

INTERVIEW I

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INTERVIEWEE: EDGAR L. BALL
INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE
PLACE: The Quality Inn, Austin, Texas

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G: I wanted to start, Mr. Ball, by asking you about the origin of the movement to challenge Allan Shivers after 1952.

B: Well, the background was really the formation of what we call Loyal Democrats in 1948, when the party was divided. There were those that wanted to support Truman, and those that didn't, and this carried over into the November elections. At the 1948 national convention, the civil rights plank that was adopted as sponsored by Hubert Humphrey caused a walkout of several southern states, and the States' Rights Democrat Party was formed. We called them Dixiecrats. They ran a ticket for president; their candidates were Thurmond and [Fielding L.] Wright. Strom Thurmond, who is still in the United States Senate as a Republican, was their candidate. Wright I think was from Mississippi. I'm not sure that that's right, but I believe that's where he was from.

Following the 1948 election, several of us made attempts to form permanent type organizations to get ready for the 1952 convention, where we figured there would be the same division within the party. We weren't successful. I think we may have had one or two meetings on a statewide basis.

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G: Who was involved, do you recall?

B: Generally it was people like Sam Low, J. Edwin Smith, Chris Dixie, Bob Eckhardt, Arthur Combs.

G: Was it largely Houston-based?

B: Well, those are the ones I know and was working with at the time. There were others from around the state: Byron Skelton in Temple, the lady in Fort Worth; she's still living. Gosh. [Margaret Carter?]

G: What's her name? Johnson?

B: No. Gee whiz, I saw her sometime last year at some function, the first time I had seen her in a long time.

But there had been loyal Democratic member type organizations formed outside the structure of the party in many parts of the state in 1948, because the regular party organization was going pretty well opposite. They were going against Truman. Those efforts weren't successful.

G: Let me ask you here before you leave 1948, what comprised the support for Henry Wallace in 1948 in Texas?

B: Well, there was very little support for him. The law firm in Houston of Mandell and Wright, Herman Wright out of that law firm ran for governor on the Progressive Party ticket. My recollection is he didn't get but a couple of hundred votes. And there really wasn't much. There were one or two unions that supported Wallace. The National Maritime Union did, as I remember, and the food, tobacco and agricultural workers. And that's really the only unions that I remember getting involved.

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G: What about the black vote?

B: The black vote went solid for Truman.

G: Is that right?

B: Yes. Sure. That civil rights plank in that platform sewed that up.

G: Okay. And the bulk of the labor movement also stayed with Truman?

B: Yes.

G: Okay.

B: Well, in 1952 we had the same fight all over again. The party structure was still in the hands of the conservative group of the Democratic Party. The pro-national Democratic group was generally outside the official party structure, had very few people on the state committee, no influence over it, and again organized outside the party. We actually spent almost all of 1952 organizing precinct organizations. I went to work for CIO in September of 1951 as the PAC director for Harris County. I spent all my time, first selling poll taxes and setting up precinct organizations for that party fight. We had a split delegation go to the national convention again. Then in the September convention, Shivers had it in Amarillo, and the party itself, the state party convention endorsed Eisenhower for president. And that I think convinced everybody that it was absolutely necessary to form an organization.

So following the November election we had a meeting in Houston where we decided to form the Harris County Democrats. We spent about three months working to set that up. [We] primarily started it with the leadership that had worked the precincts, each precinct leader

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that had worked for the liberal Democrats, the liberal wing of the party, and some additional people such as Mrs. [Frankie] Randolph who had not gotten involved until the November election. She'd come into the Stevenson headquarters during that campaign and worked as a volunteer in the headquarters during the campaign, and she got interested in the program of having a permanent organization.

G: Was she interested, do you think, as a result of her support of Adlai Stevenson?

B: Not altogether. Mrs. Randolph had been a political activist before that, primarily in city elections. She had been very active in Neal Pickett's campaign for mayor, and some other political type things that she had done. But she was a liberal, and she was interested in anything that would offer some hope for the liberal movement to be effective. But there were others, too, that had gotten involved during the campaign in November that helped do the thing, and this is statewide.

We had the founding convention of the Harris County Democrats in March, as I remember, in 1953. Set it up on a permanent basis with a set of bylaws. At the same time, they were doing similar type things in Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio, Corpus Christi, some of the Central Texas counties, a few out in West Texas, a few in East Texas. We then called a statewide meeting, I think at Buchanan Dam if my memory is right, where we made the decision that we would form the Democrats of Texas and became the permanent statewide organization.

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If my memory is right we elected Byron Skelton of Temple as chairman of the Democrats of Texas at that time.

Well, with that we worked, you know, in various degrees on a full-time or part-time basis, depending on what kind of financial resources they had in different counties, through 1954 and into the 1956 campaign. We made a major effort in 1954 to try to capture control of the party. Of course, we ran Ralph [Yarborough] for governor again in 1954. He ran originally the first time I think in 1952. By 1956 we had built a pretty effective political organization as far as precinct organization was concerned. In the major counties and in a lot of Central and East Texas [counties] and some in the Valley, or South Texas, at least Corpus Christi had done a pretty good job. EL Paso had done a pretty good job. There were a few counties in West Texas. Amarillo has two counties and I can't remember which is which, but one of them was liberal and one of them was conservative; Randall County I believe was the liberal one. Andrews County out there was [liberal], a few like that, scattered. Wichita Falls and Abilene and that area had developed a pretty good organization at that time.

