

INTERVIEW I

DATE: July 22, 1971

INTERVIEWEE: LINDLEY BECKWORTH

INTERVIEWER: DAVID McCOMB

PLACE: Mr. Beckworth's home near Gladewater, Texas

Tape 1 of 2

M: I've just been talking to Mr. Beckworth about the use of this information, and I've explained that the tape and the transcript will be part of the Lyndon Johnson Library; that the interview is for the purpose of supplementing the Johnson papers that had been put into the Presidential Library in Austin; that this tape and interview will be subject to Mr. Beckworth's limitations and restrictions, however he wishes to make it; and that we will type a transcript, send it to him to edit, and at the same time, give him a legal form with which he can express his restrictions as he sees fit. The tape, the transcript, the legal release form will then be placed in the Library, to be administered by the people at the National Archives incidentally, and this will be used as Mr. Beckworth wishes.

B: Thank you. That's very fine.

M: This is an interview with Mr. Lindley Beckworth. I am at his home outside of Gladewater, Texas. The date is July 22, 1971. It is about two-thirty in the afternoon, and my name is David McComb. Is there anything else you want put in as part of this preliminary--?

B: Let the record show that this is Route 2, Gladewater, Texas, Upshur

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County. Gladewater is in Gregg County, but I live in Upshur County.

M: You have a county line then right up here someplace.

B: Exactly--just south of where we are now.

M: So your address, then, is Route 2, Gladewater.

B: Yes, I've been getting my mail here at Route 2, Gladewater about thirty-one years and have been in this same house about thirty-one years, and incidentally, have had the office you see in my yard about thirty-one years. This was my congressional office, the only office I ever had here in the congressional district, through the years that I served in Congress. I did establish for a very, very short time a kind of sub-office in Tyler for a period of a month or so one fall. Then I had a very small office in the bank building down in Gladewater for a while, but this is really the congressional office that I operated from all the time I was in Congress except when I was elected to Congress, I lived in the West Mountain community which is about two and a half miles from here north toward Gilmer, our county seat.

I ran for Congress out of a teacherage at the West Mountain school. My father was the principal of the four-teacher school there. I had a homemade sign on the Gladewater-Gilmer highway that had on it the words, "Home and Headquarters of Lindley Beckworth, Candidate for Congress--1/4 Mile." That sign was made by a neighbor out of secondhand lumber, and on it was an oil cloth on which the words that I have just given you were painted. For a while, I operated out of one room in the little teacherage up there. That was my office for a while until I bought this place. The office building you see was a three-car garage, and I cut the

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garage half in two and made the office you see there.

M: Were you raised in Upshur County?

B: I was born in Kaufman County, and lived there a very short time. We lived in Henderson County a very short time, where my mother, who was Josie Slaughter, a Van Zandt County lady, taught school. When I was about two years of age, my father moved off to Huntsville to attend college there for two years. He was a half-and-half tenant the year I was born and made, as I understand it, about eight bales of cotton, sold the cotton in the field, and moved to Huntsville and graduated from the normal college there after some two years.

M: For the sake of the record, when you say a "half-and-half tenant," you mean--

B: That means the owner of the land furnished the mules, two of them, the plows, the seed, and the tenant did all of the work and got half of what was raised.

Then when my father finished school down there, two years of college, he obtained the Union Ridge school here in Upshur County and came here about 1916. With the exception of two years, when we lived in Camp County, the county seat of which is Pittsburg, Texas, I've been in this county all of my life. I was born in 1913, and I'm fifty-eight years of age now.

M: Then you spent most of your lifetime right here in this area.

BL In this general area of Upshur County, I have spent the far greater portion of my lifetime. As a matter of fact, about fifty-five out of my fifty-eight years.

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M: What got you interested in politics?

B: My father was a man that was quite interested in politics. He was an ambitious man, and I've often paid to him this tribute: that he did all he could with what he had to do with. He was a very poor man, financially, and he had a tough time getting started. He studied the seventh grade at Mabank, Texas when he was a man twenty years of age. My mother, a teacher in Henderson and Van Zandt Counties, helped him with his studies a lot after they married. She was a very alert and, if I do say it, a very talented person, and a very ambitious person herself and wanted to see my father do well. His brothers and sisters were interested in him likewise. They were readers. I've heard him say when they lived in Georgia that they were poor people, but they took the Atlanta Constitution, and his mother read to them. They kept up with things right well for poor people.

The reason I was interested, I'm sure, would begin like this: Daddy was quite an advocate of those men in whom he believed. One of his first real heroes so far as Texas is concerned was Joseph W. Bailey, who, by the way, President Johnson was very interested in and President Johnson's father was very interested in, if I have heard it related correctly. I remember in 1920 when Joseph W. Bailey ran for governor after having left the United States Senate about 1912 or 1913--Morris Sheppard took his place, Senator Sheppard--that my father carried me to a speaking in Big Sandy where Daddy was teaching and where a man was speaking in behalf of Senator Bailey. To show you how interested my father was in politics, at one point he caught a train at Bettie, Texas to go to Winnsboro, Texas. It was difficult to

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get there. The roads were poor, and transportation was not plentiful, but I think he spent probably two days going to Winnsboro from Bettie, Texas to hear Senator Bailey speak. He was truly ardent in his beliefs in a given man or a given cause, and some of that rubbed off on me.

M: He helped you in your first campaign, then, didn't he?

B: There was never a man that owed more to a father and to a twin sister than I owe to my father and my twin sister. We were the campaign, with the help of numerous friends that were not paid helpers plus two loud speakers--one bought on the installment plan and one borrowed.

M: I've read that that was characterized as a poor man's campaign.

B: Oh, it was a poor man's campaign. I borrowed a hundred dollars from each of the banks in Gilmer to begin the campaign, but we are getting a little ahead of the way I became interested, and I will go back to that.

In 1924, my father had been here in this county about eight years and, incidentally, he was the only Beckworth in the county. As a matter of fact, I'm the only Beckworth in the county now; I have a wife and a thirteen years of age boy. Daddy decided that he wanted to run for county school superintendent in 1924. My mother was not well; she was ill many, many years. But in spite of that, he undertook to make the race for county school superintendent in this county in 1924. He bought, I recall so well, a 1924 model new Ford, Model T, that did not have a battery; we always cranked it. He wasn't privileged to campaign very much because my mother was ill and because he was making a crop, as well as teaching school. I went with him, I'd say, eight or ten days in that campaign. I would go with him to meet those who might be in a field and I'd be with him on a

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Saturday in town as he would campaign. It's interesting that, in that race, out of six people he ran fifth and received about four hundred and fifty votes. The average fellow would have been totally discouraged, but he was not a quitter. So four years from that time, he ran again. He had, if I do say it, made such a good impression, even though he had not run so well in votes, that in the next race against a very fine man who is my dear friend, Mr. D. T. Lloyd, he was able to run very, very successfully and was elected county school superintendent in 1928.

