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JACQUELINE COCHRAN ORAL HISTORY, INTERVIEW II  
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JACQUELINE COCHRAN

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## INTERVIEW II

DATE: April 7-9, 1974

INTERVIEWEE: JACQUELINE COCHRAN

INTERVIEWER: Joe B. Frantz

PLACE: Ms. Cochran's residence outside Indio, California

C: And the President [Johnson] had on, I guess, rubber-soled shoes or something. Anyway--and just shortly before that, General Eisenhower had had a hole-in-one, at Seven Lakes, which he was so proud of--(Laughter)--and we all accused him of having the boy kick it in the hole for him, and--just teasing him, of course.

F: Yes. All the usual jokes.

C: Oh, yes. And that day, when he played with President Johnson, who apparently must be a very bad golfer--

F: Yes.

C: A very poor golfer, from what I gathered.

F: A very inattentive golfer.

C: How much did he ever play, I wonder?

F: He hardly--he played in his early years, evidently just to--because he wanted to be with certain people. He never took up golf as a competitive sport, you know.

C: Did he ever get any good at it?

F: I don't think he ever got very good at all. He played fairly regularly after he retired, for a while, and he began to slow down some.

C: You mean, after he was the President?

F: Yes.

C: I didn't realize that.

F: Yes, back in the--

C: What was the best score he ever shot, I wonder?

F: I don't know.

C: I'd like to know.

F: I would be rather surprised if he did much more than break a hundred, if you're into--

C: Well, there was just a little--snide remarks made that day that he hadn't played very good golf. And the General said, "I lacked only a couple of inches getting another hole-in-one!" I said, "Well, then we would accuse you of having a magnetic ball"--with a magnetic center that would be attracted by the metal cup. It's been done before. Did you know that has been done?

F: I didn't know that, no.

C: Oh, sure. (Laughter) Put a magnet in the ball, and get a hole-in-one. People actually have had a hole-in-one. Some people will do anything, you know. Publicity.

F: I haven't had one yet. Maybe that's my way out! (Laughter)

C: Oh, I wouldn't think you'd want that way out! I haven't had one either. Now, I've been up against the--

F: Right up to the lip?

C: I've been up against the flag pole but couldn't get the flag out without pulling the ball out. There's just no way to work it. Because you've got to pull the flag straight out to have a hole-in-one. You can't juggle it around to get the ball in. That's not legal. So I'm told.

But, anyway, I thought they'd stay ten or fifteen minutes, or half an hour, and that President Johnson had come over there with the insistence of being nice to Floyd and me.

F: Yes. Let the General show him where he hung out, and--

C: Yes, and that he had his office there, and--this kind of thing. And we sat down in the big room. I don't know why.

F: This was what, eleven o'clock in the morning?

C: Oh no, this was about three in the afternoon, two-thirty or three. Maybe four. I don't know the time of day. I just don't think I could tell you.

I think [Jim] Jones was with him, but none of them came in the house. And I finally shooed this dunce woman--I didn't have any servants then. I didn't have anyone there. And Rusty [Lillian "Rusty" Brown] wasn't there--that was the General's secretary. We really were caught short. And I can't stand people who start apologizing [for] what they have to offer. Never done it in my life; I do the best I can, and there's nothing I can do about it. I felt about half put together, and--after all, it's a great honor to have the President come to your home!

F: (Laughter) It just wasn't the day you would have chosen!

C: I would not have chosen it, no. But I wouldn't have missed it.

F: Yes, it worked out, it turned out better--

C: I wouldn't have missed it for anything in the world!

So they started to talk. The President did most of the talking. General Eisenhower was very attentive. And I said, "If you are going to have a conference"--I didn't say, "Mr. President," you see; I'd gotten cured--"then perhaps you'd like to have Floyd and me retire, and get out of the room." They said, "We haven't any secrets from

you." I said, "Well, fine." And the President started talking about, naturally, Vietnam, some of the European situation, some of the oil situation, incidentally. I couldn't recount, accurate enough for history, to say what they talked about and what they said. The thing that impressed me was the fact that every opinion that President Johnson had on these subjects that they did discuss, General Eisenhower completely agreed with the way he was handling it. "General, such-and-such a thing came up," you know, with some of this oil business they'd been having so much trouble on; I remember that was one of them. And he said, "What do you think? This is what I'm doing about it." "Well, I don't see how you could do it differently."

So, finally, he said--he got up and he walked into the other room, the President. And that left General Eisenhower, and Mr. Odlum--Floyd--in the big room. You saw the rooms today. That was the small room, where I said, "This used to be our small living room." And he said, "I'd like to go around your ranch, Jackie." I said, "Well, fine, I'd be delighted to take you around."

F: You had about forty-five acres over there, didn't you?

C: Oh, we had eight hundred!

F: Oh, you did?

C: Oh, yes. See, where that house was--north and south, it's in the geographical center of the section. East and west, it is not quite the geographical center, where they had to--moved another quarter-mile east in the center. Although it's a pretty long way in to the main house, you can see. So we had one section there alone that had no road through it. And then we went on and on and on, across the road, and--all that property that I said, "This is where I used to sleep," and that other big piece of property. Yes, we had about

eight hundred acres. That's not a big ranch--for an irrigated ranch, it's a pretty big ranch out here.

F: Yes.

C: And I had this nine-hole golf course, just to the north of the house.

I went back in, and I said, "You'd better come out the other--I have to go get a car out of the garage." We had garages then [for] the cars. I said, "I don't have anybody on duty today. Floyd and I--with just the housekeeper, who really manages staff here. We're going to spend a day alone, for a change." I wasn't apologizing, I was just making a statement. I didn't have anybody to get the car out.

And I felt some responsibility to General Eisenhower, because I knew he rested the afternoon; I knew he was tired. And I was a little bit anxious about that. I said, "General, the President wants to be driven around the ranch, and I'm going to go and"--and he stayed in the other room, the President, when I went back to do this. You'll remember that room that had the plaque over the mantel, where all the people were sitting today.

F: Yes, right.

C: It was quite a long way back and hard to hear. I said, "Maybe you'd want to go home, or something else. He wants to stay on." By that time, they had been there about an hour and a half. He said, "Oh, no, I think I'll wait." I said, "Well, I have to go get a car out of the garage. It's going to take a little time." He said, "Well, just use my car." I said, "Well, fine. May I drive it?" He said, "Well, of course you may."

So I went down the steps with the President, and I said to the driver, "The General said I may use his car to take the President around the ranch a little bit." So two Secret

Service men started to get in. I said, "I don't need you." Nobody's going to shoot him here. I don't think so! (Laughter) And he turned around and said, "All of you stay away."

So in the meantime, I had telephoned the manager of my golf course, and I said, "Clear the people [from] the golf course." So it had to be about four o'clock. We had some kind of a little tournament there that day, so I figured everybody would be off the golf course anyway pretty well. I said, "I'm bringing the President down, and I don't want a lot of gaping people. I'm going to drive all over it. Get them off." And I said, "Don't tell them why, just tell them it's"--a reason. I had reserved the legal right to clear the golf course any time I wanted. It was mine. They paid me practically nothing anyway. I sort of built it for the community. And because I had been so good to the community, they never argued with me about something like that. I said, "If anybody squawks, give them their money back." I had the right to do that on my own piece of paper. I said, "Clear it." Well, they thought they had everybody off the golf course. In the meantime, I took him down, around, and there were a lot of beautiful flowering trees, and there was a big grove, and down some of the rows, down through the grove, there are these fine looking--he was interested in it! And the Secret Service didn't follow us. Just the two of us. I didn't realize I was breaking a precedent. That's not done.

So, by that time I knew the course would be cleared. There were beautiful views from the golf course. It was a well maintained golf course. So we drove all up and down the golf course, and--wait a minute. Rusty had left the President, and they had a military girl out there. She was terrible! I mean, both as a person to look after and, I think, as a

secretary to him. That's right. That's why I said Rusty wasn't--she was there for a long time.

And we were--one hole, where you go from the tee to the green, just a beautiful view of the Chocolate Mountains, and I was driving down that when I saw a golf cart. And the man was about to get out and hit the ball. Well, I know you're shatterproof, but, still, it was danger. I started blowing my horn, madly. And it was Ray Rummonds and his wife, and I knew them. I wasn't trying to keep it secret that the presidents, present and past, were there. And the people sort of got used to us, and they didn't blabbermouth about us. And I pulled up and I said, "I'm sorry that I did this, but I was afraid you'd hit the ball." I said, "Ray, come on. Would you like to meet the President of the United States?" (Laughter) "And Mrs. Rummonds?"--his wife. And she was so dumbfounded she couldn't get out of her seat. And he came over to the car and he said, "Well, you are the President!"

F: I'll say! (Laughter)

C: And he said, "Yes, I'm the President!" And he shook hands with him. He said, "Wow! I'm sure glad I didn't shoot that golf ball!" He's dead now. I'll bet he told that hundreds of times.

So we drove around that. We came back--we came back upstairs. I said, "Well, can I get any additional refreshment, or--?" He said, "I sure like those dates." So I went up to the kitchen, and in the cool room there was a stack of two three-pound boxes. So I got two or three boxes and had one of his men put it in the car for him.

And we got over--we came back. He said, "I'd like to see the General's office." I said, "Well, I can't invade that, it's his private"--and I said, "I wouldn't think of going in

it. I don't think I can do anything about it." And this secretary was standing there. I introduced her. And--he said, "I want to see the General's office." He was curious. And he went in, and he went all around it, and he said, "Well, you do pretty well by him." I said, "Well, it's very small and simple, but it's comfortable and clean. And at least he has privacy, which he probably wouldn't get anyplace else." And he said, "You going to do this well for me when I retire?" I said, "I don't think I'll need to. I think you have all you want in Texas, but if we have anything, we'll be very happy to share it with you."

And they took off. And it was just a--to me, a very historic meeting. So that was really the end of the visit. And it was funny--you know, President Johnson always sent me all these pictures, pictures. I must have seventy-five. I have those in there on the wall.

F: You've got a regular library of Johnson photographs.

C: Yes, I have, really. And the one in there--you wouldn't know whether it was President Johnson, President Eisenhower walking up the steps now, if you only have their back if it weren't for the fact that he signed it. He wanted to identify it. He sort of identified himself, whatever he did with us, which was kind of interesting.

F: Did you ever hear President Eisenhower express any opinions on President Johnson?

C: Never personally, no.

F: I've had President Johnson talk to me about Eisenhower.

C: What did he say?

