CSPAN/FIRST LADIES LADY BIRD JOHNSON
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(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

LADY BIRD JOHNSON, FORMER FIRST LADY: A beautification to my mind is far more than a matter of cosmetics. To me, it describes the whole effort to bring the natural world and the manmade world into harmony, to bring order, usefulness, delight to our whole environment, and that, of course, only begins with trees and flowers and landscaping.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SUSAN SWAIN, HOST: That's from a film created by the Johnson administration with Lady Bird Johnson talking about beautification, her signature issue as first lady. She was a natural campaigner, successful businesswoman, and a savvy political partner to her husband, our 36th president, Lyndon Baines Johnson.

Good evening, and welcome to C-SPAN's "First Ladies: Influence and Image." Tonight we'll tell you the story of Claudia Taylor Johnson, known to everyone as Lady Bird, the wife of our 36th president.

Here to tell our story tonight are two guests, Cokie Roberts, political commentator for ABC News and NPR. She's also the author of two books about women's political history, "Founding Mothers" and "Ladies of Liberty." Thanks for being here.

COKIE ROBERTS, ABC NEWS: Good to be here.

SWAIN: Betty Boyd Caroli is a first ladies expert. She is the author of numerous books, including "First Ladies: From Martha Washington to Michelle Obama," and she's currently working on a new biography of Lady Bird Johnson.

Ladies, I'd want to start with the beginning, with where we were 50 years ago this week. This is an administration birthed in natural tragedy. What were the immediate challenges for the brand-new first couple on those first terrible days after the assassination of Kennedy?

ROBERTS: Well, they're enormous. First of all, nobody knew whether there was a widespread plot, and so the country was in terror for a period of time. And then they had to be both taking over -- and, I mean, making sure that there was a peaceful transition to power without seeming to take over, because of the image of pushing the other -- the Kennedys out of the way, any of that, so they had to be very, very careful in how they handled it.

And Lyndon Johnson was very lucky that he had Lady Bird to help him with that, because she has a good ear for knowing exactly what to say and when to say it.

SWAIN: And in particular, what did she do during those first weeks.

BETTY BOYD CAROLI, HISTORIAN AND BIOGRAPHER: Well, she said she felt like she was on stage for a part that she'd never rehearsed. But, in fact, I think it would be hard to find a first lady better prepared than she was. And she immediately started taking notes. You know, we have her shorthand notes while she was still waiting to hear whether President Kennedy had died. And on the way back, on the plane, she started making plans for putting her radio station into some sort of...

ROBERTS: Trust.

CAROLI: ... blind trust so that they would not be accused of profiting from it. So she really took over very fast. I mean, she was a good study.

SWAIN: I'd like to just play off of that idea of her taking notes, because this was an administration, which documented itself extensively. There was a daily diary that she recorded of herself. There were also the Lyndon Johnson phone tapes, which many people...

ROBERTS: Which are fabulous.

SWAIN: ... and who love political history are aware of. And then there was also a naval television crew that followed the first couple around and documented. Is this new to this administration? Or had this been going on for a while with presidents?

CAROLI: I think the amount of documentation is new. She didn't record every day, because some days were just too full, but she had a little recording machine. And on days that were too busy, she would stuff brown envelopes with menus or lists of people she had seen. And then she would get an hour or so some day and she would sit down and record.

So those recordings are still being transcribed. They're wonderful. I mean, her White House diary, which people may have read, is, I think, 800 pages, but that's only an eighth of what she has on those tapes. So we're waiting for the rest of it to come out.

ROBERTS: I mean, there were before these recordings, of course. We have some Kennedy recordings; we have some Roosevelt recordings. And Louisa Catherine Adams, John Quincy Adams' wife, wrote when she was first lady "The Autobiography of a Nobody," which tells you something about her state of mind at the time.

But so there was -- I think that most first couples have an awareness of the magnitude of the job. But Lady Bird Johnson had such a sense of history that she understood. She said she dared herself to keep a diary. And she understood that that was something special.

SWAIN: Well, in fact, throughout this program, we will see some of the video from the naval crew that followed the couple around to document their days in the White House, and here are some of the clips. We're going to start with one of those.

This is Lady Bird Johnson on November 22, 1963, recording that first tragic day that brought them into the White House.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

LADY BIRD JOHNSON: Mrs. Kennedy's dress was stained with blood. One leg was almost entirely covered with it. And her right glove was caked -- that immaculate woman -- it was caked with blood, her husband's blood.

She always wore gloves, like she was used to them. I never could. And that was somehow one of the most poignant sights, exquisitely dressed and caked in blood.

I asked her if I couldn't get somebody to come in to help her change, and she says, "Oh, no, that's all right. Perhaps later I'll ask for Mary Gallagher, but not right now." And then was something -- if with a person that gentle, that dignified, you can say had an element of fierceness, she said, "I want them to see what they have done to Jack."

It was decided that he should be sworn in there in Dallas as quickly as possible. And there, in the very narrow confines of the plane, with Jackie on his left, her hair falling in her eyes, but very composed, and then Lyndon, and than I was on his right, Judge Hughes with a Bible in front of him, and a cluster of Secret Service people and congressmen we'd known a long time, Lyndon took the oath of office.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SWAIN: What are you hearing there that people should understand about Lady Bird Johnson?

CAROLI: Well, she's very specific. I had really forgotten how she gets so many details. And her description of that, but also before that, when she talks about walking into the hospital, and the Kennedy car was still there, and she saw this bundle of pink blossoms and the blood around it, I mean, she's a very astute observer. Wonderful.

ROBERTS: She's also a wonderful writer.

CAROLI: Yes.

ROBERTS: And she's aware of that. She writes intentionally. But she's clearly -- I mean, she's also clearly upset in that recording. You can hear it. And she's trying to both describe the situation, but at the same time, give homage to Jacqueline Kennedy, you know, this very meticulous woman, caked in blood, all of that -- to, you know, say -- she's trying to tell you what was happening, but not to, in some ways, sort of sensationalize it.

SWAIN: And for her following in Mrs. Kennedy's footsteps, Cokie Roberts referred to that this sort of delicate dance of being respectful, but needing to take control. What was the two women's relationship like?

CAROLI: Well, Lady Bird Johnson, many people said you must be -- this is a daunting act to follow. And she said, "Well, feel sorry for Mrs. Kennedy, not for me, because I still have my husband." And I think she made a special effort not to imitate in any way some of the projects that she considered, for example, beautifying the mall. Lyndon Johnson had advised her not to do that, because the Kennedys had done something similar.

But she was an amazing -- she was amazingly absent. She didn't have envy of anybody. She seemed to consider the Kennedys a different generation. And I find her amazing in that regard, that she knew that Jacqueline Kennedy was extremely popular, and yet she knew that she had a lot to offer, too.

ROBERTS: And she had filled in for Jackie Kennedy a lot.

CAROLI: Many times.

ROBERTS: I mean, that's something you have to keep in mind. There were lots of times that Mrs. Kennedy was -- she was pregnant, she lost a baby, she wasn't well a lot of times -- a lot of things she didn't want to do. And Mrs. Johnson filled in, so she knew the role well.

And she was a quintessential Washington political wife. She had been on this scene since the 1930s, and she really knew it well, and she had a cadre of other political wives who were just extraordinary women, and they all gathered around her, and that made -- that also made that transition somewhat easier.

SWAIN: We should say at the outset, among those women who gathered around was your own mother.

ROBERTS: Right.

SWAIN: Can you talk about the friendship between your parents and the Johnsons?

ROBERTS: Well, my father was first elected to Congress in 1940. He was 26, and my mother was 24, think of it. And in that -- that was, of course, before World War II. And so still the rules were still there of calling, so you had to go calling, and that was, you know, the Supreme Court on Monday, the cabinet on Tuesday -- I'm making up the days, but, you know, the Senate on Wednesday, like that.

And there was my mother, this 24-year-old girl, except people were older then than they are now, and so her first day of having to go calling, and the horn honks outside, and she goes running down, and it's Lady Bird Johnson and Pauline Gore, Al Gore's mother, and they took her calling that first day. And the friendship has been very, very warm ever since, to the point, all through their husbands' political lives, but then -- and then when they both became widows, they traveled together and had a wonderful time together.

SWAIN: We're going to step back in time and learn more about the biography of the woman who became first lady on November 22, 1963. But before we do that, a reminder about your involvement. These programs are interesting because of your questions, and we hope you'll join in tonight. Three ways you can do it. You can tweet us at C-SPAN's website. It's @firstladies.

We're also already taking questions from people on our Facebook page, and you can call in. Here are the phone numbers. If you live in the eastern half of the United States, Eastern or Central, 202-585-3880. If you live in the Mountain or Pacific time zones, or farther west, our number is 202-585-3881, and we'll mix your calls and your questions throughout our 90-minute program.

So, her biography. Where was she born and to whom?