So we were going into 1956 feeling like we were ready to win control of the party finally. Kathleen Voigt had become very active in San Antonio. We'd gotten enough money together to put on some full-time organizers. I think there were about eight of us. I was one of them, and each one of us took a certain number of counties that we oversaw to see that they had a county organization and that they had precinct organization work going on, and [we would] run schools to

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teach them the procedures of the precinct conventions and the county conventions and the state conventions.

G: How was this financed?

B: Voluntary contributions. Mrs. Randolph put up a lot of money. We got money from Judge Andrews, Jesse Andrews. We got some money from Arthur Temple, believe it or not.

G: Really?

B: Yes.

G: What about labor?

B: Labor put up a lot of money, but labor primarily put up people. They let people that were on their payroll have time off to work.

G: Had any of the political figures like LBJ or Rayburn, or in Houston, Albert Thomas, any of these people been involved in either the formation or development of this group?

B: Well, Mr. Rayburn had to some extent. He had promised during the 1952 presidential campaign that he would help us form a permanent organization. As a matter of fact, I had some money left over in the Harris County Stevenson campaign fund and was persuaded to turn it over to Mr. Rayburn to go into a fund or an account that he set up in Dallas, and that money was to be used to finance the start up of the state democratic organization that we were forming, or planned to form. Well, whenever we got around to the point we needed the money, we found out that he had used it to pay off campaign debts of some congressmen around the country and there was no money available. Mr. Rayburn really didn't want a permanent organization.

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G: How did you know that?

B: Well, he told a lot of people that, and he did a lot of things to try to convince individual people not to participate. There wasn't any question about him being a national Democrat and a loyal Democrat, but he just didn't want an organization in Texas that he would have to be answerable to. He wanted to make the decisions. He wanted to be the one that called the meetings. And he didn't see the need for that kind of organization. He'd never been involved in one.

G: Well, but in a situation where the Republicans controlled a lot of the state Democratic machinery, wasn't this an unusual circumstance?

B: It was, but I think Mr. Sam always believed he was going to be able to get those people back. I remember being in his hotel room at the Adolphus Hotel during the 1952 campaign for several days. He was in pretty bad health at the time, and he did a lot of his work laying in bed, on the telephone. He was calling person after person that had always helped in the Democratic Party, and three out of four of them was telling him that they were supporting Eisenhower. But he believed that those people were going to come back to the Democrats sooner or later. And I think he really believed that forming the organization was going to polarize the fight and the division in the party, and it would be more difficult to get those people ever back in the party supporting the Democratic candidate for president.

G: Are there any other specific occasions that you think of as basis for your interpretation of Rayburn's feelings on this? Anybody else that he talked to that expressed his opinion?

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B: Well, a lot of people talked to Rayburn during these times. Byron Skelton was in contact with him pretty regularly. People like Cecil Burney and Vann Kennedy--was that his name?--in Corpus Christi.

G: Vann Kennedy, yes.

B: The guy whose name I tried to remember a while ago; he's from Hillsboro, by the way. And generally when they discussed it with him, Rayburn tried to discourage the idea, and they'd report that back to us. But we were determined to go ahead. As a matter of fact, a lot of us really wanted to form a two-party system in the state. Our objective really was to get the conservatives over in the Republican Party and leave the Democratic Party in the hands of the people who supported the national Democratic platform and policies. It took us a long time, but we finally accomplished that. Rayburn wasn't for that program. He didn't want the Republican Party to ever gain any strength. He preferred to keep the conservatives in the Democratic Party, at almost any cost.

G: What was Johnson's view on this?

B: Well, I don't remember Johnson being active at all in 1952. As a matter of fact, I don't really remember him campaigning very much, publicly at least, for Adlai Stevenson in 1952. He got involved--

G: Was there an effort to make him, get him to campaign more vigorously for Stevenson?

B: Not that I'm aware of.

G: Okay. You were saying that he got involved in the. . . .

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B: When Sam Rayburn called a press conference and announced that he thought Lyndon Baines Johnson should be the next president of the United States, and in effect put Lyndon in the race for the presidential nomination.

G: Why was Byron Skelton chosen as the chairman of the DAC?

B: DOC, or DOT?

G: Well, it went through three names, I guess.

B: Yes. Originally it was Democrats of Texas.

G: Is that right? It was at one time Democratic Advisory Committee.

B: Yes. And I don't even remember which--we had big arguments over what we were going to name it, and finally decided on DOT, and I think that was what it was operating under in 1956, was Democrats of Texas.

G: Well, why was Skelton chosen as the head of that group?

B: Well, Byron was a very respected lawyer in Central Texas. He was more of a moderate, from the moderate part of the party that we wanted to keep and wanted to try to get active in this thing. He would be more of what we called a loyal Democrat, as opposed to a liberal Democrat. We thought that would help.

G: Did that group have two identities? Did it have, say, a labor-liberal faction within it on the one hand and sort of a moderate-loyalist group on the other?

B: It did. It sure did.

G: And how did the support break down within it?

B: Well, mostly the liberal-labor minority faction of the party was centered in the big cities: Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio,

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El Paso, Corpus Christi. The moderate-loyalist group was primarily the East Texas, Central Texas, West Texas group.

G: I see. Did either faction have a greater control of the organization?

B: Well, the big cities provided many more people at the statewide meetings than the rural areas did. So at the statewide meetings they generally could outvote the rural group, but they generally chose the rural group for their leadership.

G: I see. Was Skelton regarded as Rayburn's man in that organization?

B: Yes.

G: He was?

B: Yes. And we wanted Rayburn's support. He was the only real statewide figure, national figure, that we had that had stayed and really tried to help in 1952, and we considered him a loyalist. He had been a New Deal supporter, speaker of the House, had done a great many things.

G: Now I guess we should go on to 1956. Let me ask you how the fight shaped up with Allan Shivers. You mentioned the Rayburn press conference, or at least the announcement.