With that kind of background, naturally I became quite interested in politics and hearing speeches. I enjoyed hearing good speeches. My father was a good speaker, if I do say it. His speaking has meant a lot to me in the races that I ran. He held the office of county superintendent for six years, and a rather interesting thing took place. In 1934 he ran again. A very fine young man ran against Daddy. Even though he had been a very reputable official--I'm talking about my father--because his opponent was crippled and because his opponent was able, and because it was said in the Depression that I had a job teaching school making eighty-five dollars a month, my twin sister had a teaching job making about ninety per month, that with his salary, the Beckworths, in the heart of the Depression, were making about four hundred dollars a month and that was too much money for one family to be making in the Depression. When my father ran for this additional termage after having been in office six years, he only carried two voting boxes here in this county and was badly beaten in 1934 for county school superintendent.

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But to go back to 1928, the year he was elected county school superintendent, I was living with him and my two sisters--one of my sisters, Nellie Mae, a talented student, had passed on--about five miles west of here. We were working rented land on the Cone place. As a matter of fact, I made about four bales of cotton the year he was running for county school superintendent in 1928. My sisters and I worked, in the main, the crop and grew the four bales of cotton and some other commodities also.

But to show you that he wasn't afraid of himself, we took enough time from that campaign and our farming activities to go to Houston in a car that Daddy rented from a Mr. Lee Jones to attend the National Democratic Convention in Houston in 1928. Men like John J. Rascob and Governor Pat Neff were there, and though we couldn't get very good tickets, I can remember that convention real well. I can remember the fact that the building in which the convention was held was very obviously a rather temporary thing. You know, Jesse Jones financed that convention, in the main. So I saw my first national convention in 1928, and it, too, was inspiring and had an effect on me. Then, of course, to make the story continuous, my father, I told you, was defeated in 1934 for county school superintendent.

I went to college some. I graduated from Gilmer High School in 1931. We celebrated our fortieth graduation date this spring in Gilmer in May. So after having gone to SMU one year, I came back here and taught a country school, Shady Grove, for eighty-five dollars a month. To get my teaching certificate, I attended East Texas State Teachers College the

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summer of 1932 and took some correspondence work from Abilene Christian College. [I] boarded with a Mr. Herbert McWhorter for fifteen dollars per month. Shady Grove's twelve or fifteen miles west of here, maybe more. My school was out March 29, 1933. I taught the school the year of 1932 and 1933, six months and three weeks, I taught the six and seventh grades. I was not the principal. And on Sunday morning I left for college. My father at the time was living in Gilmer because he was working as a county school superintendent. I started hitchhiking on that Sunday morning and entered Sam Houston State Teachers College on Monday morning.

I went there until July, 1933 and transferred to the University of Texas. I think you might be interested to know that I never was privileged to get a degree. I have no degree. I did get about four and a half years of college credit--a year of which was in law. Then it is reasonably significant that I went to school through June of 1934 at the University of Texas and got a school that was to begin in September, 1934 at Glenwood which is about seven miles from here. I was what they called the second man, I was not the superintendent of the school. I taught the school years of 1934-1935. I went to the University of Texas law school the summer of 1935 and then taught the school year of 1935 and 1936 at Glenwood, where I not only taught, but drove a school bus and coached basketball.

This will interest you. I had more or less determined to try to enter politics and be an attorney. When I got back from having been to the University of Texas law school in the summer of 1935, I put a little

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ad in the Gilmer Mirror, the county seat paper here, saying that I would be a candidate for state representative beginning in January, 1936. My predecessor, a young man named Otis Dunagan, had not had too much trouble being elected state representative on the basis that he was going to try to be a lawyer, and the state legislator immediately preceding him had run more or less indicating that he'd be a lawyer. I felt that if I got my name as a candidate in rapidly that I might get by without opposition. But the contrary took place. I had before it was over five opponents, including a good man who'd been county judge, a man who'd been a state representative, a man who'd been a county commissioner, a businessman, and another young man my age. So it became a very rallied spirited race. We spoke everywhere, night after night, candidate speakings and at picnics. To show you that the fact that a man's father had been defeated really has no effect, and to show you that there really was nothing against my father--I told you that he lost every box in 1934 in Upshur County except two--when the vote came in in the two counties, Upshur County and Camp County, Pittsburg, Texas, in which I was running, I defeated my five opponents in the first primary by over 700 votes. Everybody knew I was O. J. Beckworth's son because there were only two Beckworths here, that is, two male Beckworths. I carried both Upshur and Camp Counties. Particularly pleased was I to carry Camp County, though my father lived and taught in the county only two years. I carried seven out of the eleven voting boxes in Camp County with two opponents from Camp County and some 22 boxes out of 24 in Upshur County. I had no run-off.

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That brings up the manner by which I met President Johnson the first time. He may not remember it. I have talked to him about it. Immediately after I was elected to the House of Representatives, I knew I wanted to be a full-time House member when I took the oath. I began to look around to find where I could go to school that fall and get through before Christmas. I found that I could go three months at Baylor University law school and get through with it before the session of the legislature met. I was in debt badly, and my car was no good. I didn't have a car when I was in law school at Baylor University. My car had gone bad and I sold it. I never owned a car until I got ready to run for state representative. I bought the car expressly for the purpose of making the race for state representative, a \$285 Chevrolet car it was, a coupe. I got in touch with President Neff, then president of Baylor University, and told him that I had no money but that I wanted to go to law school. He said, "Well, you just come on down here, move into Brooks Hall, and I'll make arrangements for your tuition to be taken care of temporarily." In other words, I didn't have any money. So I went down there and entered Baylor University. By the way, Honorable Abner McCall was in school down there, the present president of Baylor University, when I was there. I went to school there at Baylor University that fall.

In about October of 1936, President Neff planned to and did confer on Vice President John Nance Garner a Doctor of Laws degree. As a student there, I naturally was interested in that ceremony. President Neff was unusually good to me. He meant a lot to me in that I remember, for

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example, when Senator Robert M. LaFollette came there to lecture he said, "Lindley, I want you to meet him." That was Robert M. LaFollette, Jr., whom I later served in the Congress with. He did the same with reference to permitting me to get close, as it were, to Vice President Garner. I don't recall that I shook hands with Vice President Garner, but I know I was close to him during the ceremonies. I had a good seat. If I'm not mistaken, I did shake hands with his son, Tully, and I saw real well Tully's daughter, who would have been the granddaughter of Vice President Garner. I do remember Mrs. Garner, whom I later saw in Washington as the secretary to Vice President Garner. And of course I saw Vice President Garner in Washington some and once I visited the Vice President in Uvalde. As that ceremony was breaking up, I was with a classmate of mine named Tom King. He presently is an attorney in San Antonio, and he was from Stockdale in Wilson County, the county seat of which is Floresville. Tom looked over, we'll say forty feet or fifty. He said, "That's Lyndon Johnson over there." I don't know exactly why and how he recognized Lyndon Johnson, but he said, "Let's meet him."

My recollection of the President as of that moment was that he looked somewhat lonely. He wasn't getting too much attention as I viewed him at that moment, even though he was as I recall the head of the National Youth Administration at the time. He was slender and rather tense-looking and appeared to be very, very interested in what was taking place. I don't recall that he spent very much time with us. I would believe that he was thinking in terms of these other people, not that he was ignoring us or not that he was unkind to or inconsiderate of us. But that's my recollection.