CAROLI: She was born in -- well, you can't really say a town, because it's a house outside the town, which is really not much of a town, either, Karnack, Texas, in 1912, December 1912, in a big house. I mean, one of the things I found in studying first ladies is how many of them married down, that is, they married into families considerably below theirs economically, socially, sometimes even education.

And it made a big impression on me to drive past the house where Lady Bird Johnson was born, that 17-room house with six fireplaces, and the big white columns, and then go 300 miles -- it's right near the Louisiana border -- and then drive 300 miles west and see that low-to-the-ground four-room cabin where Lyndon Johnson was born. So she came from a far wealthier background than he did.

SWAIN: What are the important things to know about her childhood and what shaped her?

CAROLI: Well, I think the death of her mother. She was only five when her mother died in what I consider mysterious circumstances. And she was pretty -- a very lonely child, although she said she wasn't, but how would she know what any other kind of childhood would be like? Her two brothers were -- she had two older brothers, but they were sent away to boarding school.

ROBERTS: And they were a good bit older.

CAROLI: They were a good bit older, and they were sent away to boarding school. She -- particularly, the older one, the -- Tommy, the oldest brother, she said she really never knew him. When he died in 1959 of pancreatic cancer, she said she cried harder than she had ever cried in her life. So it was a lonely childhood, I think.

Even her name, you know, Lady Bird, the typical story is it came from a nurse. But she says in her interview with Mike Gillette that it was really two little African-American playmates, the children of hired help who decided to call her that, because they didn't like Claudia, but it was not considered somehow acceptable to say that she had African-American playmates, so the nurse was brought in, and it was attributed to the nurse, the Lady Bird.

SWAIN: And an aunt who -- an aunt...

CAROLI: Who was dysfunctional, really...

ROBERTS: ... with the aunt was someone she ended up having to take care of.

CAROLI: Yes.

ROBERTS: And so there she was, this little girl all by herself in this big house with a father who was around, but, you know, had no clue what to do with her, and this, you know, sort of nutty old Southern aunt, and some playmates here and there. But the big advantage to that was she became a world-class reader.

SWAIN: Well, how important was it for Southwestern women of that vintage to get an education? Was it unusual that she went to college?

ROBERTS: Yes, slightly. But by that time, more women were going to college. We were now talking the 1920s and into the '30s, so, yes, I mean, it was more common than it was clearly a generation before that.

SWAIN: Do we know why she was interested in journalism?

ROBERTS: I think that for a lot of women -- do you have an answer to that?

CAROLI: Well, she did -- she was interested in high school, so it's obviously an early interest. And I think it was part of her plan to get out of that area, to get out of that part of Texas. But...

ROBERTS: I also think for a lot of women, you know, they could write. They had learned to write, and that that was something they thought they could do. My mother wanted to be a journalist, too, and they both ended up as politicians.

SWAIN: The interesting thing about her approach to it -- here she was from a wealthy family, but she not only got a college degree, but she also got a teaching certificate and learned stenography, so...

CAROLI: That's what a girl did to prepare for all possibilities, right?

ROBERTS: But isn't it interesting that she felt the need to prepare for all possibilities with as much money as she had?

CAROLI: Yes, because she had a good income. I figured that she was inheriting about $7,500 a year in the 1930s, which was about what five school teachers could make.

SWAIN: Wow.

CAROLI: But I think her aim was to get out of there, I mean, she said some faraway place like Hawaii or Alaska. And remember, she went to the same journalism school as Walter Cronkite. In fact, they had the same professor -- singled out the same professor as a favorite. Cronkite said he was a good professor. I think his name was Paul Bolton. And she hired him to head the news division, that

same professor, when she bought the radio station. So I think we forget how very well-trained she was as a journalist.

SWAIN: How did she meet Lyndon Johnson?

CAROLI: Well, by chance, supposedly, but it was certainly through a woman that they both knew, and they must have heard something about each other before. It was a September afternoon when Lady Bird was -- had dropped into the woman's office. Her name was (Jean Behringer), a woman that Lady Bird had grown up with, although the woman was older than she. And Lyndon dropped by the same office on the same day. And it was, as Lady Bird says in the -- one of the interviews, it was electric going from the first minute.

And the love letters, which are just the courtship letters, which were released by the library last Valentine's Day, everybody should read them online. You know, you just put LBJ courtship letters, and you can read the transcripts. They were -- they were conducting a hot and heavy courtship there, because...

ROBERTS: And fast.

CAROLI: ... because he was in Washington.

ROBERTS: And really fast. He was not going to waste any time. She was either going to marry him or not.

SWAIN: He was, at the time, a congressional aide?

ROBERTS: Right.

SWAIN: So she knew she was going to be selecting a life in politics.

ROBERTS: I guess so. I mean, you could be an aide and not run, but he clearly had ambitions, and she was for those ambitions.

SWAIN: And he seemed like -- you call it whirlwind, but it seemed like he was -- if you read the books -- very directed. He knew he wanted her from the get-go. Was she encouraging this? Did she have any doubts about it?

ROBERTS: Well, I think -- from her own oral history, she basically says, you know, "Hold on here," as anybody would. And he essentially said, "Well," I mean, "are you going to marry me or not? Because if you're not, let's just not see each other." She didn't want to have him gone, so she finally said, "okay."

SWAIN: Did her father approve?

CAROLI: He liked Lyndon, but he thought it was too fast. They met on, I think, September 6th, and Lyndon showed up on Halloween. So what is that, seven weeks later?

I mean, the time they'd spent together, which was about five days, I think, and he was ready to get married right then. So even the father said, "This is a little too fast." And the woman who introduced them thought it was too fast. And Aunt Effie certainly thought it was too fast.

So, yes, against really all the family counsel, she went ahead. I think when she got -- what she said when she got in the car that Saturday morning and they drove down to San Antonio to get married,

she didn't know whether she would get out on the way. So she really didn't make up her mind until about 6 o'clock when she went down to the church.

SWAIN: And was very young, 22, and he was 26 when they married.

CAROLI: Well, she wasn't quite 22, was she? She was just 21, because her birthday came afterwards.

ROBERTS: So that was normal. I mean, you know...

CAROLI: 21 to 23 was the normal time.

ROBERTS: ... that was a very normal time to get married.

SWAIN: Well, before we learn more about their political life, let's take a few calls. We're going to begin with James in Oakland, California. Hi, James. What's on your mind?

JAMES (ph): Yes, I have two questions. One is, did Lady Bird Johnson have any contact with Jacqueline Kennedy after she was first lady? And did Lady Bird Johnson ever have doubts about the Vietnam War?

SWAIN: Thanks very much. Did they continue their contact after the Johnson White House began?

CAROLI: Yes. The Johnsons, in fact, one -- the very first -- the tax bill, when that was signed, when Lyndon Johnson signed that, he went with Lady Bird Johnson to the house of Jackie Kennedy in Georgetown and gave her four pens -- one for her, one for each of the kids, and one for the library.

I think during the White House years, the contact was rather formal. The Johnsons certainly invited Mrs. Kennedy back, but she never came back while they were there. They gave gifts to the children. I know the first Christmas, for example, they gave John, Jr., a fire engine. I mean, they certainly reached out to her.

After the White House, though, in the 1980s, after she was widowed, Lady Bird Johnson and Jacqueline Kennedy I guess we wouldn't say renewed a friendship, really established a friendship when they were both on Martha's Vineyard for periods in the summer.

SWAIN: When you look at the documentary evidence, certainly she supported her husband publicly, but -- in the -- in her private materials, did you ever find any doubts that she expected about the Vietnam War?

ROBERTS: I never saw anything.

CAROLI: Well, she said, if you're going to start a war, it has to be because of some big event, like Pearl Harbor. And to me, that meant that she thought they didn't have it in Vietnam.

ROBERTS: And, you know, it was -- it was so hard with all of the protests, and they were so personal. And that I think would put you in a position where you would just want to support him no matter what.

SWAIN: Michael is in Washington, D.C. Hi, Michael.

MICHAEL (ph): Hi, Susan. I wanted to let you know that this program is just fabulous. Thank you so much. I've watched it all the way from the beginning.

SWAIN: Great. Thanks for watching.

MICHAEL (ph): My first question is, did Lady Bird Johnson have any of the former first ladies that were living at the time -- obviously, Jackie Kennedy didn't come back, because she didn't come back until the Nixon administration -- but did she have any of the former first ladies back at the White House? And was she the oldest -- longest-living former first lady?

SWAIN: Thank you very much.

CAROLI: The longest-living -- we just discussed this -- was Bess Truman, right? But it's a very close tie. I think Bess Truman made it to 95, and Lady Bird Johnson and Betty Ford were both...

ROBERTS: Ninety-four.

CAROLI: ... 94, so it's very close. The other question about, did...

ROBERTS: Other first ladies...

SWAIN: Did other first ladies come back?