B: Well, by the time that announcement was made we felt like we had enough strength that we could win the party conventions in Texas that year. Most of what I say now is hearsay and supposition. But the way we analyzed it at the time was that Mr. Rayburn was not convinced that we could, number one. He was afraid Allan Shivers would be able to defeat us. And number two, if Shivers wasn't able to defeat us legally, that he would be able, by controlling the party machinery, to

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keep us from being seated at the convention. He had control of the credentials committee.

He felt like with Lyndon Johnson as a candidate, and forming the fight on the basis of those who supported Lyndon for president, and those who were supporting Shivers, that we would be able to get more of the moderate and conservative faction of the party on our side. [He felt] that we could pick up some support of people who were members of the state Democratic committee, and that it would make it very difficult for Shivers to steal the convention from us. That there would be so much publicity, so much press coverage, and Lyndon had so much standing nationally and would have as a presidential candidate, that this was necessary in order to be able to regain control of the party and have a good delegation go to the national convention. And I think he also thought that Lyndon Johnson was presidential material. I'm not sure that he had great hopes that Lyndon would become nominated that year. He may have been really shooting at a vice presidential shot in 1952 [1956?]. But you know, that's just generally what we were thinking at the time was Rayburn's reasons for doing it.

G: You did not include in those [reasons] Johnson's candidacy as an aid in defeating Shivers at the precinct conventions? You don't think that he felt that was--?

B: Yes, I think he was an aid and I thought I mentioned that in that he would be able to draw support of moderates and some conservatives that would support LBJ in the fight against Shivers' group for control of the convention.

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G: Do you think that Shivers was vulnerable by 1956?

B: Yes.

G: Can you elaborate on that?

B: Well, we had had a couple of recessions under the Eisenhower presidency. The farm economy had not gone all that well. The loyalty issue had really become a good issue by then, and we had really organized and I think very effectively.

G: Let me ask you, now, to elaborate on how you conducted the actual precinct organization for that precinct battle, what the elements of it were.

B: We started out in 1952 by accumulating the names of all the loyalists who had attended precinct conventions over the state, and the delegates to the county convention and the delegates to the state convention, the workers in the Yarborough campaign and the workers in the Stevenson campaign. That's what we started out with. Then we started calling meetings, first at a county level. We'd write a letter to all those people inviting them to come to a meeting to talk about setting up a permanent organization of loyal Democrats to work for the next convention, which would have been September of 1954.

If we got commitments to do that, then we'd set up programs. We'd outline programs for them to call meetings at the precinct level to actually select or elect or appoint, however they wanted to do it, somebody to be responsible for organizing each precinct. Which means they took the list of people who had poll taxes and started calling them to try to determine whether they were loyal Democrats or not, and

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try to get them to come to a meeting. We would send speakers to the meeting. I guess we kept Ralph Yarborough on the road almost continuously for two years making county meetings and precinct meetings. And others did the same thing. I spent most of my time doing that, also. And we'd run schools, anybody that we could get to a meeting, on how you organized a precinct and what convention procedures were and what all you had to do and everything. We tried to get all of them to select candidates to run for precinct committeeman jobs in their precinct, and for county chairman and county secretary jobs. County chairman I think was the one that was elected. We just did that continuously for two years. Actually by 1956 we'd done it for four years.

G: It really had a snowball effect I guess by this time.

B: Yes.

G: Was the race issue a problem for you, the way Shivers used it in 1956?

B: Yes. Not as bad a problem as it later became.

G: What do you remember about that in 1956? I know that was the year they had the interposition resolution?

B: Well, the race issue is the thing I guess that finally polarized the division in the party in the South, including Texas. The adoption of the civil rights plank in the 1948 platform did that. And that effectively put all the racists on the other side from us, because we supported the integration of the blacks into the party, and we supported the policy and principle of civil rights for them. There were some people that simply didn't believe that blacks should have civil

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rights that were not going to help us because of that. And there were politicians who might have supported us otherwise who were afraid to support us openly or publicly because they would be tarred with that, and they felt like in their district they couldn't get re-elected if they came out with the group that was supporting civil rights.

G: 1956 must have been a particularly difficult year because of the weight of the Brown decision hitting at this point and the various school desegregation cases. How did Shivers use that issue?

B: Well, the same way all racists use it: "Do you want your daughter to marry a black? Do you want your kids to have to go to school with blacks?"

G: Yes. But I mean, was the brunt of this issue as used by Shivers done through the public statements, or was it disseminated through mailings and things like that that would be less inclined to receive press attention?

B: Well, I never saw many of Shivers' mailings. I wasn't on his mailing list so I don't really know what they did. You know, I had reports of some of the things they were saying at the meetings they would have, primarily in the Houston area, some of the statewide meetings that we got reports on. Because some people who were in their group were also sort of undercover in our group. We'd get some of those reports, that's basically the way I got the information.

G: Some of the blacks in Houston seem to have been disgruntled with Ralph Yarborough's stand on segregation in that campaign.

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G: They sure were, in 1952 and 1956. Ralph just didn't feel like he could make a commitment or a public statement on that issue and get elected governor, and his ambition in life at that point was to be elected governor of Texas.

G: Were you privy to any discussions dealing with his stand here?

B: Yes.

G: Can you recall any of those?

B: Well, I can't recall dates and places, but I had many meetings with Ralph, both individually and with committees, in that campaign. We were pressing him to make a public statement in support of the school decisions, in support of the civil rights generally. Ralph would never do it, and he was being pressed very hard by particularly his East Texas supporters, Central Texas supporters, not to.

