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Interviewer: Eleana Turner

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JOHNSON, Dorothy Power

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NARRATOR: Mrs. Paul B. Johnson, Jr. (nee Dorothy Power), Hattiesburg, Mississippi
INTERVIEWER: Eleana Turner, Mississippi Department of Archives and History
DATE: April 10, 1973
PLACE: Mrs. Johnson's Home, Hattiesburg, Mississippi
SUBJECT: Governor's Mansion during the Johnson Administration, Family Life, Mrs. Johnson's Cookbook

Miss Turner: Mrs. Johnson, will you tell us a little bit about yourself, such as your maiden name, when and where you were born, something about your early life?

Mrs. Johnson: My name is Dorothy Elizabeth Power. I was born in Red Banks, Mississippi, in Marshall County, a little country town outside of Holly Springs, January 16, 1915...that's fifty-eight years ago. Of course, I grew up in the country and was fortunate enough to go to a good country school where we had wonderful teachers.

Turner: What school was that?

Johnson: Red Banks. Well, it was a consolidated school. My class...my graduating class only had nine people in it. You can understand that we had individual attention, and had certain things to live up to, insofar as the teachers were concerned; and I think that I studied a little bit harder than most children do right now, because I felt like more was expected of me; therefore, I spent quite a bit of my time reading and studying.

Turner: What did you do after school in the afternoons?

Johnson: Like every other child, I played and dreamed. I think I had a very normal upbringing, it was in a good Christian home with loving parents. I'm very grateful for that.

Turner: What did your father do?

Johnson: Well, when I was growing up, Dad had a country store, and of course, that was great then, because we could go in and get candy every afternoon after school. At...when they gave the store up and went with the Highway Department...for a while...and then he went with the Motor Vehicle Department. During Paul's father's administration, he was...I'm not sure whether he was head of Civilian Defense or assistant to the head of it. And...that, of course, was during World War II, and then he went back to the Motor Vehicle Department until he retired. When he retired, he went home to read and study. I don't think I can remember a day in my life that he did not do a great deal of reading. This sort of passed on down to the children.

Turner: That's good.

Johnson: The three of us...my two brothers...all liked to read.

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Turner: You have two brothers? Where are they?

Johnson: Yes. The oldest one is in Holly Springs, Shelby Reeves Power, Jr., and the youngest one is in Memphis, Jimmy. He is assistant vice president at E. H. Crump Company.

Turner: Did you go to college?

Johnson: Yes, I went to what was at that time, Mississippi Synodical College in Holly Springs. It was a junior college. It has been incorporated with Belhaven now. It was a Presbyterian school. After that, I went to Ole Miss, and graduated in '38.

Turner: When and where did you meet your husband?

Johnson: I met Paul at Ole Miss. At that time, he was quite a young man about the campus...president of the student body....Well, I guess the way I met him, I had gone down...I needed a job to go to Ole Miss, and he had to pass on all applications. I chased him down and asked him if he would be kind enough to give me a part...to sign his name with the rest of the people who were on the board to allow me to get a job so I could enter Ole Miss and...his eyes sparkled and he signed immediately! That was in the summer, so after school started, we were...I went to the first party that they had for the students...the "Y" party where everybody got together to meet everybody...the new students and freshmen, and he was there; and he was there and his roommate...Judge Dan Russell... was there, and Paul asked me for a date. We started dating at that time.

Turner: ...And never stopped!

Johnson: Never stopped!

Turner: And when did you get married?

Johnson: He had two more years of Law School. I graduated in 1938...well, of course, he got his BA in '38, I believe, but he had...he graduated in '40 and we were married in '41, I believe February 8, 1941. Because we just this year celebrated our thirty-second anniversary.

Turner: And then what did you all do?

Johnson: Well, first I might say that we were married in the Governor's Mansion.

Turner: ...We difinitely want to know about that. Could you tell us in great detail about the wedding?