F: Well, he said--among other things that impressed me, he said that he thought he was very underrated in his political knowledge, that he--and a lot of people liked to make out that

he didn't understand the governmental process, but that he was very much impressed with his grasp of what went on throughout the great Washington machine.

C: Oh, Eisenhower was very astute, very. He was a great man.

F: And that he--as people saw more and more, Eisenhower's stock was going to go up.

C: Well, after the President and I left that day for our drive around the ranch, he turned to Floyd and said he was too talkative, he tells things he shouldn't talk about, as though he was being critical. He didn't say it to me; so I told you the truth. And that was--but Eisenhower was very open with both Floyd and me, about anything and anybody. And I told you I got the first commitment out of him to seek the nomination, and I got the first real question about it.

F: I assume you got that down [inaudible].

C: Oh, yes, I put it all in there [?].

But--I thought Johnson was something unbelievable. And one other point, I was trying to think of it--there's something significant that won't come to mind.

F: You mean on the visit?

C: Yes, during the visit, but I can't remember what it is.

F: But they went back to wherever Eisenhower and Johnson's plane was, and then flew on over?

C: I don't know now. I don't really know. I think that they broke up there. Now, I guess they--see, they had another car, in the back. It looked like a hearse, it was so big, and filled with Secret Service. Where do they get those cars from?

F: And probably a photographer! (Laughter)

C: What?

F: They were bound to have a photographer somewhere.

C: Maybe they had a photographer, but they didn't have any press.

(Interruption)

F: Okay, let's talk [about] Queen Elizabeth's dinner. And we've got Josef Klaus's dinner, too, at the White House. But let's go to Queen Elizabeth.

C: Well, when they have a--when a Democratic president has a dinner for a head of state, he invites one Republican. Did you know that?

F: No, I didn't. I had noticed lots of times that one was there, but I never realized that it was done--

C: One. One Republican. And I'm not sure of this statement, but they alternate between the speaker of the House and the majority leader. Here's where they come in. Now, the chief justice of the United States has to be invited. And when they get through with state dinners, and when they used to sit at the horseshoe table, and when they had state dinners the way they should be given--and Mrs. Kennedy just destroyed this and made it into a cafeteria, practically; at square tables, they would pack in 150 people and call it a state dinner, which it was not. But with the gold service--and, incidentally, till they remodeled the White House we only had sufficient gold service for thirty--I think it was thirty-two people. Anyway, it was a number where you could seat man-and-woman.

And I have been to, I would estimate--this is off the cuff, this is a ballpark guess--more than thirty state dinners, which is unheard of.

F: That in itself is a career.

C: Well, I mean, it's just completely unheard of. It just isn't done. I went to a state dinner under Roosevelt, I went to a couple of state dinners under Truman, two or three. And I

went with the Eisenhowers--I think he was the only Republican president who was ever in for eight years, on election. Did you know that?

F: I didn't know that.

C: I think it's true. And during his reign, every time they had anyone really important, like--

F: Yes, that's right.

C: Isn't that startling?

F: Yes.

C: Well, anyway, because I did get the first commitment out of him to seek the nomination, I was certainly a big factor in his first campaign. And I was running myself in his second campaign, that's why. And he and Mrs. Eisenhower invited us. We were always the first on the list, always.

Oh--I've got to digress here. I'm sorry. General Eisenhower told me that if it had not been for the support of Lyndon Johnson, during his first four years particularly, he couldn't have made it. And he said, "I had 100 per cent support in the Congress, and he was responsible for it." So this was a true statement, told to me by the President, which I put in his archives also. And I'm sorry to digress, but this is important to get in there. That's what I was trying to think of a while ago; I couldn't think of it.

So, anyway, I went to [Charles] de Gaulle's dinner; I went to all of the really important dinners. Not [merely] one! It got to be almost a joke for the Washington press. (Laughter) We were just--[like] family!

F: (Laughter) They just keep your name in type all the time, because it would be showing up at the next one, no?

C: Yes, I guess so.

So, I was in England, and I had had an operation on my feet, and I went to England to have it. That was from walking barefoot in the cotton mill twelve hours a night when I was a child. And it needed to be done, and I went over there to get it twittled on. And Floyd called me from New York and said, "We have been invited to the state dinner for Queen Elizabeth. And I think you should come home [for] the dinner!" "Well"--[whining]--"what [will] we do with my feet?" We were invited--and I was invited to some things he wasn't, just for women only--to every single function that she appeared in. I've never heard of anything like it in my life. Every single one!

F: You practically toured the country too, didn't you?

C: Well, in New York City, and Washington.

F: That's what I mean, but--

C: Every single thing, including the barge that they fixed up to bring her into New York.

F: Really?

C: Yes. I didn't go, because I couldn't stand on these old sore feet of mine. I regretted that very much indeed.

So, I arrived at five o'clock in the morning, and this wonderful secretary that I had--she worked for me seventeen years; Miss Walsh [?]-I saw her up, looking down into the--oh, the room where you go through customs, the customs room. And I knew the chief of customs. And I can take an oath; I never cheated for a nickel's worth of anything in my life in customs, just never. I never had a bag opened, either. Not to my knowledge. And I always paid my duty, and did what I was supposed to do. I don't mean to sound like a Pollyanna, but I just believe in that sort of thing. So, I saw her there, and I thought, "My Lord, there must be something wrong!" And I waved to her,

and she came down--I was standing at the door, and I said, "What's the matter?" She said, "Mr. Odlum is very ill." I said, "Really?" She said, "Absolutely." And they didn't know what to do; he had a very serious gall bladder attack, and had surgery within a month. He was very, very sick.

So, naturally, I assumed the dinner was going to be in a couple of days; I just got home in time, you know, practically just beat the Queen [into] the country. So I called up Ann Whitman. I knew her very well. She told me that she was the only person who ever took dictation from Eisenhower. She was an amazing woman. And I called Ann and I said, "Ann, I'm just devastated, one, because I'm sorry that Floyd's sick, and, two, I would love to go to the Queen's dinner. That one I really wanted to go to." Then I said, "He's very sick, and there's nothing anyone can do about it." And she said, "I suspect that if you can leave Mr. Odlum, that the President and Mrs. Eisenhower are going to want you to come alone, because you were the first people put on the list that don't *have* to be invited." You know, there's a certain list they must invite, whether they like them or not, government people. And I said, "Well, I--he's certainly well enough for me to do that unless he gets a turn for the worse and goes into surgery or something." So, she called back within an hour. She said, "You're invited alone." So, I said, "Floyd, do you think I should go?" He said, "Well, by all means. I wouldn't have you miss it for anything."

So I went down to Washington. And I'm not sure of this statement. I think it was the first dinner they had given in the horseshoe room after everything was completed. You know, she came over very early in Eisenhower's--do you know when she came over? Wasn't it in Eisenhower's first administration--I mean, his first tour, four years? I think it was.

So, I went in. You know how they have all these people that--one person for every person will either be a navy, air force, army, all dressed up, looking pretty, these pretty boys?

F: All decorated.

C: Oh, yes, they all just look wonderful, and charming, and nervous, in their white gloves, and trying to do something they've never seen done before in their lives. Sometimes I'm sure they're soloing [?] for their first time. And it's just darling! And their pretty clean faces.

So, I had a very, very good-looking navy boy, who I suspected had come from a pretty big home, because he seemed so at ease with everything, without being fresh. So he said, "Do you--we'll be taken in to dinner by Senator Johnson." And, you know, there were two Johnsons in the Senate. And I said, "Is it Lyndon?" He said, "Oh, yes, the Majority Leader." I said, "Goody!" Well, they had put an extension out in the center of the horseshoe table, and they had squeezed about ninety people in the room, which--I didn't blame them; clearly this dinner was *the* dinner of the--I don't know what.

F: Yes, certainly of the administration.

C: And it was so glamorous, and it was so beautifully turned out that night. I've never seen the White House look lovelier, and all decorated in pink carnations, and--it was gorgeous, really, just beautiful.

But, in the receiving line, I was on the very tail end, about the last four people on the receiving line. And--which I didn't care; I figured I was sitting over near the salt, it didn't matter to me. Then I was taken over--turned over to Senator Johnson. We went in to dinner, and I was eleven to the left. See, the Queen was on his right, so I was to the

right of the Queen. And--General Eisenhower's right. I was eleven in row. I couldn't believe it! And so it was [Under] Secretary [of State Christian A.] Herter--no, I guess it was Lyndon Johnson, and me, and Secretary Herter, who was the only under secretary there, who was obviously taking Floyd's place at the table, or his slot. And he was very crippled with arthritis. It was so crowded in the chairs, you couldn't serve yourself; you sat like this to try to handle your food, and--

F: Kept your elbows in close! (Laughter)

C: And not spill it on you, and not--and I know he got ice cream on him, trying to serve himself, and I quickly dipped it up and I don't think anyone saw me. Well, you can't help it if your hands are crippled. Even if they saw me, I didn't care. It was a nice thing to do.

F: It's always nice to be kindly.

C: And so the Johnsons took me in, to dinner, as I said. Of course, Lady Bird was just looking really glamorous that night.

When the dinner was over, the Commonwealth came in, all that was in Washington, I think from the secretaries up, to have champagne and see their Queen. I mean, that was from the--all the embassies of the Commonwealth. You know, that would be Canadian, and Australian, and--goodness me, I don't know how many. You've never seen such a horde of people. And I lost the most beautiful diamond brooch off of my purse that night, in the White House. I put it down, my purse, and when I picked it up, it was gone.

F: Well, somebody took a real souvenir, huh?

C: They sure did!

So, Lady Bird and Lyndon came over and said, "Are you going to stay here?" I said, "No, I'm not, really." And they said, "Well, who did you come with? Floyd isn't here." And I said, "I came alone," at the invitation of the President and Mrs. Eisenhower. I said, "I have a car and a driver"--of course, I had to. "I'm really splurging tonight!" They said, "Well, dismiss him, and we'll take you home."

We got in the car, and I missed my pin. Lyndon got out, went back, notified the Secret Service people. He knew his way around this, and with such smoothness and niceness. There was nothing I could do, and I said, "I know it was there," because somebody had admired it that evening.

Oh, also--I might as well put it on record. When the ladies went into the Blue Room for coffee, I was the first lady that was seated by Mrs. Eisenhower and the Queen, for five minutes.

F: Very nice!

C: They were pretty good to me, too. I got along well with them.