G: He did make a statement in East Texas that, as I recall, was a real problem for a lot of the urban blacks. Remember that?

B: I remember the incident. I can't quote the statement.

G: So it was primarily a question of just votes? That he felt he would lose support if he came out publicly for the Brown decision?

B: He felt like he couldn't get elected if he did that. He felt like the majority of his votes were going to come from the rural areas. We had never carried a big city for him. I don't think he thought we could carry a big city for him. As I remember, we did carry Harris County for Ralph in 1956, because that was the first time.

G: Now, in the precinct fight between Johnson and Shivers, did you work at all directly with Johnson?

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B: Very little in Harris County. In Harris County we had the Harris County Democrats that was the organization, and we did our own thing. We didn't oppose the Johnson nomination. My recollection is that we never did officially endorse it either. Now, we had people active in the organization, like Sam D. W. Low, who were very close friends and supporters of Lyndon Johnson. As a matter of fact, J. Edwin Smith, who was chairman of the Harris County Democrats at the time, was a long time personal friend and supporter of Lyndon Johnson. And they as individuals worked for him and passed resolutions supporting his nomination at their precinct conventions. I don't even remember whether we passed one at the Harris County convention or not. I don't really think we did, but I'm not sure about that.

G: Did Johnson in that battle travel around the state and actively work, himself, against Shivers, do you recall?

B: Well, he came to the state and made some speeches, but I don't remember him personally doing all that much. A lot of his people did, like Byron Skelton very actively campaigned for him. People like Cecil Burney, Vann Kennedy, the two lawyers in Beaumont.

G: Adams?

B: Adams and, oh, what was the other guy's name?

G: [O.J.] Weber?

B: Who?

G: Weber? That's an old [friend].

B: Well, it was Adams' law partner, whatever his name was. [Ernest J. Browne?] I can't remember it now. Gilbert Adams. But, you know,

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people like that who were part of the Democrats of Texas, and some that weren't. Vann Kennedy and Cecil Burney were never members of the Democrats of Texas. There were other LBJ supporters, a lot out of his old congressional district here in Austin. There were congressmen who did a lot of campaigning for him.

G: Oh, really?

B: Wright Patman did over in East Texas. The congressman from Galveston, Thompson, Clark Thompson did. Albert Thomas did.

G: Well, would you say then that it was not simply the DAC or DOT organization that won the precinct thing? Did Johnson have his own organization actually in the field working at the precinct level as well?

B: Oh, sure.

G: All right. If you had to divide up how much the DOT did and how much Johnson's own organization did, and I realize, as you've explained, there is a lot of overlapping there, how would you divide it up?

B: Well, in the May convention I think there's no question that the DOT elected a majority of the delegates to the state convention. I think that was demonstrated by the fight over the national committeewoman's position. That was the only real test of strength between the two groups. And the conservative faction of the party that was there voted with the LBJ supporters that were there against the DOT people. I think we demonstrated that we actually elected a majority of the delegates to that convention and held them loyal in a fight with the

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guy that we were going to support for the nomination, from his home state. That was pretty tough politics.

G: Yes. Well, let's go on into that convention and let me ask you to recount how that fight took place. There were a number of issues I think. One was the election of the national committeeman and committeewoman. One was whether or not to scrap the State Democratic Executive Committee in May or wait until September.

B: Right. Right.

G: Can you recall what happened? This was in Dallas I think.

B: Right. Well, we wanted a loyalty oath imposed, and we wanted to get rid of any officer of the party that would not sign a loyalty oath, and we didn't want to seat any delegate at the convention that would not sign a loyalty oath. The loyalty oath was a commitment to support the nominees of the party from top to bottom, from president to justice of the peace. And the Democrats of Texas were pretty united on that issue. Lyndon and his group did not want that done. They thought that would drive out of the party some people that they could get to support Lyndon and would support a Lyndon candidacy for president, and that it was a divisive thing that would further divide the party rather than unite it. I guess as candidates they wanted all the unity they could get.

Mr. Rayburn took no position on that issue. He came to Dallas the day before the convention. He had some meetings in which he advised us not to do that, asked us not to do that, one of which I attended. He took some criticism and some boos for taking that

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position. He had a fairly large meeting that evening and got booed rather severely, whereupon he got in his car and went to Bonham and left the convention and didn't attend it, and as far as I know had no further activity in the convention, turned everything over to Lyndon and his people to handle at the convention. We might not have done as well had Mr. Rayburn stayed and actually stayed in the fight, as we finally wound up doing.

G: Now, was there any sort of a deal that had been negotiated in advance that traded appointments or selection of the national committeeman and committeewoman on the one hand, and the state executive committee on the other?

B: No. The only deal that I think had been negotiated--and this actually had not been negotiated with the liberal-labor minority wing of the party; I think a lot of the leadership of the rural wing of the DOT had participated in it originally--was that Lyndon would be able to name the committeewoman, and the DOT group would be able to name the committeeman. Their thinking behind that was that we would name Byron Skelton because he was our president, or chairman, and that he was already a Lyndon Johnson supporter. Then Lyndon would name a woman from the conservative wing of the party and with that he would have a moderate and a conservative that he could use in the campaign. When we found out about that, we refused to agree to it.

G: Now you're talking about the labor-liberal [group], was this largely Harris County or was this all?

B: No, this was statewide.

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G: Okay.

B: Statewide. Then the rank and file delegates statewide rebelled against it also. The leadership simply couldn't handle it.

G: Jerry Holleman recalled in this connection that there had been some sort of deal to the effect that Johnson could have his choices as national committeeman and committeewoman as long as each local area could name its state committeeman and committeewoman as members of the executive committee and have those put in place in May rather than waiting until September. And that when this broke down that caused the agreement over the national committeeman and committeewoman to break down.