Johnson: I can't tell you in great detail because I really don't remember too much about it (both laugh). It was quite exciting; my...one of my attendants, Mary Sylvia Herron she was at that time, she's Mary Sylvia Armstrong now...had had...been in the hospital and had been quite ill,

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and we did not know whether or not she would be able to come down the stairway at the Mansion. Everything was ready, and she got out of the hospital that afternoon. Everybody expected her to either fall down the stairs or faint, but...so we were all looking at her, and trying to help her through the ceremony; therefore, I remember very little about it insofar as my part was concerned, except that right in the middle of the ceremony there was a hush, and one of the servants upstairs...was upstairs, and he tiptoed from one end of the Mansion to the other, and you could hear each footstep. Later, we found out that he had forgotten to put Paul's hat wherever it was supposed to be and he suddenly remembered it, and he had gone to get the hat...and ...I guess even when Paul and I went to the Mansion, you could still hear tiptoes across...if it was very silent downstairs, you could hear tiptoes upstairs.

Turner: Where did you all get married...in which room?

Johnson: In the...west parlor...the one facing....

Turner: ...The one that has the piano...in the back?

Johnson: No, the first one.

Turner: ...The front one?

Johnson: The front...yes, the front west parlor.

Turner: Did you have a reception?

Johnson: Not very much of one. We left very shortly after that for our honeymoon in Hot Springs. We got away as quickly as we could...there were so many people there that it would have been...I'm sure they had a reception of some sort, but Paul and I missed most of that....

Turner: You all had gone....

Johnson: ...Because we left as soon as we could. There's one thing I do remember about...about the wedding. Senator Bilbo was there along with about four hundred other people, but he could not see, so he had one of the servants bring him a chair, and he stood up right in the middle of everybody so he could see, and of course, there were a lot of people that could not see because he could, but...he was a man that usually had a way of getting what he wanted.

Turner: That's interesting. And then where did you go?

Johnson: We came back to Jackson. The Governor, Paul's father, gave us a home there as a wedding present...at 1745 Devine Street, so we set up housekeeping and Paul started practicing law. We had quite a few lean years. Then, when Pearl Harbor came along, of course, very shortly

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after that he enlisted in the Marine Corps...volunteered for the Marine Corps...and then we started the "war years."

Turner: And you had a child?

Johnson: Yes. After...after he had volunteered, I found out that we were going to have one, so he was...had finished his Officer Training course and was in Pensacola at the time that Tish was born, and at that time, I was living at the Mansion with Governor and Mrs. Johnson awaiting the arrival of Patricia; because I knew that very shortly thereafter Paul would be stationed somewhere, possibly sent overseas, but possibly somewhere in the United States for more training before being sent overseas. So that's where Patricia was born, and....

Turner: She was born in the Mansion?

Johnson: Well, in the Baptist Hospital. I was living at the Mansion at the time, and then she lived there for about three months before we left to go to Oceans...no, not Oceanside...Eagle Rock, California. Paul was in charge of a Navy V-12 unit there at Occidental College, and we were there for three months, and then on down to Oceanside, where he was stationed... he went into San Diego to the Naval Base there. We were there for several months. His father became ill, well, in November as well as I remember. Tish and I caught the train and Paul flew into Jackson in November around Thanksgiving, and we spent about a week or ten days at home with the Governor at that time. Then we went back to California and, of course, the Governor died on the twenty-sixth day of December.

Turner: After you had gone back.

Johnson: Yes. I did not come back then...Paul did...and then after that he was sent overseas to...the first stop was Hawaii...and then...I don't remember, I don't recall all the battles but I guess that's not important. He was over there for about two and a half years, and he was in most of the major battles.

Turner: And then you all came back to Jackson, or....

Johnson: Yes. Well, I lived in Jackson while he was gone....

Turner: Oh, and....

Johnson: I worked while he was gone. Mother and Daddy moved up there with me and Mother looked after Tish while Daddy and I worked.

Turner: Where did you work?

Johnson: I worked for Satterfield, Ewing and Hedgepeth....

Turner: The law firm?

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Johnson: Yes, and also did volunteer work, with the Gray Ladies at...was it Foster General Hospital...and did work at the Community Center every Saturday, and other times when I was called on to do it. And I belonged to various other organizations that did volunteer work. I stayed quite busy all the time.

Turner: I don't blame you.

Johnson: And wrote a letter every day! So, I tried to stay as busy as possible.

Turner: When did you all move to Hattiesburg?