CAROLI: I don't remember who else was around to come back. Mamie Eisenhower and Bess Truman...

ROBERTS: And Lou Hoover?

CAROLI: No, Lou Hoover was dead in '44. But I know that the Johnsons went to the Trumans in Independence, because that's where they signed the Medicare Act, and certainly Lady -- there's a picture of them all there. But I don't remember anything about -- oh, they did, I think, confer with the Eisenhowers about how to give the ranch to the nation, which is what the Eisenhowers had done with Gettysburg farm. But I don't remember having any luncheons with former first ladies.

SWAIN: Early in their marriage, Lyndon Johnson gave Lady Bird a movie camera, and there are many hours of what are, really, family home movies that are now on -- recorded and accessible to historians and other researchers at the Lyndon Johnson Library. We're going to see one of those next. It is from the 1941 special election.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

LADY BIRD JOHNSON: Son-in-law of -- and there I am. That hat and suit went all over Texas. A night rally. Some of the gestures have persisted through the years. Weight was not his problem then. Sometimes he'd sweat down three or four suits a day. (Harfield Wheaton Odom on the right), the M.C. All I did in those days was wait and look. This is in competition with a carnival. Never try to do it.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SWAIN: They are fun to watch with the commentary of her.

CAROLI: Oh, yes. Could I just say that those are accessible to anyone online? If you just put Johnson, LBJ home movies, about 35 of them come up, and you can watch them all. She said, by the way, that was her favorite campaign, and it's the only one they lost.

ROBERTS: Lost.

CAROLI: Yes.

SWAIN: Would you talk about his progression from congressional aide to Congress?

CAROLI: Well, when she married him, he was a congressional aide, and that's when she started out. She got there New Year's Eve, 1934. She'd been married, what, six weeks, five weeks or something. And he served about a year before they went back to Texas so he could be head of the National Youth Administration.

And then she goes back in 1937 when he's elected to Congress, and she's there for about a dozen years, as Cokie said, as a congressional wife. And she's very good at networking with other women. She's a very loyal member of the Congressional Wives Club. And then he gets elected to the Senate in 1948, and she's very loyal member of the Senate Wives.

But in the House years, in 1941, after Pearl Harbor, Lyndon enlisted. He had been in the Naval Reserves, and he enlisted and went off on active-duty, and she ran his congressional office. I don't think we have another first lady who ever ran her husband's office. Bess Truman worked in her husband's Senate office for pay, and Lady Bird Johnson was always very careful to say in all the letters that she sent out that she was volunteering her services.

ROBERTS: And it's remarkable. I mean, he just left her in charge and off he went. And then various friends of his reported to him that she was running the office a whole lot better than he had.

But coming back to what Betty was saying about networking with the political women, it was an extraordinary group of women, to begin with. But they -- what they were doing was not, you know, sitting around, drinking tea and tending to the tatting. They were very politically active, both in their husbands' campaigns and in the broader campaigns, voter registrations, organizing conventions, all of that.

But they were also very active in the District of Columbia. It was before home rule. And they, no matter where they were from and at a time when it was not particularly -- wouldn't have been popular were it known where they were from, they worked with the African-American women here in Washington on all kinds of social service issues, and they really did create a social safety net.

SWAIN: One thing that was interesting in the home video that we -- home film we just saw was that she said, "My job at that time was to sit and watch."

ROBERTS: Sit and watch.

SWAIN: At what point did it become -- this was 1941 -- become, okay, acceptable for spouses of congressional candidates to become seen as being actively involved in campaigning?

ROBERTS: Well, it was different in different place. And some had been active from the beginning. I mean, again, Louisa Catherine Adams talked about "my vocation" to get her husband, John Quincy, elected president. God knows he wasn't working on it. So, you know, they had been much more active than anybody gives them credit for all through history, and certainly Eleanor Roosevelt was out there doing campaigning. So I -- and it was -- it was considered bad form if you didn't do a certain amount of campaigning.

CAROLI: But it was behind the scenes, most of it, and I think Lady Bird Johnson deserves credit for being the first wife of a presidential candidate to go off on a speaking tour of her own. That was really very new, because even Eleanor Roosevelt campaigned for other candidates, but I don't think she campaigned for her husband until he ran for that third term in 1940, because it wasn't considered -- I don't know...

ROBERTS: Lady-like.

CAROLI: ... lady-like to be open about your support for your husband. You were behind the scenes, maybe organizing women to put up posters or sending out letters. You were thanking people. What did Lady Bird Johnson say, that the candidate's job -- the wife of a candidate, her job is to walk behind him and say, "Thank you, thank you, thank you." So it was pretty behind the scenes until, I think, the '60s.

ROBERTS: But Jackie Kennedy did do some ads in Spanish, for instance, to try to get -- something we talk about all the time now, to try to get the Hispanic vote.

SWAIN: Next is a question from Owen in Marietta, Georgia. Hi, Owen.

OWEN (ph): Hi.

SWAIN: Hi. What's your question for us?

OWEN (ph): My question is -- I have two. First is, what were Lady Bird Johnson's hobbies? And two is, what was her relationship with her kids?

SWAIN: Okay, Owen, so how old are you?

OWEN (ph): I am nine years old.

SWAIN: Nine years old. And how did you become interested in Lady Bird Johnson?

OWEN (ph): Well, my mom has been telling me about these programs, and I have really liked history for a while, and, well, I wanted to be able to call in and watch one, and I am able to now.

SWAIN: Well, thank you very much for participating.

ROBERTS: That's great. Just wonderful.

SWAIN: That's great. So the questions were, did she have any hobbies?

CAROLI: I would say her number-one hobby was nature, the outdoors. I mean, she said it was "my kingdom, my world." And people told me that if she was doing something that she didn't particularly like, like sorting through pictures or doing some work that was boring, she would just start humming or whistling and take herself to a place where birds sang and flowers bloomed. It was a wonderful defense to have, I think.

ROBERTS: But I think the photography, too, that she did enjoy the photography.

SWAIN: And also the second question was about her children.

ROBERTS: She was -- I mean, she was a mom, you know, there was no question but that she was a present mom. Lynda Johnson is two, three months younger than I am, and Luci, of course, a few years younger. And, I mean, she was always around, and so were they. And then, as she grew old, they were very wonderful caretakers for her.

SWAIN: We need to talk about -- we said at the outset that she was a successful businesswoman in her own right. Another first she had, she was the first self-made millionaire among the first ladies. How did she become that?

CAROLI: Well, she inherited some money from -- and some land from relatives, and she bought a radio station in 1943, where I think the figure generally given is $17,500. And then she was very active in seeing that it was turned around from a money-losing operation to a money-making operation. She went down and lived in Austin for six months or so...

ROBERTS: Again...

CAROLI: ... and mopped floors and windows.

ROBERTS: I mean, I just couldn't get over this when I read it in her oral history. I mean, she takes over a radio station and starts running it. I mean, huh? How do you do that? And she did it. She just went in, she changed the building, she changed the staff. She got the -- she got the station up, you know, and CBS came in, and...

CAROLI: She got the network.

ROBERTS: ... and got it as an affiliate, and it became this highly successful station that she was running. And Johnson basically just said to her, "Go run that station." And off she went and did it.

SWAIN: And she drove the distance between Washington...

ROBERTS: She drove back and forth constantly in Washington and Austin.

SWAIN: And she got...

ROBERTS: And by the way, I did that as a kid, too, between New Orleans and Washington. It was no fun. There were no interstate highways. There was no air conditioning in the cars. It took a long time. It was -- those trips, of...

SWAIN: But is it fair to say -- she was a successful businessperson, but it didn't hurt to have a politician who eventually became the majority leader of the Senate as your spouse, so, I mean...

CAROLI: Yes, many people have charged -- for example, when it came time to apply for a TV station, that the fact that her husband was a senator -- other people just didn't apply for the license.

But she kept a really careful eye on the report she demanded when she was in Washington. She demanded weekly reports, and people said she went over them with a fine-tooth comb, suggesting different sales pitches to use to sell airtime. She was very active in who got hired. She wanted -- so she was managing a good station and she...

ROBERTS: And it was just the beginning, I mean, it became a -- it became a communications empire.

CAROLI: With TV and...

SWAIN: And also during this time period, the Johnsons, with Lady Bird, really with her investment, bought the acres in the Texas Hill Country that was known as the Johnson Ranch. We're going to learn more about that in this next video.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DAVE SCHAFER, LBJ NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK: The living room is the oldest room in the house, dating back to the 1890s. In fact, she would refer to this as "our hearts' home," this home out here on the ranch.

And we have a few things that speak to her connection to the room here. One of the things that she wanted to highlight was the Native American heritage here in the Hill Country. And we do have a small collection of arrowheads over there. Mrs. Johnson actually had her daughters, Lynda and Luci, look for arrowheads, and Mrs. Johnson will pay them each $1 for every arrowhead. She found that Lynda was doing quite a bit better at collecting them, and it turns out Lynda was actually paying her schoolmates $0.50 per arrowhead and then collecting $1 from her mother.

