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JEWEL MALACHEK SCOTT ORAL HISTORY, INTERVIEW I
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JEWELL MALECHEK SCOTT

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INTERVIEW I

DATE: December 20, 1978

INTERVIEWEE: JEWEL MALECHEK [SCOTT]

INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE

PLACE: LBJ Library, Austin, Texas

Tape 1 of 1

G: Let's start out with your background. Where are you from?

M: I'm from Eola, Texas. It's a tiny little town about thirty miles this side of San Angelo in West Texas.

G: How did you end up in the Hill Country?

M: Well, I married Dale Malechek, who is also from that area; his folks live about eight miles from mine. Dale was going to A&M College at that time in Bryan. After he graduated we moved to North Dakota and lived on a ranch up there, and then from there to Minnesota and lived on another ranch, and then to Montana. The man that owned the ranch in Montana owned one in San Antonio, also. After we had worked on the one in Montana for a couple of years with registered Angus cattle and won shows all over the Northwest, then the ranch manager in Texas offered us a job to come back to Texas, near home, and work on their Hereford ranch in Texas. Of course, this is what we had wanted was to get back in Texas. At the time we moved away, it was in the fifties when they were having the drought in Texas. It was really hard to get a job.

So we moved home. On a Hereford tour we saw cattle on the LBJ Ranch on two different occasions. Every year in June the Hereford Association puts on a field day where all of the ranchers visit each other's ranch and look at their cattle and look at their

operation. On two occasions we went by the LBJ Ranch, and each time I told Dale, "This is where I want to live. I think this would be an exciting ranch." Most ranches aren't that exciting. They're a lot of work. It's a lot of fun to live there, but it's not very exciting for the wife. I thought that would be kind of fun, to work for a senator. Then when he became vice president, I really thought it would be fun. He said, "Well, I'm sure there are a lot of people that want to work for him, and I'm sure you'll never get to." The Ranch wasn't really that big then. There was only the main house, and a small house for the ranch foreman to live in, and the guest house. [Those] were the only houses there then.

But I guess it was in 1960 [that] President Johnson's ranch foreman was leaving, and he decided to sell his cattle because he couldn't find anybody that would stay. I think he had had about five foremen in a period of about seven or eight years. So he was going to sell them. Our ranch manager at that time, James Grody [?], went over to look at the cattle. When he got over there, he said, "What you really need is the man that's working with my cattle, because he's very good and he's capable of running your ranch. In the position he is now he can't go any higher, because I'm not going to die and I'm not going to leave.

So he came back and told Dale that he should apply. This was in November, I believe, of 1960. Dale came home and asked me what I thought. Of course, I was just elated. I was ready to go then. But they didn't want to see me; they wanted to see Dale. So Dale went over and was interviewed. The President and A. W. Moursund and I think Mr. [J. C.] Kellam all drove around, and I think maybe Mrs. Johnson was with them, too. I'm not sure. Dale said all the time he was telling all of his qualifications and why he

wanted the job and why he thought he would be good for it, the President was carrying on a conversation with the rest of them and seemingly ignoring him. Then when Dale got to the end of his story he said, "Well, that's all of my qualifications. I want the job. What do you think?" He said the President just sort of verbatim repeated everything he'd said all along the way and impressed him so much. He never forgot that. So he said, "Well, we'll have to think about it."

So Dale came home. They called him again the next morning for him to come back for another interview. Lyle, our youngest son, who was three at the time, and I went along with him and stayed at the Blackburns, because I thought, well, maybe, just maybe, they might want to see me, too. They interviewed Dale again half of the day and hired him, and I still had never met President Johnson or Mrs. Johnson or any of them.

They wanted Dale to quit that instant and come to work. Well, he couldn't. We had to give our former employer a certain amount of time to find somebody else to replace us. Then just moving takes quite a while. We had two children in the first grade, a boy and a girl, and the three-year-old boy. So we told them that we would come to work the middle of January. But Dale said that he would come for a week in December and familiarize himself with the Ranch while the Blackburns were still there, which he did. Then we moved in January. While we were waiting for them to paint, to do some things in the house that we were going to move into, we lived in the guest house next to the Johnsons' house. I kept thinking that I would get to see one of them, but I didn't. It was about three months after we lived there before I ever met the President or Mrs. Johnson.

G: Do you recall that occasion?

