INTERVIEW I

DATE: March 10, 1977

INTERVIEWEE: MARGARET MAYER WARD

INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE

PLACE: Mrs. Ward's residence, Washington, D. C.

Tape 1 of 1

W: I had been working at the Austin papers for three years in 1946 and I guess I had been covering the legislature the previous year. I was covering some politics. One morning Buck Hood told me to bring a notebook and come with him. We drove out to 1901 Dillman and we went upstairs. As I recall I wasn't told what to expect except I think I was told we were going to see Congressman Johnson. We went upstairs to I guess it was 1901 A, whichever apartment the Johnsons lived in.

There in the living room, sitting around mostly in yard chairs, because I think they hadn't furnished the apartment yet--he'd only recently acquired it--were some ten men, as I recall. I'm sorry that I wouldn't be able to recall all of the names of all of those present. I remember some of them. Johnson was lying on a couch. He was dressed or undressed as the case may be in a pair of shorts. I walked in and was a little bit shocked. I thought, well, he's been out mowing the yard, these must be shorts for mowing the lawn. The heck they were! They were just plain old boxer shorts. He was unfazed by my walking in. I was the only woman there. Nor do I recall that any of the others were too dismayed by this, although some of them may have been.

At any rate I sat down, very quietly listened to everything that was going on, taking it all in. They were planning this ten-day whirlwind campaign with which he was going to beat Hardy Hollers. Whether he started out the next day, or I think probably not, I think it was some few days later, I was assigned to go with him.

G: Had you met him before this?

W: No, no. This was my first exposure to Johnson.

G: Can you recall how he greeted you?

W: I'm not sure he did. I'm not sure that I was even introduced. I think I just followed Buck into the room. Somebody brought up a chair and I sat quietly on the fringe. I don't recall there was any introduction at all of me to him or to the other people present, some of whom I knew. If I didn't know them personally I knew who they were. I'm not sure I even knew who all of them were.

G: Who were some who were present?

W: Bill Deason. I would have to jog my memory for others. Most of them are no longer on the scene. I think probably Jake Pickle was there and Jesse Kellam; one little bitty guy, a lawyer, who later worked in the state attorney general's department, whose name would come to me; others that Bill I'm sure would remember.

But at any rate, when he went out on the road the first time I was assigned to go with him. On most of these trips out into the district he would leave early in the morning, make several towns and come back that night. There was at least one occasion I remember

when we spent the night in Brenham, but that was probably the most distant point in the district. Many of those roads were caliche. It was hot. The car that we were in wasn't air-conditioned as I recall. It was a Ford.

G: Did you travel in his car or did you follow in [another]?

W: I traveled in his car. Now Jake [Pickle] or John [Connally] would be in advance, and others in advance, setting up loud-speaker systems in a courthouse square, going around the town with a loud-speaker to say that Congressman Johnson would be on the courthouse square at ten o'clock or something of that sort. But there wasn't an entourage for his car. It was just his car. He was in the front seat with the driver, and I was in the back seat.

The second day I think Lorraine Barnes was assigned to go with him. As you know, Lorraine is red-headed and Lorraine wore a hat. You did a lot of standing out in the sun; I don't blame Lorraine for wearing a hat. Well, Johnson took offense at this big hat that Lorraine wore. As I was told later, after that day that Lorraine was with him, he told someone that he wasn't going to put up with that hat any longer, that he wanted that little fat girl that had been with him the first day. Well, I was sent back out on the road with him for the second time. I think I covered every one of those ten days except that one that Lorraine went with him.

G: Why didn't he like the hat, do you know?

W: It got in his way. I was going to get back to that. Your job was not just to follow him around and report for the paper. You also took care of his Stetson, because he had two. He would wear his good one in the car. When he got out at the courthouse square you were supposed to hand him the worn one, the dirty one, and he would hand you the good one and you would take care of it in the back. You also kind of looked after his fresh suits, because he would change during the day, en route, at least once and his throat lozenges and hand cream, because he was already having trouble with his hand, shaking hands. You know, his hand would get raw. So you sort of were a semi-valet in addition to being the reporter who was covering these appearances.

G: Were these responsibilities designated in advance?

W: Oh, no, no, no, no. They were the sort of things that you became aware of and that he seemed to take for granted. He expected the person back in that seat to perform these little functions. It didn't occur to me or to him either, certainly, that there was anything unusual about it.

Then also it developed I'm sure that second time I went out with him, now this time he did ask if I wouldn't be interested in writing newspaper articles for the country weeklies, where there was a country weekly, when we appeared in a town. That meant that you covered his appearance on the courthouse square. Then he would go by some cafe and eat a bowl of chili or whatever he did, walk around the town, go through the drugstore, men's store, hardware store, shake hands with

people. While he was doing that I would go back to the car, and with my typewriter on my knees I would bat out a story on his courthouse square appearance that he would then pick up and take by to the newspaper publisher before he left town, while he said hello to the newspaper publisher, you see. So that was a little extra assignment that I took on.

G: Did you do many of those?

W: I think I did quite a few. It would depend on how many little country newspapers there were.

G: Did he like the stories that you wrote?

W: Well, he didn't complain about them at any rate.

I would not be able to tell you how many days of that we did, because certainly he spent some time campaigning in Austin, too. But as I recall, most of those ten days were spent out in the district.

G: What was he like as a campaigner going through one of these little towns? Was he effective?

W: Oh, I think so.

G: Do you have any vivid images of him going into a cafe, for example, or a drugstore and talking to people?

