



# Lady Bird Johnson: Our Environmental First Lady

*Lewis L. Gould*

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## **Lady Bird Johnson: Our Environmental First Lady** Lewis L. Gould

Unique among presidents' wives, Lady Bird Johnson was not only one of the leading environmentalists of the twentieth century, she also redefined the institution of First Lady. In this first book in an innovative new series, Lewis Gould shows why Mrs. Johnson ranks with Eleanor Roosevelt as a significant innovator of the First Lady role.

Building upon his much admired *Lady Bird Johnson and the Environment*, Gould has refocused and revised his thinking to create a fresh, informative, and entertaining new portrait of LBJ's First Lady. Using Lady Bird's White House papers and interviews with her and her close associates, Gould captures both her spirit and considerable achievements during her tenure in the White House. He shows how Lady Bird's efforts to advance the cause of beautifying highways and the city of Washington, D.C. which included attending legislative strategy sessions and lobbying for the programs that she endorsed represented a new departure for a First Lady. He also tells how she devised and developed the staff, procedures, and tactics that subsequent First Ladies have since employed in the public arena.

The book sheds light on the personal side of Mrs. Johnson's activism as well, telling how her appearances on behalf of environmental issues were often marred by antiwar protests and how she agonized with her husband over his decision not to run for reelection. It also reveals details of her life after LBJ's death, showing that the consistency with which she pursued her vision of the environment has added to her historical influence.

Today Lady Bird's efforts are commemorated at such sites as a grove in Redwoods National Park and a park by the Potomac River that both bear her name. Equally important, she herself participated in the policymaking process in a more direct way than any previous First Lady had dared. All in all, Lady Bird Johnson set a high standard for future First Ladies to follow, while raising the environmental awareness of millions of Americans. For those reasons especially, her legacy will endure.

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