

I thereafter talked with McGeorge Bundy and Walter Jenkins, both of whom urged that the return to Washington should not be delayed. I told them I was waiting for Mrs. Kennedy and for the President's body to be placed on the plane, and would not return prior to that time.

As I remember, our conversation was interrupted to allow the Attorney General to come back on the line. He said that the oath should be administered to me immediately, before taking off for Washington, and that it should be administered by a judicial officer of the United States. Shortly thereafter, the Deputy Attorney General, Mr. Katzenbach, dictated the form of oath to one of the secretaries aboard the plane.

I thought of Sarah Hughes, an old friend who is judge of the U.S. district court in Dallas. We telephoned Judge Hughes' office. She was not there, but she returned the call in a few minutes and said she would be at the airplane in 10 minutes. I asked that arrangements be made to permit her to have access to the airplane.

A few minutes later Mrs. Kennedy and the President's coffin arrived. Mrs. Johnson and I spoke to her. We tried to comfort her, but our words seemed inadequate. She went into the private quarters of the plane. I estimate that Mrs. Kennedy and the coffin arrived about a half hour after we entered the plane—just after 2 o'clock.

About a half hour later, I asked someone to find out if Mrs. Kennedy would stand with us during the administration of the oath. Mrs. Johnson went back to be with her. Mrs. Kennedy came and stood with us during the moments that the oath was being administered.

I shall never forget her bravery, nobility, and dignity.

I'm told that the oath was administered at 2:40 p.m. Mrs. Johnson and Mrs. Kennedy were at my side as Judge Hughes administered the oath of office.

The plane took off promptly after the swearing-in ceremonies. I then called President Kennedy's mother, Mrs. Rose Kennedy. She had previously been advised of the assassination. I told her of our grief and of our sorrow for her. I gave the telephone to Mrs. Johnson, who also tried to bring a word of comfort to the President's mother. I then called Nellie Connally, the Governor's wife, and told her of our concern for her and John, and tried to give her some comfort.

I then asked General Clifton, the military aide to the President, to call McGeorge Bundy in Washington to instruct him to ask the Cabinet members who were on their way to Japan to return immediately.

When we landed at the Andrews Air Force Base, I made a short statement for the press, radio, and television. In my heart, I asked for God's help that I should not prove unworthy of the responsibility which fate had thrust upon me.

LYNDON B. JOHNSON.

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## STATEMENT OF MRS. LYNDON B. JOHNSON

THE WHITE HOUSE,  
Washington, July 16, 1964.

The Honorable EARL WARREN,  
*The Chief Justice of the United States,*  
Washington, D.C.

MY DEAR MR. CHIEF JUSTICE: Mr. Lee Rankin, chief counsel to the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy, has advised me that the Commission would be interested to have a statement from me concerning my recollection of the events of November 22, 1963.

Beginning on November 30, and as I found time on the following 2 days, I dictated my recollection of that fateful and dreadful day on a small tape recorder which I had at The Elms, where we were then living. I did this primarily as a form of therapy—to help me over the shock and horror of the experience of President Kennedy's assassination. I did not intend that the tape should be used.

The quality of the tape recording is very poor, but upon considering your

Commission's request, I decided to ask that the tape relating to November 22 be transcribed. I am sending the transcription to you with only a few, minor corrections. Perhaps it will serve your purposes. I hope so. In any event, it is a more faithful record of my recollection and impressions than I could produce at this late date.

Please accept, for yourself and the members of the Commission and its staff, my thanks and best wishes for the important task which you have undertaken and to which all of you have so generously dedicated yourselves.

Sincerely,

(S) Lady Bird Johnson,  
Mrs. LYNDON B. JOHNSON.

[Enclosure.]

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[Transcript from Mrs. Johnson's tapes relating to November 22, 1963]

It all began so beautifully. After a drizzle in the morning, the sun came out bright and beautiful. We were going into Dallas. In the lead car, President and Mrs. Kennedy, John and Nellie, and then a Secret Service car full of men, and then our car—Lyndon and me and Senator Yarborough. The streets were lined with people—lots and lots of people—the children all smiling; placards, confetti; people waving from windows. One last happy moment I had was looking up and seeing Mary Griffith leaning out of a window waving at me. Mary for many years had been in charge of altering the clothes which I purchased at a Dallas store.