W: Oh, absolutely. He would go in then just as he would have years later when he was president, going into stores and talking to people with whom he was acquainted in Johnson City. He knew most of these people. If he didn't know them he sure faked it good. Because, after all, he had been running in this same district for many years. He might not

have done it in quite such a concentrated fashion but still, he went in as a person who was at home with them. "I am Lyndon Johnson, your congressman." He'd eat a bowl of chili, and he'd brag on the chili. Now I do remember in one little town the Tenth Congressional District cut down the main street. As so often happens in congressional races, he worked both sides of the street. He was working Bob Poage's district I think on the opposite side of the street.

We'd go to a society--one of these Czech or Polish insurance societies down around Brenham--went to one of their Sunday afternoon beer picnics. He was at home among them. Then we went to a Catholic Sunday picnic on the ground, on the river banks at just beyond Chappell Hill. Isn't there a little town by the name of Chappell Hill outside Brenham?

G: Yes.

W: I remember going to that with him. Of course, Washington County was always a thing with him. It was his toughest county.

G: Why was that?

W: The German element, I think. He didn't appeal to the German element as strongly as he did to other parts of the county, to the other derivations in the district, that is. Washington County was largely German just as Gillespie County was, and of course Gillespie County was never in his district, [which was] fortunate for him.

And a strange thing, my mother was from Fredericksburg; I had never lived in Fredericksburg. After I came to Washington he would always introduce me to people--well, not always, that wasn't true when

I first arrived. Toward the end of his presidency, or 1967, 1968, I was always introduced as being from Fredericksburg. I was the closest thing to Fredericksburg that he had up here. I think he wanted to identify with Fredericksburg. I remember being introduced to Haile Selassie as being from Fredericksburg.

G: I suppose that during his youth there was a certain dichotomy between the Germans and the non-Germans in that whole Hill Country area.

W: Probably so. Now my mother took elocution lessons from his mother. I think Mrs. Johnson probably went over to Fredericksburg on certain days of the week and gave elocution lessons. But there must have been, if not a physical schism between Johnson City and Fredericksburg, a cultural one. I don't know. Fredericksburg was pretty snobbish I would imagine.

G: That 1946 campaign was I guess the first campaign in which Lyndon Johnson's business practices were questioned by his opponent.

W: I think 1901 Dillman was a big issue in that campaign, and possibly an apartment house on Red River.

G: That's right.

W: Well, of course it was the availability of building materials. He was supposed to have used his influence as a congressman to get the building materials, because they were still hard to get, or had been I suppose at the time he was interested in acquiring these places or building them.

G: Do you have any particular recollections of his strategy in countering this sort of accusation?

W: Not immediate. I would have to go back. Well now, I do remember one. He used a diversionary tactic for one thing. He started talking about canalization of the Colorado River, bringing tug boats, barge traffic commerce up the Colorado to Austin. On election eve, the last night--I'm pretty sure it was election eve--Hardy Hollers had Wooldridge Park. He had someone up on the fringe, on the perimeter of the park up on the sidewalk with a steamboat whistle, and in the midst of his speech there came this "toot-toot" from the steamboat whistle. And Hardy Hollers said, "Ah, there's the LBJ Special. I can hear it coming around the bend now." Hollers ridiculed the thing.

G: As I recall during that campaign, LBJ had a big speech also in Austin at which he offered to make all of his business records available and challenged people to come up and [examine them].

W: Well, now this probably is true.

G: Do you remember that?

W: Yes. That does seem to ring a bell.

G: Were you there?

W: I'd say yes, that does ring a bell.

G: He attacked the Hardy Hollers campaign as being supported by the PUP Gang, I think it was.

W: Yes, Petroleum, Utilities and what else?

G: I wonder what the last P was.

W: Petroleum, Utilities, something else. Yes, I think that was one of his appearances. That was his big appearance at Wooldridge Park. Then on the final night of that campaign he had Gene Autry, didn't he?

G: Yes.

W: With watermelon, at the parks.

G: Were you there at that speech?

W: Yes. I'm sure I was. I'm sure I was. In Wooldridge Park? Yes.

G: Do you recall it?

W: I remember the PUP, but I don't think that that was sprung aborning in that speech. I think he had been using the same thing in his appearances over the district.

G: Do you think there was any validity to the charge that Hardy Hollers was heavily financed by these big money people, particularly in Houston?

W: I would have to be candid and say that I was a young reporter who did not do a thorough digging job of covering what lay behind that campaign. I wouldn't be competent to say.

G: Do you think Lyndon Johnson was more relaxed and amiable in those early campaigns than he became later? Do you think he was more tense later on?

W: He could get pretty tense in that campaign. I remember one day the guys, the advance team, lousing up on one little town. It was Florence or someplace. I think it may have been Florence. He didn't have a crowd at the courthouse square when he got there to speak. Somebody had failed to go in with the loud-speaker in advance and he blamed Jake. I don't know whether it was Jake's fault or not, but Jake got the blame. As I recall, John placated him.

G: How did he do it, I wonder?

W: Well, he caught up with him on the road. Johnson was really reaming out Pickle. You know, I don't really know whose fault it was. I think it was John [who placated him], though Jake himself may have, simply by making himself available to be reamed out, Johnson seemed to get it out of his system. "By God, don't let it happen again!" You know, this sort of thing.

So he could get uptight. If things didn't come off in apple pie order he was not easy to get along with.

G: Did you get much of a glimpse of the relationship between Lyndon Johnson and John Connally in 1946?

W: Yes, and I think that instance that I just remarked on was probably as indicative of it as any, that John could handle him, could calm him down. He didn't seem to slap at John the way he would others.

G: Connally didn't seem to be intimidated by him at all.

W: Perhaps that's the reason that he could get along with him. I don't know.

G: Do you think Connally was, shall I say, bolder around him than other people were?

W: Possibly, yes. But all I can say is possibly. I can't think of any incidents that would [back that up].

G: Let's move on to 1948.

W: That was the helicopter campaign.

G: Right.