M: Yes, very much. I always made my own clothes then, and most of my children's. I had made some white pants. Dale was out in the yard and I was walking outside to show them to him, and the President drove up with his secretary and the Moursunds, and Don and Jane Thomas were with him. He drove up, and I was outside showing Dale these white pants that I had just made. He said, "Well, how would you like to drive around?" I said, "Love to." (Laughter) I wanted to meet him; I wanted to be around him to see what he was really like. So we drove around. I believe this was just before Mary Margaret [Wiley] got married, she and Jack Valenti. She was fixing to leave to go to Houston. Anyway, it was just real exciting for me to listen to him talk. The President was a great talker and storyteller. So we drove around that day.

Then after that, whenever they came home they usually invited us up for dinner at night on one of the nights they were there or picked us up to drive around the Ranch with some of their guests. So it was sort of the beginning of a lot of fun times for me.

G: On that first occasion when you were riding around the Ranch, did the President inquire about you?

M: Oh, yes. I think he always wanted to know about where you were from and things like that, but not really too much. I really didn't see a whole lot of them until we had been there about a year.

G: Anything about the operation of the Ranch when you moved there that you thought was significant? Was it in need of a new manager?

M: Well, perhaps they didn't have the time or the money to spend on the cattle before then.

You know, the Ranch grew after we moved there. A lot of buildings were added later, and certainly the Ranch was not the showplace when we moved there that it is today. But they had only bought the Ranch in 1952 so they hadn't really had too many years, and they hadn't had a foreman that had been there for any length of time to really have any continuity to getting things started. After we moved there they acquired equipment and buildings and some better bulls and so forth.

G: Do you think then Vice President Johnson had a goal for the Ranch?

M: Oh, I'm sure he did. I think he loved the Ranch, and I think he enjoyed building the herd. I think he wanted to have probably as good a registered Hereford herd as he could, and the best if he could acquire that. Because at the time he died we were in the process of buying a new bull. We had bought one and it died and he wanted to get another one, because the cattle had gone from a short, fat, stocky type to more of a lean, long-legged, bigger-boned type and that's what he was trying to get.

G: Were you and your husband to play a part in this expansion of the Ranch, do you think? Was that why he hired you, to help build the [Ranch]?

M: I think so. I think after he met both of us that he--I know he thought Dale had the ability to do it.

Several times he would ask us to go places with him. In other ranches that we'd lived on, the women never got to go along anywhere. I know one of the times--it was shortly after the first--he asked if we would like to go with him to Senator [Robert] Kerr's ranch in Oklahoma. Dale said, "Well, I don't know if Jewel can go, but I can go." And I said, "Yes, I can, too." "Well," he said, "Let me put it this way. If only one of you can

go, Jewel can go and you can stay home and take care of the children." (Laughter) But this was basically [his attitude]. I mean, he always felt like the women should be able to go along, too.

G: This was while he was vice president, of course, the first part.

M: Right.

G: Did you have any indication then what he planned to do after his tenure as vice president, or if indeed he intended to run again or be on the ticket again in 1964?

M: I don't know. We really never discussed politics with him at that time. Of course, we heard through other people, you know, as everybody did, that he was and he wasn't going to run at different times.

But really the main things that we were always interested in was the Ranch and the cattle, and he certainly was planning to come home when he retired and really get into ranching. Of course, this was our interest. When we moved there Dale wanted to show cattle because he thought this was one of the ways of building a herd, and we did show I think until 1965. After he became president, he decided he couldn't win either way. If he won, people would say he rigged the judges, and if he lost they would say that his cattle weren't good enough and a president should have better cattle. He felt he couldn't win either way, so we quit showing. But it was a way of advertising cattle so that other people knew what you had. We did win quite a few shows before we quit showing. This was always a thrill to the President. When he was vice president, one of Dale's duties was to meet the plane whenever he came in. So after we'd been to a show, of course, we always met the plane with the trophies and very excitedly showed them to him. He

always seemed to be pleased.

G: Who were the other personalities around the Ranch? You've mentioned in the initial interview Judge Moursund and Jesse Kellam were there. Where they much in evidence?

M: Oh, Mr. Kellam was always there it seemed. He was a very favorite person of mine. I think he also was probably the President's favorite.

G: Do you think he participated in some of the decisions concerning the Ranch?

M: Oh, I'm sure he did.

G: Who else would the President [consult]?

M: He was always talking to A. W. Moursund about cattle because he considered him a great rancher. But he did let Dale have more of a free rein, as far as cattle were concerned, than anyone we'd ever worked for before.

G: Why do you think he did that?

M: Well, I don't know. I guess because after we first moved there he took the cattle to some of the shows and we won. Dale suggested some of the things that he wanted to do with the cattle, and he let him, and it seemed to pay off. And, too, I guess probably he had so many other worries that were bigger than the Ranch. He would call Dale from Washington sometimes. We always left word where we were going to be anytime we left the Ranch so he could call us just about anytime, anywhere, and he did. Sometimes he would talk to Dale for a couple of hours. I think it was relaxing to him to shift his mind from politics to ranching. It was like taking a short vacation.