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You mentioned while ago something we might have worked on together in the Congress, and the NYA brings up this: When I was in the University of Texas in the spring of 1934, I was given--I think they called it in those days the civil works corps--a job that paid students fifteen dollars a month for working. I know I worked in the Extension Loan Library and got about fifteen dollars a month. My recollection is that that definitely was the forerunner of NYA, the National Youth Administration. President Johnson got the idea that I had been one of the boys in the program of which he had been state director--the NYA program. Incidentally, the first speech I ever made in Congress was one for more NYA funds for students. President Johnson seemed to like the fact that I had had a student aid job and that I was interested in carrying forward the program. I might say when I was in school I never did have an easy job. I hopped a lot of tables, used to clean off the lawn there in Austin at the little Episcopal church on University Avenue near the old law school campus. I've often said I never did have an easy job while working in college. My jobs were hard jobs. Now the job that I had working in the Extension Loan Library, for which I was getting government money, was a very rewarding job in that I was studying the pros and cons of the then-debate topic. I have forgotten now what that topic was, but I was interested in debate because when I finished high school, I was on the debating team of Gilmer High School, and we won our Upshur County debate. I think we only had two teams in Upshur County. We then won--a neighbor of mine from up here at West Mountain, the community from which I ran for Congress the first time, named Conrad Morgan--the district meet at Texarkana which was composed of about fourteen northeast Texas counties.

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Then we went to the state meet, and we lost down there. My debate experience was one main reason for my getting the job to work up the pros and cons on the current debate topic in the spring of 1934. President Johnson in 1931 was a debate coach in Houston and had a team in some state meet and we discussed this several times. In other words, I was at the state meet as a debator and President Johnson was there as a debate coach.

I worked hard in the state legislature. I was very fortunate to be on the appropriations committee. The present Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Bob Calvert, Justice Calvert, came through Gilmer in about the month of August running for speaker and knew that I had won in the first primary. So he made contact with me, and we went over to a restaurant and had some coffee. He said, "I want to be your speaker." I said, "Well, I want to be on the appropriations committee, because we have a colored orphans' home here that needs some brick buildings to take the place of what I fear are fire hazards or frame buildings. He said, "I just might could help you in that connection." I don't think that he gave me an outright committal, but as a result of my having been his friend, I got on the appropriations committee. At the time I was elected or nominated, I was about twenty-three years of age. I was on the education committee, and I was on the eleemosynary and reformatory institutions committee and on the penitentiary committee.

The reason I was so interested in being on the eleemosynary and reformatory institutions committee was that my mother was at that time ill in the State Hospital at Terrell, Texas and died there in 1938, the

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year I was elected to Congress. As a matter of fact, the year I was elected to Congress, I had a little sister who died in February--she was eighteen--and my mother died in June. We were living in a rented house at West Mountain when my sister died. Mrs. Isa Phillips is still living in the same house in which we were living when we had those misfortunes and we rented from her. I want to correct myself: We were living in the West Mountain teacherage when my mother died. I might say this, if I'm not going into too much detail: my first efforts in that congressional race were made by lamplight. We had no electricity in the Phillips house. I wrote many, many postcards by lamplight with a fountain pen, particularly to county officials, telling them that I was going to run for Congress. We did get rural electricity at the West Mountain teacherage shortly before the first primary.

I decided very soon after I got into the state legislature that I would run for Congress, because the member of Congress, Honorable Morgan G. Sanders, who had been in Congress for eighteen years, had had a rather close race the preceding term, and a race not quite so close the second preceding term. I determined in my own mind that it was a pretty good time to run.

I had this rather interesting experience. When the state legislature was out in 1937--I believe it was out on Friday or Saturday--I began to take the bar the next Monday morning and passed thirteen out of the sixteen subjects, even though I had had only six law subjects in college. I had studied the others while down in Austin and while teaching school--mainly the old LaSalle Extension School law books.

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In fact, I still have out here in my office the old LaSalle books that I had read.

I was ready to announce as 1938 approached. The one thing that I was waiting for was to see whether or not I had passed the last three State Bar examinations which I took in October 1937. I had my campaign card worked out except for one thing: I was going to put on it: "He is an attorney," if I passed the bar. I was in Gilmer about December 17. I had talked to a gentleman named H. P. Steinle, a State Bar official in Austin, who I think is still living in Austin. My boy knew him when my boy was about to take the bar. I told Mr. Steinle, "Mr. Steinle, just as soon as you know whether or not I passed the bar, send me a wire." I'm sure it was December 17, I was in Gilmer and I think the weather was rather chilly. Somebody said, "There's a wire for you over at the hotel." So I went over there and, sure enough, I had been notified I had passed the bar. I added that sentence, and immediately went to Longview. I had already borrowed my one hundred dollars from each of the two banks in Gilmer and order one hundred thousand cards for a dollar a thousand. I think I can find you one of those cards here. (Interruption) Am I too wordy?

M: No, that's fine.

B: I ordered one hundred thousand cards for a dollar per one thousand and mailed my announcement to all East Texas papers and to some state papers. I recall the only paper that carried my announcement in full was the Glade-water paper. Most of the papers scarcely at all mentioned [it]. I didn't announce like people usually do, pay papers money. I didn't pay anybody

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any money. The Dallas News had a fairly good little article written by John King, whom I later knew and thought a lot of in Washington.

About a year ago, I spoke to the real estate people of Longview, the house builders. I wanted them to know that I had always been interested in housing. So I dug around and finally found one of my first cards. My slogan--and nobody put this in my mind, it really came from the fact that I'd lived in very poor houses most of my life. The teacher always got the poorest house because he got the last house that was for rent. I mentioned to these home builders that my slogan was, "Homes for All Families." That was long before there were huge housing programs in our country. I had right under there, "Beckworth favors making it possible for every family to own a home by long-term loans at low interest rates." That was really the reason why I dug up the card, because I wanted those home builders to know that I had written that by lamplight. I've never had anybody to help me write anything in all of the efforts I've made. I've had no writer of any kind, never have. I never have help on writing my speeches.

Then I spoke to the Northeast Texas Bar Association about ten days ago, and I had lost that card, so I went out to the back of my office where my father's trunk is. I felt I'd find another one of these cards in his trunk. What I wanted to emphasize to the Northeast Texas Bar Association was that in my life I have changed very little on issues and principles. I can change my position, however. I believe in change when a person feels that he should change; I think that's only sensible, and I would never be bound by a position that I had taken in the past if

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I felt I was wrong. But I read this to the bar association. I said, "Beckworth favors the Democratic administration, adequate assistance to the aged, blind, dependent children, and to those people totally and permanently disabled"--and that was before we had help for the totally and permanently disabled--"economy in government, adequate returns to farmers by giving them production costs plus a reasonable profit"--and that's not particularly original, that part--"fair hours, proper pay, safe and clean working conditions for labor, adequate aid to and care for veterans. He opposes the federal government controlling and collecting production tax on our natural resources." I mentioned to this group that that was about what I said and wrote in 1937, and I can stay with it now. I'm proud of the consistency that has characterized my efforts and my beliefs.

But, then, to go back to the legislature in which I served. You mention that President Johnson was elected not so long before the time I was elected. In about the month of April, 1937, he was running for Congress. I recall the race real well, because I had in mind running for Congress then. I began to make plans and to study what I was going to advocate. Of course, I talked to my father about some of these things, too. I wouldn't want to say that I didn't consult with him. I will say that I wrote out these things myself and then I would read them to him. Sometimes he would have a modifying word. But in the main, he rather approved what I wrote. Incidentally, I wrote my announcement for state representative along while in bed with the mumps at Glenwood where I was teaching school.

