

General Introduction

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This first installment of what will be a complete online edition of the presidential recordings of Lyndon B. Johnson collects nearly 400 conversations, beginning in July 1964 and running to July 1965. When completed, the edition will bring together all of the Miller Center's published transcripts, including all of the content in the eight volumes of the celebrated Norton print edition. The collection will span Johnson's entire presidency, beginning minutes after being sworn in on Air Force One after John F. Kennedy's assassination and ending just a few weeks before Richard Nixon's inauguration.

Each conversation is presented with its transcription and corresponding audio file so users can listen along as they read the expertly prepared transcription. In addition to introductory essays providing historical context, the editors have prepared extensive annotations for each conversation. The edition also offers image and video galleries, which, like the conversations, will grow in number through future installments.

Secret Taping in the White House

Secret presidential tapes burst rather spectacularly onto the national consciousness during the Watergate trial in July 1973 when presidential aide Alexander Butterfield revealed, under oath before a congressional investigation into the break-ins of Democratic National Committee offices, that President Richard Nixon had been secretly taping his meetings and telephone conversations since the spring of 1971. It was a startling revelation, and one that ultimately led to Nixon resigning the presidency in disgrace.

Given the nature and context of their disclosure, it was probably inevitable that the Nixon tapes became instantly tainted with a stigma of political scandal. That this stigma proved so enduring had much to do with what was actually on the tapes: during the Watergate investigations and throughout the decades since, Nixon was repeatedly betrayed by his own words, usually spoken in confidence to trusted friends and advisers. Presumably sensing how much damage they could do if they fell into unfriendly hands, at one point Nixon had asked his closest aide, H. R. "Bob" Haldeman, to destroy most of the tapes, an order Haldeman did not carry out.¹ Why he didn't do so is a matter of conjecture, but it is not unreasonable to speculate that if Haldeman had carried out that order, some of the most damning evidence of illegal abuses of power would never have come to light and Nixon might well have served out his full term. It is also possible that we also might never have known the full extent of presidential taping.

Butterfield's revelation sparked a series of other revelations that made clear that although Nixon's tapes were the most notorious, Nixon was only the most recent U.S. president to tape secretly and systematically in the White House, not the first. Secretly recording conversations and meetings in the White House was a bipartisan pursuit that dated back over three decades. Each of his five predecessors from both political parties had experimented in his own way by secretly recording while

in office, beginning with Franklin Roosevelt. That they did so stemmed from a confluence of motivations and opportunities: the improvement of post–World War II consumer technology that had made portable voice recorders an increasingly popular executive tool for dictation and office record keeping; a strong sense of history that comes with the office; the probable expectation that tapes would be useful in writing memoirs; and possibly their utility as an insurance policy for political contingencies. Each president placed his own emphasis, but there is one crucial theme common to all of the recordings: they were made on the direct instructions, or even under the direct control, of the president himself.

The cumulative result is a remarkable archive of about five thousand hours of recordings. As a historical resource, these tapes transcend scandalous utterances to provide a compelling, unique window into the American presidency during some of the most pivotal and contentious years of recent American history. They by no means capture everything—huge swaths of important historical issues make no appearance on the tapes, and by definition they present overwhelmingly the viewpoint from the Oval Office—but through the conversations these six presidents had with their advisers, with members of Congress, and with leaders of influential movements and groups, we get a remarkable view of some of the crucial battles and developments in the politics and policy of the day.