And so they said, "We'll take you home." And I had rooms in the Statler Hotel. We got out of the car, and they came upstairs and put their feet up--and I mean literally, physically--and we had a couple of nightcaps together and chatted about nothing of any particular importance. That's when I found out that the Majority Leader one time and the Speaker the next time were invited by a Republican president, and vice-versa with the other one.

But these were lovely memories that I had of the Johnsons.

F: Did either Lyndon Johnson or any of the women in his family ever talk--get any cosmetics advice from you?

C: Oh, this is a very interesting thing! That's something I won't discuss with anyone, when I was in business. We have an awful lot of doctors come to us, medical doctors. And I got so angry one night--we were having a meeting, really, on the Lovelace Clinic Foundation--medical research--or the Arthritis Foundation, I don't know which. And I had us--see, at the big house over there, it was nothing for me to entertain forty people.

F: That's out here, you mean, the old ranch house.

C: I mean, the big house that I showed you today, the old ranch house. And I had forty people for dinner--it was just no bother. Plenty of everything, chairs, rooms--you saw. It's a clubhouse now.

So I gave a rather--

F: The biggest rug in captivity, I gather. (Laughter)

C: Oh, it was the most beautiful rug in the world. The original one.

So, I had this rather large dinner party, and one of these women that I knew very well was--she was very famous. She had nailed this doctor and started asking for all this medical advice. And I went over and I said, "I'm going to have the doctor send you a bill tomorrow morning! And I'd rather you'd call him at his office!" And when women would say, "Jackie, what do you think I should use on my skin?" I'd say, "If you want me to personally give you some counsel, I'd be delighted to do it. But I never do it in social hours." I don't care; I'd have said that, I think--I wouldn't have said it to the President's wife. But certainly nobody at that level.

Now, whether Lady Bird ever talked to me about a thing like that, wouldn't have enough importance to me to remember.

Apropos of that, I was in a business, completely successfully, for twenty-five years, and I hated every minute of it! Isn't that funny; I didn't like the people I had to deal with. It was not enjoyable. But I think cosmetics are very important to people, very. Men too. Same as women.

But--oh, I gave Mamie Eisenhower some advice on her hair, and her makeup, and--but I did that as one friend to another, not at a social level. I just wouldn't like doing that. And I would never discuss my business--in fact, a lot of people wouldn't know that I was Mrs. Odlum, or a lot of people wouldn't know that I was the flyer, but in the cosmetics business--they wouldn't know that I was the woman flyer and had the cosmetics too. I kept the lives so separated; I didn't try to make it dependent.

Well, you didn't come here to record my life! You asked the question; I answered it.

F: Do you want to talk about the Klaus dinner? Is there anything to say there?

C: Oh, this was truly lovely. Again--you see, both Floyd and I were always invited to these things together. But we each got our invitation; I'd get mine as Jacqueline Cochran, he'd get his as Floyd Odlum, which I think is very cute.

F: Yes. And it shows somebody in protocol, or in the White House staff or somewhere, knew what he was doing.

C: Well, I had so established my own name, and a lot of times I wondered if people didn't think, "Are they still living together?" But seldom could he go, because of his own--of course, he's a lot more infirm now than he was then.

F: But it was still an effort.

C: Oh, it was a great effort. And he had a wonderful friendship--well, you heard him tell you tonight the story about the President taking him up to his own bedroom, for the bathroom, when he was out at the elevator seeking a place to go in alone. Of course, I'm sure some of these flunkies were around to try to direct him, I don't know.

But, anyway, I went in to Washington. And I flew in; I got in real late, in real bad weather. And the next day--I thought, "Well, I'm going to take a day's rest." And we couldn't get any transportation at the airport. And I finally had to sign with the Hertz people, that I would not hold the insurance company responsible, that I would be responsible for the car if they would let me have a car. It took me about two hours to get the car. And I was real tired, and I went into the hotel late. Nothing happened to the car, and I put it in the garage, hoping it would [wouldn't?] get banged up by some black, or some-- Well, they were doing that sort of thing!

So I had the next day to rest. And I got a call from Mrs. Gronella [Ashton Gonella]--funny I remember her name; it's kind of a funny name. And she said, "We just want to check up and see if you got in," and so forth. And she said, "President and Mrs. Johnson think you'd better come over here and spend tomorrow night, that you may have a little trouble getting here." I said, "Well, what's going to happen to all the other guests?" She said, "Well, they're not worrying about the other guests. They're just worrying about you, apparently." (Laughter) This is the truth. I said, "Well, how very nice. I'd be happy to come over if they want me to, but," I said, "I don't have to put them out." She said, "We're going to be awfully short on transportation, too, because we're trying to transport people."

F: This is after the shooting, now, of Martin Luther King, and--

C: Yes, they had burned a lot of Washington. Some of it was still smoking, I think. And I'm not exaggerating. I mean, it was burning and smoldering, and . . .

So, I said, I'm just going to stay at the White House. Now, the Eisenhowers had invited us to stay at the White House. And Floyd just can't stay away from home. He has to have a separate room; he has to have personal attention and care and help. It was just too much for us. And we always declined. And, naturally, everybody wants to sleep in the White House, I think. Don't you?

F: Yes, right.

C: I think you'd be abnormal if you didn't want to sleep in the White House! So I was kind of set up about it. So I said, "Well, fine."

She called back in a little while and said, "We think you should come over here about eight-thirty, nine o'clock in the morning." And I said, "Well, you know, you can't get taxicabs, and you can't hire a car with a driver. I have a U-Drive-It." I told her what I had to do to get it. "Now, I can drive that over there if someone can park it." "Oh," she said, "we'll send a car for you, of course." I said, "Well, fine, that eases everything." So I went right away and turned in the U-Drive-It car, and had no more responsibility. And I figured if they got me over there, they'd get me back! And, of course, I didn't check out of the hotel or anything. My maid was there, and--same old Ellen!

So I packed my evening clothes, and said, "Oh, Lord, don't get wrinkled!" And [I] put on my finest Paris suit, and got really gussied up, and went over there and was shown to the Queen's room, the one that Queen Elizabeth had stayed in. And--they were just lovely things, in the room.

So I called Mrs. Gonella, and I said, "Look, it's almost impossible for me to get into my evening clothes this evening, and to fasten my jewelry, and"--really, when you wear these dresses, they build them in Paris; they don't make them. I'm going to digress: I was written up for the most beautiful gown at the dinner that night.

F: How nice!

C: It was a lovely gown that Dior had designed. And I said, "Could I arrange some way to get a taxi, or some way to get here, for my maid to have a pass? You know, she knows President Johnson." I didn't tell her the story. I said, "She's met him." That was Ellen, that I introduced you to. She's been with me thirty-seven years.

And I said, "So she can do my clothes, and fasten me up, and squire me around a little bit. I sure would appreciate it. In fact," I said, "she can spend the night here in that dressing room, on the other bed in there." There was another bed. Really, there was! A whole dressing room with a little day bed in it. And--if nobody minded. I said, "I think President Johnson might remember her name," so I could get her cleared that way. I didn't want to say she was on that historical flight.

She said, "I'll call you back," and she called back and said, "You'll have a maid to take care of you." I said, "Mrs. Gonella, I've had a personal maid since I was fourteen years old." Isn't that remarkable?

F: It really is.

C: I've had somebody just to take care of me. I made the money, and I hired them to do it, while I was doing four jobs in one day, and putting in fourteen, fifteen hours. At least I have that, and I liked to be clean, and well groomed, and dressed and turned out properly, and always was. I'm putting it in past tense; I don't do it that much anymore.

So, this Negro woman, who was--well, she's probably whiter than I am with my sultan--came in. I've got her name; I think it was Anna Mae Williams. She'd been in the White House--she'd gone through, I don't know, three or four presidents. And she says, "You know the President--the other President very well, don't you?" I said, "You mean General Eisenhower?" She said, "Yes. I've heard them talk about you! I've heard Mrs. Eisenhower talk about you before our Rose," our old personal maid. I said, "Well, that's nice." So we got very friendly. She said, "You know, I helped take care of the Queen when she was here." Well, this woman told me that there was a law passed, right after the Civil War, that any domestic employed in the White House must be Negro. I wish you'd check that out for me. She said, "I'm not really much of a Negro! I'm more Indian than I am Negro. But," she said, "they don't know the difference, and I like working here."

F: (Laughter)

C: And she took my dress away, and she came back, and it was perfect. It's hard to pack in that climate without getting wrinkles. And she helped me dress, and--

F: And long dresses are a particular problem.

C: Oh, yes. Well, husbands do these things for wives, and wives help husbands. It's normal! Right?

F: Yes.

C: And--she said, "Now, you just ring this bell when you come back, and I'll come and help you undress," and I said, "Thank you, I will." Which Ellen always does for me--because to get out of it is almost as much of a chore as to get into it! And this was a beautiful, delicate dress. So, we just had a good time, and--

So, anyway, when I arrived, I was tired, and I just went over and turned the bed down and stretched out on the bed and--waiting to be told what I was supposed to do. And you're always escorted in the White House, till you go to the upstairs rooms, and you can wander around. But downstairs--and so I got a call from Mrs. Gonella again. She said, "You're to be down on the South Portico"--is that the way you call it? I think she said "portico." South something--that was it, I think--at ten minutes till eleven. So I jumped--I had my hair all fixed, and changed my dress, and got ready, and went down, and immediately an escort came over. And they had a big platform--they had a big red carpet going up to this--have you ever seen one of those on the South Lawn?

F: Yes.

C: You know what they do. And then they had pieces of wood in the ground, where he was supposed to stand. And I was standing right up front, with all the cabinet and all the big shots!

And the Austrian--well, he's not the president; they call him the chancellor--made his speech, a longwinded--oh, I thought he'd never stop! Because it had to be translated, and they just--it was kind of hot, in the sun, and it got sticky, and--

F: He was giving it in German.

C: Oh, yes. And when he got through, and they all got a polite applause, I think it was--this man who became postmaster general--

F: Marvin Watson.

C: I think it was Watson, but I'm not sure--came over and said, "You are to go and stand by the"--the canopy that goes up into the White House--

F: Yes, into the Diplomatic Reception Room.

C: Well, whatever--the south side of the White House, the big public rooms there that--I don't know if they're open to the public or not. But, anyway, they just hold all this kind of folderol there. The White House is larger than you realize.

F: Yes. It's really a pretty impressive house, I think, when you--

C: It's a beautiful house. We should have had the land all the way down to the river, for our president, I think, but anyway we didn't.