G: Did you ever have any insight as to what made Lyndon Johnson love that ranch or where he developed that appreciation for the Ranch and cattle?

M: Well, I think most people want to go home and I think President Johnson loved it as a boy, growing up there and playing with the Hodges and the Tanners and different ones there on the Pedernales River. I think it was a fun time for him then, and you know, you always want to go back when you get older.

G: Did he reminisce about his youth?

M: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, he did, in fact, believe he did this his whole life, because he had stories about the Crider boys that he would tell. In fact, when he was trying to make a point with someone he used these stories about his youth and different things that had happened.

G: But as he was riding around the Ranch or looking at a particular thing, would he talk about how he had been there as a youth or anything like that?

M: Oh, yes. I think he did. But he did this even when he was president, even before he came home in retirement. He knew most of the people in Johnson City and around, and when he came home and had us down for dinner usually one night, well, he wanted to know all the news about everybody, and especially friends that he had known as a child and what was happening to them and what they were doing. He could recall stories about going to dances with them. Of course, we--I guess because we were living there--heard stories from everybody about their association with President Johnson, especially after he became president. Everybody had something to remember.

G: How did he change after he became president from your perspective?

M: Well, we didn't see as much of him. Well, I guess we did, too, but when he was vice president he seemed to have more time when he came home. After he was president, you know, there were telephone calls, there were telephones all over the Ranch so you

couldn't get away from them. He just seemed to be a busier person with more things on his mind than when he was vice president. He had more time to think about the Ranch and things [then].

G: Was he happier as president than he had been as vice president?

M: I think so, because I think he was the type of person that liked to be busy and enjoyed all of that. Although there were so many people around all the time that I think at times he would have enjoyed maybe being a little bit more alone. Just personnel around, there were so many.

G: Yet I gather he seemed to surround himself with people so often.

M: Yes, he did. This is just my viewpoint, and I'm sure that everybody saw him in a different way. I know he loved people and he loved to make people happy. He was always concerned about everybody. He used to say that this was one of the trials of having a few things and having so many people working for you like that. Because you sort of take them all on as part of your family, and you have to worry about them and take care of them. He really tried to.

G: He really regarded them as family members.

M: Right. I think everybody on the Ranch remembers different things about him. One of the things that I remember, he was always worried about people's teeth and had me to take different ones like Wong, who was working for him at the time in his retirement years, and have all of his teeth capped in front. And Mary Ann and Lupe Ynclan, he really worried about people's welfare and he did something about it, and he helped them do something about it.

G: Who else belonged to his ranch family?

M: Well, his ranch family in the retirement years would have consisted of--for a while Mary Davis was working there, but then she quit I think about a year before he died. Mary Ann Burns, she was married to James Burns and they had four children, and she's still there with Mrs. Johnson. Jockey and Everee Wade and their children. Lupe Bravo. At that time Pedro Belo [?] was working for him, too. All of these people are still living there on the Ranch. Lupe Ynclan and his wife moved there about six months, I guess, before President Johnson died.

G: Did each one have pretty much an assigned function there?

M: Right. Everybody had a special job to do. Like the Wades and Mary Ann Burns worked at the house. James Burns worked on the ranching and farming end of it with Dale. Jockey was just sort of both places. He helped Mrs. Johnson whenever the President didn't send him out to help Dale, so he was pretty versatile. He could do just about anything, and so could James Davis. He worked in the house and outside. He could irrigate, and he could work in the house fixing drinks for a cocktail party.

G: You worked as a secretary, didn't you?

M: Yes, from like 1969 till he died.

G: When did you first get an inkling that he was coming back, that he was not going to run again, that he was going to retire?

M: Oh, I didn't know until March when I saw it on television it was just like somebody throwing cold water in my face, because it was a shock. We really didn't [expect it]. We had assumed he would run.

G: Really? He never said anything to you?

M: He probably had, but all politicians say they're not going to run. So we thought that he would run, or at least I did. But I didn't know--well, I probably didn't know all the reasons at that time why he didn't.

G: Did you later develop an explanation for why he didn't [run]?

M: I think he felt it was better that he quit when he did. I think he had a better overall view of everything. I think he really felt like he should not run again, and that's why he didn't.

G: Do you think any of it was health, the feeling that he wouldn't survive another four years in Washington and wanted to have those last years as a retirement?

M: I think perhaps that was part of it. I think he was always afraid of not being able to handle his job as president. I know he always used to say that everybody wants to be a good president. It's just that sometimes you really don't know the choice to make, because after all, there's not a book that you can read that tells you how.

