



President Johnson meets with reporters in his room at Bethesda Naval Hospital on November 16, 1966, a few hours after surgery.

Because he'd had surgery on his vocal cord, the president wasn't allowed to talk. Whenever he had something to say, which was often, he wrote it on a pad of paper. He met reporters beside his bed three hours post-surgery with the aim of showing that he was back at the job. He wrote answers to their questions. After three days, he left the hospital and flew to his ranch in Texas to recuperate over the next month. But being Johnson, that didn't mean he took a break from working.

He had another surgery the next year, in October 1967. This one was minor and didn't require an operating room. An examination had revealed a common skin cancer on his ankle, and the small spot was cut off. The navy didn't confirm the procedure for ten years, after Johnson's death, when Lady Bird Johnson permitted release of the information. Even though this type of cancer rarely spreads or leads to serious damage, the White House was afraid at the time to mention "cancer" because it might create needless worry and panic. During the last part of Johnson's presidency, about three dozen growths on his skin were removed. Only one was cancerous.