The tapes don't supplant other historical sources, but they augment those sources in often unique and compelling ways. Much of the White House's public record is shaped and polished, sanitized and veiled in processes that we today know as "spin" and have come to expect as an omnipresent fact of modern political discourse. But to a remarkable extent, the tapes pierce that veil, providing a largely unfiltered, real-time record of the essential process of high-level decision making, replete with indecision, missteps, frustrations, prejudices, and political agendas. They provide deep insights into the personalities and mind-sets of not only the presidents themselves but also of the advisers and friends who provided them with information and counsel. And perhaps better than any other source, the tapes show the intrinsically organic nature of policy. Modern presidents have to think about policy and political matters simultaneously. Keenly aware of the linkages between issues, they are also keenly aware of the constraining role that time plays in making sense of all of them. There is only so much that can be accomplished in a day, a week, a year, a term, and reflection is a rare luxury. The tapes also underline the role of contingency. Whatever their plan for the day, presidents are continually deflected by an unexpected event or by what they read in that morning's newspapers or hear from a personal friend, public advocate, or foreign leader. All of these influences swirl together, altering schedules, forcing decisions, effecting change.

Each collection of the recordings created by these six presidents has its own distinct character. Roosevelt's small set of tapes, all from 1940, is brief and dominated by recordings of Oval Office press conferences. Harry Truman's collection is briefer still, and its very poor sound quality makes it exceptionally challenging for historians to work with. Dwight Eisenhower actually created two small collections, one before his presidency and one during his terms in office. John F. Kennedy was the first to approach taping in a sustained, systematic way, beginning a year and a half into his presidency and capturing the White House responses to some of the momentous events of the early 1960s, from the nuclear crises of Berlin and Cuba and the Communist threat in Southeast Asia to the civil rights flash points at Ole Miss and Birmingham. Nixon's collection is by far the largest, comprising about

thirty-seven hundred hours of tape spanning the period from February 1971 through July 1973, and is also the most comprehensive; his was the only taping system that was automated.

LBJ and His Tapes

Of the six presidents who secretly taped in the White House, President Johnson was the only president who did so for the duration of his presidency. Johnson had first started recording while vice president, but the first tape on which Johnson is heard as president was recorded aboard Air Force One en route from Dallas to Washington, DC, on 22 November 1963, just hours after JFK's assassination. With the slain president's body on board, the newly sworn-in President Johnson and his wife, Lady Bird Johnson, called John Kennedy's mother, Mrs. Rose Kennedy, to offer their condolences.² The final recording in the Johnson tapes collection was recorded on 2 January 1969.³

That Johnson treated the telephone as an essential tool of governing was well known to those who knew him. "This guy was on the phone more than any president in history," wrote *Newsweek's* White House correspondent Charlie Roberts. "He made the phone an instrument of national policy."⁴ In January 1973, *New York Times* columnist James Reston wrote a remembrance of the late president, who had died on the twenty-second. Writing six months before Alexander Butterfield's revelation, Reston said that hearing LBJ was the only way to truly understand him. If only he had kept a taped record, Reston mused, we might be able to "hear him talking endlessly about his problems, his cunning contrivances, his feeling for the Congress, and particularly his affection for his lovely and remarkable wife, and his hardscrabble land in Texas."⁵

During his first year in office, Johnson taped up to 29 telephone calls a day as a way of keeping track of lobbying efforts and political engagements. By 1965, however, Johnson began to tape his telephone calls more selectively. In 1968, he added a system for taping meetings in the Cabinet Room, presumably intending to record Vietnam decision making. In all, the Johnson tapes comprise nearly 850 hours of recordings, including over 9,400 telephone conversations and 77 meetings. At various times, recorders were installed on telephones in the Oval Office, the Old Executive Office Building, the White House residence's master bedroom (designated as the Mansion in these collections), and the LBJ Ranch near Johnson City, Texas. Rarely, he also used a portable recorder while traveling. And although occasionally the speakerphone would capture room conversations in those locations, the only concerted effort to record meetings was apparently focused on the Cabinet Room, and then only in 1968.⁶

The original tapes are now in the custody of the Lyndon B. Johnson Library and Museum in Austin, Texas. The library first took possession of them in January 1973 when, a week after Johnson's death, his longtime personal assistant Mildred Stegall delivered the tapes along with Johnson's instructions that they should remain sealed for fifty years after his death, hinting at his recognition of their political sensitivity. Fearing for the tapes' archival integrity, archivists at the Johnson Library under the direction of Harry Middleton began preservation efforts in the mid-1970s.⁷ After extensive deliberations and consultations instigated and overseen by then-Director of the LBJ Library Harry Middleton, the library began releasing the tapes publicly in 1993.⁸ The processing and releasing of the

telephone tapes collection was completed in December 2008. As of the fall of 2010, the processing of the meeting tapes from 1968 has not begun.

