

TEXAN IN THE WHITE HOUSE by Don Oakley and John Lane

Lyndon Baines Johnson



Lyndon Baines Johnson was born August 27, 1908, in a farmhouse near Stonewall, Tex., son of Samuel Ealy Johnson Jr., a school teacher and Texas legislator, and Rebekah Baines Johnson. His grandfather, a Confederate veteran, predicted young Lyndon would be a U. S. Senator some day.

Johnson attended public school and after graduating in 1924, took a \$1-a-day job on a road-building gang. Wanderlust led him to California, where he worked in the Imperial Valley. He returned to Texas and road labor, but eventually determined to go to college, entering Southwest Texas State Teachers College in San Marcos in 1927.



In February 1927, young Lyndon B. Johnson enrolled in Southwest Texas State Teachers College at San Marcos. It was boom-time, post-World War I America, but Johnson had to work at odd jobs—door-to-door salesman, janitor—to pay for his education.

The following year, however, the money ran out and Johnson had to leave college. He took a job teaching school at Tulla, in the Texas Panhandle. In 1929—the year America's greatest boom turned into its greatest depression—he returned to Southwest Texas State and graduated in August 1930. He then taught school at Cotulla, Pearsall and Houston.



Johnson's first experience with national politics, and the national capital, came in 1932 when, at the age of 24, he became the secretary of Rep. Richard M. Kleberg, owner of the famous King Ranch. He remained in this post until 1935. But overshadowing any thoughts of politics was the image of a girl he had met, a girl named Lady Bird, the daughter of a wealthy Texas rancher. He won her in a whirlwind, two-month courtship.



On November 17, 1934, Lyndon Baines Johnson and Claudia Alta Taylor became man and wife. The new Mrs. Johnson had been called "Lady Bird" from childhood, and her proud husband had no intention of changing that practice—especially since it gave them both the same initials: LBJ. They were to have two daughters.



Inspired by his governmental experience as secretary to a congressman, Johnson studied law at night at Georgetown (Tex.) Law School. That same year he was named state administrator of the National Youth Administration by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The big year, however, was 1937. Johnson ran successfully for the vacant 10th congressional seat in the 75th Congress. By coincidence, Roosevelt was on a fishing vacation at Corpus Christi. He became interested in the fledgling congressman, invited him to ride the Presidential train back to Washington with him and took the ardent young New Dealer under his wing.

Johnson was re-elected to the next two Congresses. As the years passed, his stature among the lawmakers increased. At President Roosevelt's urging, he ran for the Senate seat left open by the death of Sen. Morris Sheppard in 1941. Johnson faced a formidable opponent, Gov. W. Lee (Pappy) O'Daniel—plus 26 other candidates. Yet Johnson almost won; at one time he was ahead in the election returns. But at the end he had lost—by 1,311 votes. He still retained his House seat, however.



Dramatic Event—In less than two hours after the death of President John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson was sworn in as his successor in a dramatic scene in an airplane at Dallas. Kennedy's stricken widow, right, requested she be present.



Arrival in Dallas was a happy occasion for President Kennedy and his wife, shown here with Texas Gov. John Connally. Shortly after this scene, Kennedy was dead and Connally was critically wounded.



Suddenly He's President



The representative from Texas, Lyndon B. Johnson, in 1940 during his second term in Congress.



Johnson gave premature victory wave in bid for Senate in 1941. He lost, but seven years later he was elected senator.



Kennedy and Johnson accepted at 1960 Democratic convention, Los Angeles.



World-roving Vice President met Bashir Ahmed in Pakistan, later entertained the suddenly famous camel driver in Texas at his LBJ Ranch.



Wife Lady Bird liked him in top hat, through Texas wag said it would cost him 10,000 votes back home.



Hit by heart attack in 1955, Johnson, then Senate majority leader, recuperated at his Texas ranch.