B: No.

G: You don't remember?

B: That's not the way I remember it happening. I don't remember the state committee thing being tied to the national committee thing at all.

G: But there was an effort on your part to have that state committee replaced at the May convention, is that right?

B: Yes.

G: Well, I guess we ought to go on with the Frankie Randolph fight because that actually preceded the other, am I correct?

B: Yes.

G: So how did that take shape?

B: Well, we were first told by some people like Gilbert Adams and others that this was the way Lyndon wanted it. The next thing, there was a

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labor leader in the state that was very close to Lyndon. His name was Bob Oliver. He was regional director for CIO at the time. Bob called a meeting of the labor union people--the CIO people, not the AFL people, but the CIO people who were at the convention--in his room I think it was, at the hotel, and made this proposal to them. Then Lyndon came into that meeting and spoke in favor, asked them to go along with that, that he would name the committeewoman and we would name the committeeman.

At that point some of the union people who were there got up and walked out. One of them was Jim Ward, from our union, who made the statement, "Well, there's fixing to be some policy made here that I can't follow, and I don't want to stay in the meeting and participate in the decision if I can't follow the decision of the committee or the meeting. So I'm going to leave." [He] told Lyndon, "Senator, I think we'll make just the opposite deal with you. If you're willing to name the committeeman and let us name the committeewoman, then we'll go with the deal." As he reports it--I wasn't there, I wasn't working for CIO at that time--Lyndon told him, "Jim, you're just as hardheaded as you ever were. You haven't changed a bit."

G: Ward having been a student at Sam Houston High [School], I understand, when he was teaching.

So he didn't get the agreement?

B: No.

G: Did Johnson think he had the votes to get his candidate from state committeewoman in?

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B: He may have at one point. I think he really believed that he could convince J. Edwin Smith to try to lead the Harris County Democrats into that, and he called J. Edwin back behind the stage and talked to him, asked him to go out and try to get the delegation to do that. And he called many other leaders of county delegations in to do the same thing.

G: Did Smith help him in that regard?

B: No, he didn't. He finally went back in after talking to some of us and told him that he would not help him do that. Others did the same thing, but most of them did go back and poll their delegations and then went back and reported to them that they couldn't carry their delegation.

As this was all going on, he had several congressmen there working the floor. So we decided to put out our handbill on Mrs. [Lloyd] Bentsen. By then he had disclosed who his candidate was. We had several people holding back that thought they might be able to get the committeewoman's job. For instance, Kathleen Voigt, she kept hoping that Lyndon would say, "Okay, if you all will take Kathleen Voigt and Byron Skelton, then we can make a deal on that." And we probably could have.

G Well, he did ultimately suggest Kathleen Voigt.

B: But that was too late when he did that. She went back and met with him and he wasn't willing to do it, and she came back and talked to me. I was standing at the back of the hall, and two of the other people who had been regional organizers, as I had, were there, and

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some of her friends from San Antonio. And she said, "Well, it's all over. He's not going to do it. I've just talked to him. Ed, you go ahead and put your handbill out." So I put out that handbill showing Mrs. Lloyd Bentsen, "Womanpower for Eisenhower," in 1952, and that ended it.

G: Did you have any hard evidence that Mrs. Bentsen had supported Eisenhower in 1952?

B: Well, God, it was in the newspaper.

G: Is that right?

B: That's what we had on the handbill, was a picture of her with the story, "Womanpower for Eisenhower."

G: Why did he want Mrs. Bentsen?

B: I don't know. Now I know that Lloyd and Lyndon had been close. Lloyd had very strong support in the Valley, where he'd been the congressman. The Valley support he considered very important. Lloyd had made a fortune in Houston then and was influential in the Houston business community. He probably figured this was one of the people that could really help him pull some key elements of the party together. But you know, that's speculation. I don't know.

G: Why didn't he accept Jim Ward's suggestion and drop Byron Skelton?

B: I think at that point he thought that he could have his way. Jim Ward had been a protege of Bob Oliver's. Bob Oliver and Jim had been very close personal friends. I would guess that Bob was even telling him, "Well, don't worry about Jim. He's upset now, but I'll talk to him, and he never has refused to do anything I ask him to do."

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G: Was there any indication initially that, say, someone like Mrs. Jud Collier would run and neither Kathleen Voigt nor Frankie Randolph would be the candidates for committeewoman?

B: Mrs. Collier had been considered, yes, she certainly had.

G: Well, how did Frankie Randolph's candidacy get started to begin with on that?

B: We started running her in precinct conventions in Harris County, and we asked other counties to get similar type resolutions passed at their precinct and county conventions.

G: So she had been working on it for a good while before Dallas?

B: Yes.

G: Why did you support her for that position?

B: I thought she was a great woman, and I thought she would be a great national committeewoman, and I thought we needed leadership, particularly from Texas from the liberal wing of the party.

G: What do you think was the source of ill feeling between her and Lyndon Johnson?

B: Well, I think his opposing her for national committeewoman. And she was basically an Adlai Stevenson supporter, also.

G: Do you think that she would have been friendlier to him if he had supported her for that?

B: Sure. I think all of us would have.

G: Now, Skelton seemed to indicate that she was nominated and elected before anybody really realized what was going on. That the Johnson

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forces really didn't have the convention in hand at the time that voting occurred.

B: Well, they didn't. They had it in hand on everything except that issue.

G: But you see it as simply a numerical superiority. Some of the documents indicate that a lot of it may have been due to confusion and the fact that the Johnson people were disorganized at the time.

