

INTERVIEW I

DATE: April 1965

INTERVIEWEE: PERCY BRIGHAM

INTERVIEWER: Eric Goldman

****This interview was conducted by telephone from TV station KTBC in Austin, Texas, to Mr. Brigham in a hospital.**

G: Hello, Mr. Brigham. I'm sorry to bother you when you feel so badly and I won't keep you long. I wonder whether you would be good enough to help me out on a few details. We're anxious to get down for the history records the accurate account of the President's boyhood and early years. This includes the story of his going to college, in which, of course, you were involved. Would you be good enough to tell me just what happened about his coming for the loan?

B: Oh well, you know times were bad. It was just natural--his idea of banking with me. I don't know exactly the circumstances except that they went broke and they backed out--they had no bank.

G: Where was the bank that went broke, Mr. Brigham?

B: In Johnson City.

G: Did he go all the way to Blanco to do banking business?

B: Yes. All those people at the north end did business with me for about 10 years.

G: What was the name of the bank, Mr. Brigham?

B: In Johnson City?

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G: Yes.

B: Oh, it was the Johnson City State Bank. It went broke.

G: But where was the bank located--in Johnson City or in Blanco?

B: Located in Johnson City just off Blackberry--north of where it is now. Just north of the town. It was that little old building--they have a store in there now. That little old building on the corner--it's on Highway 290.

G: Was it the President or his mother who came to see you?

B: I'm not very certain. It's been a long time ago.

G: How much was the loan? Do you recall whether it was \$75?

B: That was the first loan. And I let him have money through the years. I wouldn't know exactly how much.

G: There were several loans then while he was in college?

B: There were several loans made to him. Lyndon worked like the devil in the summertime you know. He'd get out on the highway and labor. He was a regular patron of ours. He didn't have any other chance in the world to make his way through school, and he did make his way largely through school. You know Lyndon's daddy was one of my closest friends.

G: I see.

B: He never was very much of an administrator. He was a good politician, that's all.

G: What was the arrangement, Mr. Brigham? Lyndon Johnson would borrow the money and then pay it back monthly. Is this the way it was done?

B: Oh, no. There wasn't a monthly note in those days. He just wrote me a note to be paid when school was out. Lyndon had one several times.

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G: Do you remember anything about--when the President came to see you--what he might have said, any of the conversation?

B: No. I just wouldn't recollect. That was years ago and there have been thousands and thousands of people.

G: Right. But you were friends--

B: Oh yes, he knew he could always get money from me. But he never did get too awful much. He always paid it back. Something else about Lyndon, I don't reckon he wants me to tell to you--how Lyndon's daddy was in debt to us quite a bit when he died. When Sam died, Lyndon came and paid every penny of it off.

G: Mr. Brigham, you have been very helpful to me. I appreciate this very much and I certainly hope you feel better, sir.

B: Thank you.

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Bessie J. Brigham

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