Johnson: Well, in 19...Paul came back in 1945...we moved to Hattiesburg about the middle of '46. He was coming back and forth all the time...his father's estate had not been settled...and finally, I just got tired of it and said we either stay here or we move down there, so we moved down here. Here's where we've been ever since, with the exception of our four years back in Jackson.

Turner: Did you live in this house, or is this house newer?

Johnson: No. We lived over on Hardy Street...bought a house there, and stayed there until we built this house. We built this house twenty-two years ago. In the meantime of course, we moved, and Pat and Bé lived here, Paul's brother and sister-in-law, and their children. They lived in the old home, the old...the house we called the "big house." They left to go to Alexandria, Bé's home town, and Paul and I had to move over there because his mother...lived in a little house next to the big house...and in order to be near her, we moved over there. We stayed there...in fact, we were living there when Paul was elected Lieutenant Governor...and, when he was elected Governor. Shortly thereafter, we moved back over here because that house needs a lot of work done on it.

Turner: Do you have three houses down here that belong to the family?

Johnson: Pat has the one that Mrs. Johnson lived in...that is the house that he built. And then, of course, there's the "big house."

Turner: Who lives there?

Johnson: No one. It's used mostly for storage. I hope some day that somebody would...I wish that....

Turner: Is it an older house?

Johnson: Yes, it's not an antique, although it might be called an antique in the eyes of people nowadays. I hope one day it will be made into a museum or something...like the Merrehope house in Meridian, or something like that, because it could be used for many, many things.

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Turner: Two governors lived there.

Johnson: Yes. It certainly has a lot of history.

Turner: And then you have two more children?

Johnson: Actually, I had three. We lost our second child. She was a six-months baby and she had retrolental fibroplasia, which is something...tissue in the retina. She was being operated on and died on the operating table. Then we had Paul B. III, and Shelby...Shelby Venable Johnson. Actually, he was christened Shelby Reeves Power Johnson, because neither Paul nor the preacher could remember his name. Since he was named...the "Shelby" was for my father...I guess that's why Paul said "Shelby Reeves Power", so that's what he was christened; but on his birth certificate, he's Shelby Venable.

Turner: And where are they?

Johnson: They're all in Jackson. In fact, Shelby right now is a member of the Jackson Police force, and has been for several months and is a very happy member there. He's very, very proud of his job and very happy with it. I hope he'll go on in...well, he wants to go into law enforcement, and I don't believe he'll be a rookie the rest of his life but he's very happy with it now. He's married to the former Shirley Chambers of Jackson, and they have a daughter who was born the first of November of last year. She's sixteen months old. The oldest son, Paul B. Johnson, III, "Chipper", is married to Betty Green, and they also have a daughter born the twenty-seventh of November the year the first one was, so I have two little granddaughters....

Turner: ...The same age.

Johnson: ...The same age, practically. Chipper's with...at this time, Chipper's with the State Banking Department, and his wife is with the Insurance Department, and Shelby's wife is with the Rightway Travel Agency.

Turner: Mrs. Johnson, I think we'll get, now, to the Governor's Mansion...tell a little bit about your husband's administration. When was he elected governor?

Johnson: He was elected in 1963, took office in January, 1964, and we lived there from January, 1964 to January, 1968.

Turner: In what condition did you find the Mansion when you moved in?

Johnson: I think in fairly good condition. Of course, being an old building, you don't expect it to be like a new one. We...I kept very close check with it. There were some floors that leaned, and there were some repairs that we had to do while we were there. We tried to keep them to a minimum, but keep it in good shape. We had, of course,

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the maintenance man from the capitol was there frequently, but we managed to keep on top of everything, and....

Turner: You didn't make any major changes?

Johnson: No. The only, actually the only major change that we made...no, there were two, I take it back. One thing, the room that the patrolmen had to stay in was so very, very small. They had to live and stay there and work...it was so small and uncomfortable...that the Building Commission was kind enough to go along with my idea to put a garage apartment over the garage for the patrolmen. So, that was built, and it looks like it's been there forever. It looks exactly like the Man...exactly like the garage did.

Turner: I didn't know you had had that done.