And I have never--the only time in my whole life that I ever recall having felt awkward. I had high-heeled shoes on that were going in the dirt. There were all these people, and to leave this group--which was the cabinet and everything else, the Supreme Court and what have you, the ones that were there--and walk over; it was a long way. And I mean, it was as far--almost as far as from here to that tree, I think. It felt that far, anyway.

F: Yes. Fifty yards.

C: It's a long way! I felt just like a fool. There wasn't anything I could do. And secretaries and people like that were standing around. They said, "You're supposed to go and stand by that post." I went over there, and--nobody escorted me. I went and stood by the post!

F: (Laughter) Just poor ol' Jacqueline Cochran, all alone--

C: All by myself, traipsing across that lawn--

F: --having her own party! (Laughter)

C: --with all these big shots, you know, looking at me! And I'm not a person to ever feel awkward. I don't know why; I try to behave properly and try to have good manners, and so that's that. But I've never done anything like that before.

So, the President got up. He started to speak--before I could make it to that post!

Which made it even worse!

F: Yes. Kind of like walking out in the middle of a prayer, or something. (Laughter)

C: Like that, yes. Turning your back on the flag, when they sing the national anthem!

So, I got to the post, and I stood there, and I was--"Whew! That's over." Know why? When they left the stand--the presidents left together, arm in arm--when he got to me, he said, "Mr. President [Chancellor?], I wanted to make sure you met my dearest friend, Jackie Cochran," and put his arm around me.

F: How nice!

C: And he kissed me. Again, before all these hundreds of people there on the lawn. And that's why they had told me to go stand there.

Now, how could this man be that thoughtful of me?

F: Yes. You can see it now, he told somebody you--probably himself, figured out, "Where can I get to her best, so I don't have to go looking for her in the crowd."

C: He didn't say--he didn't speak to another person in the crowd. Not one person. There wasn't a single person whom he introduced the President [Chancellor] to. No one! I was the only one. And they went inside and disappeared.

And I went to my room, and when I got to my room, the phone rang, and they said, "Would you just order what you want for lunch, in your room?" And I had seen Lady Bird--when I went inside, Lady Bird was there with a lot of Texans, or people--she did a lot of this for him. And I joined them for a few minutes, and I didn't see any point in my staying around, and I said, "May I be excused?" She said, "Yes, and if you want anything at all, just pick up the phone and ask for it." I said, "Thank you very much."

She turned around, she introduced me to everyone [and] said, "Jackie is staying with us." This is all--I was just part of the family. And that's just the way they treated me. I was there until about three o'clock the next afternoon.

So, I went upstairs, and I thought, "Well, I'll undress and take a rest. I haven't a thing to do." And--I guess I ordered something to eat; I don't remember. And the phone rang. They said, "An escort will be there in a few minutes. The President would like to see you in his office." That's right! So I thought, "Oh, God, won't it ever stop?" So back I went . . .

F: Get dressed again?

C: Well, no, I wasn't undressed. You know, they have this--I don't know what you call it--connection between the house and the office, where you don't have to go outside, and it's cool. I went over and spent about an hour with him in his office, maybe longer. And we talked about the racial problem, and--I didn't do any talking; I very seldom did much talking when I was with him. He did it.

F: You made a good listening post.

C: I think that's what it was. I was a sounding post.

And I went back and still got my rest in. And I said I wanted to go into the Lincoln Room, to this Negro woman. And there was an ambassador from Korea or an ambassador from Vietnam, I don't know which, I think his name was Butler [Samuel Berger?]-was there an ambassador of that name? It doesn't matter. But he was staying there. And when he got out of his room, I snuck in and got on the Lincoln bed. I wanted to say I had laid down on the Lincoln bed. How childish can you get?

F: Yes. Big old bed!

C: And when the dinner was over that night--it was a beautiful dinner. But she had done it like Kennedy, and had an awful lot--oh, in the afternoon--

F: She used round tables?

C: Square.

F: Didn't she use round?

C: They weren't round that night, I'm sure.

F: Doesn't matter.

C: I don't think they were. Maybe they were; maybe they were. I don't know. And I usually--I look at details.

But in the afternoon, as I was just dozing a little bit, the telephone rang. Mrs. Gonella was on the phone. She said, "We're arranging the seating, and Mrs. Johnson wants to know where you would like--with whom you would like to sit. And I will bring the list over, if it's convenient for you, or send it over." I said, "Well, don't be ridiculous! You just set me any place you please. I don't care." And she said, "You really don't care?" I said, "Well, of course not! I'm very honored to be here, and I don't have any preference." She said, "Would you like me to send you a guest list? They're going to be"--I think it was four to a table, or maybe it was six to a table, but I think it was four. I said, "No, I don't--I'd like to have the guest list, just for my own files and records. It'd be charming to have."

F: It's nice to know who they are before you meet them, too.

C: And who they are, before you meet them. I said, "If it's convenient, somebody can bring it over to me." But, I said, "It's not important to me, one way or another." And I said,

"By no means am I going to choose the people whom I want to sit with." And that seemed to please her, very much indeed. Well, wouldn't you have said the same thing?

F: Yes. Well, it gave her considerably more flexibility. Plus the fact, in a gathering like that, you may be picking a familiar name, and passing up somebody you'd find fascinating.

C: I agree with that too. So, who do you think I sat with?

F: I don't know.

C: Lynda Bird!

F: (Laughter) I see.

C: She looked lovely. The most beautiful black hair. She looks like the President, in a feminine version. Don't you agree?

F: Yes.

C: And--oh, I think it was [General Earle] Wheeler, he was the chairman of the joint chiefs. And he kept saying, all evening, "My wife looks like you." And I didn't think she was very pretty, so I didn't like that!

F: (Laughter) I see!

C: I'm just teasing! And--another man. So I guess we were four to a table. And our table was right up front. Right smack in the front, right near the podium, right near where the President and First Ladies were sitting. And I thought, "Well, maybe it's better never to say where you want to sit."

Well, you know what they'd have done, if I had been forced to have picked it, I'd have chosen a table in the back of the room. Not because I was trying to hide under a collard leaf, or anything like that, but that--I think it's important that you do it. Because,

being a house guest, I thought maybe there might be some type of protocol where you would have to choose some very obscure corner. Somebody has to be in the corner! It's just like last night, when I had this small dinner for you and the Whitmans, I had four tables, so I named the tables by flowers. Because I don't want anybody to feel they have the fourth table. So--

F: There's a phone ringing.

(Interruption)

C: We didn't do anything on the Ranch yet, have we?

F: No. We have added, I should say for the record, Mrs. Viola Pistell, or Strauss. Mrs. Strauss has been around here for years, and so we'll be hearing her voice, hopefully, from time to time.

C: Well, you know, Dr. Frantz, Mrs. Strauss and I have spent many years together, and worked together, and after she retired we've done a lot of traveling together, and even before she retired from our organization.

F: Is that a one-s or two-s Strauss?

S: Two.

C: Two-s Strauss. And although I'm pretty sure she must have met Congressman or Senator Johnson and Mrs. Johnson--had you ever met them?

S: No.

C: You had not?

S: No, I hadn't met them.

C: You hadn't.

F: I knew she wasn't here on that famous Sunday! Nobody was.

C: No, she wasn't here that famous Sunday! I had a dumb housekeeper.

S: [Inaudible]

C: Would you move up closer [to Strauss, regarding the microphone]?

F: I want to ask you one thing on that other--on that Sunday. Was your house green then?

C: Oh, yes. All the buildings--

F: It's been repainted since.

C: Yes. All the buildings were the most beautiful shade of green, and--just soft on the eyes.

I wanted this house green, but it just didn't fit, an old Spanish house. See, that house was a mongrel. It grew like Topsy; it didn't have any claim to architectural beauty, but became quite lovely, in spite of itself.

F: Did you build it, or had you bought it?

C: Dr. Frantz, I built that house with a friend of mine, a six-dollar-a-day carpenter, and laid the tile on my own hands and knees and worked like a day laborer. It took me a year and a half to do it.

F: You put a lot of sweat in that house, huh?

C: Oh, yes, I've got a lot of sweat and blood in that house.

So, anyway, I've been fortunate, since the very early beginnings of the space program, to have been brought into the picture of the space program. And, very early--I can't remember the date; of course, it's in the *Congressional Record*--women were trying to get into the program, as they were trying to get into everything else. And I don't mean to sound disparaging, but I think some things they have no business being in, because I don't think they can carry their weight, from an economic point of view in our country. Like in the military, not being able to--they spent a half million, or a million and a half,

on a woman pilot--because we did in World War II--I was the director of the program.

And then they start their family, and they're finished, whether they like it or not! Because flying a high-performance aircraft is like being a Fritz Kreisler, or like being any great performer--even in the arts, you practice all the time or you're not any good! And that's what goes for flying.

So, anyway, as I said, I testified before a congressional committee, and they took my testimony--I sent it around and got what I was going to say approved by the chief of staff of the air force, secretary of the air force, the chief of naval operations, and the army, with a little note that said, "This is what I'm going to say, but if you don't agree with it, I'll try to avoid testifying and I won't say anything." And I always--before I do anything, I'll find out whether you're going to do it with a degree of harmony and intelligence and backup, or you'd better try to stay out of it. Do you agree with me?

F: Right.

C: So, as a result of that, Mr. Webb--

F: James Webb.

C: Mr. James Webb invited me to go on as one of his consultants, if you want to call it that. Well, I thought it was kind of a show. But Dr. [Hugh L.] Dryden I had known for many years. I have known, from the time I was a very young girl, some of the greatest people in our scientific community. With my particular background, it seems rather odd that I would. But we had a warm relation, and I think without Dr. Dryden there wouldn't have been a space program. And I think that Mr. Webb, with his great promotional and showmanship ability, also had a great deal to do to add to it. It was a finely balanced organization.

So, I found myself, all of a sudden, really involved. And then the chairman of the space science and astronautics committee--a great, great man, just a marvelous--and that's Congressman [George P.] Miller, from California. So--

F: [Inaudible]

C: George Miller.

F: He and I used to serve on the National Historical Publications Commission.

C: Well, I just--you know, I wept. I'd have gone up and campaigned for him. He didn't know he was going to lose. He should have had one more term in Congress. And, you know, he's working for [Rep. Olin E.] Teague now.

F: No.

C: Yes! Teague, from Texas.

F: Really? He's in Washington?

C: He's now chairman of the space and astronautics committee. And he kept George--

F: Well, I haven't interviewed him, but he's someone I've thought I should.

C: Well, he kept George on.