B: Well, they became disorganized after Lyndon left. Lyndon got mad after he started getting those reports back from the county delegation chairmen. When it became apparent that he couldn't make it go, he then tried the Kathleen Voigt thing, and she just simply told him, "It's too late. I've already committed myself to the other program now and I can't go." He then got very angry and left the convention. Once he left, then his organization at the convention fell apart. [John] Connally stayed and saved as much of it as he could, but we pretty well had our way then.

G: Now with regard to the fight over the removal of the disloyal state executive committee members, the people that Shivers had named. Why did Johnson favor keeping the Shivers people on the committee?

B: Well, again, I think the political reason was to try to keep those people in the party and keep them available to support him in November, support the party ticket in November. They used a legal reason, that it wasn't legal for us to do it. And I don't know, up until then the courts had consistently held, and the argument we used on the thing was that the courts had refused to take jurisdiction of

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party matters. That they had always held that each party was a private political organization and had sole authority to determine their own disputes.

G: Did you feel that Price Daniel would name a new conservative executive committee if it were left until September?

B: Yes, but I think under the law he would have been able to name a new executive committee in September anyway. There was going to be another set of precinct conventions, another set of county conventions, election of delegates for another convention. We were just mad at the people that had supported Eisenhower. We didn't think they ought to hold political party office.

G: Do you think that LBJ left the committee intact as a way to head off the liberals?

B: Well, I don't think he felt he could carry Texas with just the liberals, labor and minorities. I think he felt he had to have the moderates, particularly in the East Texas, South Texas area, Central Texas, West Texas, the rural areas of the state. He felt like if we did something like that, we'd drive all those people out of the party. I think he was trying to keep them in.

G: Well, it seems that there's a possibility that the booing of Johnson and Rayburn, and his defeat on the Frankie Randolph thing might have convinced him that he was losing control of the party machinery to the liberals, and therefore had to retreat and make some deal with the conservatives. Did you ever hear this concept expressed or did this seem plausible?

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B: No, I think he made his plans to try to keep conservative support, moderate support, before he came to the convention.

G: Did he exercise influence over Price Daniel at that convention?

B: Yes.

G: Can you recount how he did that?

B: Well, that was primarily in September rather than in May. I don't remember Price being too active at the May convention at all.

G: Was the Frankie Randolph thing also the cause of the rift between Johnson and the labor-liberal group that developed that summer and fall, or was that more due to the September convention?

B: It was more due to the September convention.

G: Was it? Okay.

B: I don't think there were any real rifts created at the May convention that wouldn't have healed if it hadn't been for what happened at the September convention.

G: Okay. Well, let's go on through the summer to the September convention. That was held I believe in Fort Worth.

B: Yes. Well, we went to the national convention. Adlai Stevenson of course got the nomination.

G: Were you a delegate? I guess so.

B: Yes, I was a delegate. You know, the story is that Speaker Rayburn tried his best to convince Adlai Stevenson to make Lyndon his vice presidential running mate. Stevenson was getting tremendous pressure from other sources in the party not to do that and to select somebody else. He made a decision not to select anybody and to throw the floor

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open and let the delegates select the vice presidential nominee. As far as I know, [it's] the first time it ever happened and the last time it's ever happened.

Well, a wide-open fight developed. Lyndon decided not to get in that fight, not to run for vice president.

G: Now, was he a serious candidate for president? Did he go beyond favorite son?

B: No.

G: He didn't? He did announce at one point that he was serious about the--

B: Yes. He'd maintained that position all the way through.

G: But you don't think that he was serious?

B: No.

G: Why not?

B: I don't think, one, he announced early enough. Number two, I don't really think it was his idea to run. I think that was Mr. Rayburn's idea.

G: Some have suggested that he was maintaining this serious posture more in order to refute the Shivers charge that he was merely a Stevenson henchman. In other words, to establish his own independence. Do you think this was a factor at all?

B: You know, it's hard for me to know that, because I wasn't meeting with or talking to Lyndon at that point. As I remember Lyndon, he had a tremendous ego. I think he was also a master politician. I think his political instincts and experience and expertise would tell him that

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the only way he could survive with any credibility at all was to take that posture, that he was a serious candidate. That anything less than that would prove to be a political disaster for him.

G: One of the things, he seems to have continued on as a candidate rather than when it was clear that Stevenson would be nominated, folding up. Did the members of the Texas delegation want to get behind Stevenson at this point? Did they want to drop the favorite son business? Or were you happy to go on with Johnson's candidacy?

B: Well, there was a substantial number of us that wanted to support Stevenson, but we were not a majority of the delegation. And besides that, we were tied under the unit rule and we were instructed.

G: Why do you think he continued on this as long as he did?

B: I think to bargain with Stevenson for the vice presidential nomination.

G: Did you ever hear Johnson at that convention indicate an interest in being VP?

B: At the national convention?

G: Yes.

B: Well, we heard the stories of the Speaker's meetings with Adlai Stevenson.

G: Well, there was another indication that Johnson was supporting [Stuart] Symington for VP. Did you ever hear that?

B: Yes.

G: Do you think that was as a second choice in the event that he himself was not?

B: **Sure.**

G: Was there also an element of the civil rights platform as being a negotiating point?

B: Well, the civil rights plank was negotiated on at every convention that I know of until the law was finally passed.

G: But I mean here in 1956 it was evidently an issue also. Do you recall Johnson's position there?

B: No, I sure don't. I don't even remember him taking a position.

G: Anything else on LBJ at that 1956 convention?