Then almost at the edge of town, on our way to the Trade Mart where we were going to have the luncheon, we were rounding a curve, going down a hill, and suddenly there was a sharp loud report—a shot. It seemed to me to come from the right, above my shoulder, from a building. Then a moment and then two more shots in rapid succession. There had been such a gala air that I thought it must be firecrackers or some sort of celebration. Then, in the lead car, the Secret Service men were suddenly down. I heard over the radio system, "Let's get out of here," and our Secret Service man who was with us, Ruf Youngblood, I believe it was, vaulted over the front seat on top of Lyndon, threw him to the floor, and said, "Get down."

Senator Yarborough and I ducked our heads. The car accelerated terrifically fast—faster and faster. Then suddenly they put on the brakes so hard that I wondered if they were going to make it as we wheeled left and went around the corner. We pulled up to a building. I looked up and saw it said "Hospital." Only then did I believe that this might be what it was. Yarborough kept on saying in an excited voice, "Have they shot the President?" I said something like, "No; it can't be."

As we ground to a halt—we were still the third car—Secret Service men began to pull, lead, guide, and hustle us out. I cast one last look over my shoulder and saw, in the President's car, a bundle of pink, just like a drift of blossoms, lying on the back seat. I think it was Mrs. Kennedy lying over the President's body. They led us to the right, the left, and onward into a quiet room in the hospital—a very small room. It was lined with white sheets, I believe.

People came and went—Kenny O'Donnell, Congressman Thornberry, Congressman Jack Brooks. Always there was Ruf right there, Emory Roberts, Jerry Kivett, Lem Johns, and Woody Taylor. There was talk about where we would go—back to Washington, to the plane, to our house. People spoke of how widespread this may be. Through it all, Lyndon was remarkably calm and quiet. Every face that came in, you searched for the answers you must know. I think the face I kept seeing it on was the face of Kenny O'Donnell, who loved him so much.

It was Lyndon as usual who thought of it first, although I wasn't going to leave without doing it. He said, "You had better try to see if you can see Jackie and Nellie." We didn't know what had happened to John. I asked the Secret Service men if I could be taken to them. They began to lead me up one corridor, back stairs, and down another. Suddenly I found

myself face to face with Jackie in a small hall. I think it was right outside the operating room. You always think of her—or someone like her—as being insulated, protected; she was quite alone. I don't think I ever saw anyone so much alone in my life. I went up to her, put my arms around her, and said something to her. I'm sure it was something like, "God, help us all," because my feelings for her were too tumultuous to put into words.

And then I went in to see Nellie. There it was different because Nellie and I have gone through so many things together since 1938. I hugged her tight and we both cried and I said, "Nellie, it's going to be all right." And Nellie said, "Yes; John's going to be all right." Among her many other fine qualities, she is also tough.

Then I turned and went back to the small white room where Lyndon was. Mr. Kilduff and Kenny O'Donnell were coming and going. I think it was from Kenny's face and Kenny's voice that I first heard the words, "The President is dead." Mr. Kilduff entered and said to Lyndon, "Mr. President."

It was decided that we would go immediately to the airport. Quick plans were made about how to get to the car, who to ride in what. It was Lyndon who said we should go to the plane in unmarked cars. Getting out of the hospital into the cars was one of the swiftest walks I have ever made. We got in. Lyndon said to stop the sirens. We drove along as fast as we could. I looked up at a building and there already was a flag at half-mast. I think that is when the enormity of what had happened first struck me.

When we got to the airplane, we entered airplane No. 1 for the first time. There was a TV set on, and the commentator was saying, "Lyndon B. Johnson, now President of the United States." They were saying they had a suspect. They were not sure he was the assassin. The President had been shot with a 30-30 rifle. On the plane, all the shades were lowered. Lyndon said that we were going to wait for Mrs. Kennedy and the coffin. There was discussion about when Lyndon should be sworn in as President. There was a telephone call to Washington—I believe to the Attorney General. It was decided that he should be sworn in in Dallas as quickly as possible because of international implications, and because we did not know how widespread this incident was as to intended victims. Judge Sarah Hughes, a Federal judge in Dallas—and I am glad it was she—was called to come in a hurry.

Mrs. Kennedy had arrived by this time and the coffin, and there—in the very narrow confines of the plane with Jackie on his left with her hair falling in her face, but very composed, and then Lyndon, and I was on his right, Judge Hughes with the Bible in front of her and a cluster of Secret Service people and Congressmen we had known for a long time—Lyndon took the oath of office.

