength of our office was going to be greatly reduced. There was one young man in the office, O. J. Weber, and I think he was already in--I know he was already in at that time--who had such a bad eye problem, wore real thick glasses, that he could not get in right away. He began to drink carrot juice practically by the case in an effort to get his eyes jacked up to the point where he could go to officer training school. Well, I don't know just exactly what the components of the office were.

G: When we get into 1942 I have a list of them, and your observations about each one, I might add.

One thing here that seems appropriate. I understand that he stopped his congressional salary while he was gone, that he did not receive pay.

J: Oh, certainly he did. You bet he did.

G: Do you remember the details of that?

J: I remember it very well, indeed. It affected our standard of living.

(Interruption)

Christmas of 1941 was one of those odd little islands of stillness in the midst of a great turmoil, sort of a watershed of history was happening to us. And yet we knew for

just a brief while we would be still and visit with our family. I don't even remember how we got there. I feel sure that Lyndon flew and I may have driven. In any case, we arrived in Austin at Christmas and were there with Mrs. Johnson. I remember Lyndon in his uniform, and he really was resplendent. It was so becoming, and that cap and that huge heavy overcoat stayed with us all through the years. I think maybe they have both wound up in the Library. I remember Mrs. Johnson's little house on Harris Boulevard and all the children there. Rebekah and Josefa and Sam Houston and Lucia and Lyndon, and now of those five, there is only one left, Lucia. Mrs. Johnson sort of presiding over us all and just so proud to have us there. Aunt Lucy and Uncle Sterling, they were there with us. She had a Christmas tree in the living room sort of close to the window that faced on the street. We always had fruit cake and coffee and never, never one touch of anything alcoholic.

The main focus, the main thing that brought us there was Mrs. Johnson, because every last one of them loved her, although there was not always harmony between every one of them. It was a dramatic time because we didn't know what would be happening next and when we would all meet again, and I knew particularly a straining time for Mrs. Johnson, to see her eldest leave in uniform for God knows where. As for me, with the optimism of youth I just felt completely sure that he would return, safe and sound and with some achievements.

G: Did he and his mother talk about the war and the fact that he was--?

J: I feel sure they did. I cannot precisely remember it, but he was always a very--he didn't keep things back, and he probably would have talked about all sorts of things like wills

and what she would do, what he wanted to do to help take care of her and her plans for the next year or so.

G: Did he, to your knowledge, make any plans for her along this line that you recall specifically?

J: I don't. He had already made arrangements and I think he was joined I think specifically by Josefa in helping arrange to get that house for her. He had already put in her name a modest amount of income and an insurance policy. Our means were not great at that time, but he had thought about it and done something about it, to the extent that he could.

So, he started for the West Coast right after Christmas. My recollection is that I went with him and I do believe that Bill Deason was along with us. I remember having a little typewriter, a portable typewriter, and my shorthand book, and the resolve that I was going to learn to be a good secretary, and did take some notes as he talked on the train going out. I always loved train travel. I think it was somewhere along the way that Bill Deason came up with the idea that as soon as we had said all of the goodbyes out on the coast and he was shipped off to Lord knows where, that I ought to go back and work in his office. I do not know really when that decision was made, but I rather think it might have been on that train trip, and I do remember Bill Deason as the father of the plan. Do you?

G: I've heard that suggestion. Now I'll have to see if I can--

J: We should ask Bill sometime.

G: Do you recall the type of train travel that you went on? Was it Pullman?

J: Oh, yes. We went on a Pullman and I think we had a drawing room or a stateroom.



Anyhow, we had some pleasant smallish quarters.

G: Did you stop en route and see Tony? Was he then in Santa Fe yet?

J: He would have been in Santa Fe, yes, but no, I don't think the train went through Santa Fe.

G: Had you ever served as his secretary before? Was this a totally new experience for you?

J: Oh, I had in campaigns and things like that. I had always made use of my amateur shorthand, taking down telephone messages and taking directions about what to write so-and-so or tell so-and-so. I was not totally easy with it. I could write it better than I could read it, faster than I could read it in any case.

At any rate, it was a period of--in spite of the gravity of the situation, it was a pretty much upbeat time. You knew you faced something new and demanding and exciting that would just enlist every ounce of ability you had, and you didn't find that thought too hard to take. So it was on that note that 1941 came to an end.

(Interruption)

The first few weeks of 1942 were a strange, detached sort of life, living in hotels on the West Coast, and Lyndon going out each day to navy yards and training programs. This was a part of James Forrestal's program. I think it must have been not the happiest period of Lyndon's life.