Revealing the Tapes

Until Watergate, the existence of Johnson's tapes was not widely known. Within Johnson's White House, the tapes were not treated as official government records and therefore were not considered subject to the same record-keeping and security classification requirements. Rather, they were considered, by the President at least, to be private, personal records. The taping system was a closely held secret, known to only a few aides and some White House secretaries who were assigned the task of creating transcripts for Johnson's use.

Nevertheless, from time to time, cracks in that secrecy emerged. One source was President Kennedy's longtime personal secretary, Evelyn Lincoln, who maintained friendly contacts among Johnson's secretaries and White House staffers while also remaining close to Kennedy insiders. In his journal, published in 2008, former Kennedy aide Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. told of learning about the system from Lincoln in March 1964:

Evelyn Lincoln told me at luncheon that all LBJ's phone talks are taken down on tape. They are immediately transcribed by the girls in her old office and then given to the President the first thing in the morning, so he can see what he said. What a treasure trove for the historian! and what a threat to the rational and uninhibited conduct of government!⁹

Robert Kennedy also learned of the recording system at some point early in Johnson's presidency, perhaps through Schlesinger or Lincoln or both, a discovery that was, in turn, disclosed to journalist and historian Theodore White. In his 1965 book, *The Making of the President, 1964*, White described the famous July 1964 meeting in which Johnson told Kennedy that despite pressure on him to do so, he would not be naming Kennedy as his running mate in the upcoming election. Having heard of Johnson's proclivity for taping and with relations between the two already tense, Kennedy was guarded during this sensitive and potentially contentious meeting.

Thereafter, since the story [of LBJ's cutting RFK from the ticket] was out, friends of the Attorney General began to make available Robert F. Kennedy's version of the story.

He had indeed come at one o'clock to the Oval Office and the President had sat behind his desk. The business part of the conversation had taken only a few minutes of the forty-five minute session. The President had looked at the wall, then looked at the floor, then said that he'd been thinking about the Vice-presidency in terms of who'd be the biggest help to the country and the Party—and of help to him, personally. And that person wasn't Bobby.

The Attorney General had said fine, and offered to help and support him. The Attorney General had been restrained during the entire conversation—he knew that the President had taken to the habit of recording conversations in his office on tape, and he could see that the buttons were down and the tape recorder was on.¹⁰

White's brief mention of LBJ's taping, however, seems to have been largely overlooked for at least the next decade. And recordings included in the current digital editions led to a new discovery of another overlooked public disclosure that LBJ had a taping system connected to his telephone, one

even earlier than the publication of White's book. It came at the height of the 1964 election campaign and was the product of a politically motivated leak.

A key part of the Johnson campaign's 1964 election strategy was to paint the Republican candidate, Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona, as trigger-happy and reckless, charges that found their ultimate expression in the famous "Daisy" television advertisement, in which the Johnson campaign implied that Goldwater might lead the country into a nuclear war. But even before that commercial aired, the charge that Goldwater was reckless was starting to stick.