She had an eye for copper and collected various items through the years and had gifts from various friends. One of the objects that always gathers visitors' attention, the three television sets. The president loved to watch the news, and at that time, the three major networks -- ABC, NBC and CBS -- would all show the news at the same time. The president would turn down the volume on the television sets he didn't want to watch.

But Mrs. Johnson's favorite program was "Gunsmoke." And she routinely altered her schedule so she could catch an episode of her favorite western.

Shortly after Lyndon Johnson became president, the ranch was dubbed the Texas White House, and life at the ranch revolved around the home. And to show you the importance of the ranch and the home, the Johnsons returned home 74 times during Johnson's five years as president. Mrs. Johnson, as first lady, loved to show off the Texas Hill Country and her home.

The guests to the ranch would often informally gather here in the den. And various heads of state came to visit, President Diaz Ordaz of Mexico, West German Chancellor Ludwig Erhard, and Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol to name a few. And they would visit with the Johnsons right here in the den.

The dining room was a very special place for Lady Bird Johnson where she entertained her guests. She picked out the wallpaper depicting a country scene very similar to the Hill Country. And very similar to the scenes she would have seen out her picture window that she had installed at her request.

Mrs. Johnson gave a tour of the house in 1968 that was filmed and where she featured the china that you see here purchased in Mexico, very colorful.

The president would sit down at this end of the table where you see the cowhide chair, with typically Mrs. Johnson at the other end of the table. And one feature that you'll notice next to the president, a handy telephone. President Johnson loved working the telephones and in the middle of a meal could make a call or answer a call. Mrs. Johnson wasn't necessarily happy about that, but she got used to that, because Lyndon Johnson was such a workaholic.

As first lady, Mrs. Johnson spent a lot of time here at the ranch, and it was very important because it provided such a respite from all the turmoil of Washington, particularly later in the presidency, where the Johnsons could come home, recharge their batteries, and make that connection back to the land and this place that they valued so much.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SWAIN: How important was the ranch to them?

CAROLI: Well, she didn't like it at all, when I -- she said the house looked like a Charles Adams house. She was very annoyed when he bought it. But she got to love it and, as you heard, called it her heart's home, so...

SWAIN: In the "First Ladies" series, which we've referred to a lot, the "Modern First Ladies" series, the biography of her is written by Lou Gould who is the sort of dean of the series. He makes a point in here about the difference between the Kennedys, who were people of the East Coast and people of the sea, and the Johnsons, who are people of the land, which spurred their love of conservation. Does that connection makes sense?

ROBERTS: Sure, it does. It makes a lot of sense. And that whole, you know, being part of Texas, which was a whole almost country of its own, you know, it was very different from the Boston early part of the country, all of that. This is -- you know, this is where the country spread to and grew up and became exciting, and sort of every -- on your own, out there, and, of course, being in a ranch like that really emphasizes it.

But Mrs. Johnson again was very interesting about -- they talked in the little film clip about bringing Chancellor Erhard there. And that was a great success of bringing him to the ranch and serving him Texas food, instead it being a White House state dinner. And, of course, that part of Texas has a lot of people of German descent, and they were also around, and that was a great eye-opener for the chancellor and a wonderful moment for those people in Texas.

SWAIN: Many studies have been made and books have been written about Lyndon Johnson's Senate majority leader career and what a powerful majority leader he was and how happy he was. "Master of the Senate" is Robert Caro's volume on that, for example. What were the vice presidential years like for Lady Bird?

CAROLI: The vice presidential years for her were great, but they were terrible for him. Everybody says they were his worst years. But she loved it. First of all, she traveled a lot. And I think she talked about arriving in Senegal and feeling like she'd been put down in the middle of National Geographic, because it was -- so the travel was good. She really thrived on being a second lady, if that's what we're going to call it. And, of course, as Cokie pointed out, she filled in a lot for Mrs. Johnson.

SWAIN: But if he was unhappy, and her role was really to keep him happy in his political career, keep the domestic life going, how did she help him through that?

CAROLI: Well, she tried. She was always trying to get him to go to the gym, because he put on a lot of weight, and she tried to get him to watch his diet. And she invited a lot of people for him to -- that he would like to see, but they were really not good years. I think everybody will agree that he did not do well. The vice president, that job is a little difficult for strong people.

ROBERTS: But she started these women-doers luncheons, and she had them in places like Senegal. And, you know, again, people think that this is something new under the sun, that just recent first ladies have been interested in women and women's issues and promoting the role of women around the world. Mrs. Johnson was doing that back when she was second lady.

SWAIN: And this 1960 campaign, you also -- this is the one where she really came into her own and campaigned and understood what it was like to be on the national stage in a way she hadn't in the past. Is that right?

ROBERTS: Well, I don't think anybody knows what it's like to be on the national stage until they're on it. I think that's always a shock, no matter how experienced you are as a candidate or as a candidate's family. To run as president and vice president is a whole other thing.

SWAIN: Well, how popular -- I mean, the ticket, the 1960 ticket in the Southern states in particular, with the Roman Catholic on the ticket, had a big selling job to do. Also, the South was changing at that time. Can you talk about how the Johnsons approached the people that lived in the South during that campaign?

ROBERTS: Mainly by identifying with them. And Mrs. Johnson was very key in that. You know, she emphasized her Alabama roots, which is where her mother was from. And she had spent time there with cousins as a child. And she insisted on spending time in the South, and -- but she also -- when they went home to Texas, they did have this one awful incident where they were attacked, and she was very rudely and somewhat dangerously treated.

And there are a lot of political analysts who think that that actually threw Texas to them, because people were so shocked to see a lady, and particularly a lady like Mrs. Johnson, treated in such a fashion. But, look, the main thing is that Texas did go for the ticket and, had it not, Kennedy would not have been elected president.

And whenever we're talking about the pick for vice president and all of that, the only time we can ever actually prove that a vice presidential pick made a difference is the Johnson pick.

CAROLI: And she, remember, held those teas all across Texas and insisted on shaking hands with all the 400 or 500 women who showed up. And after Texas did go for Kennedy-Johnson in '60, didn't Robert Kennedy say, "Mrs. Johnson won Texas for us"?

ROBERTS: Right.

SWAIN: When approached during campaigning about the Catholic issue, how did Mrs. Johnson reply to people?

CAROLI: I'm not sure I ever heard her reply to that question.

ROBERTS: I don't think it was a question that would have been address to her, you know. It was -- it was much more either sotto voce or it was directed to the Kennedys.

SWAIN: Next call is from John in Charleston. Hi, John, you're on.

JOHN (Ph): Good evening. How are y'all?

CAROLI: Good.

ROBERTS: We're great. Thank you.

JOHN (Ph): Good. I appreciate C-SPAN having the "First Ladies" Series. One question I had was -- you highlighted a little bit about it. But how was Mrs. Johnson treated on the Lady Bird Express? I know she came to Charleston, 1964. I believe Congressman Boggs accompanied her with Congressman Mendel Rivers, who was a big powerful congressman in the state.

And he kind of went out on a limb to do all he could for her, but I think she was pretty -- she was treated pretty bad here in Charleston. But overall, how was she treated, I guess, with the rest of the South? And what was kind of their relationship with the Rivers and the Johnsons?

SWAIN: Thanks very much. A little bit later on, we'll have a clip from the Lady Bird Express, but it fits nicely with the campaign style and the approach in the South that we're talking about.

ROBERTS: Well, of course, in 1964, we were in a whole different place, because the president had signed the 1964 civil rights bill in the summertime, and the South was up in arms. And Mrs. Johnson absolutely insisted on taking what was the Lady Bird Special through the South saying, you know, this is the part of country that I am from, I am not going to write off the South. And so they all got organized.

I found just recently in my basement -- since I live in the house I grew up in -- all of the advance work for the Lady Bird Special in my mother's handwriting, and she said she has various places we can't find a local politician to show up. But the women, who were wives of members, were with them, and my father, as the caller said, served as something of an MC on the train.

But my mother told the story that they would have to go ahead because there were bombs along the way, there were threats all along the way. But not only was Mrs. Johnson on that train, but so were the Johnson daughters. And that's a lot of courage.

SWAIN: And we will come back, as I mentioned, a little bit later on and have some reflections from Lynda, the daughter who was part of the campaign then. But I wanted to just ask this question, when we're talking about her approach to politics in her campaigning, from a Facebook viewer, David Welch, who asked, how was -- essentially asking whether or not she could have had a political career in her own right if she had been born later.

CAROLI: Well, that's an interesting question. I, somehow, don't see her as running for office, but she developed the traits. For example, she started taking speaking lessons, public speaking lessons in 1959. So that was a far cry from where she started out, where the only thing she did was working in the backroom with the letters and getting other women to do the speaking. Lyndon's mother and his sister were the ones she turned to in the 40's. So she did develop -- so maybe in another time she would have been.