G: So he came home in January, 1969, and came back to the Ranch.

M: Actually, how I think I got to start working for him in the first place, Dale, my husband, is a diabetic, a very severe diabetic, and had been really sick off and on, and the President was concerned about him, as he was about all of the other people that lived on the Ranch. But I went to him one day, and I was talking to him and I was telling him my concern that here we had lived on a ranch all of our lives, and if something happened to Dale I did not have any sort of a means of making my own living, and I would like to acquire a skill. I had tried a couple of times to go back to college. Well, it just didn't work out because the second time I think I tried I got pregnant and I had to quit. I hadn't been able

to get back, with my own children and their schooling needs, into that field again. So I asked him if he could help me to do something so that I could learn a profession, so that I could be able to take care of myself.

So one day we were riding around at night, Mrs. Johnson, the President and I. He said, "Jewel, how would you like to be my secretary?" I said, "Well, that sounds like a fun job, but it sounds like a bigger job than I can handle." So he said no, I could work with Yolanda Boozer, and this is what I did. Then also I was working at the Birthplace at that time as a volunteer. He decided to open it on a paying basis for a while, which we did. Then when it was deeded to the National Park Service, I worked there a couple of days a week. So now I have gone to work for the Park Service.

G: How long did you work with Yolanda?

M: I guess about a year, and then I did it by myself out there. Then whenever he had any major thing or anything, of course there was always Mary Rather that could come out there or Betty Tilson, or we came into town quite a bit.

G: I gather that a lot of your work consisted of taking down things that he said and instructions. Is that right?

M: Right. Mainly learning all of the people he knew and trying to decide what he was going to do before he told you. Just to follow him around all the time, well, after a while you sort of knew what he was going to do.

G: You learned to anticipate him.

M: Right. Right.

G: How did one anticipate Lyndon Johnson? What guidelines would you pass on to

someone?

M: I don't know that there were any guidelines. I enjoyed the Ranch. I loved it, and I loved the excitement of working for him. I guess he was a schoolteacher until the day he died, because he was always trying to teach everybody as much as they would take. He used to tell my children to learn and keep going to school and just take as much as you can. I think that anybody that wanted to, and I certainly wanted to, that he tried to teach you everything along the way. Because I know some of the times he would dictate some letters to me, and I would write them and take them back, and he'd edit them for me, and I'd start over. So he was very understanding, if you were really trying. I don't know how to put it in the term of guidelines. I think it was mainly I liked my job; I liked him; I liked living there, and it just all worked out.

G: A number of people were intimidated by him because of I guess his size, the power of the office, the fact that he was a very strong man. This didn't affect you?

M: No, I don't think I was ever intimidated by him. I was awed by him certainly at times. In fact, I was awed by the fact that we were working for a president. But I was never intimidated by him. He used to say, "Jewel, what is it like to live here?" I'd say, "I've got butterflies in my stomach every minute." I think it was always exciting. That's the way I felt about living there. I still feel that way every time I drive through those gates.

G:: How did retirement change him?

M: Oh, I think he slowly changed. I know at first when he came home he did everything quickly. He moved quickly. Then I think later he sort of . . . Too, when he first came home, he was always kidding Dale about his western hat, about his Levis and things like

that. After he was there about a year we started nudging him into wearing sort of the western clothes, and he liked it. He started wearing his boots, and he got some blue jeans and a blue jean jacket. I know the first Levis I ever saw him in, he was so pleased to have them on. They have a Thanksgiving service at the [LBJ] State Park every year, and he decided he'd wear it to that. Mrs. Johnson said, "You can't wear that." He said, "Yes, I can, too. Because I'll look more like one of them, and they'll all talk to me and they'll all be more friendly." I think that's the way he felt, that if he could talk like and look like [them] that perhaps people would be closer to him.

G: Was he a good rancher?

M: I think he was. I think he tried to learn, and I think anything he wanted to do he could do, about ranching. I guess he always knew about ranching, but there were certain phases of it that had changed quite a bit in ranching. But he used to say, "Jewel, you and I can drive through these cattle all day long, and we won't know as much as Dale does when he drives through on his way to Stonewall Cafe to get coffee. He can just sort of glance over them and he can tell the ones that are sick and different things about them. You and I could really drive through here and try and we'll still never know." But as far as managing a ranch, yes, I think he did know.

G: He must have relied heavily on Dale.

M: Well, they say a good manager is one that can tell somebody else what to do and then follow through and see that they do it. The President would ask Dale questions, and we had most of our meals at the main house at that time. He could always ask what was going on and sort of sift out the things he really wanted done and things that were really

important to him.