At a press conference on 12 August 1964 in Hershey, Pennsylvania, Goldwater lashed out in frustration. Asked by a reporter to answer the Johnson campaign's accusation that he was "impulsive and imprudent and trigger-happy," Goldwater accused Johnson of hypocrisy, claiming that just over a week earlier Johnson and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara had themselves authorized the U.S. military to use nuclear weapons if necessary in responding to the Tonkin Gulf attacks on 3–4 August. Goldwater was apparently misinterpreting a statement McNamara had made at a press conference on the afternoon of 5 August. McNamara had been asked by reporters about the orders he had issued to the Seventh Fleet in the Gulf of Tonkin, and he responded that the Fleet had been told to protect themselves with "whatever force is necessary." In the context of the carefully cultivated ambiguity of nuclear deterrence that so dominated Cold War military strategy of the period, McNamara's phrasing was, on the face of it, reminiscent of many previous veiled nuclear threats. But in this case, context was crucial. Goldwater focused on the "whatever force is necessary" phrase but in the process overlooked public assurances given the previous night (4 August) by McNamara and the State Department that no nuclear weapons would be used. Nevertheless, as the story played out in the press in the following days, Goldwater stood by his accusation. On 14 August, in direct response to Goldwater's charge, the Pentagon declassified and released a section of the original orders to the Seventh Fleet. Those orders specified that the military response was to utilize "conventional ordnance only."¹¹

But as the campaign heated up, the issue of nuclear (im)prudence lingered and was thrust into the center of the campaign with the 7 September broadcast of the "Daisy" commercial. As Goldwater found himself again on the defensive, he continued to charge that Johnson himself had already proved his own recklessness with the response to the Tonkin attacks in early August. Evidently, Johnson, or someone very close to him, decided to answer the accusation by leaking to *Washington Post* reporter Chalmers Roberts some information that could only come from the inner sanctum of the White House. In a 4 October article on the election campaign, under the subheading "Orders Now Taped," Roberts wrote:

After Sen. Goldwater implied that Mr. Johnson had permitted the possible use of nuclear weapons in the Aug. 4 incidents, the Administration was able to say that orders for the use of "conventional ordnance only" had been issued. Now the President has taken the precaution of adding a recording device to his telephone so that his orders, and he has given some tactical orders to the Navy, are on tape for the record.¹²

Roberts disguised the source of his information, but recordings included in the current digital edition suggest that the source was Johnson himself. It was not unusual for Johnson to call reporters to berate them or suggest material for columns, and at least one such call with Roberts was recorded, a 15

August 1964 call in which Johnson had addressed directly, and at length, Goldwater's "nuclear" charge. No mention of the recording system is made in the open part of that conversation, but one minute of the recording, at a point in the conversation when Roberts asks about "the technical control situation," remains excised by the LBJ Library.¹³ The type of information in Roberts's 4 October article, characterized as "the word at the White House," was also consistent with the type of information he would have gleaned from talking personally with the President. The information does not seem to have appeared elsewhere, which would also seem to indicate a private conversation between Roberts and Johnson or someone close to him rather than a public press statement provided to multiple reporters. Until the excised portion of that tape is released publicly, it is not possible to say definitively that it was Johnson himself who told Roberts of the recording system, but the available evidence strongly suggests that it was. And although the Roberts article implied that LBJ's telephone recording system was designed for specific and limited use, it nevertheless amounts to the first known public disclosure of presidents taping their conversations in the White House.

For almost another decade, the idea of secret presidential taping apparently faded from public awareness. After Butterfield's dramatic revelation during the Watergate investigation, Nixon's practice of secret taping was widely criticized. In launching a congressional investigation into the practice, the chairman of the Permanent Investigations Subcommittee, Senator Henry Jackson (Democrat), expressed concerns that it could inhibit the kind of frank and honest advice that executive privilege was designed to protect and that it might well have a deleterious effect on American foreign policy if foreign visitors to the White House became concerned that they were being taped.¹⁴ Even formerly staunch Nixon supporters like Frank Rizzo and Arlen Specter condemned it as "appalling," "outrageous," and un-American.¹⁵

In an attempt to deflect the growing chorus of condemnation, the Nixon White House claimed that Nixon's Democratic predecessor had also taped. But the attempt to cast secret taping as a bipartisan affair sparked partisan defensiveness, blurring the lines between fact, loyalty, and partisanship. Despite the public, albeit oblique, mentions of LBJ's recording system almost a decade before the Watergate investigations that had appeared in White's book and Roberts's article, Johnson insiders initially denied that LBJ had taped.