ROBERTS: And also, you know, what happened with my mother, her contemporary, was that my father was killed in a plane crash and my mother ran for his seat. That could have easily happened with Mrs. Johnson.

But I will tell you that what she said to my mother, when Mama called Lady Bird to say she was running, Mrs. Johnson said, "Well, Lindy, that's wonderful, but how are you going to do it without a wife?"

SWAIN: Just to demonstrate the kind of partnership they had and how essential that she was to Lyndon Johnson's approach, public approach, we have a clip next for you that is a pretty well-known one. It is Lady Bird's critique of an LBJ speech. This was one that was right after a press conference. And you can hear how very direct she is with the president in his approach and his presentation.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

LADY BIRD JOHNSON: You want to listen for about one minute to...

LYNDON JOHNSON: Yes, ma'am.

LADY BIRD JOHNSON: ... my critique or would you rather wait until tonight?

LYNDON JOHNSON: Yes, ma'am. I'm willing now.

LADY BIRD JOHNSON: I thought that you looked strong, firm, and like a reliable guy. Your looks were splendid. The close-ups were much better than the distance ones.

LYNDON JOHNSON: Well, you can't get them to do it.

LADY BIRD JOHNSON: Well, I would say this, there were more close-ups than there were distance ones.

During the statement, you were a little breathless, and there was too much looking down, and I think it was a little too fast, not enough change of pace, dropping voice at the end of sentence. There were a considerable pickup in drama and interest when the questioning began. Your voice was noticeably better and your facial expression was noticeably better.

I thought your answer on large was good. I thought your answer on getting on was good. I really didn't like the answer on the (gull), because I think -- I've heard you say, and I believe you actually have said out loud, that you don't believe you ought to go out of the country this year. So I don't think you can very well say that you'll meet him anytime that's convenient for both people.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SWAIN: What are we hearing there?

CAROLI: You're hearing a very firm, a very educated evaluation of a speech. I think it's wonderful, that tape.

ROBERTS: And he clearly wanted her analysis. He relied on it. But as you listen to that tape all the way through, he starts backing away from the phone, you know, because -- and starts getting somewhat defensive. Well, they told me to do that, you know, that kind of thing, because, you know, nobody really likes to hear that direct a criticism. But he relied on her to tell him the truth.

SWAIN: Well, they were obviously very close and valued political partners. But the flipside of this is that there were challenges in their marriage because of Lyndon Johnson's infidelity, something that he actually would occasionally brag about. How did this affect their partnership, if it did at all?

CAROLI: Well, people who knew them said that she always acted as though it didn't happen, but that she must have known it existed. And I think it's important to realize that journalists changed how they covered presidents during the Johnson years. You know, she had lived in Washington all those years and watched as Franklin Roosevelt's relationship with Lucy Mercer and John F. Kennedy's relationship with other women, reporters didn't write about that.

But in the Johnson years, and perhaps encouraged a little bit by the president himself, President Johnson himself, they did start writing about the women who were around him. I think Time magazine in April of 1964 -- so Lyndon Johnson had been president only three or four months -- had this article about Lyndon Johnson driving around the roads of Texas at 85 miles an hour with a glass of beer on the dashboard and a beautiful young reporter at his side, cooing into his ear, "Mr. President, you're fun," I think was the headline.

I don't think you'll find any articles on previous presidents. So I think it's important to remember that she came into the spotlight at a time when the spotlight had changed.

SWAIN: Here's one critique of President Johnson about this aspect of his life, and the source is Lou Gould, again, in his biography. "Johnson preyed on some of the women who worked with him and was not above making advances to the wives of friends and reporters and acted as a kind of romantic predator when his wife was not present."

Can you talk about the reporting relationship and how that has changed? You said nothing is new under the sun, and we have many examples of prior first ladies who've dealt with this, but times were changing.

ROBERTS: Well, I think the -- I, trust me, was not, you know, somebody who was aware of this, in terms of Mrs. Johnson's views and all of that. There was not -- it was something nobody would talk about, certainly not the moms.

But the -- but I think that what's happened in terms of reporting is that it's only grown. But part of that has to do with the increase of the numbers of women in the ranks of the reporters, because there is a sense that the personal is political. And I think that where you really saw the huge shift in that was in 1984 with Gary Hart.

But I think that, you know -- that before that, there was a sense of what happens on the bus or on the trail or whatever stays there, and that did change with the increased number of women on the bus.

SWAIN: Back to phone calls, Dave in Albuquerque. Hi, Dave.

DAVE (ph): Hi, how are you?

SWAIN: Great, thanks. What's your question?

DAVE (ph): I was wondering -- the series has been really great. But one question that keeps occurring to me for both Lady Bird and all of the first ladies, how big of a staff do they tend to have in the East Wing? I mean, do they have their own speechwriters? Do they have -- I know they have the social secretary. But how big of a staff is there generally that the first lady has at her disposal?

SWAIN: Well, thank you for asking that, because, in many ways, Lady Bird Johnson created the framework for the modern first lady.

ROBERTS: That's right.

SWAIN: How did she do that?

ROBERTS: She hired -- as she went into office, she hired Liz Carpenter as press secretary and chief of staff, and Bess Abell, who had been working for her, as social secretary. And they really, you know, took over the East Wing and then hired others, obviously, to help. But that was the first time that there had been a press secretary, chief of staff...

CAROLI: Who knew what they were doing.

ROBERTS: Right.

CAROLI: Yes. And she had a -- I tried to find out the number, and I was told by her office that it varied, because not only did she hire a large competent staff herself, but she also brought in on loan people from other departments. For example, for the beautification campaign, she brought in people from the secretary of interior's office, so it was not on her budget. And so it's really hard to come up with a number. It was somewhere in the 20s.

ROBERTS: And she also still had this cadre of political women who worked with her on many of these things, particularly on Head Start, for instance, when she got very engaged in creating Head Start. My mother was very engaged with her, as were several other of the political wives. So she had a lot of volunteers, very highly trained, very smart volunteers, as well.

SWAIN: How long was it before the office of first lady was officially established? And how was that done?

CAROLI: Well, that's difficult to answer. Most people point to Mamie Eisenhower as having the first secretary that makes it into the official -- being listed in the little blue book as the secretary to the first lady. But, of course, way back at the beginning, it was mostly relatives or friends, you know, the sister-in-law who did the volunteer work, so it's very -- it's hard to document.

The Roosevelt women always had their social secretaries, and they passed those on from one generation to the next. But I think we can point to Lady Bird Johnson as having the first really professional staff.

Remember, Liz Carpenter had been a reporter since 1942. That's when Lady Bird met her. I mean, their friendship went way back. So she chose people -- and they stayed with her the entire time in the White House.

ROBERTS: And after.

CAROLI: And after, right.

ROBERTS: And the other thing that I think is remarkable is that, as Mrs. Johnson became so much in demand on many of these issues, particularly on what they called beautification, really, environmental issues, people wanted her everywhere. And so she had to create essentially an office of surrogates, which is such a funny notion, because we always think of the first lady as the surrogate for the president. But there was an office of surrogates for the surrogate.

SWAIN: Next is Shirley in Lady Bird's hometown, Austin, Texas. Hi, Shirley, you're on.

JAMES: Yes, hi. Well, I'm so pleased that you're doing this series. It's just wonderful. The first ladies are getting their due.

I wanted to mention, earlier in the program, you asked if Mrs. Johnson ever had former first ladies at the White House. Well, I know she had two at the ranch, Mrs. Carter and Mrs. Ford. And I believe it was probably in the late 1980s.

And also, I wanted to mention that Mrs. Johnson's centennial was last -- her birthday was last December 22, 2012. And in honor of that, the post office issued a commemorative stamp. And Mrs. Johnson was only the fifth first lady to have a stamp. The others were Martha Washington, and Dolley Madison, Abigail Adams, and Mrs. Roosevelt.

SWAIN: Shirley, our producer tells me that you have a personal connection with the former first lady.

JAMES: Yes, I was her executive assistant from 1991 until her death.

SWAIN: What is it that you would like people watching this program to know about Mrs. Johnson?

JAMES: Oh, my. Well, first of all, Cokie and Betty are doing a terrific job. Thank you.

She was very warm. She was unflappable. She had a delicious laugh. It was a hardy belly laugh. And she was just such a good role model for all of us who knew her and loved her.

And when you worked for Mrs. Johnson -- well, for the president, too, although I didn't know the president -- but you became part of the family. So she was my friend, and I loved her, but she loved

me, too. So it was a privilege working for and knowing her and her family. They have certainly followed in her footsteps, and they're all just terrific people. And, anyway, it's been an honor.

SWAIN: Thanks very much for your call and adding your personal reflections to the program.