Johnson: That was done during Paul's administration. They made a three-bedroom apartment, with a large living room with a little compact kitchen in one end, and a large, large bath, and adequate closet space. We found that to be one of the nicest improvements that we had. Another thing that we had to do while we were there...that very few people probably know about...we had to repair another bathroom. After the publicity with the gold bathroom, it took about...well several weeks for the Building Commission and for me to talk Paul into even letting us repair it. But some of the pipes burst in the bathroom where we were staying, and water leaked out into the ceiling in the second parlor downstairs...where the piano was. So we had to do something about it. Of course, Paul just wanted the pipes fixed because he didn't want to go through...he didn't want to spend any money and go through any bathroom publicity. But neither I nor the Building Commission was for that. We were fortunate enough to talk him into letting us fix us a real nice bathroom, particularly since I had to use...my clothes closet was a converted linen closet. We made the linen closet into a hanging closet, and it was not inside the bedroom; it was outside in the hallway.

Turner: Now, you all slept in the back west bedroom?

Johnson: No. We slept upstairs in...well, not the front...it's the second room upstairs. The front room was used as a family living room, on the west-hand side. The second room back of it was a bedroom with a bath, a small bath, and it had a closet.

Turner: And that's where you all slept?

Johnson: That was our bedroom and we used...then right outside the door, going into the hall from this bedroom was this linen closet. So that linen closet was converted into a clothes closet for me. So when we had to repair the bathroom, we took the back wall out of the linen closet and then that made one nice big closet all the way across...and it was

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large enough so that I could hang my clothes on the inside without having to go out into the hall to get them. We changed the bathroom, put in carpet, and no gold fixtures...Paul wouldn't have any of that ...but we did make a very lovely....

Turner: You made a kind of dressing room out of it....

Johnson: Yes, a very lovely bathroom. In fact, I thought it was the prettiest in the house when we got through with it.

Turner: It was. I did, too. Now, where did your children stay?

Johnson: Shelby had the back west bedroom and Chipper had the one next to that.

Turner: This is in the 1908 addition?

Johnson: That's in the very back part.

Turner: In the newer part....

Johnson: ...And Mother was with us most of the time, a great deal of the time she was ill, she had....

Turner: Your mother?

Johnson: My mother. She had osteoporosis, and also had had a heart attack, so we had her there in the back room on the east, and Patricia, Tish, had the room next to her. Tish and Mother shared the gold bathroom.

Turner: And then no one stayed in the bedrooms on the east side?

Johnson: No. They were guest rooms. If we had guests, that's where they stayed.

Turner: Did you have guests very often?

Johnson: Not a great deal, well...I don't know, seems like the rooms were filled a good bit of the time. We had quite a few people in and out, but...it seems to me that they were close friends, or family, or something like that...not really company.

Turner: What kind of furnishings were there when you arrived?

Johnson? Did you see it when I left? No, you didn't, did you.

Turner: I had not...I saw it when the Barnetts were there, and then I didn't see it again until I was working for the Department and they started tearing it up...last year.

Johnson: Well...we had very much the same that the Barnetts had. We did change

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a few things. Now the room that Paul and I chose for our bedroom was the one that Governor Barnett had. Mrs. Barnett, I think, stayed back in the room where Mother stayed. But Paul and I chose the bedroom that he had so that we could make a family living room out of the big front room. Of course, that room had to be completely furnished; well, we looked all over the Mansion, and up in the attic, and found several pieces that I thought were real pretty and we had them redone. We bought a few pieces; we didn't have to buy too much, but we did have a lot of refinishing done - reupholstering and reworking of the wood - of some lovely pieces that we found - just around. Also, in the hallway right outside of that room that we used for our family living room, in the hallway there, I found a beautiful old couch up in the attic that was redone, and we made that into a little sitting area, too. I think that was a lovely thing.

Turner: And there was an old piano...?

Johnson: Yes. The couch across from the old piano was the one we found in the attic and had it reworked. We bought a few little pieces to fit in with that but featured that as the main attraction out in the hall.... And also, we reactivated the terrace. We bought some beautiful iron furniture for out there on the terrace, and we used it frequently... well, during the months that we could stay out there, we ate out there frequently at night if we had guests for dinner - maybe a couple or two to come in to eat - we usually ate out there by candlelight at night...if the weather would permit.

Turner: Sounds nice.

Johnson: It was lovely, really. We enjoyed that very, very much. We even had a...we had a kettle up there where we could barbecue. I'm sure sometimes people walking around town could smell the barbecue and wondered where it was coming from. (Both laugh)

Turner: Did you use the state dining room very much?