So, as a result of that, I went nine consecutive trips to either the Farnborough show in England--air show--or the Paris Air Show in Paris, with this group of chairmen and executive committees--I mean, executive assistants. And it became a very rewarding experience, and I got a very fine idea--these men were really not on a junket. Now, sometime a congressman would get invited on the airplane, and he was, maybe, spending government money I didn't think he should, or behaving badly. But, on the whole, they were a very serious working group of people. And I just thought George Miller--and I think he was one of the fine men of our country.

So I really got very much involved, and I think had some influence--oh! Miller asked me to write a whole dissertation of my opinion on how the space program was being run. And I said, "Well, you know, I wouldn't want to do that unless Dr. Dryden"--and I said, "I don't know Mr. Webb very well"--I agreed, basically, in my thoughts on the subject. I said, "I think it's ridiculous that we've taken seven men, put them in one basket, for seven years, and spent a fortune on them, without preparing a basis for a much wider base on the program, such as getting scientists, medical doctors"--just a whole array of people, astronomers and this kind of thing--"into space." And I said, "I think we're just kind of ridiculous. We're not doing it on a balanced basis."

Well, Congressman Miller was just fascinated with my ideas. He said, "But you make sense!" So, I said, "Well, if you don't put in File 13"--that's the wastebasket--I said, "I'll sit down and write you everything I think. But first I would like the privilege of showing it to"--

(Interruption)

C: --"and if he wants to, he can certainly pass it on to Webb," I said, "because it's their business, and I don't like any outsider picking up other people's balls and running with them." You wouldn't like it in your office--around your administration. And Congressman Miller said, "I think I'd better hire you as my assistant!" And I laughed and said, "Well, I'd be honored to work with you, Mr. Congressman, but I'm not for hire! I'm kind of busy."

So that's how I got started with the space program. And so I went to all of these shots, all of them. And I was named Webb's assistant, and all of his subsequent

administrators except the present one, I think, didn't renew my advisory capacity. But for three or four years I haven't been doing very much for anyone because I've been ill.

So I was getting ready to go down to the shot. And I--something had happened to my airplane, I don't know what it was. Oh, yes. I'd lost an engine on it, and I was trying to decide whether I was going to buy a new one, or repair it.

F: Was it still the Lodestar?

C: Oh, yes, I loved that airplane.

F: You must have put lots of miles on it.

C: I put six thousand hours in on it. I flew it to Russia! Flew it 140 hours on that trip alone. That's a heck of a trip.

So, I said to Vi--I said, "Miss Strauss, would you like to go and drive with me to Florida? I'd love to see some of the country, and before I die, I hope to see all of it. But I've seen it from the air, and I've done so little motoring and so little traveling by ground. And I was just--I didn't go anyplace except by air. And I said, "I think it will be a very interesting trip," and I said, "They all sit in the VIP section, and I can bring guests," and this kind of thing. And she said, "It sounds wonderful."

So the--President and Mrs. Johnson had repeatedly, both in writing and orally, said, "Come visit us at the Ranch." I mean, they never said, "Come on the thirteenth of May," but "if you're down our way, or anywhere"--

F: Y'all come!

C: "Y'all come," is right. So I thought it would be lovely to see them again. I hadn't seen them for a long time. So I dropped Lady Bird--or Mrs. Johnson--a note, and I said, "I'm coming--making a trip to Florida to see the upcoming shot. And I'm going to be within

fifty miles of your"--you know, Florida is down in the South--"of your ranch, and I would just love to come over and pay my respects, and say hello, and give you a kiss on the cheek, and go my way." Well, I instantly got a telephone call, and--that I was to come and stay, and--

F: What time of year is this?

C: This was in January or February; it was one of those shots, not one of the December shots. And I can't even remember the year now. You can get the timing on it.

And I said, "No, I couldn't do that. I'll stay in Stonewell"--or is it Stonewall--

F: Stonewall.

C: I said, "I understand there's a very fine motel there, because I have a very dear friend traveling with me. And I just can't do it, and, I mean, I just wouldn't want to leave her in a hotel while I go off to the Ranch."

So Mrs. Johnson called me. She said, "Well, bring your friend!" I said, "Well, she's really one of the dearest friends I have, and so I'd be delighted to come and spend a night." And I'm one of these people--I'm always afraid I'll overstay or get in somebody's hair. Then she called me back and she--I gave her a date, and she called back and she said, "We're going to leave the next day for Acapulco, and we don't want you to spend just one night. You won't bother us. We're going to put you in a cottage that was built for Mr. Churchill when he came to stay with us." And she said, "You know, he stayed with us several days." I didn't know that. Did you?

F: No.

C: Well, maybe you'd better get hold of some of that material. So, she said--I said, "Well, if that's the case, then maybe I will stay two nights." I don't remember. I couldn't go

earlier. Whatever it was, I couldn't get there before that time. And I thought one night was enough.

So we were going to arrive in time for dinner, say, like today, and spend the evening with them, and leave the next day, sometime during the day, after we had the chance to look around the Ranch and to see things and so forth. And they left for Acapulco, the next day. They were going to visit somebody important down there.

F: Miguel Alemán.

C: I have no idea. So, I got into the area. And although I had written down exactly how to find that ranch, I couldn't find it. Never felt so dumb in my life! (Laughter) And then, all of a sudden, the cylinder--and I had a brand new car. That's why I hate new cars! This must have been 1969, because my car was brand new.

S: Yes, it was. I guess it was then.

C: I had it in Europe that fall.

F: If this was January, it could have been 1970.

C: Well, it could have been 1970, because I bought it in 1969. That was really tied down by the car. Here was a brand new car, a beautiful car. And the brakes went out. And I mean they were out! I think--you know, they have a backup cylinder, in their master cylinder. But I was a little leery of that.

F: Were you in town, or--?

C: Yes, I was in the town, but--there's that little town, Johnson City. But I went to the phone, and I called, and I said, "I'm at this Arco station. I just can't find this place. I'm getting later and later by the minute." So the President came on the phone, and he said, "You stay where you are, and I'll have a man there in five minutes." So a Secret Service

man came with a jeep. And we followed him in. And he said, "I guess I'd better not take you over the dam." I said, "I don't want to get these brakes wet. I've got enough trouble already!"

So Mrs. Strauss and I arrived. It must have been about--it got dark very early. It was really before six o'clock, wasn't it?

S: It would have been dark, yes.

F: It's getting dark about 5:30.

C: Was it before six o'clock, Vi?

S: Yes, it must have been. It must have been before six.

C: Because we were worrying about dinner, and I said--if we were late, and we had no idea how early they ate, or what they did, or their personal habits at home.

So when we got there, they were both standing out, clear down in--in front of the steps, which was just, to me, incredible. And I got out, and Lady Bird put her arms around me, and the President put his arms around me, and they both kissed me warmly, and--well, the usual act. And they just made Miss Strauss feel right then as though she's a part of this family. Am I correct?

S: Yes, that is true.

C: What I'm trying to do--I want people to see the picture of these two lovely people, you know.

S: Exactly as it happened.

C: Yes. And I said, "Well"--

F: It's visiting former friends, not a former president.

C: Oh, that's exactly what it was. [It] had nothing to do with visiting a former president. I mean, they were accepting me in their home, as--with the attitude that they had nobody closer, or anyone they thought any more of. That's the only I way I know how to [inaudible].

F: Yes. They would come out, would come up the steps, and out to the fence, and greet you.

C: They were standing down in the yard!

S: Came outside of the house, and--

C: Outside of the house. Clear down on the ground. Standing there waiting for us, when we drove up. Now, I call that kind of a welcome!

F: Yes.

C: I would have called it a welcome if it had just been at the door. But, that's exactly as it was.

So, I said, maybe we could be taken immediately to our quarters, and--whatever instructions. "Well," he says, "you're just gonna have supper," and he said, "I'm not gonna let you stay in"--Lady Bird said, "We're not gonna let you stay in that guest house! You're gonna stay in the house with us." [He] said, "Move over, and I'll drive the car around to the back so we can unload it."

And I said, "Oh, goodness me." I said, "I didn't expect that. I don't want to put you out in any way. And--we don't need too much for the night." Because I had a lot of luggage, because I knew I'd be going to all kinds of things down in Florida; we were going to make a long trip of it. And he said, "Move over!" And I said, "But the brakes

are bad on the car, Mr. President." And I said, "Uh-oh, he doesn't want me to call him Mr. President." And--but I did.

And he said, "I don't know. I may decide to put you in bed with me. You never can tell! I've got a pretty big one." (Laughter) Isn't he fine? And Lady Bird was standing there, hearing this. He had this very cute way of saying things. It sounded terribly--probably, to history, now, it will sound funny, but it was just cute.

F: Yes, well, he could always toss out a--an extra intimacy, which you knew there was no truth in.

C: Well, so--

F: Which you'd enjoy, kind of--banter.

C: I don't know of anyone, or know any lady, who has better training and manners than Vi Strauss--and is at home in any situation, and with any kind of person. It doesn't make any difference who they are; she handles herself beautifully.

F: Were you dreading meeting them, or--?

S: Well, I was in a bit--in awe of them, you know. I didn't think they'd be that friendly, and I just--

F: Did the awe vanish?

C: Well, she insisted that she stay in a hotel, as a matter of fact.

S: [Inaudible] I went in the house with Mrs. Johnson, and immediately she offered me a drink. And I said something about changing my clothes. She said, "Go up and put on a robe. That's what I'm going to put on."

Then Jackie and the President came in. And we sat and talked.

C: Well, anyway, we were quite a long time. What did you and Mrs. Johnson talk about while you were in there?

S: Well, we talked--I looked around at the house, and said--I said, "Well, you don't mind if I look around and see your lovely things, do you?" She said, "No, go ahead, everybody likes to do that." That's what we talked about. Then Jackie came in with the President. And then he turned on the television set. (Laughter) He had those three sets, you know, going. I think it was about seven o'clock in the night.

F: Yes, it was time for the evening news.

S: Yes, that's right.

C: Well, we were fully a half an hour, you know, before we came back.

S: Oh, yes.

C: And so he had--he drove this car--can you think of anything specific that you and Mrs. Johnson had to say to each other?

S: Well, I don't know, she was very friendly. She put me at ease. And we had a drink together, you know, and that sort of broke the--

C: Don't you think she's beautiful? She's physically beautiful.

S: Yes. All delightful. Immediately you see her great charm. She was just a wonderful woman, I thought.