B: No. After he decided not to get in the race for vice president, I don't remember him making an appearance or being active at all in the remainder. Mr. Rayburn then took over the leadership of the delegation and was the one that Connally reported to. Connally was chairman of the delegation. I think most of the delegation wanted to support Estes Kefauver. Walter Reuther had called a caucus of the labor delegates late the night before, and they had decided to support Kefauver for it. Mr. Rayburn in our first caucus recommended that we support Albert Gore from Tennessee and carried the vote. Mr. Rayburn disliked Estes Kefauver and he did not want the Texas delegation to go for him, and that was his way of holding us off.

One of the things that happened at the convention, while that roll call was going on we all knew that Gore was not going anywhere. Putting in another guy from Tennessee was just a real obvious political ploy to try to hurt Kefauver, who also was from Tennessee. But we worked the delegation and we got a majority committed for Kefauver on

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the second vote. And Connally called Mr. Rayburn and reported to him that he'd polled the delegation and that a majority was for Kefauver. Under the unit rule they'd vote for Kefauver. Mr. Rayburn blew his stack and told him to call a caucus. We all walked out and went back to the cow pen. We were standing there and Connally was up on the platform. Mr. Rayburn just walked in and brushed Connally aside and said, "I think this delegation ought to vote for John F. Kennedy for vice president. All of you in favor hold up your hand. All of you opposed hold up your hand. John F. Kennedy is our nominee. This caucus is adjourned." And he got down and walked off the stage. We all sat there looking at each other, mouths open. Finally I looked at Kathleen Voigt and she looked at me, and she started laughing and I started laughing, and we all walked back to the delegation seats and sat there and voted for John F. Kennedy for vice president.

G: Do you recall what the show of hands--?

B: I wasn't even where I could see them. But he made no count at all.
(Laughter)

G: There's an indication that when John Connally was trying to get recognition to make Stevenson's nomination unanimous that Rayburn refused to recognize him. Do you recall that?

B: Yes.

G: Tell me about that, why Rayburn did that.

B: I think it was just simply because he was angry that Kefauver got the nomination.

G: Well now, this was on [the Stevenson nomination], wasn't this?

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B: Was it before?

G: I think it was Stevenson's own nomination, wasn't it?

B: I don't really know. I remember the incident happening, but as to why, I don't know.

G: Anything else on the national convention?

B: No, nothing of significance that I remember.

G: There's some indication in the files that Kathleen Voigt was not treated well in Chicago, that perhaps Johnson and Rayburn had not accommodated her as they should have.

B: Well, I think that's true of all of us that opposed him on the Frankie Randolph thing.

G: Really? Okay.

Now let's go to September.

B: Okay. Well, September was a disaster for us. I think we legally elected a majority of the delegates to that convention, but there were contested delegations and the credentials committee seated the non-liberal-labor minority delegations from the big cities. Of course, they were trying to set it up for Price, and Lyndon was I think more in charge of the convention than Price was. Price was not a very strong leader, had had no experience in party politics to amount to anything. The real power there were the congressmen and Mr. Rayburn and Lyndon's people.

The credentials committee counted the votes very carefully and seated those delegations that were loyalists that they could seat and still have a majority. They made a mistake. Woodrow Bean convinced

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them that he could keep El Paso in their camp and they seated our delegation from El Paso. We thought they'd made the fatal mistake. So we got a couple of counties, one-vote counties--I think Andrews County was one of them; I think Andrews was the county that was then going to make the motion to reconsider. We got them to vote for the credentials committee report that didn't seat Harris County and some of the others. The reason we did was so they could then make a motion to reconsider and second the motion. Once it was adopted and El Paso had been seated, then we'd make the motion to reconsider and with El Paso's vote, we'd then be able to carry a motion to reconsider and seat Houston and the other counties that were sitting out in the cow barn.

Mr. Rayburn got suspicious and went up on the stage and stopped the proceedings and had them recanvass the whole convention. Every one of the floor leaders, those guys with their little white carnations in their lapel, went back and recanvassed every county and every delegate and came back with the report that they'd screwed up.

G: They didn't have enough votes with El Paso, was that the idea?

B: Yes. El Paso wasn't going to vote with them. Woodrow Bean couldn't control the El Paso delegation. It was under the unit rule and there wasn't anything Woodrow could do about it. But they had already voted to dismiss the credentials committee. But they called the credentials committee back into session, unseated El Paso, the delegation that they'd previously seated, and seated the other group that was there, and then passed their credentials committee report.

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Well, when they did that, school was out for us. We couldn't muster the votes then. So we had our pep rally over at the cow barn and went home. But it was a very bitter experience for all those people, and it created animosities that lasted for a long time, in the party and against Lyndon Johnson. My relationship with him was healed and Jim Ward's was and many others, but for a lot of people the relationship never was healed. I actually got to be closer to him after that than I ever had been before that.

G: Do you think it's fair to say that he was able to mend his fences much better with organized labor than he was with the other liberal elements in the faction?

B: He did it sooner. I think eventually the next group that he healed his relationship with were the minorities. He did that through passing some legislation. I think after--well, during the Kennedy Administration I think he healed his relationship pretty well with most everybody else. Certainly after the Great Society programs were passed he did.

G: Some of the Johnson people would argue that he did what he did in that convention to keep hold of the party machinery, to keep it from going to the labor-liberal faction.

B: Sure.

G: What would have happened if he had not done that?

B: If he hadn't tried to keep control of it?

G: Yes. If you'd had your Harris County delegation and the El Paso delegation.

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B: We would have taken control of it.

G: And what would you have done?

B: We would have polarized the division within the party much sooner than we were able to do.

G: Did you all contemplate doing anything about the Yarborough-Price Daniel election?

B: No.

G: Really?

B: It was discussed, you know, but we had no real plans to do anything about that.