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President Johnson, as an NYA man, was running. He, I think, resigned. I don't recall that exactly. I remember some of the names in this race, like Merton Harris, Polk Shelton, I think there was a gentleman named Brooks in the race. Houghton Brownlee, a state senator, was in the race. I remember President Johnson's headquarters were in the Stephen F. Austin Hotel, so I decided to go down there and look at those headquarters. I can recall he had a well-manned headquarters. I don't know how many typewriters were being used; my recollection would be that he had anywhere from eight to fifteen typewriters being used. I recall his having come in there while I was there that evening. Of course, I took great interest in his race. I don't know that I had talked to him that evening, but I did get the impression that it was very much of a going race. In my mind, I can see now his picture--I think I'm correct--that was taken when he was in the hospital the night or day before the election. He took appendicitis and had to be carried to the hospital and was operated on only hours before the election day. I think I can see him more or less giving a victory smile or [saying] that, "I'm going to be all right. Things are going good." So, of course, that race was inspiring.

The next time I saw the President was in Washington. I'd never been to Washington, as a matter of fact, before being elected to Congress. In those days, we were all so poor we never did even have a hope of going that far. It was in the Depression, you know. Having been nominated in the month of August--it was a very spirited race, I won't try to tell you about it now. But anyhow, my race was a tight race and I worked awfully hard and won, I think, by about 2900 votes out of, oh, 58,000. I had

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some very outstanding opponents--good men. In October, wishing to learn something about Washington, a state representative by the name of Roy Tennant--a very small gentleman, whom I'd known in Austin; he was from Gregg County, Longview--and I went to Washington. One of the first offices we visited was the office of President Johnson, then Congressman Johnson. I remember it was about five-thirty one afternoon that we went to his office; he carried us down to his hotel. If I'm not mistaken, he was staying in the Willard Hotel. We had a good chat. He was very friendly with me and offered to help me in any way he could. He said I could advise with him. [I] felt very kind toward him from the very first.

I left Texas about December 10 to go to Washington to try to learn as much as I could before the session began in January, 1939. Of course, after I got there to Washington as a member of Congress, he, like all the others, treated me very nicely. We would chat and, as I told you, the NYA or help to students was a common meeting ground for our conversations.

Of course, it wasn't too long until war came on, and he and I were known as members that were strong for defense. As a matter of fact, he was on the Naval Affairs Committee when I became a member of Congress. My recollection is that in May, 1939 we had a vote to fortify Guam, and he voted for fortify it and I voted to fortify it, too. The Guam vote in those days constituted a test of whether or not a person really believed that danger was imminent for our country. You probably recall that it lost; we didn't fortify Guam then. Then after Hitler began to march in August, 1939, we were called back to Washington around the first of September, 1939, and President Roosevelt urged us to fortify Guam.

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A good many members who voted not to fortify Guam in 1939 were defeated later on. So we were pretty much together on all measures to prepare and protect and to go forward to win the war which was clearly on its way.

M: There is some thought that Johnson got support from Franklin Roosevelt, that he was sort of a protege of Roosevelt. Is there in any truth in that?

B: I don't think there's any question but what President Johnson was very well thought of by President Roosevelt, and highly appreciated by President Roosevelt. In fact, I just know that to be the case and I think very correctly so, because he ran as a 100 per cent New Dealer in the Austin area about the time President Roosevelt was having some controversy with Senator Tom Connally about trying to pack the Supreme Court by President Roosevelt. As a matter of fact, I think I'm correct, Senator Connally spoke before the Texas Legislature in 1937 and was quite critical of President Roosevelt's attempt to pack the Supreme Court. Naturally, running as a 100 per cent New Dealer, as President Johnson did, and having won, as he did, caused the President to feel that he was being vindicated in a state where a prominent senator was taking him to task on an issue.

Now, I did not run as a New Dealer. I have never run under any label. I've been labeled a lot of things, but I have never run under any label that I gave myself.

I recall President Johnson was a hard worker. He was a man that evidenced great zeal in getting the job done. He was pleasant, and he was not a fussy man with the members, but he was not a man to be pushed around.

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One of the pieces of legislation that I took a great deal of interest in was to obtain terminal leave for enlisted men. I ran into the question in this manner: I happened to have a friend who got out of the service. He had been a lieutenant colonel. He was talking about the fact that he was going to get about four months' pay after he got out. I said, "What's that?" He said, "It's terminal leave." The thought struck me, "Well, what about these enlisted men? Do they get terminal leave?" This is an illustration of the fact that we don't sit around and make up proposals on which to legislate, we discover them. Do you follow me?

M: Right.

B: I was the one who discovered that. I don't say I was the first. I'm always quite, shall I use the word suspicious of these people who think of things first, do you follow me? To me, that's a bragging attitude, but I know I did discover that, and went before the Military Affairs Committee to try to get a bill passed providing terminal leave for enlisted men. Andrew J. May, who later went to prison--and I was sorry--because of some war contract difficulty, was chairman of the committee, and he wasn't very friendly toward our terminal leave for enlisted men legislation. A gentleman from Florida named Dwight Rogers was likewise very interested. As a matter of fact, it may have been his bill that passed. I seem to think it was. Anyhow, he and I were very interested in getting terminal leave for enlisted men enacted into law. We couldn't get any action from the Military Affairs Committee in the House. So, finally, we got a petition that had to be signed by 218 of the 435 members

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in order to petition it out, to take it away from the Military Affairs Committee. I was one of the first to sign the petition. I think it was Mr. Rogers' petition, I think he originated that petition. His son, Paul Rogers, is in Congress now.

I recall, I think the record will show, that only two Texans signed the petition: one was Congressman Johnson and the other was Lindley Beckworth. So we got it out. I never have forgotten that when it became apparent that this petition was coming out, we had many reluctant members--it was going to cost a lot of money--who had waited too long to sign. There was a line of them back to the entrance doors of the House Chamber trying to get to sign that petition, but it was too late, because it turned out to be a very popular piece of legislation, as well as a very just piece of legislation.

To go back now some, as to my experience with President Johnson, I recall very well the death of Senator Sheppard. I was with Congressman Henry Jackson, the present senator, at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and my office got in touch with me, telling me that Senator Morris Sheppard had died and that the Texas delegation was expected to attend the funeral in Texarkana, Texas. That was in about May, 1941. So, Congressman Henry Jackson and his secretary, a man named John something, and I rushed back to Washington so that I could attend the funeral. One of the things that I've always remembered about that trip: While we were at Fort Bragg, we were entertained by one of now-Senator Jackson's close friends. We went to the club that night, and he had such a fine smile--big fine, tall-looking boy. It was not too long after that that he was killed. He

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didn't live long after we saw him.

We got back [and I] came down to the funeral on the train. One of the men I talked to was a senator named D. Worth Clark of Idaho, and another one I talked to a lot on that trip was Senator Bunker, a fine Mormon from Utah. I met lots of fine people on that trip that I had not known really well, because I was relatively new there. That was in the third year of my experience in Congress.