W: He was in a great vivacious, vibrant mood much of the time, at least when he was campaigning. He really liked the helicopter.

G: Did you cover that campaign?

W: Parts of it. I was with him at times.

G: How did you get from place to place?

W: We would race along on the highways. Sometimes we'd get there ahead of him. After his speech he would stick around and shake hands. Everyone was invited to come up and shake hands with him. And "please stay out of the way of the rotor blades on the helicopter," you know. Let's don't chop anybody's head off. While he shook hands Joe Phipps [?] kept up this patter about Johnson and kept inviting people to come up. He'd be feeling great, people were really responding. He could read an audience; he could tell when he was getting through. Of course in the little towns they would really flock out to see this chopper, and Joe would be standing nearby. He'd be in such a good mood. He'd turn to Phipps and say, "Tell them about me, Joe!"

While he was doing that we would get in [the car]. Usually three or four reporters would travel together in one car. We'd race to the car--we'd have his schedule--and head for the next town to try to beat him there. And often, well, most of the time we could do it. There was no relaxation; you couldn't relax a minute, though. You were constantly on the go. When you got there very often of course the chopper would land sometimes in a field, and then you'd have to race across the stubble of a field or sometimes just a plowed field.

He had an extra seat in the chopper. He would take one of the reporters on, would vary it, rotate among them. The one instance that

I remember that stuck in everybody's mind--and this was the type of thing that turned the press off on him--Dave Cheavens was the correspondent for AP, in charge of the AP bureau in Austin. He's now dead. Dave was a fat, chubby little fellow, and as fine a reporter as ever hit the Capitol Press Room in Austin. A sweet man, son of a Baptist preacher, just a great fellow, but really fat and sensitive about it to a degree. So one time when it came Dave's turn to fly in the chopper, for some reason--I guess they had the chopper parked way away--anyway, they were racing across a plowed field, and I mean the furrows were against them. They weren't going down the furrows but across them. Johnson turned to Cheavens, who was trailing him, and shouted over his shoulder, "Won't those little fat legs carry you any faster?" It really offended Dave and someone else present. Maybe there were two reporters present; everybody was offended by it. It was the type of thing that Johnson seemed to think he was entitled to say, and he wasn't any more than the next man.

Of course there were times when he landed in [dangerous places]. We thought [he] took chances he shouldn't have taken, like flying that chopper into a rodeo arena in Waco.

G: Was the arena filled with people?

W: Yes. Yes. Of course they had it cleared, but even so you're coming into a pretty confined area.

G: Did you fly in the helicopter with him?

W: Yes. As I recall I flew from like--and this may have been it--Brenham to Giddings. I remember that's one time I flew with him. I think I did on another occasion, too.

G: Did he enjoy that helicopter?

W: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. It really was invigorating to him. And he never thought he was ever taking chances. No. He would have taken a lot more chances if his people had allowed him to. The advance team would go out with yellow crepe paper and mark the landing area. I'm sure that they at times vetoed places that he would have preferred to land. Sometimes he would fuss about the site for the landing and the speech. "Why didn't we go into the courthouse square? You can't get any people out there! Look at that small crowd we had. Why weren't we downtown?" And they'd say, "Well, there's a power line that interferes with the courthouse square, and it was dangerous." Then he'd grumble about it and grouse about it, not having been available to the most people.

G: Was there a problem of keeping the helicopter supplied with fuel?

W: I don't know how they arranged that. I really don't recall there ever being a fuel truck out refueling the plane when it was a speaking stop. I think that would have been very dangerous, probably. Because there was a constant fear among the advance team or the behind team--I don't know what [you call it], the cleanup team--of someone getting in the way of the rotor blades, children especially. There were so many children who came out. They would have some of the crew around, not the plane crew but his sweep-up crew I guess, to guard against children getting in the way of those blades. I just believe that fueling the plane would have been too dangerous at one of the speaking sites. Maybe those planes carried a good deal of fuel or didn't use a great deal.

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G: Did you ever see him toss his hat to the crowd?

W: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Then you know he'd do that when he was ten feet off the ground or maybe fifteen feet off the ground, and lean out.

G: Did he get it back or did he . . . ?

W. Woody [Warren Woodward] ought to be able to tell you. I'm not sure whether maybe it was one of Woody's jobs to get that hat back or not. (Laughter)

G: I've heard two versions.

W: I've heard that he did get hats back. I think he lost some, too. He's bound to have lost some.

G: Sure. This was the campaign when they worked out of the old Victorian house, is that right?

W: I'm pretty sure that was the 1948 campaign, yes, that Sam Houston was sort of the campaign headquarters manager.

G: Where was the house now?

W: It was on 8th Street, 8th and Colorado? Lavaca? Was that the sequence of streets?

G: I think so.

W: Congress, Colorado, Lavaca. It was on 8th and Lavaca, I believe the southwest corner. Now I may have that off a block or two. It was downtown Austin, within a stone's throw of the City Hall.

G: Did you do any work for him during the campaign?

W: In that campaign, no, I just covered it. I don't believe I carried the hand lotion and throat lozenges that campaign.

G: Was he pleased with your coverage of the campaign, do you know?

W: I rather think he was. The paper was totally committed to him, you know. I feel sure he was. I don't recall him ever complaining, although he might have. I don't know.

I think that also was the campaign--again, this relates to his relationship with the press--[when] he was in the Roosevelt Hotel, I believe, in Waco, up in his suite. He had some of the regulars, some of the top state political reporters in his suite, talking to them, stroking them. Felix McKnight was there, from the Dallas News. I'm not sure that Allen [Duckworth] wasn't there, too, but I know Felix was there. Johnson wanted something from Mary Rather and he spoke roughly and crudely to her. Felix took him on and said, "You can't speak to her like that. You apologize." Johnson didn't even know what he'd said, I'm sure; Mary hadn't noticed it, I'm sure, but to Felix it was offensive. He just called his hand on it.