G: Yarborough had evidently decided not to make a fight of that or contest the [election]?

B: Yes. By then we were already focusing on the Senate race.

G: That's right. You really did crank his Senate race up at that [time].

B: Yes. Sure did.

G: Now, is it correct to say that there was more animosity toward Johnson as a result of that convention than there was towards Rayburn?

B: Yes.

G: Why was that?

B: Well, now very many people knew what Rayburn did. I'm one of the few people that knew about that and saw him go to the platform. I was on the floor, had slipped into the convention with a fake delegate credential. They had made up these things that were fluorescent or something you had to put under the light, but we found a printer that could make them for us.

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G: Oh, really?

B: And we got a few made and got some of our people inside on the floor.

G: Well, now that is something that was brought out in some of the files, that there were an awful lot of delegates in there who did have fake credentials, labor-liberal delegates. How many would you say there were?

B: Probably a hundred.

G: Really? Not enough to make a big difference but enough to make noise, I guess.

B: Well, we weren't really too interested in making noise. What we were really doing was putting in our key people to keep contact with the delegates we had in there. Because most of our state leadership was outside, and we wanted to maintain contact with the delegates that we had on the floor, the delegations we had on the floor.

G: Now, let me ask you to describe in detail what happened after El Paso was unseated. I guess the conservative Houston delegation was already seated, is that right?

B: Sure.

G: So they were voting against the El Paso [delegation]?

B: They had been seated on the temporary roll call.

G: Then you walked out, is that what you did?

B: No, we were already out. We were out in the cow barn.

G: So let me ask you to describe the pep rally there.

B: We made some speeches about what a dirty deal it was and launched Ralph Yarborough's campaign and pledged ourselves to continue the

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Democrats of Texas and change the party rules and all kinds of things so this couldn't happen again. But basically that was it.

G: Did Johnson make any specific efforts to win back organized labor that you're aware of?

G: Sure. I think he went to work on us immediately. Early in the next session Martin Burns, who was our district director then, had the same job that I have now, received a call from David J. McDonald, who was our international union president, telling him that he had had a conversation with Lyndon Johnson, and that Nordie Hoffman [?], our legislative representative, had had conversations with Lyndon and that he was very anxious to repair his relationship with the Steelworkers. He suggested that Jim Ward and I particularly should make efforts to meet with him and talk things over, re-establish our relationship.

G: And you did so?

B: Yes, sure did. Jim I think did it first. Jim was assistant director and he took a delegation of rank and file Steelworkers to Washington. I've forgotten what they went up there to lobby on, but they went up to meet with some congressmen. And while he was there, he met with Lyndon and they came to an understanding. Lyndon then was invited to meet with our delegation, the Steelworker delegation that was there, and had his picture made with them on the steps of the Capitol and all of that. I met with him then later at a fund-raising dinner in Galveston. It was rather cool at first. As a matter of fact, when I first went up on the stage to talk to him, when I went through the

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receiving line he turned his back on me and wouldn't shake hands with me.

G: Is that right?

B: But then did. From then on, you know, we worked closer and closer together, I guess basically starting in 1960. By then we were working together fairly closely.

G: As I mentioned before the interview, there was a memo in the files that indicated that national labor was putting a lot of pressure on you to support him. You mentioned the one instance. Were there any other instances?

B: Well, I don't know of my personal knowledge, but Lyndon was Senate majority leader and the Washington labor leaders had to work with him on legislation.

G: Did he ever attempt to get organized labor in Texas to back off on a union issue or strike or something like that that affected supporters of his who had firms, businesses?

B: Not that I remember.

G: You don't recall?

B: No.

G: He never got into the role of mediator at all between labor and business in Texas?

B: He attempted to give us some help in that Lone Star Steel strike.

G: Did he?

B: Unsuccessfully. He offered to talk to E. B. Germany, and one of the people who had been on his staff and who was very close to him in East

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Texas was an employee of Lone Star Steel. I don't know whether he ever talked to E. B. Germany or not, but he did talk to the other guy. I'm trying to remember his name and I can't, but he became the lobbyist, and I think at the time of the strike was serving as the lobbyist for Lone Star Steel Company.

G: What year was this now?

B: That was 1957, in the fall of 1957. But that's the only time I ever remember of him becoming involved in any straight labor dispute or labor issue. He may have done that primarily at Bob Oliver's urgings. He and Bob were very close. And he may have done things for Bob that I don't know about. I just simply don't know of any others.

I think he did help us one time get the FBI involved in a case where the Texas Rangers had picked up one of our staff representatives at a strike. The staff representative was in a restaurant eating. The Texas Rangers came in and handcuffed him and took him out to the car and took off, and we couldn't find him. We got a writ of habeas corpus and served it on the sheriff but he wasn't in jail. We couldn't find where he was. We were trying to locate him, because we were scared they'd killed him. Jimmie Allred got Lyndon to assist us in getting FBI involvement and finally located him. George Parr was the one that took him away from the Rangers for us.

G: Is that right?

B: Yes. They found him in his county and George Parr was sheriff at the time. They stopped the Rangers and detained them until the FBI could

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get there and we could get there and serve our writ of habeas corpus and got him released. They had kept him in a car for three days.

G: Is that right? What was the strike, do you recall?

B: The strike was at Alcoa Aluminum Company in Point Comfort.

G: And who was the labor organizer?

B: Paul Cross.

G: And you say that Allred called LBJ?

B: Well, he called a lot of people. I think he got assistance from Lyndon in getting FBI involvement.

G: Well, I thank you so much. I hope the next session we can continue with some of your insights on the 1960s and politics there.

B: Okay.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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