Soon thereafter, after Senator Sheppard was buried, Congressman Johnson announced for the United States Senate. It was at that time that Governor O'Daniel appointed Sam Houston's son to serve in the United States Senate. He was about eighty-six, I think, and he came there and was very pale and did not live but about six weeks, but I did get to see him. He came to the Texas delegation meeting. As I recall, he could not stand up and maybe was able to say very little. He didn't make a talk. I've always taken great interest and been jovial when they say, "Well, you've been around a long time." I say, "Yes, that's true. I served in the Congress with Sam Houston's boy." This is the truth! That's interesting, you know, to be able to say that.

I'll tell you one thing I remember about his race--naturally I couldn't forget this. He wasn't known very well in this area--East Texas--even though Lady Bird was from Marshall and Karnack. When he came into this area, which was very soon after he announced, my father was teaching at the West Mountain school. He [Johnson] actually came all the way out from Gladewater to shake hands with my father at the West Mountain school, which, in a sense, I think, illustrates the thoroughness with which he

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he always has conducted his campaigns. In other words, he does all that can be done. No man, I think, has ever given more freely of his time and effort, mental and physical, than President Johnson in his undertakings.

M: Did that impress your father, incidentally?

B: Oh, yes. We have been real friends to Johnson, no question about that. I wouldn't try to hide that fact under any circumstance. As a matter of fact, my grandfather Slaughter, a man who died when he was ninety-three at Edgewood, Texas in Van Zandt County smiled while on his death bed very shortly before he died and said to me on one of my last visits to him, "I've already voted absentee for Johnson." I might say that my wife's father, an oil man in Tyler named Barney Carter, has been for him and is for him. We've been friends, true friends to President Johnson. We have admired him. Of course, we all have liked Roosevelt, too. My father was a strong Woodrow Wilson man and he was a Roosevelt man, because we've thought that men like these have been trying to go forward on the right courses.

I remember this, if I'm not badly mistaken, that soon after President Johnson was defeated, I went out to his home at his request. He and Lady Bird brought me back to the Capitol that night in a car that had the top down on it. He was jovial; he didn't seem like his defeat had set him back. Of course, defeat's never welcome, but he was taking it like a real man and was smiling.

I married Eloise Carter in June 1942. I met her in Washington. She was a student at National Park College in Forest Glen, Maryland. We saw the Johnsons quite a bit after we married and rode with them and some

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of their friends on the train from Texas to Washington a time or two which gave us a chance to know them better.

M: But he wasn't ready to give up.

B: Oh, no! He was happy. He lost the special election in 1941, and the question that was confronting him was whether to run against O'Daniel, who had won that race in 1942. He was confronted with whether to take on O'Daniel the next time he could run against O'Daniel. I got the idea that he and Alvin Wirtz, who had been an under secretary of interior under Ickes and Wirtz had been a state senator down there at Austin, more or less had discussed the proposed new race. And they came to the conclusion that that wasn't the proper time, that they had to wait some time before Johnson should try again.

Another thing I remember about him was the great effort he made to help elect President Truman. I went to the meeting at Bonham, Texas, where Truman spoke, and I can recall how rapidly Senator Johnson was moving around working for Truman. Was he elected to the Senate?

M: He ran in 1948, too, and was elected.

B: He was certainly taking a lot of interest up there at Bonham. Of course, he was taking a lot of interest all over the state for President Truman. My wife and I went to Bonham, and my wife was privileged to sit by Truman. I first met Truman, and he always recalled me, traveling from St. Louis to Washington on a railroad train when he had not even been at that time the chairman of the investigating committee that made him famous--the Truman Committee. He never failed to know me after that. I had on a pair of new boots, incidentally, when I first met him.

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After President Johnson became president, Truman was at the White House one day when we were having a meeting of Democratic members, actually a breakfast for President Truman. Of course, I had not seen Truman in a long time, because I had been out of Congress four years. You know I ran for the United States Senate in 1952 and was defeated. I said to him, "Mr. President, you, I'm sure, don't remember me." I repeat I had a nice pair of boots on when I first met him on the train. I've told this many times. He said, "Yes, I remember you. You're that fellow that had those boots on on that train." He remembered me from that.

M: Does your thought about Jimmie Allred fit in here somewhere?

B: I think I am correct when I say this. The President would know: that immediately preceding his announcement for the Congress, he had been in Governor Jimmie Allred's office, and Jimmie Allred gave him a hat that he used in his first congressional campaign and Governor Allred told him he could win. Immediately, probably after he got that hat, I met him coming out of the Governor's Office. I got the idea that Governor Allred believed in him very strongly, believed he could win, and the record shows that Governor Allred, from the time I began to talk about running for Congress, told people that he believed I could win, including Ralph Yarborough. So I always consider this a tribute to me.

My wife and I were not at all the most intimate couple to President Johnson, but he was always nice, he and his wife, to us. We know we were very good friends to the Johnsons' and considered them good friends to us.

This might be of interest. When I was defeated for the United States Senate in 1952, I called President Johnson and told him that I'd

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like to be on the United States Custom Court. One reason I was interested in being on the court was because I had served with Congressman Jed Johnson and Jed had got on the court and seemed to like it. He was from Oklahoma. Later I served with his son in the Congress. His son was a little younger than I. I was about twenty-five and a half years old when I took the oath to be a member of the House, and his boy was a little younger than I. I've been told in the history of Congress there have been only about three members of Congress younger than Jed Jr. and I when we took the oath to be members of Congress. It's rather interesting: I helped his son when I was on the United States Customs Court pack some of the remainder of Judge Johnson's office supplies and helped him carry them down to his son's car. That was in New York after Judge Jed Johnson Sr. had died. But anyhow, I called President Johnson and told him I'd like to be on it and he, in effect, told me he just wasn't in a position to do anything for me at that time. I didn't get angry. President Eisenhower had just taken office.

M: This is in--what? 1953?

B: Yes, this was in 1953. I was defeated in 1952 by Price Daniel. So Johnson told me he couldn't help me. Some people have wondered how I became a member of the United States Customs Court. When I did get it, this actually occurred. I was in that room there by the porch on Labor Day evening of 1966, and I had a call.

M: Excuse me. I might mention that Mr. Beckworth just pointed to a room in his house.

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B: I received the call. It was after dark. I think the man who actually got me on the line first was Representative Jack Brooks. Apparently he was in Austin and he said the President wanted to talk to me. So I got on the phone. He was cordial and said, "Is there anything I can do for you?" I said, "Well, I haven't thought anything about it." He said, "Well, you do some thinking." So finally I either called him or wrote him and told him I'd like to be on the U.S. Customs Court. He said that he would see what he could do to help me get on the court. Also the President said he would try to help me get any position I might ask him for--a mighty kind offer it was.

The President was so kind to me then and I have never forgotten that, but of course, that's not the reason I like President Johnson, particularly. I just think he's a man that has done his best all along to try to help our country with the light that he has. In fact, I've said this about presidents, and by the way, I served with Roosevelt, with Truman, with Eisenhower, with Kennedy, and with Johnson--five: why wouldn't a president want to do a good job for his country? If you were president, why wouldn't you want to do a good job for America? You would. I would. And I think that motivates and actuates their efforts. I feel he meets that standard very definitely.

M: You went back to Congress, then.

B: I went back to Congress in January 1957. I was defeated for the U.S. Senate in 1952. The man who took my place was Brady Gentry, and Brady Gentry was one of the men I defeated in 1938. He'd been a judge over at Tyler and had been chairman of the highway commission--a very fine man.