G: What happened?

W: Oh, he said, "Goddamn it, Mary, why can't I get my coffee hot? Why do you bring me a cup of coffee that's lukewarm?" or "Can't you do anything right?"

G: What happened after Felix McKnight challenged him?

W: I think he was rather startled, rather stunned. Talk to Felix about it. Have you interviewed Felix, incidentally?

G: No. Did he apologize, do you know?

W: I really don't remember. I think so. Felix was never--certainly not in those early days--a Lyndon Johnson fan. This is his story so you really should ask him about it. But Felix, but for Lyndon Johnson, would have been [Richard] Kleberg's AA up here.

G: I didn't know that.

W: Well, very few people know the story. Felix doesn't tell it very often.

G: What were the circumstances here?

W: Felix was working on the San Antonio Light and Johnson was teaching school in Houston, as I recall, had been down south of San Antonio as a schoolteacher, but was at that time teaching in Houston. Kleberg was elected and was in San Antonio. Felix was--maybe he had been covering the campaign or was in his hotel suite--introduced to him. Who Felix's mentor was who was there, who recommended him for the job, I'm not sure. He was offered the job of AA to Kleberg and had accepted and thought the job was his, so sure of it that he went back to the paper and told--I guess it was Colonel Allison [?], who was the publisher at the time, or editor or whatever--that he was quitting, that he was going to Washington with Kleberg. Within twenty-four hours the job had gone to Lyndon Johnson.

G: Do you know who influenced him the other way?

W: Someone who was a friend of Kleberg's, after Felix thought he had the job, said, "I have got just the young man you ought to take to Washington with you." Felix could tell you who it was. I can't.

G: Would you know if you heard it?

W: I don't believe I would. I really don't think I would.

G: Let me ask you about some of the other reporters. I guess Walter Hornaday covered that campaign, too, didn't he?

W: No, Walter was always up here.

G: Is that right?

W: No, from the Dallas News there would have been Allen Duckworth and Dawson Duncan.

G: Did their stories seem to earn his disapproval?

W: Oh, well, he and the Dallas News always battled. He got along with Allen. He and Allen Duckworth got along fine in later years at any rate, before Allen died. Well, you know, many of these relationships mellowed after he became president. Now he and Dawson Duncan never got along, one reason being that Dawson had courted Lady Bird before Johnson married her.

G: Did Dawson Duncan generally write unfavorable stories?

W: Well, Johnson probably thought they were. I think Duncan was a fair reporter. At least I thought he was at the time. Maybe if I went back and read his stuff I'd decide that he wasn't.

G: With Everett Collier, who I guess covered it for the [Houston] Chronicle, you had a case where perhaps the reporter was more friendly than his publisher wanted him to be. Did you get any insight here into whether this was the case?

W: Golly, I'm not sure I would be a good judge of that. I was so much younger than most of these guys. I'll admit that I was awed by their positions on larger papers, their superior years, their experience. I still felt pretty new at this sort of thing.

G: Buck Hood and Lorraine Barnes were old friends of the Johnsons, I suppose. They seemed to have a very good rapport with them during these years. How would you characterize that relationship? The hat notwithstanding.

W: Well, you see--the hat notwithstanding--Lorraine, of course, was close to the Johnsons. She would do anything for them, but Lorraine could get a little testy, too, about being asked to do maybe menial things. I don't know that. I think Johnson saw me as a kid who was just eager and willing to do menial things, and he was right.

G: Did you get a chance to see much of Lyndon Johnson's mother during this campaign or the previous one?

W: Maybe on, I'm tempted to say ceremonial occasions, but that's not true--where she was formally introduced at a rally, like in Wooldridge Park. No, she was not out on the road campaigning for him or giving tea parties or anything of that sort.

G: How about Mrs. Johnson? Did you form an impression of Mrs. Johnson during this period?

W: Yes, she was always very gracious and helpful.

G: Did you get the impression that she was much shyer then than she became later, in terms of public speaking?

W: Yes. In terms of public speaking, yes. She didn't do any of that. She felt comfortable greeting people in a receiving line at a ladies coffee or something of that sort, but she wasn't a public speaker. And I think when I was first introduced to them, she had been in Washington and had had enough exposure to people in Washington and to persons of higher position than Johnson at that time, and ladies whose husbands were in higher positions, so that she was comfortable in those circles, so that going back to Texas she certainly was comfortable with the home folk constituents. She knew how to handle herself.

G: Yes. This race in 1948 was really an uphill race.

W: Yes, you bet.

G: He was behind. Did you get the feeling that he thought he would win?

W: Oh, yes. Yes. I never got the feeling that they thought they were beat. Oh, no.

G: What did you think?

W: I thought it was going to be tight. I thought it was going to be exactly what it was.

G: Did you cover the [Coke] Stevenson campaign at all during that [election]?

W: Some. Yes, I did. Some. Not as much as I covered Johnson. I don't really remember who the paper might have sent out with Stevenson, someone I'm sure. Let's see, Weldon Hart? I'm not certain who would have been covering the Stevenson campaign, I believe Weldon. Maybe Raymond Brooks, but I think more likely it was Weldon.

G: Do you have any insight into the eleventh hour of the campaign, when the vote was jumping back and forth?

W: No, I really don't.

G: Where were you during that time?

W: Since you mentioned it, I'm trying to think where I was. I'm sure in the city room at the Austin paper, because we worked with returns. I would not have been at the campaign headquarters, or out at Senator [Alvin] Wirtz'. I would have been working in the newsroom that night. Now, of course, how many days did it take to get the vote in, the final result? I really have forgotten.