C: I think she was the finest first lady that we've ever had in the White House--that I have had personal contact with. And I have had contact with all of them, starting with Roosevelt, Mrs. Roosevelt.

F: Always--now the White House does something to you, and I suppose you can put a ten-pound midget in there, and you'd feel something, in the White House. But at the Ranch,

the Johnsons always made it very difficult for--you almost had to keep reminding yourself that this is, or has been, the President of the United States. These are just nice people.

S: Exactly, yes.

C: *Apropos* of that, you know, General Eisenhower, as I said before in this recording, spent seven winters in our home, for his office. He had his office there. And he said to me one day, "You're the only person, among my very close acquaintances, to still treat me as the President of the United States." And I think he liked it. And I tried so hard to do that with Lyndon Johnson--of course, in the early days, I certainly called him Lyndon, and I continued to call her Lady Bird. But I thought, he was the President of the United States, and I should say Mr. President. But he didn't like it--he really didn't like it. Because that night he gave me kind of a dirty look, when I said, "You shouldn't drive this car," and I was afraid he would run into the wall, and he almost did.

So he drove it around to the back of the house, and Vi, as we just said, went in with Mrs. Johnson. And two or three boys came out to help unload. There was a--I think it was Japanese, wasn't it? The butler?

F: Filipino, possibly.

S: Yes, he was a [inaudible].

C: I think he was Japanese, wasn't he? Or was he--

F: He was Filipino.

C: Or Filipino. He was quite charming.

And so--they said, "We might as well just unload everything, and put it in your room, and you'll have what you want." Well, I thought that was very nice. And I said,

"Well, all of my bags have my name on them, so you'll know which ones are mine," and, of course, Vi, a sensible woman, only had a couple, and I had six, as usual.

F: They gave each one of you a separate room.

C: Yes. But we were across the hall, weren't--?

S: Yes, I had one of the daughters', I don't remember which one. It was one of the girls' rooms, that I had.

C: And I had a lovely room--just a real typical farmhouse room! Just beautiful, and charming. I'll tell this now, but--we went up, I said, "Well, I've got to go up and change," and I said to the President, "Shall I change now, or come down--when do we dine?" And he said, "When I get ready!" (Laughter) And I said, "Well, I'll run up and change." I was dirty from our travel, I was in slacks--but finely tailored slacks, I mean, not messy things. He said, "Oh, no, you don't! You stay just like you are." He said, "I'm not going to change." He didn't have a tie on. Did he? Did he have a tie on or not, Vi?

S: No, he didn't have a tie on. She put on a--

F: Probably had on a long-sleeved sport shirt with a jacket.

C: She put on a--it was actually a very big, soft, full velvety type of robe. Normally used strictly with the family, and not if you have guests. But she's a beautifully groomed and beautifully dressed woman when she's in public. Now, I don't want to leave any impression that she came improperly dressed.

S: No, no, she didn't. She looked beautiful.

C: Yes, she did. Glamorous and beautiful. She made me feel badly, in my old, dirty traveling suit that I had been in all day.

So, we came back into the living room. He brought me a drink, and said, "Now, Jackie, you tell me exactly how you want your drink, because I've heard you say that if you get a drink that isn't made to your liking, you don't want it." I said, "That's correct, sir."

F: And he would remember it.

C: Oh, yes, well, of course he would remember it! Of course he would remember it.

And so we sat down, and he said, "Well"--

F: Did he mix the drink for you?

C: No, he didn't. Somebody brought to him just what I wanted, and they brought it. And if I had another drink--in fact, I had two drinks. And--because I was tired. I had been upset over this car thing, and I had been upset over the--not being able to find the place.

F: Yes, and that is a long, long run across West Texas, getting there. A whole day of nothing.

C: Yes, and I had been driving all day, pretty hard. I was running behind--something had happened that I couldn't get out of, and I didn't--I had even planned to come, get within the vicinity, and rest for a day, and arrive properly dressed. But I ran out of time, and it was just--and I wasn't going to fail to see that ranch.

Incidentally, he took me out and showed me where he was going to be buried.

Isn't that morbid?

F: It is, in a way, but he had it all planned out.

C: I think he felt that he would never see me again, or something. And I had the most emotional feeling the next morning, when we separated. I don't know. Do you remember? I said I just feel so badly--I don't think he was very well. But--

F: Incidentally, what was the weather like? Because it could be anything--

C: It was simply beautiful.

S: Yes, the weather was lovely.

C: It was warm, and charming, and it was balmy, and--just lovely weather.

So, I was sitting in a chair. It was--the living room isn't very large; it isn't very small. There were three--three TV sets?

F: That's right.

C: And he went over, and he turned all three of them on, to different stations. He tuned in--he said, "The President's speaking." I was so cross that the President had to speak that night! (Laughter) And I felt robbed--I felt robbed; I'd been late getting there, by two or three hours. And I felt--very cross.

F: Yes. You could stay home and listen to the President.

C: Yes. I sure could. I couldn't listen to the former President. (Laughter)

So he turned them on, and he kept tuning them. And he was absolutely glued to those sets. He was so attentive, you could hear a pin drop in the room. And the--

F: Did he have the sound on, on all three, or just one?

S: That I don't know.

F: Well, since it's the same speaker, it's probably just one.

S: Yes. I believe it was just one. But the other two were going--

C: No, he didn't. He had it on all three.

S: But not voice. I don't think he had the three voices--it would have been all mixed up.

F: Well, it would have all been the same speaker, just a question of--

C: I think he had one--now, this is something I don't know. Not sure. But it was odd that he had the three on. I'd never seen anyone do that before.

So--well, you can see, in here picture, photograph of himself with his grandson.

F: Yes. Little Lyn was there.

C: No, he wasn't there, but the one when he was going to see the first--shot, or some kind of--the astronaut shots. Then he had three TV sets in that picture.

F: Well, you all waited until [President Richard] Nixon was through until you--

C: Completely. And the woman came to the door to announce dinner. Then he just did *that*, with his hand--

F: Just waved her away.

C: She didn't open her mouth. The President got through speaking. And I said, "What did you think of the speech?" He didn't answer.

S: He didn't make any comment.

C: He made no comment whatsoever, and I felt badly I'd asked the question. But he made no comment--nothing. And he listened very attentively and took it all in. He said, "Well, let's all have another drink." About that time, the gal came back to the door and said, "Dinner's ready! It's going to be spoiled!" Just like in--do you remember that?

S: Just like in anyone's home.

C: Anyone's home, and you only had family around, and you come around and you reprimand them for misbehaving.

F: And you don't argue with the cook!

C: No, I don't think you do. I don't even argue with my chef, here.

So, anyway, he said, "Let it ruin!" He said, "By the way, we're having an all-home product tonight. We're having catfish that we grow down here in the pond"--and I thought, "Oh, Lord, I don't like catfish!" (Laughter) And I don't like fried food, either. But I ate catfish, the first and only time.

F: They have good catfish.

C: Well, I just don't--

S: I enjoyed it! It was good. First time I'd had it, but it was good. I had a second helping.

C: So did he. He had a third!

S: He had three helpings.

F: And Mrs. Johnson probably said, "Now, Lyndon, watch it!"

S: She did. Exactly!

C: And, you know, they had ambrosia. I hadn't seen this since I was a kid. You know what ambrosia is? Oranges cut up with some coconuts spread on it. They had that for dessert, and they had the most unique centerpiece on the table.

F: Did they have cornbread?

C: Oh, naturally! And they had Brussels sprouts, which surprised me. I can't stand the things. I was hoping they would have turnip greens.

F: They didn't really hit you on the menu, did they? (Laughter)

C: No, they didn't hit me at all on the menu. No way.

But during this broadcast, Vi and the President were sitting on the couch. And he started to lounge, and finally he was practically down on her lap.

S: I didn't want to tell that.

C: Well, of course I want to tell that! And I thought, any minute his head's going to drop into her lap. (Laughter) He was leaning up against her, like this. Just leaning up against her! Using her for a cushion. Now, you know it's true. Am I right or am I wrong?

F: Well, you can always tell your friends, "You know, the President used to lean on me a lot." (Laughter)

S: Especially on me.

C: So, the centerpiece was so interesting, and somebody, I think in Germany, had had it made for them. Do you remember?

S: Yes, it had--it was like an earthenware piece. It had animals on it.

C: All the different kinds of animals from the country.

S: And a cow, and--different animals on it. It was quite unique.

F: Was it a bowl, or a . . . ?

C: It was a tureen. I think it was intended for a soup tureen.

S: It looked like a tureen, yes.

C: But it was a very interesting piece. We discussed that.

I had sent them a donkey, from Stueben [England]. A Stueben donkey is not just any donkey!

F: No.

C: And I had written them a note and said that this would draw their chariot back into the White House. But--I looked around, but I didn't see it anywhere. Wonder what happened to it. It was a very amusing, very lovely piece. But I didn't look that carefully.

So, anyway, the next morning I said to them, "We'll just have breakfast in our room. You're leaving. Don't bother with us." She said, "You will come down and have

breakfast with me." And, after dinner, we thought we would just go right up to bed, you know, because, after all--they said, "No! Sit down for a little while." So we went back into the living room and sat for probably another hour, wouldn't you think?

S: Yes, around that.

C: At least. And so he made the moves, said, "Well, I guess it's bedtime," and went off.

The next morning, I got up--

F: You went to bed pretty early. He could get to talking, as you know, some nights, and just totally--

C: Well, I don't think we went to bed before ten or eleven o'clock that night.

S: Maybe around ten, I think.

C: So, the next morning, we got up to shower, and there was no hot water.

S: That was the strangest part! (Laughter)

C: You tell the story.

S: Well, I had heard--I heard Mrs. Johnson knocking on Jackie's door, and I was wondering, "Well, what's going on?" And then I went to--I asked her, "What's going on?" And she said, "We don't have any hot water." If we wanted to shower, we'd have to go down the hall to get our shower--

C: We used her shower.

F: Yes. It was just for that bathroom.

S: Yes.

C: Something was wrong with that particular bathroom.

S: She said, "You have no hot water. If you want hot water, you'll have to go take the . . ."

C: Well, what I had done, I had called--I rang for the butler. I rang--I thought a woman would come, but the butler came up. I said, "There isn't any hot water."

F: You had already tried.

C: Yes. "Is there anything here that--where I could get the [hot] water?" And so--I said, "Now, look, I'll just use--bring a pan of hot water. I'll manage. Don't bother Mrs. Johnson." The next thing I knew, she was knocking on my door. Vi heard it, and came out, in her dressing gown, and she said, "That's all right. Come on down the hall and shower." So we both trotted down the hall to shower. I'm pretty sure it was her shower. I think it was.