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In fact, I have no ill toward anybody against whom I've run or who's been in races with me. So Mr. Gentry beat me in that race, 1100 votes out of 63,000. I carried six counties. He carried two. I carried many more voting boxes than he carried, and I still lost by 1100 votes. Then in 1956 he didn't run, and I had no trouble winning. And, of course, I won until my district was abolished.

M: Yes, there was some reshuffling of districts.

B: That's a light word. I think the press always writes, "He lost as a result of redistricting." I lost as a result of my district being totally abolished. We had more people than the First District, Mr. [Wright] Patman's district, so they gave five of my nine counties to Mr. Patman. He didn't lose a county, kept his district intact and the legislature gave my other four counties to Mr. [Ray] Roberts; he kept his district. So two people kept their districts totally intact while mine was abolished. I've made this statement and I think it's well to know: What would have happened if I'd have kept all my counties? The best evidence of what would have happened is this, that when I ran for the state senate in eight of my nine counties, I had no Democratic opponent. As everybody knows, Gregg and Smith Counties are strong Republican counties and they are large counties, but I carried all of the eight counties and nearly all of the voting boxes in the eight counties after being away a good while. In other words, I carried my whole area. So again I'd say, what would have happened if I'd have kept all of my counties? But I'm not bitter about it, because I've had an excellent life, am still having a good life. It's just one of those

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things. But I have been this type of person: I've never sought a running start on anybody, and I don't want more than a fair deal. I have never asked for a stacked deck. Some people do.

M: After you left the Congress, then, after the redistricting and so forth, you finally did go to the New York Customs Court. How did that come about?

B: Right. I told you President Johnson called me on Labor Day and asked me if he could do anything for me and I told him I would think about it. In a little while, a few days or a week, I wrote or called him and told him I'd like to be on the U.S. Customs Court. So he immediately recommended me. All during the fall of 1966, as in all instances of a federal judgeship appointment, they were checking on me through, you know, the FBI and otherwise. I went to Washington about February, 1967, to be interviewed by the Judiciary Committee of the Senate and in about six weeks the U.S. Senate confirmed me. By the way, I took the oath down here at a little store building on the right as you go toward Gladewater. You'll see a little store on the right. Actually it's the office of a justice of the peace now. He administered my oath to the court. We had just a few neighbors present and our closest relatives.

I arrived at the New York Court about April the first, 1967. I was there seventeen months, and I resigned it. Very soon after I resigned it, it began to pay, as I knew it would, \$42,500 for life. A lot of people thought it rather strange I had resigned. They said, "Well, you didn't like New York." I said, "I surely did like New York." The members of the court are fine people. By the way, the first judge

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of that court, Judge Paul Rao, is a close friend of the President. He knows him well. The President knows some of the other members of the court. I told my friends here that I like there very much, had a good time, but I like here better.

M: That's why you came back?

B: Right. I like here better. Then I have five children. Apparently all of them will live here. My wife's parents are living in Tyler. And it's where I've been all these years, you know.

M: To go back a little bit. I've often read that Sam Rayburn in the House when he was speaker and Lyndon Johnson as majority leader in the Senate worked very closely together.

B: No doubt about it! There's no doubt that he and Speaker Rayburn were very close. I think they ate together a lot, went to places together a lot. I think that one probable reason for that--and this is all speculation--is that Congressman and Mrs. Johnson were an attractive couple; Speaker Rayburn was an older man. They had time for him. Not that others didn't, but they had plenty of time for him. I think part of that relationship--this is just a personal opinion--was developed by virtue of the fact that they did take time to be with him and to see that his days were pleasant days. I don't regard it as anything other than genuine. I know that you couldn't say that President Johnson has not been an ambitious man. He's been a very ambitious man, but I don't regard him as an insincere man, one that would just play on the emotions of an older person in an unfair and unjust way. That's not my conception

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of him. For example, he was nice to me. I don't think he was nice to me just because of what he thought I could do for him. Matter of fact, I couldn't do much for him, though I did go to the Democratic convention in Los Angeles to try to help him. My wife and I both went at our own expense. I was a delegate to that convention. Then we went to the Atlantic City convention.

M: Were you supporting Johnson for president in Los Angeles?

B: Oh, yes. Yes, sir. We surely were.

M: Were you surprised, then, when he took the vice presidency, when he accepted it?

B: I really wasn't surprised, because I think that the head people of the Democratic Party decided that he was needed on that ticket to win and being a good Democrat, he said, "If I am needed, then I'll perform in that capacity." That would have been about the attitude I would have had. I've always been a Democrat. You notice that card that I [mentioned]. And I have been a Democrat not because my father was raised as a Democrat. I have been because I believe that the Democratic Party has had the right objectives, in the main. I didn't say it hasn't made errors in its leaders and in some of its policies.

M: Have you ever had an occasion where Lyndon Johnson as a politician was trying to persuade you to vote a certain way, and you didn't want to vote that way? You know, he's supposed to be very persuasive.

B: He has called me about votes but never told me, "If you don't do this, I will do this." That was never done. That's one of the things I've enjoyed about my political career; people haven't talked to me that way

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and have never tried to force me to vote a given way.

M: That's never been your problem.

B: No. And I might add they didn't talk to my daddy that way either. Because I think people who've really known us [have known] that's probably the surest way not to get something done. I don't say that with any heroic attitude. (Laughter)

M: But you never had any of that kind of problem.

B: No, I never did have that kind of problem. I really didn't.

M: Did you have much contact with Johnson when he was president?

B: He was awfully good to the Texas delegation. My wife and I have been to the White House along with some other members. He had us in groups, Texas groups. My wife and I have been there and eaten and been in swimming with them there in the White House pool. Then we have been on the yacht with them, the presidential yacht. I was on the Foreign Affairs Committee for a number of years, and in that capacity I had occasion to hear him discuss foreign policy matters a lot. Then occasionally, I don't know how many times, we have been to their home, the one they had before moving to the White House. We lived not very far from them in Washington. Luci, I believe, has been in our home. I'm sure she has; she stayed all night with my daughters in our home. When Lynda Bird came to Gilmer here to be a princess for our "Yamboree," [as] we call our fair in Gilmer, the Yamboree.

M: Spelled with a Y?

B: Y-A-M-B-O-R-double E--she stayed with the Laschingers--our publishers. My daughter and I went to see her in Gilmer at the Laschinger home. We

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felt at ease with them, the Johnsons. That's one thing I like about them, one of the many things I like about them. They are easy to know. As a matter of fact when former Prime Minister Harold Wilson was down at the Texas Legislature recently, I was one of the ones that escorted him in and sat, by the way, right behind Mr. and Mrs. Harold Wilson and President and Mrs. Johnson where I could see them real good. I had my little boy with me and had his picture taken with the President and with me.

(Interruption)

You ask me anything, I'll try to tell you the best I can. I've done a lot of talking.

I was with President Kennedy in Texas when he was killed. I was in the party.

M: Were you traveling with him then?

B: Yes, I was on the whole trip. Incidentally, I saw Bobby Kennedy in New York at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel about a month before he was killed.

M: For the tape I might mention that Mr. Beckworth has just shown me a picture of a group of men with Lyndon Johnson, as he mentioned, on the plane. This is Air Force One no doubt.

B: That's right.