G: Did you cover any of the post-election proceedings?

W: Oh, yes. I covered the Fort Worth convention.

G: Why don't you give me your recollections of that.

W: Oh, my gosh, I sat in that committee room. Well, I just was scared to leave. I wasn't secure enough as a reporter, or comfortable enough with the situation, to allow myself to leave the room. I just sat there. I remember someone going out and finding Charlie Gibson--was that his name?--from Amarillo to come in and cast that winning vote for Johnson.

G: What was the atmosphere in there?

W: It was crowded. It was tense. It was nip and tuck.

G: Was there belligerence in the air?

W: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. You bet, as there was in the convention the next day. I suppose it was the next day. I remember working all night; I worked around the clock. I never did quit that night. I was working

over at the [Fort Worth] Star Telegram. Finally, when the convention shut down, I went over to the Star Telegram and wrote over there, and got back to the hotel--was I in the Texas? I guess I was. Duckworth, who had connections with the Stevenson people that I didn't have--I overheard something in a hallway between Duckworth and one of Stevenson's lawyers, or it may have been between Duckworth and Ernest Boyett, that suggested to me that a move was about to be made. I knew I was getting beat on a story. I didn't know what it was and it worried the hell out of me, because I knew Duckworth had something that I didn't know about, and I didn't know where to go get it. Sure enough, it was the petition that they took over to East Texas and filed with Judge whoever it was, to enjoin the certification of Johnson as the nominee.

G: Did you have a chance to observe Lyndon Johnson during this period?

W: No. I don't recall that I did.

G: Did you get an opportunity to see the Johnson people at work on some of these delegates, to try to convince some of the people straddling the fence to vote [for him]?

W: No. No. I don't believe I did. I saw them at work in their positions in running the convention committees. So much of this had to have been done ahead of time. Because convention control is decided ahead of time, especially committee control. I remember the auditorium well. 1950, 1948, no, I'm getting that confused with a later one; I'm getting that confused with the 1956 convention. We went back to the same convention hall.

G: Where they turned the lights out?

W: Yes. That was the real raunchy one, when Price Daniel was booed off the stage.

G: Now you went to work for Lyndon Johnson in 1950. Do you want to describe the circumstances of that, going to work for him in the [Washington office]?

W: That was when I'd had a run-in with Buck Hood on the Austin paper over coverage of the Austin Housing Authority. Senator Wirtz was on the board of the Housing Authority and I had been assigned to write city news, to beef up a new front page for the metro section that the Austin papers had just initiated. I covered the Austin Housing Authority in depth, as they would say these days, including taking a photographer out, taking pictures of shanties in very few blocks from the Capitol, with their outdoor privies.

Well, the stories never appeared on the front page of the metro section; they appeared back in the classifieds. I went to Wirtz and told him there wasn't anything I could do about getting better play for these stories and suggested that he might want to use whatever influence he had with the paper, which I think might have been considerable, because not too few days later I had a letter from Buck saying that my views and those of the paper would never coincide and my resignation would be accepted.

So I wrote him a letter of resignation and then I went up the street, up the hill from the Austin papers to the Brown Building--they were in the same block--to see Senator Wirtz. I was sobbing and crying. I

held my tears until I got out of the office but I was sure shedding them when I got to the law office. Senator Wirtz wasn't there. John Connally was. So he saw me and gave me coffee and sympathy and said, "Well, now, don't cry. What would you like to do? Would you like to go to Washington and work for Lyndon Johnson?" I said I didn't know whether I would or not. He called Johnson, and they agreed that I should go to work for Johnson, and I agreed that if he didn't like me or if I didn't like working for him, that we would part company and no hard feelings.

So I came to Washington in, as I recall, about the first of April in 1950. I worked with Horace Busby. I guess Busby was the one who was responsible for me if anyone was. I never felt like I knew what the office was all about. I answered some personal mail for him, not personal mail, but mail to personal friends, close friends. I would suggest inscriptions for pictures that he was sending to friends. I did some research on legislation. And one weekend Mary Rather and I baby-sat with Lynda and Luci while the Johnsons went to New York. Luci had the mumps, and I caught the mumps. They really laid me low.

G: Did you do anything with the press at all?

W: No. No. I didn't. I don't recall the period being particularly active in Congress.

G: You didn't have to work long hours?

W: Well, if the hours were long they didn't impress me as such. I guess everything was new and different to me, and I was interested so that

the hours didn't really matter. The Johnsons had me stay at their house for the first two weeks I was here, just as they did so many of their new people who came to town. I was fascinated with the town, the whole business, so that I didn't really care whether the hours were long or not.

I remember that the baseball season opened. Warren Woodward must have been in the office at that time. Woody had gotten several tickets to the baseball game. I think six or seven of us went to the opener. It was a day when really nothing else was going on; everybody had gone to the baseball opener. It was still in the old Griffith Stadium, I guess. But when Johnson found out about it he was furious. He laid out Woody royally.

G: Why was this?

W: Well, we'd taken off from work.

G: Was this on a weekday?

W: Oh, yes, yes, a weekday afternoon. I think Woody kind of let it slide off his back. I gathered that he was kind of accustomed to this.

I remember there was one chap who had come from a radio repair shop in Austin. In fact, the shop was right across from the Travis County Courthouse. Maybe he was going to school. I don't remember his name now. He may have been going to school at the time, and he would work at the office part-time sorting the mail. Well, Johnson would ride to work in the car, and of course many of the power lines in Washington are laid under the pavement. [It's a] beautiful city;

you don't have power lines marring the landscape. Well, Johnson would listen to the radio en route into town and home again at night and when the car would cross these power lines the radio would start a ruckus, static. He didn't like it. He'd get into the office and say, "Roy, Bill,--"whatever this chap's name was,--"I thought you were going to get that radio fixed. That thing is still causing trouble. It gets the biggest racket. Something's wrong with it. I don't know who you're taking it to. Tell those people to fix that radio." Well, he'd go on in his office and I'd notice that Roy, Bill, whatever his name was, would do nothing about it.