It's odd at a time like that the little things that come to your mind and a moment of deep compassion you have for people who are really not at the center of the tragedy. I heard a Secret Service man say in the most desolate voice and I hurt for him, "We never lost a President in the Service," and then Police Chief Curry, of Dallas, came on the plane and said to Mrs. Kennedy, "Mrs. Kennedy, believe me, we did everything we possibly could."

We all sat around the plane. We had at first been ushered into the main private Presidential cabin on the plane—but Lyndon quickly said, "No, no" and immediately led us out of there; we felt that is where Mrs. Kennedy should be. The casket was in the hall. I went in to see Mrs. Kennedy and, though it was a very hard thing to do, she made it as easy as possible. She said things like, "Oh, Lady Bird, it's good that we've always liked you two so much." She said, "Oh, what if I had not been there? I'm so glad I was there." I looked at her. Mrs. Kennedy's dress was stained with blood. 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. Somehow that was one of the most poignant sights—exquisitely dressed and caked in blood. I asked her if I couldn't get someone in to help her change, and she said, "Oh, no. Perhaps later I'll ask Mary Gallagher, but not right now."

She said a lot of other things, like, "What if I had not been there? Oh, I'm so glad I was there," and a lot of other things that made it so much easier for us. "Oh, Lady Bird, we've always liked you both so much." I tried to express something of how we felt. I said, "Oh, Mrs. Kennedy, you know we never even

wanted to be Vice President and now, dear God, it's come to this." I would have done anything to help her, but there was nothing I could do to help her, so rather quickly I left and went back to the main part of the airplane where everyone was seated.

The ride to Washington was silent, strained—each with his own thoughts. One of mine was something I had said about Lyndon a long time ago—that he's a good man in a tight spot. I even remember one little thing he said in that hospital room, "Tell the children to get a Secret Service man with them."

Finally, we got to Washington, with a cluster of people watching. Many bright lights. The casket went off first; then Mrs. Kennedy. The family had come to join them, and then we followed. Lyndon made a very simple, very brief, and—I think—strong, talk to the folks there. Only about four sentences, I think. We got in cars; we dropped him off at the White House, and I came home.

*Tuesday, July 28, 1964*

### TESTIMONY OF AMBASSADOR LLEWELLYN E. THOMPSON

The President's Commission met at 3 p.m., on July 28, 1964, at 200 Maryland Avenue NE., Washington, D.C.

Present were Senator John Sherman Cooper (presiding), and Allen W. Dulles, members.

Also present were J. Lee Rankin, general counsel; W. David Slawson, assistant counsel; and Richard A. Frank, attorney. Office of the Legal Adviser, Department of State.

Senator COOPER. The Commission will be in order.

Do you solemnly swear that the testimony you are about to give before this Commission is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Ambassador THOMPSON. I do.

Mr. SLAWSON. Mr. Ambassador, could you please state for the record your full name and address?

Ambassador THOMPSON. My name is Llewellyn E. Thompson. I reside at 1913 23d Street NW., Washington.

Mr. SLAWSON. And could you state your present position with the U.S. Government and the positions you have held since late 1959?

Ambassador THOMPSON. In 1959 I was Ambassador in Moscow, and then I was transferred to the State Department as Ambassador at Large, and have been that since that time. In addition, I am now Acting Deputy Under Secretary of State.

Mr. SLAWSON. Thank you. Ambassador Thompson has been asked to testify today on any contacts he may have had with Lee Harvey Oswald while the Ambassador was in his post with the American Embassy in Moscow and on any knowledge he may have on pertinent Soviet practices or American practices at that time which might relate to the treatment of Mr. Oswald.

Ambassador Thompson, could you state all of the times and describe them when you heard about Lee Harvey Oswald's dealings with your Embassy at Moscow while he was in Russia, either in late 1959 or thereafter?

Ambassador THOMPSON. Yes; the only recollection I have is that when I returned from a trip to the United States in November 1959, or some time after that, the consul informed me about the case, and said this man had asked to renounce his citizenship. I recall asking him—

Mr. DULLES. Was that Consul Richard E. Snyder?

Ambassador THOMPSON. Yes; I am almost certain of that. I recall asking him why he didn't accept the renunciation, and he explained that in cases of