See, he slept downstairs. He didn't sleep upstairs. But she did--I think. I'm not sure of that. I'm almost certain she did.

So we got up, and we finally got dressed, and decided we would walk out in the garden and wait till we were called to breakfast, because she said she was going to have breakfast with us. It was fairly early, as I recall.

S: Nine o'clock.

C: Was it?

S: We had breakfast at nine o'clock.

C: And I saw her sitting at a desk, which was probably her work room, working away. She works a lot, doesn't she?

F: Yes. Beautifully disciplined.

C: So, a boy came and said, "The President would like to see you." And I didn't know where--I went into his bedroom. [I] sat down beside the bed, talked with him a little bit. He had the most enormous bed I've ever seen in my life. And I was just startled to--"The

President wants to see you," and he apparently wasn't going to get up for breakfast. But he did. He got up and ate breakfast with us. And he said, "You all wait for breakfast. It will be out in a few minutes." And I really was surprised to be brought into his bedroom, to sit down at the side of the bed.

So we all sat down to breakfast, and they had homemade jam, they had biscuits, and they had eggs, and they had ham, and they had bacon. It was a wonderful breakfast! That suited me just fine. And I ate an enormous breakfast.

And after breakfast, he said, "Now, we can load up first, or we can have the boys load you up. You've got a long ways to go. Or," he said, "why don't you and Mrs. Strauss stay here and see the Ranch and spend the night here?"

F: Yes.

C: "We have to go." And I said, "Yes, I know, you asked me [to arrive] early, but I couldn't do it." And I said, "Oh, no, you're very kind, and thank you so much." I didn't feel it was proper to do it. You know, I've always regretted we didn't spend the rest of the day there, and that night.

S: I'd like to have seen the rest of it, too. He wanted to show us the schoolhouse, the former schoolhouse.

C: And he wanted all that done, and he really wanted us to stay.

S: We had the car--you had an appointment to have that car fixed.

C: Oh, he even got on the phone himself to help me get--

F: He called the garage man?

C: Well, he called somebody to see that I was taken care of, on it.

S: So we had to get on our way, to the garage.

C: And so--then I regretted it, because I wish I had stayed. He told us that night about when he was teacher in this little red schoolhouse. It's on the property, isn't it?

F: Well, now, he wasn't a teacher there.

S: No, he had it for the Ranch--

C: He went to school there.

S: Yes.

C: Well, then, he told us about a place where he taught, where he taught school.

F: Yes, he taught down in a little, mainly Mexican town called Cotulla.

C: What can you specifically remember, Mrs. Strauss, about his conversation, the people that had been close to him? Because he really went through them that night.

S: I don't--

C: Well, for instance, he said that Mr. McConnally [referring to John B. Connally] had worked for him for fifteen dollars a week. He enumerated the names of men that he had really created, that he felt he was responsible for their position in life.

S: Yes.

F: You mean John Connally.

C: I mean John--not McConnally, it's Connally. John Connally. And that John had worked for him for fifteen dollars a week. And, he said, sometimes he gets too big for his britches now. But he had the most homely way of expressing things.

But I'll never forget Mrs. Johnson's graciousness to us there. We couldn't have felt more--

S: More at home.

C: --at home than her our own daughter!

S: It was just like any--anyone's home.

F: What did you do, then, leave a little while after breakfast?

C: Well, they were packing up. And the President was bringing packages out himself. Can you imagine?

F: (Laughter) I can see him doing it.

C: Helping load the car.

S: Lots of water, big jugs of water, they were bringing up. [Inaudible]

C: Yes. And you saw him--don't forget this--he was engineering the whole thing, and then he'd come over and speak to me, and then go back to engineering things. And, finally, I was packed up, and they still were working at theirs. And I went over and I said goodbye to Mrs. Johnson, and--

S: Do you remember, for a while we talked in the kitchen. We went through the kitchen, and for a while we talked in the kitchen.

C: Oh, yes, that's right, we sat in the kitchen. Well, I went through the kitchen--

S: It just happened to where we were talking there. He came in and we were--we went through the kitchen to go out. And then he came in the--

C: Well, you see, I came in through the kitchen the night before. I didn't come in through the front door.

S: And I thought it was so strange, that we stood in this kitchen and talked.

C: Well, you know, when you and Mrs. Johnson went in the house, upon our arrival, we went around to the kitchen.

S: That's right.

C: And we came through the kitchen, so I didn't enter the front door. They took me in the back door.

S: Yes.

C: Anyway, the President was with me, so I didn't feel badly about going through the back door.

But, I said goodbye to her, and she put her arms around me, and gave me a big kiss. She said during the visit--I don't know when she said it, but, as I recall, it was that morning--that she wouldn't have been the First Lady if it hadn't been for me. Do you remember her saying that, Vi?

S: Yes.

C: But do you remember when she said it?

S: No, I don't.

C: But she made the remark during our visit.

S: It was at breakfast, I know, but that's all I . . .

C: Hmm?

S: It was at breakfast.

C: Was it at breakfast when she said it?

S: Yes, it was when breakfast was brought out.

F: Did she call you Miss Strauss?

S: Yes, she called me Miss Strauss.

C: I said--well, I didn't call Miss Strauss Viola in those days, because she was--you were still at the Ranch, weren't you?

S: No.

C: Well, anyway, maybe I did, then. I don't remember.

But, I thought it was a very wonderful statement for her to make. And, of course, no one but the Lord knows what you've done, but I think that maybe he would have lost his career in politics right then if I hadn't made the decision for them to take him to Mayo's. But--I was surprised that she was so conscious of it. Because I said something about--"One thing for sure, I know why you were such a wonderful First Lady, and I think you were one of the finest we've ever had in my lifetime--and I've been privileged to know them all. And I really--Lady Bird, you just made us feel so welcome." And I said, "You were a great First Lady, and you're a great hostess." And we were all stuffing our face with food, and it was such a good meal. And she said, "I wouldn't have been the First Lady without you."

F: Warren Woodward pays tribute to you for your calmness and decisiveness.

C: For my what?

F: Calmness and decisiveness. He seems to think that they had wrestled with the problem to the point, you know, you get there, where you really don't know what to do next. And you walked in, like a fresh breath, and took over.

C: Well, I did take over--

S: That's the way I felt when I first--you know, I was in great awe of them, I felt, "Well, I don't know what to say, or how to behave, or anything." But they immediately put you so at ease that you think it's an old friend.

C: Well, you see, what Dr. Frantz is talking about is when I flew him to Mayo's. And I went in--and you've never heard the complete story, I don't think. I've told you some of it, I'm sure, but not in the detail that I told it to Dr. Frantz here on the tape.

But when I got in that sick room, I said, "He's going to die, or we'll get him out of here. And let's get him to Mayo's." And I respect Mr. Woodward, who is now a big shot in American Airlines, to say that, but I--I've never been conscious of that myself. But when I think of the jobs that I did, very young, with being academically untutored, on a formal level, I sometimes feel--and I never thought about my work, or the work I did with people or for people, including with the President, until I was ill, and in intensive care, and alone for just weeks. And I found myself reviewing my life, and almost couldn't believe it.

F: Was President Johnson aware that you were ill?

C: Oh, I forgot to tell you, I have some wonderful correspondence, but, again, mostly telephone calls. You know when he had his heart attack--

F: Yes.

C: I think it was--well, it was after we had been at the farm. And they had him in the hospital in San Antonio.

F: Right.

C: And he said--he and Lady Bird both called me. Lady Bird called me in Albuquerque, and must have talked to me fifteen or twenty minutes. She said, "We'd better have you flown down here, so you and Lyndon can talk to each other." Because she knew this very warm friendship existed.

F: Was he in the hospital at the same time that you--?

C: Yes, when I had my first serious heart attack. And we talked on the phone, to San Antonio. I'm glad you brought that up. Because she telephoned, and she'd telephone every two or three days to check up on me. And she said, "Well, the President's doing

just fine"--or "Lyndon." She never referred to "the President" in my--you know, to me. And I tried so hard to keep the formal attitude with them, but, knowing them when he was--

F: (Laughter) It's hard to do!

C: --a congressman, it was very difficult to do. But I--I don't respect people who do not respect the job that a man represents, like the presidency of the United States. I saw the mother of a president stand up when he came into the room. He is the president, and we must never forget it.

F: Yes. Mrs. Roosevelt?

C: Yes, Mrs. Roosevelt did that. It was on the third of July, 1941. I even remember the date now!

But, on the other hand, it was very difficult for me to keep in line with Lyndon Johnson. And, for just months, I didn't call him anything! I avoided using his name. I phrased my "Do you want me to do so-and-so? Is this satisfactory?" Because he resented my calling him "Mr. President." He was very adamant about it. So what are you supposed to do? You're not supposed to not obey them.

So, it was a great visit. He walked down this little place, and he showed me this tree. It's not very far from the house, as I recall.

F: It's a quarter of a mile.

C: I don't think it's that far.

F: Well, you go down, go out through the cattle guard, it's just beyond there.

C: Well, he pointed to the tree.

- F: Between there and the Boyhood Home. [Note: Frantz apparently means to refer to the reconstructed LBJ Birthplace on the Ranch grounds.]
- C: He said, "I'm going to be buried right down there." It's a mammoth tree, as I recall.
- F: Yes. Great spreading branches.
- C: I have to go there and see the grave.
- F: Oddly enough, I mean, surprisingly, they've got really thousands of visitors a week there. People have been in--Californians, and Iowans, and so forth, detour out of their way to come by and look at it. A simple gravestone.
- C: Well, she wrote me this very sweet letter in December, I guess it was, saying that--what she had been doing, where she had gone, and with whom she had gone--her daughter and son-in-law. I think it was the Nugents. Was it the Nugents? Or the Robbs?
- F: Oh, when she went to Iran? That was with the Robbs.
- C: The Robbs. But now she was going to be home, and she was going to have her entire family around her at Christmas. She would be at the Ranch. And she sent me two books that I haven't yet had a chance to read. Vi, have you read one of them?
- S: I've read both of them.
- F: What kind of books?
- S: One was that story of Anita Loos and Helen Hayes, [about] New York [*Twice Over Lightly: New York Then and Now*]. What was the other one? I forgot what the other one was.
- C: Well, I shouldn't have forgotten. But I have, because I haven't read them yet.