ROBERTS: You know, at Mrs. Johnson's funeral, all of the staff, no matter how old they were and how far away they were, came, including some Secret Service men who had really, you know, retired long before, but who loved her so much that they made the huge effort to get there.

SWAIN: Well, with all those kind words, Regina Crumkey is asking on Twitter, is there anything in her White House diary that would shock us even today?

ROBERTS: She wouldn't have put it in, I'm sorry to say.

SWAIN: She was careful about the history that she reported at the time.

Let's go next to Marvin, who's watching us in Los Angeles. Hey, Marvin, you're on the air.

MARVIN (ph): Yes, thank you very much for the program. One thought first. I was able to be at the Texas delegation at the Democratic Convention where JFK and LBJ had sort of a debate. It was very humorous. And JFK said, "I think you're such a great Senate majority leader, you should stay there."

My question number one is, did Lady Bird Johnson want LBJ to accept the VP nomination? And, number two, would LBJ have been as successful in all of his various jobs without the support of Lady Bird Johnson?

CAROLI: Well, I think we can start with the second one first. Everybody pretty much agrees that it would have been a different Lyndon Johnson without Lady Bird. Don't you think that, too?

ROBERTS: Absolutely. And I think he'd say that. I mean, she was an enormous part of his success and his support.

CAROLI: And then on the 1960s question, it seems fairly clear that initially she...

ROBERTS: She did not.

CAROLI: ... and a lot of other people did not want him to take the second spot on the ticket. They considered John Kennedy really a junior member of the Senate and he should wait his turn. But I think she came around, and nobody could have campaigned harder than she did.

ROBERTS: Well, what happened was that, you know, Sam Rayburn had to be convinced. And at least my family's story is that my father went to him and said, "Do you want Richard Nixon to win?"

CAROLI: Exactly.

ROBERTS: There you are.

SWAIN: On beautification, conservation, her cause, how did she choose it?

CAROLI: Well, first of all, it was a heartfelt thing. But, you know, in that first year in the White House, the year that they had the rest of the Kennedy term, she didn't choose a project. She didn't even change the curtains that needed changing because she said the next family might not like it and she acted as though that would be the last year in the White House.

But then, after Lyndon Johnson won so big in 1964, she sent out, really, requests for advice on what she should do. And the word came back that she, like other first ladies, should do something about Washington. And the beautification of Washington really came out of that.

But very quickly, I think it became clear that her committee -- her beautification, people had split, and some wanted to go more national, and that's where the emphasis on national parks, highway beautification came. Mary Lasker, for example, who was a very important part of that...

ROBERTS: Absolutely.

CAROLI: ... who move thought that she should do something. And Mary Lasker said, "These highways are terrible." I think she was thinking particularly the New Jersey turnpike. She said all those signs, you know, it can be better. So it's good to think of her beautification project as being national, and that was highway beautification, getting the junkyards either removed or covered up with fences.

And then the Washington part -- and even the Washington part split into two. One group wanted to plant tulips. I think they were called the dogwoods set or something. The people wanted to polish the statues and make it a more beautiful city for tourists. And the others who wanted to go into the poor neighborhoods, where sports fields, recreation facilities were just not there, and do something for those neighborhoods. And the important thing about her, I think, is that she incorporated them all.

ROBERTS: She tried to do it all. But what she also did was she personally lobbied the United States Congress. And there was no hiding behind, you know, the man, and she did not pretend that she was not doing it. She was up there lobbying, and it was very tough.

You know, it sounds all nicey, nicey beautification. But, in fact, you can imagine, the billboard lobby was completely against any of this. There were people, of course, as there always are in these situations, there were people pushing harder, saying she wasn't doing enough, you know, that it needed to be much -- a much bigger emphasis on cleaning everything up, and people saying you're going way too far.

And she just hung in there, and she kept it up. I mean, even as the Congress was really not to reauthorize, she kept it up. So she was a very powerful force. And that really was the first time there have been such -- first ladies have always lobbied, from Martha Washington on. But that was the first time there had been such public lobbying.

SWAIN: Well, we promised you earlier we would show you the Lady Bird Special train tour, and that's a good time to show it, because it demonstrates her political skills, which she put to her environmental issues. Let's watch that now.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

LADY BIRD JOHNSON: The South and the whole nation at this election are at a crossroads between past and future. We face many problems together. Peace is one, and economic prosperity is another. We have reached good and workable solutions in the past through this partnership. And it takes men in Washington who care about the people of the South, and it takes citizens here at home with a vision of the future.

Today, many parts of the South present one of the nation's proudest pictures of progress. A Democratic victory means we will face new challenges together with imagination and zeal. We draw on the past our strengths, but we do not plan to turn back.

LYNDA JOHNSON ROBB, DAUGHTER OF LBJ AND LADY BIRD: Mother didn't want the South to think that we didn't want their vote, that just because we knew that there were a lot of people who didn't like the civil rights bill, for instance, she hoped that she could appeal to them to recognize that that was a time that was coming and that change had to be made and we were moving forth, and that there were also a lot of African-American citizens who we were there, and we wanted to reassure them.

Now, we ran into some people that didn't like us and that were very vocal. We heard that there were threats that they were going to blow the train up, and so they ran a car through before ours, just think, if it was on the tracks, they'd blow up the sidecar and not get us.

But -- and then there were threats all along the way, but it was a wonderful success. And mother would stand on the back of the train like she had seen Harry Truman do, and she would tell him how proud and how happy she was to be here, and she hoped that they would vote for her husband.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SWAIN: And, Cokie Roberts, right behind Lady Bird Johnson is who?

ROBERTS: Was my father, Hale Boggs. Nice to see him.

SWAIN: And those political skills applying to the campaign -- beautification campaign, how did they stand her in good stead? Cokie mentioned how controversial this was. But was it really a tough job selling this to the Congress? And was it a difficult job with the lobbying groups?

CAROLI: The highway -- the billboard lobby was very strong. I think we forget how strong it was. And I think maybe now the judgment is that she tried to do too much on that, that that was really very hard, but she did.

ROBERTS: And Washington -- I mean, people don't realize that this beautiful city we live in is much, much, much more beautiful because of her and Mary Lasker, her friend, who was a wonderful philanthropist. But, I mean, this perfusion of flowers and trees, and the fact that you just come into the city and are greeted by just total beauty is a result of her having been here.

SWAIN: And this was a complement to Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs? Or was it truly an independent campaign?

CAROLI: Well, it was a little of both. I mean, we certainly associate it. That's something I think that we've required almost of every first lady since her, what will be your project? I think Michelle Obama was asked that even before the nomination. So it was a little of both. It was a complement to the Great Society, and it was also uniquely hers.

ROBERTS: But the first ladies who have succeeded her, particularly both Michelle Obama and Laura Bush, have said -- have quoted her that she has said, you know, I realized -- and I think that's part of what Betty was saying. You know, it took her a while, and she had to have that big landslide, that she was no longer the heir to the job.

But she said, "I realized, I had a pulpit and I could use it, and I could use it to do good." And she determined that she was going to do that. And they have taken those words and followed them very consciously quoting her.

CAROLI: Rosalynn Carter also has made a point. And remember that she continued that work after -- the beautification, if we want to use that terrible term...

ROBERTS: Right.

CAROLI: ...which she hated, also.

ROBERTS: She hated it.

CAROLI: But she continued it after she left the White House, I think until 1990, which is whatever it is, 22 years after leaving the White House, she continued to give that highway beautification award out of her own pocket to highway workers in Texas who had done most to beautify the highways of Texas. So I'm always interested in which first ladies continue their projects afterwards and which one forget that they ever did that.

SWAIN: Here are some of the key accomplishments and challenges of the Johnson administration, including the passage of a major education bill, the establishment of public broadcasting, the establishment of Medicare and Medicaid, the signing of the Civil Rights Act, which had been Kennedy administration legislation, the Warren Commission report, with the findings on the Johnson -- I mean, excuse me, the Kennedy assassination, the establishment of the Outer Space Treaty, which people say today still is the framework for how the international community treats outer space, and of course, the Vietnam War.

ROBERTS: And the Voting Rights Act of 1965...

CAROLI: Yes.

ROBERTS: ... which I think is probably the most important civil rights piece of legislation, because it made it clear that people could get the vote and then work to get themselves in a better situation.

But the Civil Rights bill of 1964, you're quite correct, of course, Susan, that it started under President Kennedy, but I don't think there's any way on Earth President Kennedy could have gotten that bill through Congress. And I think it took Lyndon Johnson and his great skills as a former majority leader and an incredible arm-twister to get that bill through. And the tapes certainly show us that.

SWAIN: In each of these programs, we've talked about how the first lady, but the -- the first couple have used the White House as a base for their lobbying, as it were, their relationships in Washington. How did the Johnsons used the White House?