A day after Butterfield's disclosure and the Nixon White House's claims that LBJ had also taped while in office, a Secret Service spokesman said that it knew nothing of an LBJ taping system and that if one had been installed the Secret Service did not put it there. Harry Middleton, the director of the LBJ Library, confirmed that the Johnson Library did in fact have in its holdings a collection of tapes but, in an apparent effort to distinguish them from the expansiveness of Nixon's taping, emphasized their limited scope, referring to "selective telephone conversations" LBJ had recorded along with "a limited number of meetings recorded in 1968 in the Cabinet Room. Most of these concerned national security matters."¹⁶ Juanita Roberts, LBJ's White House secretary, also downplayed similarities with Nixon's taping system, implied that LBJ used the system infrequently, and suggested that often those being recorded would have known they were recorded thanks to President Johnson's habit of asking, "Did you get that, Juanita?" She also told the *Washington Post* that although the White House Communications Agency had the capability to record conversations passing through its services, "there was not a capability on his [Johnson's] phone. If there was, I didn't know it, and I checked out

every line every morning before he'd come into the office." Other aides insisted that although the capability existed to record conversations on the telephone, they knew of no office or room bugging on the scale implemented by the Nixon White House. Asked by reporters whether Kennedy had any similar system, the curator of the John F. Kennedy Library and an appointments secretary for the former president, David Powers, initially denied knowing of any such system, a statement corrected two days later by the library's director, Dan Fenn Jr.¹⁷ Kennedy aide, biographer, and loyalist Arthur M. Schlesinger told the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* that not only did Kennedy not have such a system but that it was "absolutely inconceivable" that Kennedy would ever have approved such a system.¹⁸ Within days, further details emerged from unnamed sources about LBJ's taping system, and Chalmers Roberts raised the possibility that President Franklin Roosevelt had also taped while in office.¹⁹

Since then, most of the presidential recordings—although not all—have been dutifully reviewed, processed, and released by the archivists of the National Archives and Records Administration.²⁰

The Presidential Recordings Digital Editions

These digital editions represent the logical evolution in publishing formats for the Presidential Recordings Program and build upon an established record that includes a total of nine print reference volumes already published with W.W. Norton & Company—six volumes in the *Presidential Recordings, Lyndon B. Johnson* series and three volumes in the *Presidential Recordings, John F. Kennedy* series—along with four more scheduled for publication in coming years (two of Johnson material and two of Kennedy material). Norton has also published two thematic books based on the tapes in which scholars present a selection of transcripts to tell a particular story. Those include *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis*, Concise Edition, edited by Ernest May and Philip Zelikow (2002), and *Kennedy, Johnson, and the Quest for Justice: The Civil Rights Tapes* by Jonathan Rosenberg and Zachary Karabell (2003).²¹

The new digital edition format creates a number of opportunities and challenges. Perhaps the most fundamental opportunity is to present the original audio recording directly alongside the annotated transcript. Transcripts and audio recordings each individually have their strengths and shortcomings, and presenting them together makes the most of their combined strengths. The full-text searching, annotations, and rendering of unfamiliar names and phrases of the transcripts can be used simultaneously with the ability to actually hear the original voices and audible nuances of the tapes themselves. We hope that this pairing of sound and text alone will significantly enhance the user experience. Other opportunities that digital editions afford include the ability to access the transcripts in innovative ways, such as through temporal, spatial, or thematic data, and to present supplementary materials such as scanned documents, video footage, audio recordings, and images. These are all areas in which the Presidential Recordings Program and the University of Virginia Press seek to build and innovate in coming years. One other opportunity is no less important: the ability to update and correct the transcripts as mistakes are found and new information is discovered. The Presidential Recordings Program has always put a very high premium on scholarly accuracy in its transcripts, but the act of transcribing can be an imperfect process. And while every effort has been made to produce accurate and reliable transcripts, occasionally a phrase can be unclear, a word misheard, or new evidence

discovered. The Presidential Recordings Program is committed to correcting any errors that are found and encourage users to use the contact form to alert us to errors they believe significant, providing as much detailed information as possible.