G: Do you think when he first retired and came back to the Ranch that he envisioned a role for himself as sort of an elder statesman with more active involvement in national and international affairs than he subsequently assumed?

M: I don't know. All I ever heard him say was that he liked living there on the Ranch and he wanted to get to know his neighbors. I never really enjoyed the sunset before; I never really noticed the trees. I saw them, but it never really meant that much to me. So I think he really enjoyed things when he came home. Well, he said it was serenity to be there. I don't think he really planned all that. However, he may have. At least I didn't feel that way.

C: You didn't notice him shifting gears? He was able to relax?

M: Oh, I think at times he probably missed all of that. I think it would be hard to [adjust]. It would be like living in town all of your life and moving to the country. I think it would be really hard to shift gears. But maybe we were so glad to have him home that we didn't see a lot of things that other people did.

G: After listening to his stories and his reminiscences for years, did you get any feeling for what was the happiest time of his life, or what he enjoyed looking back on the most?

M: I don't know. I heard him tell about the years when he worked for Kleberg, and the years when he was teaching school and going to school in San Marcos, and the years when he lived in Stonewall and also in Johnson City. His stories seemed to come from all of those times. He was always picking out stories that had happened at different times with him to tell us how to treat our children or how to discipline them. I now Clarie had three

wrecks with her car while he was at home in retirement, and each time she would tell him instead of us, because she knew that he was a much softer touch. So he would always remind us of the time that he wrecked his father's car, and his father went out and bought a new one and let him drive it twice around the main block of town in Johnson City so that everybody would see him driving and everybody knew that his father trusted him. He just insisted that we had to trust our children, that they would make mistakes but we had to let them know that we trusted them, that we didn't necessarily think that all those things should have happened, but since they did we would make the best of it, and we trusted them again. And especially girls, I think he was always soft for little girls.

G: Did he take care of himself health-wise in retirement?

M: Well, that's hard to say. I think he tried to at first and then maybe all those years of not being able to do what you wanted to when you wanted to, finally he decided I think that, "I'm just going to enjoy the rest of my life and do what I want to." I think that's what he did. So maybe you could term that not taking care, or maybe if he would have done all the things that some people thought he should have, maybe it wouldn't have helped any. I guess you're referring to like going back to smoking.

G: Well, and different--

M: Different things.

G: I know he always had a battle with the waistline.

M: Right. He liked to eat. I think he was always fighting that battle up until the day he died. He really was.

G: Anything else, just general observations on him in retirement?

M: I guess the thing that I'll always remember is the interest he had in all of the children on the Ranch. At the time he died, Lisa was six. But at the time I really was working for him and gone quite a bit, she was like from four to six and was going to the Head Start program that he had started in Stonewall. Because when he came home and he asked some of the help in the kitchen why they didn't send their children to Head Start, he found out their parents made too much money. They could not qualify for the regular Head Start. So he decided there had to be another one so that everyone could go. I think he worked out a situation with the Lutheran minister at that time so that the different children could go, and I think it cost something like thirty [dollars] a month for them to go at the school there. And Lisa was one of those.

They used the little building across from the Lutheran church, and it was one that he had had confirmation in. He didn't belong to true Lutheran church, but he did go there when he was a little boy. So he had a lot of nostalgia for that building. We stopped by there every time we would drive down that road. He always had jelly beans in the car in a styrofoam cup that he'd stop by there and give the children and go in. Especially if he had some special guest with him, why, he always thought children benefited from any little bit of exposure that you could give them, and he'd stop by there and introduce them to them.

But he also thought environment played a big part in shaping a child. I know for Christmas one year Luci wanted this picture, and it was a ring of children, black and brown and white. He had it copied and he gave one to the Head Start program, and he gave one for Lisa for her room, and I'm sure he gave one to many others. Then he asked

Luci what kind of books he could buy for them, and she suggested some Richard Scarry books, and he bought a television for them so they could see the children's shows on television. He was always interested in helping because he knew that all of these children, especially, that their parents didn't have probably the ability to give them all of the things that they needed. So he was really interested in the Velez [?] children and Bravo's children from the Ranch, and Wade's and Mary Ann Burns' and Lisa. He would tell Lisa that she was going to be his big girl that was going to have to help take care of these children all their life and see that they got sort of a head start all the way. Of course, this made her feel very important, and I think she still feels that way towards all of those kids. Now they're all in the seventh and eighth grade and I would say that most of them are A students and most of them excel in sports, from Stonewall.

G: Did he equate these sort of Head Start programs with his own teaching experience in Cotulla?