CAROLI: They used it very differently than the Kennedys. I think they had -- there was a month of mourning, of course, after the assassination, and so there was no entertaining. But by early January of 1964, they were having their -- two or three evenings a week getting congressmen and their spouses in there in small groups. They could have done it in one big reception and gotten some footage, but they did it a dozen at a time and got much more -- got much closer to the congressmen.

Also, I was struck by the fact that she used the White House -- many of the congressmen's wives had never been upstairs, and certainly the Kennedys didn't open the second floor. But she had them and the women reporters up there I think January 8. I mean, she had only lived in the White House about a month, and she had the women reporters going through the family bathrooms and looking at the living quarters. It was completely different from Jacqueline Kennedy's attitude that the upstairs was off-limits and it was private.

ROBERTS: And don't underestimate the power of that, because people, when they feel that they're in the inner sanctum and they've gotten something special, they're likely to be nicer to you.

SWAIN: I also read that women reporters were coming into their own during this time period. And Mrs. Johnson, by having lots of news to cover, helped them with their careers.

CAROLI: Yes, I'm sure they -- they appreciated her being so open. I was struck by the fact that she had -- when she had the women reporters through the upstairs quarters, she said, "I felt good about it, because I've always been open about my life, and I think that's why I am pleased to share most aspects of that with the reporters."

But she said one thing she'd do next time was put away the books she was reading, because I think a week later, an article appeared -- which may have been coincidence -- but listing the books that Mrs. Johnson liked, so even she, I guess, would have...

ROBERTS: Put a different one out. Put the Bible out there.

SWAIN: Mrs. Johnson fired Mrs. Kennedy's French chef, but she also continued Mrs. Kennedy's restoration of the White House, but -- she insisted that all of the acquisitions be American-made, which was a bit different than Jacqueline Kennedy's approach to the White House. We saw her on a video saying, "I want the finest things, no matter where they came from."

CAROLI: Right. And Jacqueline Kennedy told her to get White House china made in France, and she did not. She got it made in the U.S. with a wildflower theme. So she was her own woman.

SWAIN: Also, on the social side, they had the first White House wedding in 53 years.

ROBERTS: Right. Well, first, Luci's wedding, and then Lynda's, so they really had -- they had both of their daughters marry while they were in White House. And, of course, that was a very joyous thing to have, because -- and by this time we were getting into the Vietnam War and into the -- into some of the real nastiness. And to have the weddings was a really nice moment of just -- of sitting back and saying this is a family.

SWAIN: Who did the daughters marry?

CAROLI: Well, Luci married in August of '66, right? She married Pat Nugent in a Catholic ceremony...

ROBERTS: Right.

CAROLI: ... not in the White House. So Lynda's is the first White House wedding of a president's daughter, I believe, since the Wilson daughter in what would be 1914. So this -- and she married -- he had been a military aide, Charles Robb.

SWAIN: And what was Mrs. Johnson's role in it? And was she very much involved in the planning of all these things...

CAROLI: Oh, yes. I mean, everything became political, whether or not there was a union label in Luci's gown. Her diary has a lot about what an ordeal that was for her. I think the day after...

ROBERTS: They had to make two dresses.

CAROLI: To get...

SWAIN: Is that right?

CAROLI: And the day after Luci's wedding, I know she fled to the Virginia farm where she sometimes went when she didn't want to see anybody. And, of course, after Lynda's wedding, the president fled, so I think they both found it stressful.

SWAIN: Barbara is watching us in San Francisco. Hi, Barbara, you're on.

BARBARA (ph): Yes, good evening. I want to say, I love your program. The question that I have is, what are Luci and Lynda doing now? And how many children do they have each? Thank you very much.

ROBERTS: Well, Lynda is here in the Virginia suburbs of Washington. Her husband, Chuck Robb, was governor of Virginia and a senator from Virginia. And Lynda has been very, very active in all kinds of causes where she's been very effective. And she was the first lady of Virginia, and she has been a political wife herself and knows those ropes.

Luci was married to Patrick Nugent. They divorced. I think she had four children and now is married to Ian...

CAROLI: Turpin.

ROBERTS: ... Turpin. And he had children, too. So Luci's Christmas cards are just -- have a million kids, and it's adorable.

SWAIN: but the grandchildren, there were seven all together.

ROBERTS: Right. And Lynda now has three grandchildren.

SWAIN: And Ian Turpin has a connection with the Johnson family. He is with the foundation?

CAROLI: Yes, he's head of part of the business in Texas.

SWAIN: Gary Robinson wants to know -- and I think you alluded to this -- what was Lady Bird's most challenging time in the White House? Was it the Vietnam years?

ROBERTS: I think so. I think the Vietnam years were very hard on everybody. They were hard on the whole country, but we also were going through this huge generational fight.

And I think that having people outside the White House screaming, "Hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?" Can you imagine? And this is somebody that you know means -- wants to do the right thing by the country, and it is a horrible thing to have that.

CAROLI: But she kept going out and giving speeches in spite of those. Remember, the Williams College...

ROBERTS: Right.

CAROLI: ... the Yale? She said, "I don't want to shut myself up," which would have been easy to do.

SWAIN: In 1999, Lady Bird Johnson gave an interview to C-SPAN, and she spoke about Vietnam.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

BRIAN LAMB, C-SPAN HOST: Where's Vietnam going to fit in?

LADY BIRD JOHNSON: As a wretched obstacle along the way, which he couldn't solve, couldn't escape, couldn't shake off.

LAMB: When did you see him at his lowest?

LADY BIRD JOHNSON: During those days, I think when the bags began to come home. By that I mean...

LAMB: Body bags?

LADY BIRD JOHNSON: ... they would come in at night on freight trains. And I don't know whether this was good planning or just happenstance. But several times, I would be on my way back from a trip to New York from somewhere, and at the station, as I would get off, there would be freight trains, and those bags would be -- were being unloaded and put onto -- I don't know what kind of vehicle. In that, I knew what he was doing, and I knew I couldn't help him.

LAMB: Did you try to help in any way?

LADY BIRD JOHNSON: Yes, yes, of course.

LAMB: What would you do?

LADY BIRD JOHNSON: I'd just say, "You're doing the best you can, and I think a lot of those people understand it." And there really isn't much you can do in a situation like that, except to say, "I'm here."

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SWAIN: As the public sentiment against the war mounted, can you walk us through the president's ultimate decision not to seek re-election and what Lady Bird's role in that was?

CAROLI: Well, she says -- and I think there's other evidence to support this that she -- well, in fact, she wrote in her diary in 1964, "I know when the time to leave will be, and it is exactly" -- and she picked March of 1968.

I don't -- she was such an authentic person that I don't think she dreamed that up later. Certainly, as 1967 wound on, there was a big meeting, I think, in September of '67 at the ranch, and she talks about being called in with the top advisers, and she says, "I don't want another campaign; I don't want to ask people one more time to help out."

But it was hard for Lyndon Johnson to walk away from the presidency, I think. And I believe there was a sentence written that he would include in his State of the Union, and then he said he forgot it or he couldn't find it in his pocket or something. But I think she very much wanted him not to run in March of '68. And he, of course, found it difficult to walk away.

ROBERTS: Apparently, she was worried about his health. And what we haven't talked about is his...

SWAIN: Heart attack, yes.

ROBERTS: ... heart attack in 1955...

SWAIN: Right.

ROBERTS: ... which was really a massive heart attack, and he was -- he was quite affected by it, and the whole family was affected by it. And so I think that that was something that they always had hovering over them. And she had been very protective of his health and of his diet, as best she could

be. And so it was -- it was something that was always on her mind. And, in fact, he did die in January of 1972.

SWAIN: So she had four years after the White House...

CAROLI: '73.

ROBERTS: '73, right.

CAROLI: Right. So I think he lived like four days beyond the -- what would have been another term.

ROBERTS: Second term.

CAROLI: And he had a serious -- he couldn't have been president. He had that serious heart condition during that time, another heart attack.

SWAIN: And the tumult -- national tumult continued in 1968 after that announcement was made with the Martin Luther King assassination, then the Robert Kennedy assassination. And how did the Johnsons hold this all together, knowing that they'd be leaving?

ROBERTS: Well, I mean, it was a terrible time. 1968 was just a year that -- you know, here we are in the week of the 50th anniversary of the 1963 assassination. And that was the beginning, you know, of America's loss of innocence, in a way, but we had no notion what was going to happen after that happened.

And just trying to keep the country together and keep it in some sense of not falling into despair was something that all the political leaders had to do. And the president tried, but it was very hard for him, because he was seen as the symbol of the problem by so many of the people.

SWAIN: As we said, Lyndon Johnson lived just four years after he left office in 1969, Lady Bird living 38 more years, and many of those active ones. We're going to return to the LBJ Library to learn a little bit more about how they worked there and prepared the library for the recording of the Johnson administration's history.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

MARJORIE MORTON, SOCIAL SECRETARY FOR FIRST LADY JOHNSON: We're in the private office of Mrs. Lyndon Johnson at the LBJ Library. I was her social secretary from 1976 to 1990.