Johnson: For our personal use the only time we would use it was when we would have family get-togethers on special occasions - maybe like Thanksgiving and Christmas. But we did not use it daily. We used the family dining room in the back which was large enough for us...and most of our friends who dropped by were always welcome to eat with us.

Turner: What about china and crystal? Did you find a great shortage?

Johnson: I surely did, yes.

Turner: Did you have to buy some?

Johnson: Yes. I did not buy at first, because I had service for eighteen - the Colonels were kind enough to present us with service for eighteen in a beautiful pattern of silver, and I had service for twelve in my

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china pattern and they gave me six more, which gave me eighteen in that.

Turner: Was this your personal china?

Johnson: My personal, yes. And I had silver goblets. So we used that mostly, my own china and silver.

Turner: Well, you have it all back, don't you?

Johnson: Oh, yes! That was personal....

Turner: None of it was broken?

Johnson: No...I think maybe one salad plate was broken, but the state bought me another one.

Turner: Well, good.

Johnson: And before I left, I bought, I think, service for twenty-four - I've forgotten how many - but I bought flat silver and china, and crystal. Crystal has been a hard thing to keep because it's hard to wash, and it's hard for servants not to break a piece; and every time you break a piece of crystal, well it's just sad, to me. But when I left there, there were linens and...well, enough for anybody to entertain. I also left some every day...a lot of every day china...that we used up on the terrace, and then we had other china that we had downstairs in the family dining room.

Turner: Were there other weddings or deaths in the Mansion, other than the two you have mentioned?

Johnson: My daughter was married there. We celebrated our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary there, and then Tish was married there.

Turner: Did she get married in the same room?

Johnson: The same room...the fourth of April...I can't remember the year; isn't that terrible? I'm not very good at remembering years. I think it's been about....

Turner: About 1963?

Johnson: No, we weren't there in '63...'65, I believe. I believe it was '65, on April the fourth. Of course, it brought back many, many memories....

Turner: ...Of your own wedding?

Johnson: Yes.

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Turner: This was a big wedding also, wasn't it?

Johnson: We tried to keep it fairly small, but the way Tish remembers it is the same way I remember mine...that there were an awful lot of people there, but we tried to...tried to keep it small.

Turner: What do you think about the location of the Mansion? So many people wanted to move it out to the suburbs. Are you in favor of keeping it down town?

Johnson: I always said I would never want the Mansion moved...that is until I lived in it four years'! If it could be arranged, I think it would be wonderful for the Mansion to remain as...well, it's used so much for teas and parties and things like that...with many, many different organizations, that it's a public place as well as a private place... which makes it very, very difficult for the people who are living there at that time. I think they have arranged it now, to have the living quarters completely private upstairs, will be a very good thing. There's something nostalgic, I think, about using the Mansion. We've had...it is not the oldest governor's mansion that's been in continuous use, I think someone challenged us on that. We thought it was....

Turner: Right...we lost.

Johnson: ...But we lost. But I think that it's certainly one of the lovliest, and certainly one of the best functioning of any in the United States for its age.

Turner: Yes.

Johnson: I visited several while I was the First Lady of Mississippi, and I always thought ours was by far the prettiest.

Turner: I think it's beautiful!

Johnson: It would be nice if the governor and his wife and family could have a private home to live in during the four years; however, the way they have it planned now, if it's...if that works out, I think it will give them enough privacy. As I say, I think there's something wonderful about using the one we've had for so long.

Turner: Yes. Did you have a secretary when you were in office...when your husband was in office?

Johnson: I didn't have a secretary. Gladys Seely was my right arm. She was secretary, hostess, housekeeper...everything you could...say, she was it.

Turner: Did you need a secretary?

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Johnson: Yes, we needed one badly; very, very much. Consequently, I'm sure that I was remiss in some of the correspondence that I should have attended to; but we found that the two of us could actually not handle everything...it required more, at least part-time.

Turner: And you had maids and servants...where did you get those?

Johnson: From Parchman, as has been the tradition...for years and years and years.

Turner: Are you in favor of this?

Johnson: I certainly am...I certainly am. They worked out beautifully for us. We had no problem with them whatsoever. Oh, every now and then there'd be a little fussing and a little fighting, but it worked beautifully.