Our aim is to make these remarkable historical sources accessible and authoritative while adhering to the best standards and practices of scholarly digital documentary editing. Our objective is to provide the truest possible sense of the actual dialogue as the participants themselves understood it, and to that end the Presidential Recordings Program has long implemented normalized transcription that aims at conveying the substance and intention of the speaker rather than diplomatic transcription, which attempts to preserve every utterance and sound, every “ah” and “um,” every stutter, stumble, and accidental mispronunciation. We do this for two reasons: first, to ensure readability and accessibility; and second, because we are attempting to complement, not supplant, the original recording as the document of record. By presenting the transcript alongside the audio, we hope that users will have access to the level of accessibility they require and prefer.²²

Previous Transcription Efforts

The transcripts included here were created specifically for these digital editions by a team of scholars working for and affiliated with the Miller Center of Public Affairs at the University of Virginia, each an expert in his or her field. There have, however, been some previous transcription efforts.

Kennedy and Johnson both ordered the production of some transcripts while in office. In 1963, Kennedy instructed staffers to transcribe some civil rights telephone conversations. Later in the year, perhaps in the expectation of writing a campaign memoir on the Cuban missile crisis, Kennedy launched a more ambitious effort to transcribe eighteen meetings from the fall of 1962. The civil rights transcripts were few in number and turned out quite well because the recordings were relatively clear, but the Cuban missile transcripts were badly flawed. In fact, these 1963 transcripts were so poorly done that as of the fall of 2010, the John F. Kennedy Library declines to release them for fear that, in the absence of authoritative transcripts, scholars will refer to these incomplete and garbled documents as faithful records. At the end of his term, Johnson instructed his staff to begin transcribing his tapes, and the Johnson Library estimates that about 60 percent of the telephone tapes and some portion of the meeting conversations were transcribed. These transcripts, however, which were often done hastily, are replete with mistakes and lack any scholarly annotations to give the reader a sense of context.

In the early 1980s, the Kennedy Library launched an ambitious effort to transcribe all tapes covering domestic policy matters. Ultimately abandoned as too costly, the Kennedy Library’s initiative stopped before work could begin on the bulk of civil rights meetings in 1963, especially those covering the Birmingham crisis, or the 1963 railroad union dispute. In addition, the Kennedy Library produced transcripts for 75 percent of the 30 hours of recorded telephone conversations. The bulk of the Kennedy tapes collection, however—approximately 220 of the 260 hours—remain untranscribed. The Johnson Library has not attempted to supplement the transcripts prepared by President Johnson’s staff in the late 1960s. Similarly, the Nixon Presidential Library has chosen not to supplement the transcripts prepared in 1974 for the various Watergate trials and investigations.

Technical Information

In doing our work, we are committed to open standards and the best practices of the field. Working with the University of Virginia Press and Stephen Perkins of Dataformat.com, we have invested considerable time and resources to implementing the best methods of digital documentary editing in our workflow. To ensure the long-term compatibility of the data, we have encoded the transcripts in XML (Extensible Markup Language) using open standards developed by the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI P5). We use the Pubman document management system developed by Dataformat.com to manage the various versions a transcript goes through before being published. To edit the XML documents, members of our team use XMetal and oXygen XML editors; in working with the sound files, they use Audacity and Adobe Audition. We also make available on our website, at <http://whitehousetapes.net>, high-resolution sound files of all the publicly available presidential recordings in both MP3 and FLAC formats.

Acknowledgments

Creating these digital editions has been very much a collaborative effort that has benefited from the contributions of many individuals and institutions.

Since the Presidential Recordings Program was founded in 1998, the University of Virginia's Miller Center of Public Affairs has provided the funding and institutional base that makes our work possible. It is a remarkable institution making valuable contributions on many fronts. From Philip Zelikow's original vision and under Tim Naftali's early direction, the Program has built a long and distinguished publication record.