One day I asked him, I said, "You know, that radio really does cause a lot of racket." Because I was staying out at the house at the time and riding in and back with Johnson. He said, "Well, I know it does. There isn't anything anybody can do about it. It does it when it crosses the power lines under the pavement." People who worked for him and who knew him well took these things as a matter of course. The sun came up in the morning, Johnson was going to walk in the office and complain about the radio in the automobile.

G: Did you get an opportunity while you were staying there to see him at home?

W: Oh, yes.

G: What was he like there?

W: More subdued than at the office.

G: Really?

W: Yes, around Bird. This is one of my favorite stories, a little insight into Johnson and Bird. He invited the Speaker home for dinner. It was shortly after Congress had convened and shortly after the holidays. They had obviously had a turkey for some occasion and Zephyr [Wright] had prepared turkey hash for dinner. Mr. Rayburn was there. It wasn't a party; it was simply a family supper that the Speaker had been invited home to. I don't think it was his birthday or any big occasion like that, because there were no other guests. When we sat down at the table, when Zephyr brought in the turkey hash, Johnson upbraided Lady Bird for serving the Speaker turkey hash. "Can't you have something better for dinner when we've got the Speaker here?" Mr. Rayburn spoke up immediately and said, "Well, I'd be offended if I thought that you had turkey hash and hadn't served it to me. It's one of my favorite dishes." After Mr. Rayburn had gone home and we were sitting in the living room, Bird said to Lyndon very calmly and matter of factly, "Dear, when we have guests, please do not complain about the food that's being served." And he said nothing and she said nothing more. That was all that was said.

He was a good host in his own home I think, when he had parties, and the children, the little girls, were introduced nicely to the elders. They were brought into the group, certainly not at the dinner table with a book. They were introduced to the group early in the evening when they were having cocktails. The girls would pass bowls of peanuts, do a little bit of serving, and then they were off to bed.

That was their total exposure, or the guests total exposure to them. They had terribly interesting crowds to me, fun crowds, people like Tommy Corcoran [who] would bring his accordian; Stuart Symington's wife, who had been a chanteuse, a nightclub singer, would sing to Tommy Corcoran's accordian; William O. Douglas and his wife; Paul Porter and his wife at that time; Chief Justice Fred Vinson.

Of course Bird always observed the old custom of the ladies retiring after dinner, leaving the men in the living room. They had a little library kind of at a half landing up the staircase, where the ladies had coffee. The first time I was up here--and I think this was in 1947; it was after that 1946 campaign, and I was invited to come up in 1947 when Congress convened. I just came up for a week I think. This was the particular party I'm thinking about, that Corcoran and Mrs. Symington were at.

So the ladies were in the little library and Zephyr or Patsy brought a coffee tray and demitasse cups. Mrs. Johnson poured. She handed one of the cups to me, and I think I was so scared I was going to drop the coffee cup I probably gave it to whatever lady was sitting nearest, knowing nothing about protocol. When Bird poured the next cup she said, "See if Mrs. Vinson would like cream and sugar." Mrs. Vinson after all was the ranking person there, and I should have served Mrs. Vinson first. Then I had to quickly try to figure, "Well, I've got a cue here, but who's next in line?"

G: Did you get an opportunity to observe the relationship between Lyndon Johnson and Sam Rayburn at these gatherings? You mentioned the dinner before.

W: Father and son. Father and a son of whom he was very proud, who might have given him some trouble from time to time, but basically he was very proud of him.

G: Did they seem to agree politically?

W: Yes, at that time I sensed that they did, that whatever disagreement there may have been politically, Rayburn was at least tolerant of.

G: I get the impression that there was a certain competition because of the different houses of Congress that they represented.

W: I would think that developed later. But you see now I'm speaking of the period almost immediately after Johnson went to the Senate, while he was still in the House and after he went to the Senate, and before he had established himself as a power in his own right in the Senate.

G: One other question about the dinners you discussed. In the early one, I guess in 1947 or so, I get the impression that he met with a lot of the old New Dealers on these occasions. Did you observe them reminiscing on the New Deal period when he was a young congressman?

W: No. No. They would have been mainly concerned with what was current, because they all were involved currently.

G: That's fascinating. I get the impression that Lyndon Johnson on these occasions could be rather stiff around people to a point when he felt comfortable with them, and then he would really let his hair down and be much more relazed and informal. Is that the case?

W: Now I saw Paul Porter there on other occasions. This one occasion I'm speaking of, this was rather a formal dinner, ladies all in long dresses; I think the men were in black tie. What was said when the men were alone together, I don't know, but it was a dinner for I would say at least ten couples, so there wasn't the opportunity for the intimacy that you would find at a smaller occasion, smaller affair. It was a fun time. They all seemed to be enjoying one another's company. Johnson would have been the lowest ranking in the crowd.

G: But in your own case, did you experience what might be described as a period of trial before he felt comfortable around you? Did you feel that he was reserved at first?

W: No. No. Around me?

G: Yes.

W: No. I mean the man's lying there unclothed when I first meet him. (Laughter) There was certainly no discomfort on his part. It didn't occur to him there was anything unusual about it, just as it didn't occur to him there was anything unusual about asking me to "Take care of my throat lozenges, would you. These boys, I can't trust them." You know, he would put it in some such terms that I could scarcely refuse.

G: Let's talk generally now about his relationship with the press during the Senate years.