M: Yes, he used to tell me about when he taught in Cotulla that most of the teachers at that time would stay in the schoolhouse during recess and entertain themselves instead of going out with the children and playing with them and really trying to have some impact in their life. When he went there and started teaching school he bought some playground equipment with his own money and went out and really played baseball and other games in season with them, so that he could sort of get them to like him more and to get them to trust him. He said that was really part of being a teacher. You had to be respected, but you also had to be liked. He didn't think that all teachers had that quality. So this was what [he did], too--when we went to the Head Start programs he always wanted to sit in

on part of the session to see what kind of teachers they had. But he said that he really believed that as far as integration was concerned, it was going to have to start at Head Start or kindergarten. It wasn't going to be something you could start when somebody gets forty years old.

G: Did you have any insight as to his racial attitudes?

M: He was really concerned when he came home and found out that none of the black children on the Ranch could swim. Well, there was no way they could know how because where would they go swimming? So he invited them all to his pool, to come down there and swim. I believe it was shortly after that that the park pool at the [LBJ] State Park was opened. So then they had lessons there, and he insisted that all of them go. At that time Happy Feller was teaching swimming lessons, and also I think Lyn Nugent came out and took swimming lessons there, too. At least he did a few times. I'm not sure he took the complete course.

But the President was very thrilled that he had someone like Happy Feller who was involved in the program at that time. He was just amazed that none of the children on the Ranch could swim, because no one had ever said they could use his pool, and so they hadn't. So he was interested in getting everyone on the Ranch into the swimming lessons and seeing that they could all learn how to swim and do things. Almost every afternoon, at least the last year and a half before he died, he'd drive around the Ranch and pick up some of the children some of the time and give them jelly beans. They'd have stuff running down their arms; they'd just be sticky from one end to the other, and he'd pick them up and carry them around. When Mrs. Johnson would get home from work

he'd call and say, "Lady Bird, can we pick you up? We've got a few sticky children here that want to tell you hello." (Laughter) We'd sing songs, and he would tell them stories and have them all laughing. I have some pictures of those, too.

G: Was this part of the ride at sunset?

M: Right, right.

G: He must have done that almost every day.

M: He did. He drove around every afternoon. He really adored [them]. I remember once when Ellen Cernan [?] was there, especially, he was showing off all of his children to her, and they were all really putting on the show, too. He loved showing them off and carrying them around and getting involved with them. But if you could have had a tape of him singing, with all those children in a car, you can imagine, and everybody sticky from jelly beans and Cokes.

G: Do you think he missed Washington?

M: I'm sure he did, but he never said anything about it. He never really reminisced about it to me. He probably did to other people.

G: It was really a very different way of life.

M: Oh, yes, it was. On the Ranch he got involved in our beautification program there. I was the co-chairman of it. He helped me get it started. He told me the people to go talk to and to get help, and he literally went to our meetings. He helped us get a landfill for Stonewall by saying that he would donate equipment if Simon Burg would donate land, or something like that. He would donate one thing if someone would match him. We had meetings in the hangar, and of course he attended and prompted me on what to say.

G: Did he help you plan strategy, too?

M: Right.

G: What did he [tell you]?

M: Like when we wanted Fredericksburg to go in with us on this autograph party for Mrs. Johnson's book, and thereby make money for our beautification project in Stonewall, because we had been trying to figure out some way to make money. When they first put me on that committee I couldn't figure out, in a little town like Stonewall, how in the world do you go out and make thousands of dollars. We made twelve thousand dollars on this Christmas party with Fredericksburg! But I said, "Fredericksburg will never go with us. Why should they? They can make money on their own. They don't need us." He said, "Well, I tell you what you do. You go and talk to Colonel [Alfred] Petsch, and you go tell him that you want for him to go with you and get the garden club in Fredericksburg to go with ya'll in this. Because if you can get Colonel Petsch on your side, you can get all of Fredericksburg." He's a lawyer there.

So I went in. He's sort of hard of hearing. I went in and I told him what we wanted, and he looked at me. He called me Mrs. Halamecheck. I mean, he's never said Malechek. He said, "What in the world? You want me to get involved with a beautification program?" There he was, a busy lawyer, and had many, many things to do, and one of them was not to go out and help women make money for their garden club. But he did. He said, "Well, I'll help you get started, but I'm not going to put a lot of time into this, because I don't have it to give." Well, the President went to the meetings, too, and this sort of intrigued Colonel Petsch, I'm sure. We had several meetings in

Fredericksburg, and it really turned out to be a beautiful affair. We did sell a lot of books, and Mrs. Johnson let Fredericksburg and Stonewall have the money, which was quite a bit. Then after we started ours, Johnson City also had one, but we weren't part of that.