The National Historical Publications and Records Commission, a grant-making arm of the National Archives and Records Administration that greatly enriches our understanding of the nation's history by making many important documentary projects possible, has provided crucial funding for the creation of the material in these digital editions.

The tapes that form the foundation of our work would not be available without the extraordinary efforts of the archivists of the LBJ Library and Museum in Austin, Texas, who, over the course of nearly two decades, undertook the painstaking task of reviewing, processing, and releasing the LBJ telephone tapes. The LBJ Library's dedication to enhancing our understanding of the thirty-sixth president and his era, and its strong tradition of promoting and facilitating research have, with good reason, earned it the reputation of being one of the very best archives at which to conduct research. Former LBJ Library Director Harry Middleton deserves special mention and our gratitude for his vision and foresight in championing and overseeing the early release of these remarkable tapes.

We have been privileged to work with the University of Virginia Press, in the process seeing firsthand why they are at the forefront of scholarly digital publishing. Their combination of vision, innovation, and expertise is remarkable. In particular, we wish to acknowledge and thank the small but talented Rotunda team who took our transcripts and transformed them into a digital edition: Shannon Shiflett (lead programmer), Markus Flatscher (multimedia implementation), and Bill Womack (graphic

designer). The Press's director, Penelope Kaiserlian, along with David Sewell and Mark Saunders, were also essential in conceiving of and creating these digital editions.

Finally, the editors would like to thank the all those who labored alongside us on these tapes. We've long benefited from the expertise and help of our colleagues working on other aspects of PRP's work. Since the Program's founding, our copyeditor Pat Dunn has saved us from embarrassments large and small on many occasions; all of the reference print editions and now these digital editions have passed through her expert and careful review. Two new additions to our team, Keri Matthews and Lisa Warren, have provided essential help in the late stages of preparing these editions for publication. And our work would not be possible without the efforts of a talented team of University of Virginia undergraduate and graduate student interns that provide early drafts of transcripts.

To all these people and everyone else who has helped us along the way, we express sincere thanks.

Notes

- [1] Ken Hughes, "Why Didn't Nixon Burn the Tapes?" WhiteHouseTapes.net, <http://whitehousetapes.net/exhibit/why-didnt-nixon-burn-tapes>.
- [2] *The Presidential Recordings, Lyndon B. Johnson: The Kennedy Assassination and the Transfer of Power, November 1963–January 1964*, vol. 1, *November 22–30, 1964*, ed. Max Holland (New York: Norton, 2005), pp. 63–66.
- [3] John Powers, "The History of Presidential Audio Recordings and the Archival Issues Surrounding Their Use," CIDS Paper, National Archives and Records Administration, 12 July 1996.
- [4] Quoted in David Shreve, "Preface," *The Presidential Recordings, Lyndon B. Johnson: Toward the Great Society, February 1, 1964–May 31, 1964*, vols. 4–6 (New York: Norton, 2007), p. xxxi.
- [5] *Ibid.*, p. xxvii.
- [6] *Ibid.*, p. xxviii.
- [7] John Powers, "The History of Presidential Audio Recordings."
- [8] Shreve, "Preface," p. xxviii.
- [9] Diary entry for 25 March 1964, in Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *Journals: 1952–2000* (New York: Penguin, 2008), p. 225.
- [10] Theodore White, *The Making of the President, 1964* (New York: Atheneum, 1965), p. 278. That Kennedy could actually see the recorder is unlikely since the recorders themselves were physically located inside the kneewells of his secretaries' desks in the secretarial space outside the Oval Office (John Powers, "The History of Presidential Audio Recordings"). He may have been confusing some of Johnson's new electronic gadgetry such as oversized telephone systems and television remote controls for his three television sets.
- [11] Tom Wicker, "Navy Order Cited in A-Bomb Dispute," *New York Times*, 15 August 1964; Chalmers M. Roberts and Murrey Marder, "'Conventional Ordnance' Specified in Viet Action," *Washington Post*, 15 August 1964.