It was just a warm letter, which--you let people know when you're ill, "I'm sorry, I heard that you were--through a mutual friend"--I have no idea who could have told her.

So it was perfectly obvious that she talks with her--with our mutual friends about me, which is very flattering. So I immediately wrote her a letter.

F: This may be part of another tape, but you were seeing the President--and we'll put it off if it is--you were seeing the President fairly frequently there, in around 1968. Did you get any intimations that he wasn't going to run again, before that famous March 31 speech?

C: I got an indication when he and General Eisenhower had the famous meeting at our house in February, the 18<sup>th</sup>--1969?

F: That was 1968.

C: [In] 1968. And I wrote him a letter, when he made the historic announcement.

F: Were you watching, by any chance?

C: I don't remember. Probably not, because I look at the TV very seldom, unless the--it's widely announced that the President will speak. I probably was, because I've tried to listen to presidential speeches.

F: Yes.

C: But I can't verify that.

F: You don't have any memory, then, of how you heard the news of Johnson's--

C: Well, I'd either read it, or heard the news on TV. But I certainly saw most of his speeches.

And I wrote him a long letter, and I said, "I had been talking with Floyd, just a few days before. And I had dictated the enclosed letter before you made this announcement. And therefore"--I want it to be known that I had dictated the letter before he made the announcement. And I had offered, if he ran again, to either work as hard as I could, wherever I could, either as a reregistered person on the Democratic ticket, or a

Republican--a Republican working for a Democrat. And I thought he would make a--another fine four years, and I thought he should do it. That was one thing he had never asked me, in all of our meetings, whether I thought he should run again. And I was just completely shocked, because I saw what we had on the horizon and I didn't like it.

F: Did he ever tease you, as he could, about having run on the Republican ticket?

C: No, he and Mr. Sam had both, before I had ever raised it, seriously wanted me to go to Congress. No, he knew I was too heartbroken--I have never had a more bitter disappointment. Because I believe--as we all do, I hope, who set ourselves up to serve the nation at a very high level--I think I could have served this district and our country very well. And I think the many, many jobs that I have had with many of the leaders of our country, military and otherwise--I think it's pretty well proven. Because, you see, for the work I did in World War II, I was the only woman who received a Distinguished Service Medal, and General Arnold--General Eisenhower didn't have anything higher. And I was pretty young in 1944 to receive that type of honor. I don't think it can be given out unless they have--you have accomplished enough to do it, because of the procedure for doing it.

So, no, he never teased me about that one. I think it was too close to my heart. And he and I agreed on one thing: that you need a strong two-party system. And you need fine people in both parties, if the republic is going to survive. And I wonder if it is going to survive, now, with the mess we're in.

F: Did he ever talk with you about Nixon?

C: We never discussed [him]. We discussed politics a little bit. But we discussed Nixon before he became president--but not after he was president. Right now, I will not sit, on

this recording or anything else, and say disparaging things about the president of our country. I don't believe in that. I think it's wrong.

You see, I never wanted Mr. Nixon as either vice president or president. And this was well known, wasn't it, Vi? You knew it.

F: You always said it, yes.

C: I said it long before he ran, and--primarily because, ruthlessly, when he was the head of the Un-American Activities Committee, he ruined a few lives, you know, indiscriminately, where they were tried in the press. And I didn't think that was necessary. I thought the committee perhaps had a usefulness, but I'm never sure that it did. And I think that we have an intelligence service to deal with subversive people, and I don't think that's the job of the Congress. I wonder if you agree with me, Dr. Frantz.

F: Well, the problem with the committee is that everything is tried without any attempt--everything is tried in the press.

C: And without all the facts!

F: Yes, without any chance to cross-examine or anything else. And I could lay out a charge that you were most anything, and I could get the papers to pick it up, and the charge follows you the rest of your life. I mean, you may be as non-guilty as can be, but--

C: Well, he did this with two brothers, he ruined their careers, and I don't think they were guilty of what they were accused of--which, of course, was subversive activities. The one stayed out in the foreign department and became the first secretary--he was the kind of a man who would have been a career ambassador--which, incidentally, I think we should have, and educate people as ambassadors. And these people we give political plums to--they should be there . . .

F: Did Johnson as president ever suggest strongly--I'm sure he made a kind of a little feeling suggestion, but did he ever pressure you to join his administration in any way?

C: He asked me to. He asked me to come and work in the White House, as one of the--you know, the so-called assistants. And I said I didn't think that I had enough to offer, and that I was honored, but I preferred not--it was never put in writing.

F: And he didn't continue to push you, then. He just accepted your opinion.

C: Well, he pressured a little bit, yes. Because I spent a lot of time in Washington. We'll put this on the new tape.

F: Okay.

C: But, anyway, I can't think of anything else significant in the visit, Vi, that you and I had.

S: One little thing. Do you remember how he liked Blum's Candy?

C: Oh, yes!

F: What's that?

S: How he liked candy. Blum's Candy.

C: [Inaudible]

F: Did you take him some?

C: Well, I sent him the biggest box you've ever seen.

S: The biggest box of candy we could find, about that big. A beautiful box of candy.

[Inaudible]

C: And I said, "This is going"--because I had to address it--"to the ex-President of the United States. If it isn't fresh, I'll shoot you!" And so--she said, "I'll guarantee it's fresh." And they kept bringing this box of candy around. He kept asking for it.

S: He loved candy!

C: He had a little too much weight on him when we were there.

S: Yes, he was big. I thought so, too.

C: Well, I guess--can you think of anything else that was significant, of the two of them?

S: No.

C: But, really, her graciousness is something that--

S: I think you told the story very well, and accurately.

F: Yes, you didn't get any . . .

S: Well, thank you. I tried to tell this whole story, as accurate as I could. You know, if three people see an accident, usually all of them have a different idea as to what happened.

F: Right.

S: Right.

C: So, therefore, any time that one takes oral history--I'm doing this to the best of my ability, and my memory, and I don't expect not to have some facts corrected. Quite all right with me, because somebody else might have a different idea. I may have been mistaken in some of the things that I have said. I've tried not to--my intent is to be truthful. But--

F: You'll have to come back to the Ranch, because I think you would like to see it.

C: I think that Lady Bird would invite me for the night if I went anywhere near there. I'm sure she would. I see no reason why she shouldn't. And I think she is just marvelous, and, anyway, if she has time, right after she gets back from a long world trip, to write me a letter because she heard I was ill, and send two books, she must still like me very much. And she said, "Come and see us." This kind of thing.

S: The other one was the Anne Morrow [Lindbergh] book.

C: Oh, yes. And I just liked her very much, Anne.

F: Yes. Okay.

(Interruption)

C: Don't you remember, the President told us the long story about the special school he had for Negro children? Negro children.

S: No, all the children of the Ranch, or the people that work on the Ranch.

C: I thought he had it especially for Negro children.

S: No, no. Well, there were some. But they were the children from the Ranch, of the Ranch workers.

F: Mexican-American kids, too.

S: Yes. And then how he--how much he enjoyed that, and especially when his little grandson was there, too.

C: And he said he went to the school--

S: In the morning.

C: Almost every morning.

S: And they were following the Sesame program [*Sesame Street*]. Yes. He said that was his greatest joy, one of his greatest joys, was to be able to do that.

C: And I'm so glad we remembered that. Well, I just--

S: I wanted to mention it, but I didn't know whether it was running or not.

C: Well, I asked you to mention anything that you could remember! You were there! For goodness sakes, I think this is important.

F: Yes. His--I don't think his interest in education ever flagged.

C: I don't think so either.

We had many--we had many arguments about federal aid to education. You see, I'm against it. How do you feel about it?

F: Well, we disagree. I'm for it.

C: Well, I'm not. And I think I can give a pretty valid reason why I'm not for it. And I think I can make it stick with you in an argument. Let's sit down and have an argument!

F: We'll have an argument in a minute.

C: On another visit, we'll sit down and really work this one over.

F: All right, good.

C: Now, what else?

(Interruption)

F: He talked to you about how your car ought to be working, or give you any of that "Be careful" sort of thing?

C: Yes, he was worried about these brakes. And so was I, and, I mean, if it had been an old, dilapidated car, like it is now--(Laughter)--a 1969 car, maybe you would expect something like this to happen. But the car was not even four months old, I don't think. And it was a beautiful car, a nice station wagon to travel in. And so I didn't feel embarrassed about it. I always use a car until I wear it out. If it takes five years, then I keep it five years.

(Interruption)

F: You met Dale Malechek?

C: Yes. We met him, and he said, "You see that Mrs. Cochran gets anything she needs." And--well, they just couldn't do enough! I've never--

F: You went into Johnson City?

C: To me, this visit was such that I didn't feel it was proper to not have Miss Strauss as a part of the--to verify what happened. Just amazing.

F: Did he talk to you at all about his library, which was a-building?

C: Yes. But I don't think he did on that trip.

S: No, I don't remember--

C: He's talked to me about it, several times.

F: He didn't suggest, "You ought to go into Austin, see what's going on in"--?

C: No, he didn't.

F: Did you go by his Boyhood Home there in Johnson City?

C: No, we didn't.

S: We didn't have the time. We wouldn't . . .

C: I had these bad brakes!

S: Yes, you see, we would have gone, but--

C: And even driving the car into Austin was a thing of hazard, in my mind.

F: You went on to Austin to get it fixed?

C: I had to. And I drove very slowly, on the extreme right-hand side of the road.

F: Yes. And that's hilly country.

C: Yes. And I wouldn't get closer than ten car-lengths from any other car, to make sure I didn't have an accident. And if anybody got close in front of me, I just slowed way down, way over on the extreme right. You can drive a car with weak brakes, or almost no brakes--

F: Yes, doing the drive very defensively.

C: --if you know exactly how to do it. And I have never had an accident in a car.

It took us a long time to get there, I know, because I went so carefully, and primarily I didn't want to get near any other car if I had to stop.

F: Yes. When he took you out there to the gravesite, did you walk down there, or did you . .

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C: No, he didn't--we didn't go down to it.

F: Oh, he just pointed it out to you.

C: He pointed out where he was going to be buried. And that was this beautiful tree. But I thought it was closer than a quarter of a mile.

F: Did you drive down by there when you left the Ranch, or did you go out the other way?

C: I don't know. I can't answer. I know we probably went out the other way, because we got led out, do you remember?

S: Yes.

C: Because I didn't want to go over that water. They had a dam in the little river, you see, so that--

F: Right, and the water flows over that.

C: Flows over the dam, and I didn't want to go over that, with my brakes.

End of Interview II