Turner: They stayed in the basement?

Johnson: They stayed in the basement, yes. We had four men and four women. We had five men, because we had one man to look after the grounds. There was a man to look after Paul and a girl to look after me, and then...let's see, we had a man and a woman in the kitchen. Then we had a man to serve, and a woman to clean up...I don't know, there was enough for all of them to do. They were kept busy. Of course, they had their resting periods, but there was plenty of work with the activities that were going on for...to have eight or nine working all the time.

Turner: And that was enough?

Johnson: Yes. I suppose we were just fortunate in the ones that were chosen for us...of course, Paul made the final decision on all of them, and we had to send maybe one or two back while we were there, but that's all; and over a four-year period I think that's a very good record. They were very loyal and they seemed to take pride in their work. Of course, they were all working toward a pardon, and it was an incentive for them, and so far as I know, the ones that were with us have made ...have been completely rehabilitated and have made good citizens since they've come out. That's the whole idea of the system.

Turner: What were some of the outstanding accomplished...accomplishments of your husband's administration?

Johnson: Well, in my opinion...I wouldn't put them in the order...I wouldn't know which to say the first...would be the greatest...I was interested in several things, particularly the Research and Development Center. That's something that our state has needed for so long, and I think it's great to have it. Then, what he did for the vocational and technical training schools...we have so many of those now in this state, that I suppose a child that wants to go out and learn a trade can

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learn just about any trade that he would like in the state now, because of the variety of things that are offered in so many different places in the state. I think he is more proud of that than anything else. Then, I'm very proud of the Marketing Council, the work that they did. Our trip to Europe with the Marketing...the Marketing Council's trip to Europe was certainly very successful. We came back with over two million dollars' worth of orders from abroad. It was considered the most successful one, up to that time, in the United States. Then, of course, the big shipyard of Litton was...I think was quite a wonderful...shipyard of the future was...quite a wonderful thing, because there were so many other places in the United States that were trying to get that. There's quite a little story back of that for me...we had been down to Grand Isle to...I guess it was the Interstate Oil Compact Commission meeting...and the man who was supposed to make the decision on Litton...the place for it...was coming through Mississippi on his way to Florida. So Paul leased a jet and flew him to Florida...we left Paul at Gulfport about two o'clock and we came on back home. We flew on back in the DC-3 that the state had at that time. He got back, I think about seven o'clock that night he walked in the bedroom door at the Mansion. That was a quick trip, but he sold a bill of goods, and very shortly after that we found out...I guess he did a lot of charming on the plane, but we got the shipyard and we're awfully proud of it. Of course, there are a lot of things that I'm proud of during the administration. One thing is that we had so many nice new blue chip industries to come into the state. I don't think that Paul ever went after one that he didn't get.

Turner: Did you entertain these people in the Mansion?

Johnson: Yes, groups of people would come and we would...have a small dinner party for them and get together with other people in the state who were interested in them...having them come...people that might be backing them or having interests in them.

Turner: Who were some of your close associates?

Johnson: Well, actually, living in the Governor's Mansion is sort of a lonely life, believe it or not, because there were so many, many times that ...Paul worked possibly eighteen hours...I said he worked eighteen hours a day because he worked at the Capitol and then he brought work home with him, and there were many lonely times for me. Of course, I had a lot of teas and receptions and things like that, and I was sort of on my own in one way; but the people who we were more closely associated with were the people who were helping Paul in...in his work. They were, of course, Judge Tom Brady and Kenneth Stewart, and Herman Glazer, and Frank Barber, and oh! there were just so many of them I couldn't name them all, and, of course, Paul had a lot of confidence in Walter Sillers and Carroll Gartin, and when...their deaths left a big burden on him. But George Yarborough and John Junkin filled in very well - they did a beautiful job; however, the presence of the others was always missed. There were many, many people who helped Paul. In fact, he had the ability to pull all the people together and have them

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working together...people who, maybe, didn't like each other or maybe people who hadn't been for him at all, but he'd ask them to do a big job and they'd come through. And, I guess it's the...the success of the administration could be measured in that one thing.

Turner: What are you doing now?

Johnson: I'm just being a housewife and still looking after Paul, the same thing I've been doing all my life...ever since we married (laughter).