M: On that trip when Kennedy was assassinated, did you have contact with Johnson immediately after?

B: I did not. My recollection is that I did see Vice President Johnson coming out of the hospital where President Kennedy was pronounced dead. I could be wrong, because that was a very tense time. I know that I was

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standing right near President Kennedy's presidential car when the Secret Service people came out and took the flags down. And if I'm not mistaken, about that time I did notice the Vice President come out right rapidly. I think Jack Brooks was with him, and I think Representative Albert Thomas was with him, and they tarried no time. I just it was at that time they went immediately to the plane where Judge Sarah Hughes administered the oath to President Johnson.

M: Then you were at the hospital.

B: I was at the hospital.

M: Were you in the motorcade, and you just followed on out?

B: I was. I was in the motorcade when the shots were fired. We thought at first it as a salute. I know Representative Albert Thomas and Representative [George] Mahon and Representative Jack Brooks--we were all together in about the third car back. The thing that really signalled that there was something wrong was this: We had been going at a parade speed, then we had an acceleration that threw us forward in a rough manner. It was at that time that I personally felt that something very bad had happened. We'd been having a very wonderful time in that parade.

M: You might be able to give insight into something else. Why was that trip planned to Texas? There are various stories about why.

B: I was certainly glad to come because I was for Kennedy and for his administration.

I would believe that the real reason for the trip was that President Kennedy was a man who wanted to do well as a president. He wanted unity and concord. He did not like dissension and felt that probably there were

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some warring factions down here and that a trip down here showing some solidarity might cause his situation in Texas to be stronger. I think it was a trip to try to mend the fences of the administration here in Texas and to bring about as much unity as possible. That's the way I would interpret the trip. I don't think there were any ulterior motives.

M: What do you think about the way Johnson took over the government after that?

B: I think he took over very smoothly. I never have forgotten his first speech to the Congress. I went to everything to which members were invited; I didn't miss a thing. Naturally, he was in very conspicuous positions at all of the meetings to which we members were invited, and I thought he did a good job under very trying and sad circumstances.

M: Another miscellaneous question. Did you have anything to do with that imbroglio, that fight, within Texas in 1956 between Lyndon Johnson and Sam Rayburn on one side and Allan Shivers on the other?

B: I went to the National Democratic Convention in 1956 in Chicago. That's where it was, wasn't it?

M: There were some preliminary fights within Texas.

B: No, I wasn't in that fight. As a matter of fact, I've always been for the Democrats and am a Democrat. I was in a race myself in 1956 and was not a delegate to Chicago, but I'm always for the Democrats--and strongly favored the Johnson-Rayburn side for I'm a Democrat.

M: I've noticed in my reading that you have been interested in agriculture through your congressional career.

B: What did you read? What do you refer to?

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M: Just some of the clippings and things like that, that you have had sort of a long-running interest in farmers and their problems.

B: Yes, I've been very interested in helping our farmers and ranchers.

M: I was wondering about Lyndon Johnson and you in agriculture.

B: All right. I'll be glad to discuss that with you. When my people came to Texas, my Daddy came in 1898 immediately from Alabama but they lived in Alabama only two years. They came originally from Georgia. My father was born in Georgia in 1884. When they got here to Texas, they owned nothing. They were half-and-half tenants. The land offered and afforded them the opportunity to get ahead. Out of eight children, all of my father's family, all became homeowners--except perhaps one child--or better primarily out of the land. My father farmed and taught school. He farmed many of the years that he taught because teaching paid such poor salaries back in those days. My grandfather Slaughter, over in Van Zandt County, was the father of around a dozen children. All that he was able to do for his family came from the land. I have always been a strong believer in what you might call free enterprise so far as land is concerned. I was in a great minority when I was in the Congress on some of the ideas I had about land. Marvin Jones was the chairman of the Agricultural Committee. What I objected to with reference to the farm program was the fact that it was operated in such a way that the big got bigger and the little ones were put out of business. In today's papers--I thought I had the article, but it's in my other office--Tom Wicker, I believe that's his name, had a very interesting article in the Dallas News about the fact that they lowered the payments, I believe, ..

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to \$55,000 per farmer. They tried to lower them to \$20,000 but they kept the \$55,000. But they used to be, oh, two hundred thousand dollars or more per farmer. What happened when they lowered them to \$55[000], if a fellow had been getting we'll say \$250[000], why we just cut his operation into five parts and would continue to get the same money. That's in today's Dallas News. Now, my thoughts in those days, and it still is this: if you're going to have a program, the first thing you should do is to permit everybody who wants to farm and who is farming to have at least a fair chance to earn a living. But when you cut a fellow, we'll say in the case of cotton, if you cut him five per cent or ten per cent, you cut him below a living. What happens? Many of them had to go out of business, not because they wanted to, but because they were cut below a living. Now a lot of people said then, "That's best for this country. They ought not to be trying to farm. It's an uneconomic operation." So, sure enough, they all went into town--and many on relief.

And if I'm not badly mistaken, both senatorial candidates, Lloyd Bentsen and George Bush were advocating legislation to see that people are sent back to the rural areas in last election. That wasn't that way when I was trying to do something about it, do you follow me? And recently Senator Talmadge of Georgia and several other senators have introduced legislation to get them out of these big cities back into rural areas. I simply didn't go along, and don't yet, with a program that makes the big bigger and runs the little ones that want to stay on the farm away from the farm. I have said this; probably no member of Congress uttered more words, I doubtless would have to say, and maybe

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did less good in doing it than I, but I surely tried and I'm not convinced yet that I was wrong in it. In other words, I wasn't a go-alonger on the farm program. I would believe that probably, in that situation, that President Johnson disagreed with me and he had his right to. As I see it, the so-called biggest agriculturalists, farmers, have been in charge of the program, and they continue to be. I believe, for example, if you want to become a farmer, there ought to be a way for you to become [one] other than by inheriting land, or having a lot of surplus big money that with which you can buy land--money that you haven't made out of a farming operation.

M: Did you ever talk to President Johnson about this?

B: Not really. I voiced my convictions and went my way and made my talks. I realized that I was on an unpopular side. When I see that--in other words, I don't talk to people just for the purpose of talking. I made my own record. At one time, I got in touch with the head man of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration in nearly all the counties of the nation where crops are grown. I will say I never was able to accomplish much, but I think some of the positions that I took are being somewhat vindicated now. Maybe I'm wrong.

M: Did President Johnson ever have occasion to talk to you about, just in idle conversation perhaps, farming techniques or ranching techniques or cattle?

B: I never did hear him talking about farming much, and I don't recall any speeches he made on farming. He was very interested in cattle and liked to talk about his cattle and the livestock industry, but I don't remember

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his talking about farming a lot.

M: Not farming as such.

B: No, sir, I don't recall a lot of talking he did about farming. He may have talked to others.

M: To shift the topic again and to concentrate, perhaps, on Lyndon Johnson's personality as a leader. What would you say was Lyndon Johnson's secret of success as a politician, say in Congress when he was a congressman or a senator, or maybe you'd like later as president.

B: There's no factor in his success greater than his willingness to work hard. That's number one. Number two, he could pick people whose influence--I'm talking about when you think of it through the long pull--would help him attain the objectives he had in mind.

M: You mean he knew who to go to?

