

Texas Personalities

Lyndon Baines Johnson

Another famed son of Texas! Lyndon Baines Johnson became the 36th president of the United States on the assassination of John F. Kennedy in November 1963. A skilled promoter of liberal domestic legislation, he was also a staunch believer in the use of military force to help achieve the country's foreign policy objectives. His escalation of American involvement in the Vietnam War eroded his popular standing and led to his decision not to run for reelection to the presidency in 1968.

Johnson was born on Aug. 27, 1908, near Johnson City, TX. He attended public schools in Johnson City and then taught grade school for a year in Cotulla before going to Washington in 1931 as secretary to a Democratic Texas congressman, Richard M. Kleberg. On Nov. 17, 1934, he married Claudia Alta Taylor, known as "Lady Bird." A warm, intelligent, ambitious woman, she was a great asset to Johnson's career. They had two daughters, Lynda Bird and Luci Baines. FDR named him to head the National Youth Administration in Texas. In 1937, he won a Texas seat in Congress, where he championed public works, reclamation, and public power programs. In 1939 he backed Roosevelt's efforts to aid the Allies. During World War II he served a brief tour of active duty with the U.S. Navy in the Pacific (1941-42) but returned to Capitol Hill when Roosevelt recalled members of Congress from active duty. In 1948 he ran for the U.S. Senate, winning the Democratic party primary by only 87 votes. In 1953 he won the job of Senate Democratic leader.



The presidential nomination of 1960 went to Senator John F. Kennedy, who then selected Johnson as his running mate to balance the Democratic ticket. As vice-president, he also undertook some missions abroad, which offered him some limited insights into international problems. Upon becoming President, he quickly proved a masterly, reassuring leader in the realm of domestic affairs. Johnson's triumph in 1964 gave him a mandate for the Great Society, as he called his domestic program. It was the policy of military escalation in Vietnam, however, that proved to be Johnson's undoing as president. It deflected attention from domestic concerns, resulted in sharp inflation, and prompted rising criticism, especially among young, draft-aged people.

After stepping down from the presidency in January 1969, Johnson returned to his ranch in Texas, where

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