- [12] Chalmers M. Roberts, "Johnson Expects to Win With Rating Shift," *Washington Post*, 4 October 1964.
- [13] See Conversation WH6408-22-4962, 4963.
- [14] Jules Witcover, "LBJ White House Bugging Reported," *Washington Post*, 19 July 1973.
- [15] Ibid.
- [16] Middleton quoted in Jules Witcover, "LBJ Aides Disavow System," *Washington Post*, 17 July 1973.
- [17] John Kifner, "Kennedy Aides Unaware That Talks Were Taped," *New York Times*, 19 July 1973.
- [18] Witcover, "LBJ Aides Disavow System," and Kifner, "Kennedy Aides Unaware That Talks Were Taped."
- [19] Jules Witcover, "LBJ White House Bugging Reported," *Washington Post*, 19 July 1973; Chalmers M. Roberts, "Bugging the Oval Office," *Washington Post*, 18 July 1973.
- [20] For the current status of individual recordings collections, see <http://www.whitehousetapes.net>.
- [21] For further details on the Presidential Recordings Program, see Ernest May and Timothy Naftali, "The Presidential Recordings Program," in Robert David Johnson and Kent B. Germany, eds., *The Presidential Recordings, Lyndon B. Johnson: Toward the Great Society*, vol. 4, *February 1, 1964–March 8, 1964* (New York: Norton, 2007), pp. xxi–xxvi; and the Presidential Recordings Program's website at <http://www.whitehousetapes.net>.
- [22] For further discussion of the distinction between normalized transcripts and diplomatic transcription, see M. J. Driscoll, "Electronic Textual Editing: Levels of transcription," http://www.tei-c.org/About/Archive_new/ETE/Preview/driscoll.xml; and Susan Perdue and Mary Joe Kline, *A Guide to Documentary Editing*, 3rd ed. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008).

The Nixon White House tapes are audio recordings of conversations between U.S. President Richard Nixon and Nixon administration officials, Nixon family members, and White House staff, produced between 1971 and 1973. In February 1971, a sound-activated taping system was installed in the Oval Office, including in Nixon's Oval Office desk, using Sony TC-800B open-reel tape recorders to capture audio transmitted by telephone taps and concealed microphones. The system was expanded to include other rooms "The GSA went to great lengths to keep the work secret," the Associated Press reported in 2012, when construction neared completion, "not only putting up the fence around the excavation site but ordering subcontractors not to talk to anyone and to tape over company info on trucks pulling into the White House gates." The air supply is self-contained, Kessler said, and the facility is stocked with enough food to last for months. When Trump arrived at the White House in 2017, he and a few select officials were given a tour of the facility, which remains unstaffed, a sort of subterranean "break glass in case of emergency" option. The tunnels. Kessler pointed out that escaping the White House was still an option. Presidents, secret visitors, and shadow confidants have had a back door in and out of the White House since the 1940s through a little-known passage opening on H Street. The circuitous route passes through one closed-off alleyway, two subterranean tunnels and finally spills out in the White House basement. This account is based on archival newspaper reports from the early 20th century, when the tunnels were a matter of public architectural interest, long before security paranoia cut off the flow of juicy information. The White House Has Been Home to Several Deaths. Presidents William Henry Harrison and Zachary Taylor both died in the White House. Three First Ladies"Letitia Tyler, Caroline Harrison, and Ellen Wilson"passed away there, too. To date, a total of 10 people have died within the White House walls. To discover more amazing secrets about living your best life, click here to sign up for our FREE daily newsletter! Filed Under: Facts & History. When the presence of a secret taping system in the Nixon White House became known in 1973, Mr. Fenn said, the Kennedy Library issued a statement reporting the existence of tapes made in the Kennedy Administration. But it was not until 1975, when the library actually acquired the tapes themselves, that curators began indexing the more than 100 hours of conversations. In July 1973, the Senate Watergate committee staff called in Alexander P. Butterfield in the hope that because he managed internal security in the Nixon White House, he might shed light on the suspicion by a former Nixon counsel,