(Interruption)

I think it must have been increasingly frustrating to Lyndon. He was used to working fast, and with a purpose, and he was the boss, and he knew what the aim was, and he could do it. Well, I think he probably found himself mired in a lot of agencies and red

tape and indecisive situations. The ideal was good enough. In the NYA [National Youth Administration] the mission had been to train young men and women.

(Interruption)

G: Were you based in Los Angeles?

J: As I remember, mostly we were based in Los Angeles. What he was supposed to do was to help launch a training program to bring a lot more workers into shipyards and later into aircraft factories with some kind of on-the-job training, or a training school from which they would go into the job. It was to try to meld the work of the NYA with the new war effort. So basically the idea seemed to be a good one and his being put there to help crank it up a good idea. It was only partially successful I would say. He would spend long days going out to places like Burbank and Wilmington and San Diego and back to Los Angeles at night. I would be in the hotel and would amuse myself delightfully, no trouble there. I remember one time when we were close enough to San Marino I went to see the Huntington Library, which is a great colossal place in a vast green garden. I was just filled with enchantment although many of the paintings had been taken out and put up because of the war.

G: There was sort of a fear that the West Coast might be the next point of attack, wasn't there?

J: There was indeed. And every morning I would go down to get the newspapers--to the stand--and I could see the big black headlines about two inches high about a half a city block before I could get to them and read them, and I would practically break into a run thinking that the Japs had landed on the coast. What else would produce such a huge

headline? I soon got accustomed to them. They could make a big headlines out of just about anything. But there was a very real feeling that we might look up some morning and out there would be a bunch of Japanese submarines firing at us or planes overhead.

As I say, it was a queer, offbeat sort of existence. Much more fun for me than for Lyndon, I'm sure. One evening we went to the Tom Clark's and had dinner. That was the first time I remember seeing them. This was in Los Angeles. It took us forever to get there. I vowed I would never live in a town like that, ever, ever. Mary and Tom Clark were so soft-spoken and gentle and sweet. I thought, "I want to be friends with these people," and indeed, they did become--they were already Lyndon's friends, but I came to know them, and they became some of my closest friends from then on all through life.

I kept on telling Lyndon that I wanted to go shopping and buy something. I remember finally, I think we were on our way to the train station or even to the airplane field, I don't know, but anyhow we were leaving, and I do believe it was San Francisco, and I was just putting in my bid, "Let's stop." So Lyndon told the taxi, "Stop right here. Now you get in and go in there and buy yourself something real quick." But I went panting into a shop, one of the numerous Japanese shops that I presume were destined to soon close up, and bought some prints which I believe to be Chinese, which I love. These delicate prints with peonies and flowers and butterflies and the colors of coral and orange and yellow and green, which have fitted into all of my houses: first into 4921 Thirtieth Place in the upstairs den. Then I believe they made the round trip with us to The Elms and the White House. Indeed, certainly now they're in my little apartment in Austin where one gets off of the elevator in the vestibule before you go in the living

room. I always pass them with a smile, thinking of how young we were and what an adventure it was, in spite of the overhanging--I can't call it fear, but gravity and anger and determination.

I remember I loved San Francisco and those steep, steep streets. I had some good moments of sight-seeing there.

G: Was that your first visit to the West Coast? I guess it was.

J: Yes, it was.

G: Do you recall visiting with any other Texans out there?

J: No, I don't. I have a feeling that when we finally went on up to Seattle, where Lyndon went to the Bremerton Navy Yards and to a lot of installations, that we did see [Warren] Magnuson. This is not clear in my mind, but now-Senator Magnuson, then a member of the House, was a great friend of Lyndon's. He was single at that time, always had some pretty young woman with him. I think we got together for dinner.

I remember well the trip from Seattle across this continent, particularly the first part of it going through the great woods, those huge trees of the far northwest. It was magnificent country. I love train trips and there was no better way to see it. You were just filled with a sense of respect and love for the country as you went clackety-clack across it and saw the changing scene out the train window. About all I remember about Chicago was how desperately cold and windy it was. Lyndon went to some more naval training stations there and worked on the plan of trying to further the training of young men to make them ready for service and what was going to have to be one of the biggest outpourings of war materiel ever.

Then toward the twentieth of the month, thereabout, we were back in Washington, and it was time to put into practice this idea of me going to work in the office. Lyndon quickly announced that he was not going to be taking his pay as a member of Congress, and so that reduced us. It seems to me that we went from something like eight hundred and fifty dollars a month as a congressman to two seventy-five as a lieutenant commander. We might check that.

G: I will.

J: But it took some doing. And the first bit of doing we did was to move out of our nice apartment in the Woodley Park Towers and rent it furnished, which not only paid the rent there but a nice little cushion above it. Apartments were much in demand, especially furnished ones, because people didn't know how long they were going to be where and the town was filling up with dollar-a-year men and all sorts of specialists and businessmen. I think these people came from Detroit, some suburb of Detroit, and were terribly nice. In fact, I never had any trouble renting houses and never any really bad experiences.

