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The magazine of
the Mizzou Alumni Association

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Around the Columns

Required presidential reading

As a professor of American colonial history at MU, it may seem like quite a departure for John Bullion to have written two books about Lyndon B. Johnson. But as a man who spent three days hunting with the 36th U.S. president in 1965, the author's perspective is unique.

Now his book, *Lyndon B. Johnson and the Transformation of American Politics*

(Pearson Longman, 2008), is required reading for all freshman English and history students at LBJ's alma mater, Texas State University–San Marcos.

“Lyndon Johnson led a full and extensive life, with a distinguished career outside of the presidency,” Bullion says. “What I’ve managed to do is boil his life down to 234 pages and cover the major aspects.”

Bullion taught at San Marcos from 1974–78 when it was Southwest Texas State and before he arrived at Mizzou. The integration of his book into the curriculum is an honor on several levels.

“Some of my old colleagues are still there or are retired, so it has very much been a sentimental journey,” Bullion says.



John Bullion, history professor at MU, wrote two books about Lyndon B. Johnson. A bird enthusiast, Bullion is shown here in his office. Photo by Nicholas Benner

At age 21, Bullion and his father — who was one of Johnson’s tax attorneys — spent three days hunting deer on the LBJ ranch. Those episodes, among others, are recounted in Bullion’s memoir, *In the Boat with LBJ* (Republic of Texas Press, 2001).

The choice to make the biography required reading coincides with the 100th anniversary of Johnson’s birth year, also translating into a 5,000-copy order from Texas State.

“No one talking with the president of the United States ever forgets that he is interacting with the most powerful individual in the world,” Bullion says.

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Published by MIZZOU magazine, 109 Reynolds Alumni Center, Columbia, MO 65211 | Phone: 573-882-5916
| E-mail: Mizzou@missouri.edu

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Last updated: Feb. 15, 2013