And a typical day would begin with her coming in, in the morning, probably around 9 o'clock, and she would come in toting a straw bag in each hand filled with some of these things you see on her desk that she had taken home for signing, or speechwriting, or event planning, whatever she was working on. And she would always say when she came into office that she felt like a little burrow, because she had a straw satchel in each hand like saddlebags.

And she'd come in and get to work. Her desk was always very orderly. She had her calendar that she worked in her daybook, and she kept files on her desk, files she was working on, trips she was taking. She was on the board of one of the banks, National Geographic, Smithsonian, she would keep in large envelopes on her sofa with either the title or the dates on them, so that she could pick them up, work on them, and close everything back in them.

And as she worked on her desk with letters that she was processing or things, when she completed things, she would put them on the floor. But she stayed at the office most of the day, making phone

calls or working on projects that she loved so much. She loved this office because she could look out at her alma matter and then a corridor through to the capital in the city she loved so much. She would stay here all day, and that was pretty much Monday through Friday.

And when we are having guests at the ranch, she would sometimes go out a few days early and stay in the different guest rooms to check on the water and then the lights, electricity to be sure everything was working, the TVs, in the different rooms. And we'd also make a stop on the way out to the ranch to the store to pick up magazines that were guest-specific for whoever was coming to the ranch for the weekend. She was very thoughtful, very meticulous, and very gracious at that.

We had three office staff at the time. We had a person who handled her calendar. We had a person who came from the White House as her press secretary who helped her work on speeches, and then I was in the office. So that chair was usually occupied by one of us a good part of the day as we rotated doing projects that she was working on.

By Friday afternoon, she was ready to leave and go to the ranch, which she really called home. And about 3:30 in the afternoon, she would say, "Do I have anything else to do?" And if the answer was no, she'd say, "Tell the Secret Service I'm ready to go." And she'd get up, and we'd pack those little saddlebags up, and she'd take off and head out to the ranch for the weekend to be back there on Monday morning, normally.

I was so fortunate to be here and learn so much from her in the way she did things, in the way she entertained. And I like the way she entertained. I think that's one reason we did so well together. I really loved her sense of making people feel at home. She was so, so good at it.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

ROBERTS: The business of being guest-specific, she was so thoughtful about things being for you. And when I got married, they were in the White House when I got married, and she sent out to the house a beautiful -- which, of course, we've had since -- a picture, a print of the Capitol seen from the White House in the 19th century.

And it was just so perfect. You know, they -- because the Capitol's building I grew up in, and their -- but their view of it now, and it's, of course, signed by them.

SWAIN: So we've learned from you and from this tape that she continued to be a very active first lady, post-first lady, and into her very late years.

CAROLI: Into the 1990s, I think the macular degeneration in the '90s she had to stop reading, and that's when she really stopped giving speeches, I was told, because she couldn't see the notes well enough. So -- but certainly until the '90s she was very active.

And then we were talking earlier about how even after the stroke, she continued to see people, just so valiantly going out to restaurants, and even though she couldn't voice her reaction, she laughed and made people feel that she really appreciated them.

ROBERTS: And she was very active at the library and very, very interested in the work and very proud of the work of the library. I was there at least three times in this century, the 21st century, so -- and she was always there.

CAROLI: And she was so important in the building of the library. I mean, she looked into the smallest detail, how they were going to attach certain things to the wall. She had herself raised in a crane so she could see what the view would be from her office, which is on the top floor. She was very important in the building of the library, and where it would be located, because she had traveled

to the FDR Library and thought the hometown might not be the best place. She wanted it at a university.

SWAIN: Karen in Cleveland. Hi, Karen.

KAREN (ph): Hi, good evening. I had two questions. One was I was wondering about how Mrs. Johnson felt about her daughter, Luci, getting married at such a young age. And the second question was about her involvement in the work in the Johnson school of government at the University of Texas after her husband's death.

SWAIN: Thank you.

ROBERTS: Well, her work at Texas was very much as part of the work at the library. It was all of a piece. And she was very interested in that work. And that's a great place. It's a wonderful school.

You know, she was private about her views about her daughter getting married young, but obviously it was something worrisome. But then once Luci had made up her mind, her parents embraced it and embraced her husband.

SWAIN: In her post-White House years, her work for conservation and beautification was recognized with a Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1977 and the Congressional Gold Medal in 1988. Also, the National Wildflower Center was created as a result of her work. Where is that located?

CAROLI: It's in Austin. When she first started it, it was called the National Wildflower Center. I think she -- it was on her 70th birthday, and it has since moved, but it's still in Austin, and it's really quite an operation, answering questions from all over the world about what species will grow where and showing people model gardens. And she continued to visit that right up until she was in a wheelchair with an oxygen tank, I think.

ROBERTS: She was very...

CAROLI: And she knew the people who worked there. She really continued to be active in that.

SWAIN: As our time about Lady Bird Johnson comes to an end, we're going to return to the ranch in Texas one last time.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DAVE SCHAFER: This is Mrs. Johnson's private bedroom. It was part of the 1967 remodeling. She specified to the designers that she wanted this to be her forever room. She specified certain elements she wanted -- a fireplace, east-facing windows, and a large bookcase to display so many mementos and keepsakes she gathered through the years, the birds, the china, and also cameras.

Lyndon Johnson actually gave Mrs. Johnson a camera for her wedding gift, and she became quite -- a really photojournalist. She had an eight-millimeter camera to capture home movies. We have hours and hours of her home movies, as well as a recorder here where Mrs. Johnson, every night at the White House, would record her daily observations. And this became the basis for the book, "A White House Diary," which is a very insightful chronicling of those tumultuous years of the 1960s.

Now, Mrs. Johnson, though, for 34 years after the president's death, in her later years, Mrs. Johnson loved to sit here at this desk to keep up with her correspondence and all of her activities as a very active former first lady.

Also in this space, we have Mrs. Johnson's closet, with all of the clothing -- her formal wear, the ranch clothing, with the boots and the hats, a lot of her colorful outfits, and her shoes, one of my favorites, the straw hat with the blue bonnets painted on top, and then her private bathroom that is, again, very reflective of the importance of family, with all of the photographs of those who mattered so much to her.

And to her grandchildren and great-grandchildren, she was known as Nini, a very, very special person in their lives.

Lady Bird Johnson had a great sense of history. In fact, during her years in Washington, she would often be a tour guide for Texans who went to the nation's capital.

I had the fortune to meet Lady Bird Johnson while working at Harry S Truman National Historic Site, and I was very impressed that she wanted to see how the Truman story was being interpreted, knowing that one day her story would be told here at the LBJ Ranch.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

SWAIN: After Mrs. Johnson's death in 2007, the ranch was then ceded to the National Park Service as its curators, and it is available for you to visit if you happen to be in that part of Texas, in the Texas Hill Country. It's well worth the stop. You really get a sense of the Johnsons' life when you're there.

So she died at the age of 94. Sheldon Cooper wants to know, how did the country respond to her death?

CAROLI: Oh, there was an outpouring of...

ROBERTS: Absolutely.

CAROLI: ... respect and love.

ROBERTS: And, you know, everybody showed up, former presidents and first ladies. And as I say, the -- and members of Congress, and all the official people that you would expect to be there were there. But also this wonderful response of her staff and those Secret Service men. I mean, seeing them come in was really quite something.

But I think also the point that we just heard, the Park Service gentleman make about her sense of history is something that really we can enjoy so much. And Betty has made the point several times, all of this is available to us. All we have to do is go to our computers and Mrs. Johnson has made it possible for us to see their home movies, read their love letters, and most important, from my perspective, hear those Johnson tapes.

She allowed those tapes to be open to the public without knowing what was on them, which is very gutsy, and we have learned an enormous amount about American politics and American history from listening to those tapes.

SWAIN: And where is she and the president buried?

CAROLI: Just down the road from the ranch house, in the family cemetery.

SWAIN: So not at the library, but they chose to be out in the countryside, the country that they loved to go.

CAROLI: Right. There is a picture of the family cemetery, where his -- some of his siblings -- I believe his mother and father are buried there. It's all -- you can walk from the ranch, to the cemetery, to the birthplace, to the school in 10 minutes, I don't know. Very short time.

SWAIN: So as we close here, I have a question for both of you, is what should her legacy be seen as among first ladies?

CAROLI: I think she was an outstanding first lady who really wrote the book for modern first ladies, what they needed to do to be non-controversial and yet contribute to a spouse's legacy. And it will work for a man, too, you know.

ROBERTS: That's right, first guy. But she understood that she had a megaphone and that she could use it for good, and she did that and instructed all of her successors to do the same.

SWAIN: As we close here, and we do each week, our thanks to our colleagues at the White House Historical Association for their assistance in this entire series on the biographies of first ladies. And thank you for being with us once again tonight.

END