Perhaps we stayed at the Dodge for a few nights, I'm not sure, but the Dodge was always the haven for in-between times and new people.

And then I went to live out in Buckingham Apartments with Nellie Connally, because John--I did that as soon as John and Lyndon left. Now, I have a memory of John and Lyndon leaving on a plane [train] together, and of Nellie and I and Speaker Sam Rayburn going with them down to the depot and seeing them off. I think that was toward the end of January. Nellie and I were feeling forlorn and as we turned away from the last

goodbye, I remember how loneliness sort of began to descend upon us. The Speaker said, in his brisk voice, "Now we're going out to dinner. I'm going to take you young ladies and we're going to get you the best meal in town." And as I remember we went to a seafood place, and it was a jolly evening. He was a rare thoughtful man and always knew when to make his friendship evident.

G: President Johnson met with FDR before he left.

J: Yes, he did.

G: Do you recall any of the details of that?

J: I don't really. I just know in general that whenever he met with FDR he came home with an aura of excitement about him and often told about--maybe sometimes they would have lunch on what Lyndon described as a bridge table in the President's office, which I believe is what is now the Yellow Oval Room. Once at least, I know he had breakfast, or perhaps it was just coffee, with the President sitting up in bed with his navy cape around his shoulders. He was not very well and didn't get out of bed that day, but still felt like doing some work.

G: The indication is, as you've said, that you went to work in the congressional office while President Johnson was still there, or at least while he was back in Washington for a couple of days. Do you recall that phase of your work in the office? Were you at work typing letters or answering constituents or what sort of work did you do at first?

(Interruption)

I was asking you about your work in the office part-time when he was still in Washington, before he left.

J: I'm sure it must have been a training period. As it developed, I continued with this school, brushing up on typing and shorthand and that was quite a few hours a day, four or five, or something like that. Then the rest of the time in the office. I'm sure Lyndon was trying to indoctrinate me and teach me what the poll tax list was and the favorable list and his general method of mail. He had a policy to be sure to answer a letter before it's twenty-four hours old, and if it was the sort of thing where you had to call departments and get help on them, just write them and say you're going to work on it; you're going to call the necessary agency or department and get right back to them. My work boiled down to dictating some mail, reading all of it, signing it, meeting with constituents, taking telephone calls galore. Lordy mercy, there would be at least one a day from Mayor Tom Miller of Austin, and that would be a long one. And meeting with constituents who would come to Washington. Washington quickly became a magnet to which all sorts of business people came, wanting to get some extra materials so they could build that terribly necessary plant of theirs, because quickly all materials were put under restrictions. Wanting to get into the OCS [Officer Candidate School] instead of being called up as a private. Some of them, and I remember one particularly, just determined to get in, and go overseas, and fight, wherever he could, as soon as he could, and that was Colonel [Willard] White to whom Josefa was married. About all we could do for them was put them in touch with the proper agency. We could cut some of the red tape and sort of guide them by the hand.

I remember there was one constituent who had relatives in what is now Israel who died and left some property, and they were looking for a lawyer who would handle the

property and see that it was disposed of properly. So we went to the State Department just to get names and addresses of reputable lawyers. Not that they would say, "This one is the best one in town," and, "This is the next best," or anything like that, but those that could provide us with names and addresses and general limitations [?].

G: Was this the first time you worked in the congressional office?

J: It was the first time I worked with any degree whatever of responsibility. Now, I had already been well indoctrinated into the business of addressing envelopes for everybody on the poll tax list and into this envelope we would put one of the Department of Agriculture little lists of booklets that they had that were free. And the congressman wrote a sort of a State of the District letter: this is what is happening to the Tenth District, how the government is functioning in the Tenth District, these are programs you might be interested in, just about his activities and what was going on. We did that every year so that he indeed covered his entire constituency with a letter to remind them that he was there to serve them. I'm sure that I have mentioned this earlier, have I not, this business of addressing the poll tax list?

G: Yes, I think you did. As far as helping out in the Washington office, and I know you worked in the campaigns, but did you ever go to the office on a daily basis?

J: No, not on a daily basis. This was something that happened once a year, this great blitzkrieg of work to address an envelope to every last human being in the district. And it went on; it would take a number of weeks. You would become acquainted with your district, with the demographic makeup of it, where the Czechs lived, where the Poles were clustered, what towns were German, the areas that were Anglo-Saxon. It was a very



good learning experience for me, and I think it probably was a service to the people he worked with.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview XV