G: I gather that the President had a fascination with gadgets and mechanical [devices].

M: Oh, he loved everything like that. He loved the latest shaver. He had a radio that you could touch the top of it and it would tell the time. A woman would come on with a real nice voice and tell you what time it was. You could do this every minute if you wanted to. He also had some radios that told you the weather forecast. Of course, he always had a business service radio in everything he drove, in every room he was in. He liked being able to communicate with everybody. If he wanted you, he wanted you right then.

G: He had, I guess it was a two-way [radio]?

M: Right. And it really made him mad, because evidently Dale at times would turn his radio off. He'd get busy, [and] he'd just turn it off. So he had a loudspeaker put on Dale's, so that even if you turned the key off, here was this [loudspeaker]. Or if you were like several feet away from the pickup you could still hear it, because it would just magnify it. Well, Dale finally turned that off, too, because it would just deafen him when he was in it.

G: Well, lighters, gadgets--

M: Oh, yes. He loved lighters. He always loved getting the new lighters. J.B. Fuqua gave him the camera, the Polaroid, what is it, XL-70? Before it came out on the market he gave him one, and the President had to have some of those, which he did, to give that last

year he was living as Christmas gifts. Also that year calculators were coming out, and he gave everybody a calculator and everybody one of these cameras. It was before you could get them. Well, you could get them on the market, but not to the extent that you can today. And you couldn't get this Polaroid camera at all, this one that just spit out the film.

G: Vehicles?

M: Oh, yes, he loved cars. You know, Christmas was one of his most exciting times. He sort of "wasn't going to do too much this year," and about two weeks before Christmas everybody on the Ranch was Santa's helper, I mean, helping him wrap gifts, helping him . . . He just couldn't seem to get enough for everybody. But the year before he died he decided to give everybody a car. He loved new cars himself. I know he had talked to some of the ranch personnel, they'd never owned a new car. One of them especially had always wanted a new yellow car. So he ordered a car and gave everybody on the Ranch a new car for Christmas, and some of them got to go out and pick their colors, those he thought it would really matter to.

G: But this fellow got a--

M: Got a yellow new car.

G: How many cars did he get, do you know?

M: I'd have to sit down and really figure that up, but Lawrence Klein got one; Lupe Bravo got one; Jockey Wade; Mary Ann Burns; we got one; James Davis, that's all I can think of. Oh, I think James and Mary [each] got one, because I think they were separated at that time.

G: Who did his Christmas shopping for him? Did you do it?

M: I did a lot of the personal things he gave to people, especially after I started working for him. I loved doing that. It was fun. I would go to Neiman's in Dallas. We'd usually start in the first part of December, and we'd go to Houston and have lunch and shop there. And I did a lot of it in Austin.

G: He wouldn't go along, I guess?

M: No, he didn't go along, but he really had a lot of input into what I should get. He always loved to give women clothes, and he liked to give men clothes, too. He always wanted me to buy people on the Ranch clothes because he knew they really didn't go out and spend that much money on them. I think he always felt that you got a lot more for your money, too, than by just handing somebody some money, because you could watch them open it up and he always loved to do this. He gave people things as if he were giving part of himself. That was as much fun, getting it, as it was getting what you were getting. As soon as you opened your gift--everybody had to do it separately--you had to put it on and model it for him and everybody else. He always made a big deal out of it. Everybody on the Ranch got clothes to wear. Usually he got the women a nice dress or pants suits. Pants suits were real popular then so most of them got pants suits, and usually something nice to wear at night, some pretty cocktail dress.

But the first Christmas we moved there, before I knew what Lyndon Johnson was like, he invited Dale and I and our children to come down Christmas Eve. Well, we went down early, and of course we had our children all dressed up. Our eldest daughter and son were in the first grade, and Lyle was three, and I had them all dressed up, sitting on

the couch in his office. We were waiting for him to come, and he was late coming in. He came in from San Antonio, I guess, probably an hour after we got there, with his car and the Secret Service all loaded up with gifts. He had called me at home from different stores all over town wanting to know what size Dale wore, what size I wore, what size our children wore. He came in just like Santa Claus for everybody. He bought Dale boots and a western coat and a suit and he gave him a watch. Of course, everybody had to try this on as soon as they got it. He gave our children books and clothes and I can't remember what all. They got some toys, but I can't remember now what they were. They were just sitting there with great big eyes. To this day they will never forget that Christmas. I got a watch, and I'd never really had a real nice one before. That was really exciting.

G: He was fantastically generous.

M: Oh, to everybody. It was so unusual, because the man we had worked for before we moved there, I'd say we worked for him for six years, and he never remembered my name. At Christmas time he'd give you a check and that was it. So this was really [different]. I couldn't believe that a man like that existed.