B: He was an artful man in knowing who could enable him to reach his objective. I'm talking about in the long pull now, I don't say in all situations. All of us who know him know that he has a very incisive mind.

M: Is he smart?

B: He's smart. Yes, I'd say he's a smart man.

M: Has he got a good memory incidentally?

B: Good memory, in my judgment, and the type of man that is earthy. He is probably more earthy than most of us at first glance would think.

I think of this experience I had with him. We have a little swimming pool down here in a park in Gladewater near the high school. Cleo Marlow, who runs a store here, invited him to come here and speak to dedicate this rather small park. I don't know that I had heard him make a dedicatory

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speech before. I introduced him.

M: Is this when he was president?

B: It was when he was senator, and it wasn't too long after he'd been awfully sick with that heart attack.

M: That would have been about 1956 or so--1955 or 1956.

B: Somewhere along then. When did he have his heart attack?

M: 1955.

B: Well, it was about 1957 or 1958. He was getting ready to run for senator again, which would have been--

M: He ran in 1960 for senator.

B: Well, anyhow, I introduced him when he dedicated this little park down here in Gladewater. I think I was in Congress when I introduced him, too. I'm pretty sure I was. Anyhow, he was well received. Some of these remarks dealt with the fact that he realized that he was almost gone, and that he'd sent his wife to buy two suits, one a black and one a brown one. The idea was, at least that was the way I interpreted it, if he lived, he'd be wearing the brown one--if he didn't, he'd be wearing the black one. (Laughter) He went over big.

I think he had a very wonderful ability to adjust to whatever public situation he has confronted. Then there's no question but what he's been a loyal person to those that he has felt have done the most for him; he's been loyal to those.

M: As a politician, was he honest and trustworthy?

B: I think he was a man of his word, yes, sir. I think if he told me he would do something, he would do it. I think he would not tell me that

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he was going to do something, and then go back on it. I think that is a reason for his success. That's part of what caused him to succeed.

M: Is his wife part of his success?

B: Oh, yes. No doubt about that. A very smart lady. She's been a very wonderful mate as the wife of a member of Congress, as the wife of a senator, as the wife of a vice president, and as the wife of the president. I know I introduced her in Tyler when he was running for the presidency against Goldwater. She has had great vigor and determination and has done the right things at the right time.

M: She is a good politician, too, then.

B: Oh, a good politician and what a wife should be, and that is, "Right or wrong, he's my husband, and I'm helping him." That's what a partner should be. That's the kind of wife I've had and do have.

M: So she was a big support to you, I betcha.

B: You know, Doctor, when a person has a friend like that, as I've had in my Daddy and my wife and sister, he can go forward through a lot of adversity. This kind of backing can make the difference.

M: How did Mrs. Johnson strike you in playing her role of first lady?

B: The best!

M: I mean you've seen other first ladies, obviously.

B: None ahead of her.

M: She really did the right thing.

B: You betcha. I had a nice visit with her which shows how life works. She was appointed to the Board of Regents of the University of Texas and I was on the nominations committee that approved her. As she was walking out,

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she spoke to me in a nice and fine and courteous and thankful way. I was glad to see her and support her, of course.

M: Have you had much contact with the Johnsons after he left the presidency?

B: No, sir. I saw her when she came to the Senate Committee to be confirmed. I saw him when he was with Harold Wilson, former prime minister of England, there at the joint session. I saw him after the joint session was over when he was on the Senate side and my little boy and I had our pictures taken with him.

And then I was in Austin on some business before I went to the state senate. I called him and told him I was in town and just hoped he was getting along fine. He's easy to get on the phone. I got him on in no time. He said, "Come by some time." So that really is about the extent to which I have had any connection with him lately.

M: Since you're still active in Texas politics there's been some talk about Johnson being interested also in Texas politics, even though he's retired from the presidency. Is there any truth in this kind of rumor?

B: I know of nothing to substantiate it. I would say this: I wouldn't be surprised. Most of us who have been in office maintain a very keen interest in what's going on. I think it's second nature, or first nature to do that, and I am confident he's very interested in what's going on worldwide, United States-wide, hemispheric-wide, and statewide, and yes, Travis and Johnson County-wide.

M: Were you surprised, incidentally, when he chose not to run for the presidency again back in 1968? Did that surprise you at all?

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B: I would say that that was somewhat of a surprise to me.

M: Why?

B: Well, he was so interested in his work, was giving it so much effort. As one who had taught school and read a good bit, I always felt that most presidents aspire to a second term. That's been somewhat of a Democratic tradition, as I have known the Democratic Party. If a fellow gets elected to county clerk, he wants to get a second term, and it's always a good talking point: "I've just had one term, and I think I ought to have a second term." Matter of fact, that probably had as much to do with defeating me when I ran against Congressman Gentry on his second term. I was running against him on his second term. I mentioned a while ago he beat me only 1100 votes.

M: We were talking about the reason for Lyndon Johnson's success, and Mr. Beckworth mentioned the fact that his momentum was never stopped. You might go ahead and explain that.

B: By that I mean, once he became a member of Congress in 1937, his fortunes were such, even though he was defeated for the United States in 1941, he remained in the public eye in a favorable way to the extent that his momentum was never slowed. And another evidence of his good fortune, and I'm proud of his good fortune, is the fact that when he was denied the nomination for the presidency at Los Angeles, yet he remained in the public eye in such a way that he suffered really no setback.

We were talking about the fact that the President did not choose to run again. I can only say that he explained his reason when he said that he was not going to run, as I recall, indicating that he was doing what

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he thought was best for this country as of that time. The President knew that we had very serious problems within this country, internally and to some extent externally, and he felt that by doing what he was doing, he was contributing to the solution of the problems of which no one was more aware than he. I'm sure that must be the reason why he did it.

M: Would that take a lot of courage for a politician to do that?

B: It would take a lot of courage, and naturally a man of that type is truly a great American. I have no reason to believe otherwise. Some people say he could not have won. That, no one knows. I've run for office about seventeen times on the Democratic ticket, and fifteen of those times I have had opposition. I've been on the general election ticket about seventeen times, five times with opposition, and one can never forecast the result of a contested race. So often there are factors over which, really, nobody has control. In fact, the three times I was defeated-- one for the United States Senate, as I look back, there was no way in the world to have won the three races. There was the time Attorney General Price Daniel defeated me. Then when I was defeated by 1100 votes by Representative Gentry, I know of not a thing else I could have done to have won, actually, with the light I have at this moment. Then when I had my district totally abolished, I know of nothing I could have done to have won. So I think that is a pretty good way to put the proper perspective on whether or not he could have won. There might have been things that would have happened that would have elected him. There might have been things that would have happened that would have badly defeated him.

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M: We've covered a lot of ground. Let me give you an open-ended sort of question. Is there anything in your connection with Lyndon Johnson that we should talk about that we haven't touched on, or anything that comes to mind, or any comments you want to make?

B: I might refer to President Truman. At some point in his presidential career, he referred to some unlearned person that had lived in the desert area of Arizona. This person who knew about where the unlearned person was buried went to his tomb, and it was understood the unlearned person had had put on his tomb what he wanted. And the words were these: "He did his damndest." I think that pretty well characterizes President Johnson. He tried hard and he did all he could.

M: With that, let me call this to an end, and thank you for your time.

B: Fine.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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