Turner: And you've lived in Hattiesburg ever since you left the Mansion?

Johnson: Ever since. That's right.

Turner: I hear, and read, that you've put out a cookbook.

Johnson: That is correct. It was supposed to have been published in November but it didn't get out, though, until, I think, about the latter part of February. When my sons got married, my daughters-in-law would come down and...every week, they spent nearly every weekend with us, and they'd spend all their time copying recipes. Of course, Pat's boy, Pete, got married about the same time that my children were...in fact, he was married first, then Chipper, then Shelby; but the girls always spent their time copying recipes, and I thought to be real nice, I would make them up a little cook book. So I bought a little photo album, had some paper cut to fit it, and started typing the recipes for them...one original and two carbon copies, and was going to give them to them for Christmas. It turned out to be more than I could handle, so I had to get help in typing it. Tish helped, and some of her friends helped and some of my friends helped. Then they made copies, and other people made copies, and I think somebody ran it off on a copy machine, and several people said, "Why don't you have it printed?" I had no idea where to go to have a cookbook printed. I knew nothing about the printing business, but I was talking to the secretary to Dr. Cook, who is head of the University and College Press, at a luncheon one day, and we were talking about the cookbook, and she said, "Why don't you let Dr. Cook see it?" I had not even thought about that, but that afternoon when I got home, I had a call from him and he asked me to bring the book out and let him look at it, so I carried it out. He said he would like to publish it; so I went to work on making a manuscript - which was nothing at all like typing off a cook book for your daughters-in-law! There was much more work involved than I had any idea. I guess the hardest part was proof-reading it, and I didn't do a very good job of that because we wound up with some errors. Some were mine and some were theirs. Another hard part was trying to write the foreword. The original title of it was going to be Dinner on the Ground. The first part was going to be about the old recipes I remembered as a child, and the camp meetings, and the dinners on the ground, the old political meetings where people would bring food, and then the church meetings where they would have food; and after it had been listed for publication as a future book, the name... the title that had been sent in...we read in the Sunday edition of

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the Clarion Ledger that a new cookbook had just been published by the Southern Baptists and the name of it was Dinner on the Ground. So we...immediately...we had about two hours to come up with a new name before it was...of course, it had already gone to press, and, again, Dr. Cook's secretary named it Dinner with Dot.

Turner: That's cute.

Johnson: Right now, we're trying to get it on the market.

Turner: And you're having autograph parties?

Johnson: Yes, I've had one in Jackson, and will have one here in Hattiesburg on Thursday. It's been interesting, but a little bit unusual because I just never thought of doing anything like that.

Turner: I'm sure it will sell.

Johnson: Well, I think it will be very gratifying, because at least...I use it all the time now, myself. I don't have to go look here, there, and yonder for my favorite recipes. Of course, most of the time, I just put a pinch here and a pinch there and taste and dump and all that sort of stuff, but sometimes I do want to go exactly by the recipe, and it's been very convenient for me, and I hope it will be for my... for my children.

Turner: What is your husband doing?

Johnson: He is back practicing law....

Turner: In Hattiesburg?

Johnson: In Hattiesburg...and I'm very happy that he is. For about two years, he was sort of retired. We started improving the place out here - there hadn't been anything done to it in so long - and we built an addition to the house, and a garage and storage area, and then the next year we built a swimming pool. Then the next year, he started on a golf course...par 3 and driving range, and put in this little par 3 and driving range across from here. He's still working on the par 3. I understand that it takes years to get the greens in good condition so that you can have a par 3 golf course, so he's still working on that. He worked on it so hard that it gave him a slight stroke, and I'll always believe that that was largely responsible for it. That was in August a year ago. After that, the doctors didn't want him to go back out in the hot sun and do the physical labor that he had been doing, so he decided to go back into the practice of law. And, I'm very happy.

Turner: And he seems to be doing just fine?

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Johnson: Yes, he's feeling pretty good. And I'm feeling a lot better, since I wasn't quite ready to have a retired person around the house! So it's much better for him, and it's much better for me.

Turner: Thank you, Mrs. Johnson. It has certainly been a pleasure to talk to you this afternoon.

(End of Tape)

(Transcribed by Mary H. Mingee)

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