W: During the Senate years. Now the Capitol press is all that I am acquainted with, the Capitol press in Austin. The same people who I've

referred to earlier were carried over. These people were entrenched in their jobs in the Capitol press during that entire period. Newcomers would arrive but still the dominant forces were the Dawson Duncans, the Dave Cheavenses, well, the Dallas News was of course the papacita of the press corps. It had the largest bureau; it had the largest circulation. It came into Austin. You could get it delivered on your doorstep. So all of us rebelled against the domination of the news flow by the Dallas News. But still their opinion to an extent influenced either affirmatively or negatively the rest of the press corps.

But Johnson seemed to treat the press with a deference that was a little insulting. The Austin press was not the Washington press. They were not as well informed on national issues as the Washington press. We didn't have television at that time. Of course we had radio, but still, I guess you would still find that your state capitol press, except on issues that are interrelated, are not as well informed as the Washington press is going to be. Johnson's interests had grown away from the state. He was never interested in state party politics. In fact, he was never interested in party organization at all. So they felt that he felt he was too big for them. And after all, he was a politician and should have been catering to them.

G: Do you think that he had a distorted view of what the purpose of the press was?

W: Oh, absolutely.

G: How did he view it?

W: I think he viewed it as an instrument that should be helping him instead of fighting him. That was true down there, up here, was always true.

G: Did he ever talk to you about that, his concept of the press?

W: No. No, not per se. It would simply be his commentary in some particular instance, on some occasion when the press was giving him trouble, and he never could understand.

G: One gets the impression that he could read a story that was nine-tenths favorable and one-tenth unfavorable and react violently to the one-tenth.

W: Oh, sure, to the one-tenth. Absolutely.

G: Did he ever do that with you?

W: I don't recall that he did. Of course we had one real breach between us the night of the general election in 1960. I was working for an afternoon paper. He had been up in his hotel room in the Driskill Hotel, oh, well past 1:00 a.m.. I suppose it was about 1:00 a.m., 2:00 a.m., when he and the Kellams and the Connallys--maybe the Thornberrys were there, I'm not sure; I remember the Kellams and the Connallys were--went across 7th Street to the P. K. Grill. There were only a few of us still working at the time, Nancy Hanschman [Dickerson], somebody with the New York Times I believe. I can't remember who it was. There were three reporters. We followed them over to the P. K. Grill. They occupied a table for six or eight, with Johnson sitting at one end of it, and we took bar stools at the counter. I was closest to Johnson, then Nancy, then this man, whoever he was.

Well, I was faced with producing a p.m. story for my first edition, and I wanted to go to bed. I turned around on the counter stool and leaned over, and I said--I don't really know whether I addressed him as Senator or Lyndon, probably as Lyndon, because I did call him Lyndon until he became vice president--something dumb like, "What are you going to do tomorrow? What are your plans? Are you going to take it easy?" He barked at me and said, "I'm not talking to any reporters. I'm not answering any reporters' questions." Nancy had turned around on her stool, too. I mean nothing had been served yet. I think the third person also was attentive to whatever he might tell us, because we hadn't seen him all night. He'd been up in his hotel suite. I was certainly stunned. She was equally stunned. We just switched our revolving stools around and attended to the Wheaties or whatever it was we'd ordered. Their breakfast was served. In a very few minutes Johnson called Nancy and the third person, by name, individually, "Come here." They got up off their stools and knelt, sort of squatted beside his chair, and engaged in a conversation with him, I being ignored, excluded. I was hurt; I was infuriated; I was angry.

We finished breakfast. His party finished breakfast. We were heading back across 7th Street to the Driskill Hotel. I remember there was a drizzle, kind of a misty rain. The Johnsons were walking across the street. I caught up with them. It was Bird, Johnson, and I. I caught up with him on his right hand side. I said, "Lyndon, I guess

you've gotten too big for the Texas press. I'm sorry, because it's been fun." I just hastened my step and walked ahead of him. I heard Lady Bird let out a little squeak. I don't recall that I heard anything from him, and I certainly didn't give him an opportunity to say anything.

I went up to the press room and George Reedy--I'm sure that Johnson must have called George instantly, or Lady Bird did, somebody did. Because George came to the press room and said, "Come down to the Headliners and have a drink with me." I said, "No, George. What's been done can't be undone. You didn't do it. He did it. You shouldn't have to come around and patch it up. I've got a story to write."

The next day he had all the press in to one of the big living room suites on the mezzanine of the Driskill. There were so many of us that some of us had to sit on the floor, one place and another. He tried to make amends there toward me.

G: How so?

W: "Margaret, come sit over here." You know, right at his side. That was about it. Maybe a few other words said, but nothing too overt. I knew what he was trying to do.

But he was so angry over that election. He was so angry at the prospect of being vice president, I think. It was not really something personal toward me, except that I thought it was uncalled for regardless of who the person was.

Then we went on up to KTBC, the television studio. He had told us a bunch of stuff off the record in this interview in the suite. Then we went up to KTBC, and he was interviewed for NBC or CBS, or perhaps it was a pool arrangement. All three networks may have pooled it. We were taken up to one of the listening [studios]. They had a long listening studio. Cactus Pryor was sort of in charge of shepherding the press, or setting up the stage set. I guess maybe [he] was the producer or whatever, director, for the studio. Oh, we were really ordered around like we were his vassals or something, and Cactus even more so. He had evidently at one point told Cactus that he wanted an audience behind him and the TV interviewers. He wanted the rest of the press in the studio. We were taken from the listening booth down to the floor of the studio. He arrived and just berated Cactus, just furious, saying, "Who put these reporters down here?" Cactus said, "Well, Mr. Johnson, somebody told me to," or, "You told me to," or something. "Well, I don't want them down here. Get them out of here!" He was really irrational at that point.

G: Do you think he would have preferred that the ticket lose? Did you get that impression?