G: Do you think he was actually closer to the people that lived there on the Ranch, that worked with him, than a lot of his associates in Washington?

M: Well, I don't know, because I wasn't in Washington that much. I know he was close to all of us on the Ranch, at least we felt close to him and Mrs. Johnson. The only times I went to Washington were on special occasions. Then, of course, we did see President and Mrs. Johnson quite a bit while we were there. In fact, we usually stayed on the third floor.

Before that, when he was vice president, we stayed at their house at The Elms. But I really don't know much about those years. All I know about is the time he came to the Ranch, basically.

G: How do you think that heart attack in Charlottesville affected him, physically as well as emotionally?

M: Oh, I think he started worrying about what would happen to all of us. I think that was his biggest worry. I think he was worried about Mrs. Johnson. He wanted her to be able to take care of herself, and his children. I don't think he felt good a lot of the time after that. I know I drove for him all of the time; he rarely ever drove himself. Before that it was sort of half and half. I think basically he was trying to get everybody aware of the fact that there were a lot of things they were going to have to do for themselves.

G: That's something that no one has mentioned.

M: Oh, really? No. He was always telling Mrs. Johnson that she was going to have to know more about business. I can remember him telling his girls that they were going to have to--he always said that a woman should always try to be as pretty as she can every time she walks out her front door. He said, "Just because you've got a certificate, that doesn't mean that you've got some man for the rest of your life. You really should work at looking your best, because you can't sell yourself for the most value unless you do." Even then he was always trying to stress that if you really want to get somewhere, you've got to have all these things going for you. You can't just be smart.

G: Why did he let his hair grow out?

M: It was sort of the in thing to do at that time. I guess he had never been able to really just

have fun. Before he always had to worry about his image and what people thought. I'm sure a politician has got more people criticizing him than [most people do]. At that point in his life it didn't matter what they thought, so he did what he wanted to. (Laughter)

G: Do you think that was perhaps a way of expressing some rebellion of his own?

M: Well, maybe. I think probably for a lot of years he had had to look a certain way, dress a certain way, and at that point in his life he liked clothes and he enjoyed wearing them. He liked looking a little bit different. Perhaps it was that to a degree, I don't know. But I think basically it was just sort of doing what he wanted to do.

G: I guess he realized after the heart attack that he really wasn't going to live much longer. Do you think that's the case?

M: Yes, I think he knew that he was going to have to make his days count. But for all of us that knew him, I think--at least for me--I just couldn't visualize a world that he wasn't there. I really couldn't visualize someone that strong and dynamic and everything, anything ever happening to them. You think of things happening to people that are weak, and not somebody that's strong like he was. I just never really thought about him ever dying. I really didn't. Even though I knew, I just figured that each time everything would work out okay.

G: Do you think he was more philosophical after that heart attack?

M: Yes, I think so. I think he tried to be around his children more, to tell them how much he had enjoyed being around them and with them. I know Mrs. Johnson was always saying, or many times I heard her say before we'd go someplace or before we'd eat dinner at night, she'd say, "I just want you to know, Lyndon, that I am enjoying myself. I am

having fun."

G: His moods would shift.

M: Right. I think he was probably the most moody person I've ever known. I guess working for him, that was one of the hardest things to adjust to. Some days you had to be quiet, and some days you could talk, and [you had] to know which.

G: Could you snap him out of a bad mood?

M: I don't know that I could, but I guess everybody worked at it.

G: Did you really? At least you could tell when [he was upset].

M: Oh, yes. (Laughter)

G: Perhaps some of it was associated with his physical discomfort.

M: Yes, I think so. Just from being around my own husband now, who's had a stroke and had a lot of bad things happen to him lately, and he's not really healthy, I think the way you're feeling that day has a lot to do with the mood you're in. It's kind of hard to be happy and gay when you feel bad.

But there really weren't many days that I remember that the President was really moody all day. Usually this would maybe just be for a while. Maybe in the morning when he'd get up something would happen that would sort of get him going wrong. It really very seldom lasted all day long.

G: I think perhaps next session we can talk about the trips that he took in retirement, the visitors he had, the events. You went with him a lot when he would travel, I know.

M: Yes.

G: Sat in on a lot of the meetings he had, too.

M: Right.

G: Is there anything else in terms of overview that you want to add to this session?

M: I didn't think I knew that much. When someone says they wanted to make a thirty-minute tape I always say, "What am I going to talk about?" I don't know, I guess I'll just have to have you ask questions and I'll try to answer them.

G: I don't want to infringe on your time too much today.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]