W: No, no, no. I didn't get that impression. Well, I don't know.

G: If he was [angry]. . . ?

M: I don't know. I don't know. I know that his mood was foul, even for him. Now he could get in an angry mood, but he was in a foul mood.

G: Do you think it related to the prospect of being vice president?

W: Yes, I do.

G: Why do you think that?

W: He didn't want to be vice president. I think he knew the power he was losing.

G: Really?

W: Yes.

G: Did he talk to you about it or did he indicate as much?

W: No. No.

G: Well, how do you know he didn't want to be?

W: His reaction that night.

G: Really. What did he tell the Texas people off the record when you were [interviewing him]?

W: It wasn't just the Texas people, this was national press. This was all the press that was covering the vice president-to-be. I don't recall that it was anything significant. I don't recall there was any big news in it. Johnson liked to do things off the record; it didn't matter whether it was necessary that they be off the record or not. I don't know why. [It was] a fetish with him. But whatever it was, when we got up to the studio, in the interview for the TV networks, he said on the record everything that he told us off the record. When we groused about it on the way back, walking to the hotel, you know, just a few blocks in between, I remember Bill Lloyd was furious about it. Bill and I were walking together and he was complaining to Liz Carpenter. Liz said something that was even more infuriating, that just added fuel to the fire, which was, "Well, I guess you'll just have to learn that this is the electronic era." That was the end of that.

G: This was a very curious point though, about his attitude toward his election as vice president. Did anyone else feel that this was a relationship here between his foul mood and the [vice presidency]?

W: Ask Cactus, ask Cactus what he thought. Ask Bill Lloyd how he felt. You might even ask Nancy, who was sort of an unofficial adviser, you know, to Mrs. Johnson. She helped Mrs. Johnson a great deal with her . . . .

G: Let's get back to 1954 and that 1954 campaign. I suppose he actually ran in 1953 in that election, and covered the state that fall, I guess to discourage opposition. Did you cover any of that?

W: Evidently I didn't, because I looked at your schedule. You see I had gone with the Dallas Times Herald at that time. I had been with the Times Herald a little over two years. I was part-time with them. I had my own news bureau in Austin, in the State Capitol. I covered for, heavens, I don't know how many papers at that time, seven or eight. The Times Herald's main political writer was in Dallas--Barney Thompson it may have been at that stage; I'm not sure who it was--so that traveling with Johnson would have been done by that writer, not I. His challenge was obviously not going to be great. Dudley Dougherty I guess was a sort of a nutty opposition and was not a serious challenge. I think that you're right that the 1953 travels would have been designed to discourage anyone from [running].

G: There was some fear it seems that [Allan] Shivers might run.

W: Well, maybe there was. I wonder if Shivers ever thought about it at that stage. I doubt that he did. I would question that he did. He did I think later, but not at that stage.

G: I get the impression that Senator Johnson was much more alarmed about Dudley Dougherty as an opponent than he should have been.

W: Than was warranted? Yes.

G: Did you get that feeling?

W: Maybe I did. Yes, I think you're right. Well, he was not a man who wanted to take chances on an election. Of course he wanted to win big. It may not have been so much alarm as it would have been establishing some kind of a new record. He didn't want to just beat him, he wanted to kill him. I speak figuratively.

G: Do you think that most of the Dougherty supporters were more or less anti-Johnson votes and supporters rather than pro.

W: Yes. Yes. I'm sure they were.

G: Do you have any recollections of Dudley Dougherty per se?

W: Yes. Even his appearance was a little ludicrous. Well, I'd hesitate to say [he had a] comic opera appearance, but he simply wasn't senatorial candidate caliber, much less senator caliber.

G: Do you recall going to any of his speeches or covering any of his activity during the campaign?

W: I know this isn't vivid enough in my mind to give you a description of it. I remember him as making a right ludicrous appearance and that's about it, and presentation.

G: Remember his talkathon in Houston?

W: Oh, golly, I'd forgotten that. No, I don't remember. The press never considered him a serious challenger.

G: Anything else about that campaign?

W: I just almost draw a blank on that campaign. I do remember Johnson being concerned about his relationship with the Capitol press and making an attempt to court the Capitol press. That's about all I do remember about it.

G: Harry Benge Crozier I guess was the journalist who was hired by the Dougherty campaign or worked with them in that.

W: Oh, did he?

G: Do you remember his activities at all?

W: I remember Crozier being close to Coke Stevenson. I don't remember him being in the Dougherty campaign, no.

G: A lot of people, I gather, felt that the Dougherty candidacy simply represented the long hand of Coke Stevenson.

W: Of course I remember him as being financed by very conservative interests. That's about all I do remember. I wonder if this was considered a Stevenson ploy. I question that. I don't recall it as such. I guess they had ranching interests in common, but Dougherty certainly was effete related to Coke Stevenson. They had nothing really in common other than conservative interests.

G: Stevenson endorsed Dougherty's candidacy very early on in this.

W: He probably would have endorsed a yellow cur dog, you know, if he was going to be the only candidate against Johnson.

G: I want to ask you if there's anything in these immediate years, in 1954 and 1955, that you want to talk about?

W: 1954 and 1955 are rather colorless.

G: Do you remember when he was recovering from the heart attack back in Texas?

W: When was the heart attack?

G: This was in July of 1955. He spent the rest of that summer, beginning in late August, and that fall, in Texas recovering.

W: I do not. I'm drawing a blank on those years. Let me see, who succeeded Coke? Who was in the governor's office at that point. Well, that would have been Shivers. He was still governor. No, I really don't. I remember them being at the Ranch. I remember him losing weight and being careful of his health, but aside from that I really don't have any recollection of it.

G: Do you want to stop at this point and draw the line at this one?

W: I think that might be a good idea.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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