

INTERVIEW I

DATE: August 19, 1969
INTERVIEWEE: MARGARET CARTER (MRS. JACK CARTER)
INTERVIEWER: DAVID McCOMB
PLACE: Her home, 2816 Sixth Avenue, Fort Worth, Texas

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M: First of all, I'd like to know a little bit about you and your background. Where were you born; when and where did you get your education?

C: I was born in Sherman, Texas, but I lived in Fort Worth almost all my life. I graduated from old Central High School, and went to Mary Hardin Baylor College, where I received a B.A. degree, and returned to teach for eleven years in Fort Worth. The part of my teaching that I really enjoyed was history.

M: Is it fair to ask you when you were born?

C: I was born April 18, 1909.

M: 1909. And, for the record, there is no connection between you and the Amon Carters. Is that so?

C: No. [There is no connection].

M: When did you get interested in politics?

C: When I became old enough to vote. I felt it was something that had to be done responsibly, and I tried to find out enough about the issues which were acute at the time. The Great Depression came in 1929, and the first presidential election for which I was eligible

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to cast a vote was in 1932.

I had been an English major in college, and the literary views that I liked best were in the liberal journals of opinion. So I discovered the Nation and the New Republic in college and began to be interested in seeing the country come out of the Depression, so that the opportunities of many people were enlarged.

(Interruption)

M: Now, you were telling me about your interest in politics and how you'd read some of the liberal journals of the day.

C: My husband and I are orphans, and we had found through our connections with a conservative religious community that there were people who cared about seeing the opportunities of the underprivileged enlarged, and we had grown up thinking that we had an obligation to continue to enlarge the opportunities of the underprivileged. At the beginning of the thirties it looked as if participation in the New Deal politics was a good way to do that.

My husband became discouraged when Allan Shivers took the Democratic machinery into a Republican presidential campaign, but I haven't become discouraged yet. (Laughter)

M: Did you campaign for Roosevelt?

C: Yes, after the Hundred Days. I had no reason to believe the first time that anything remarkable would happen if he were elected. The oratory in that campaign was as flat as most campaign oratory is, but it was my first experience. I had to see the Hundred Days before I became a convinced New Deal activist.

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M: Well, then, in the 1936 campaign, did you participate?

C: Yes, yes. By 1936 we had become aware that the Vice President from Texas was not exactly a cooperative member of the New Deal team. (Laughter) And by 1940 we had met Maury Maverick from San Antonio, and my husband was more active than I, because our first child was born that year, in helping Maury Maverick to make a real impression on the state convention as the leader of a liberal delegation. My husband won the county convention that year without having made any preparation at the precinct level. He just took the delegation who went to the county convention from the precincts in the traditional way and was able to turn them toward Roosevelt, because they were simply not ready to turn against Roosevelt. The people who customarily wield large influence here had miscalculated. Then in 1944, for a similar reason, because there was still strong local pressure, which we felt was not popularly supported, to go against Roosevelt, my husband ran for Democratic county chairman and carried 99 of the 116 precincts. So that year we won the county convention not by accident or the grace of God, but because we had worked in the precincts.

M: Did you meet Lyndon Johnson in this period of time?

C: We knew about him. No.

M: He supported Roosevelt . . .

C: Indeed he did!

M: . . . when he first went to Congress.

C: And Roosevelt sponsored him.

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M: Yes.

C: Roosevelt gave him some very favorable publicity in Texas. We knew him, knew of him at least, as the head of the NYA [National Youth Administration].

M: Oh, you did?

C: Well, you see, I was teaching, and I knew young people who were involved in the NYA program. Helen Fuller was in Texas at the time working in the NYA program with Lyndon Johnson. She became the editor of the New Republic.

Then, we knew him as that young congressman who was pushing for regional development and sponsoring the Lower Colorado River Authority. My husband worked for a brief time for the Lower Colorado River Authority trying to get enough customers to make it feasible to bring lower Colorado River power to Fort Worth, because we were involved in liberal municipal politics and we were seeking to offset the power of the local privately owned electric service company. We were not able to get enough customers along the way for the Lower Colorado River Authority, of which Ralph Yarborough was a member of the board at the time.

M: Did you talk to Congressman Johnson about this at all?

C: No, I didn't, and I don't think my husband did. The person he got to know best was the representative of the Texas Electric Service Company who was trailing him. Everywhere he went, the Texas Electric Service Company sent this the same man. (Laughter) And they got to be good friends. They agreed with each other about

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vacation plans and weekends and that sort of thing. But I don't remember that we met anybody with high official responsibility. I don't know how Lyndon Johnson knew me in 1948, but I remember that he did. This was the first time I ever remember his ever having spoken with me.

M: What happened in 1948?

C: Well, you know, he got elected to the Senate, but he almost didn't get seated.

M: Were you in that campaign?

C: Indeed I was. And I had been in the 1941 campaign.

M: Both of them.

C: The 1941 campaign was managed here by Mr. L. J. Wardlow, who was a sheep rancher among other things.

M: What did you do in the 1941 campaign?

C: Oh, just what people usually do: sign postcards and check precinct lists and make telephone calls.

M: That was a close election, too, that you lost.

C: Yes, it was, and, of course, we lost. Then in 1948 it was close, and we won. By 1948 we had collaborated with Mr. Harry Seay and Mr. Bill Kittrell in the management of the state machinery of the Democratic Party. Of course, my husband had been the Democratic county chairman in 1944, and we had been quite active in the presidential election campaign. Then in 1948, my husband was elected to the State Democratic Executive Committee. The 1948 convention was just as hard fought as the 1956 one later and as memorable to those of us

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who took part. And, of course, it was very important to Lyndon Johnson. The state committee which planned the 1948 convention was also the one that canvassed the returns and decided that he was indeed the Democratic nominee. My husband was not a member of that one; he was a member of the one who succeeded them and were chosen the day that Lyndon Johnson was chosen as nominee.

Then in September of that year, President Truman came to Texas. He traveled by train in this part of the state. My husband was on the arrangements committee for his appearance here. And we followed in our cars to Bonham while the presidential train was going to Dallas and on to Bonham, because there was a reception for the State Democratic Executive Committee, among other people, at Mr. Rayburn's home that night. Mrs. Edwards was in charge of the women's division of the national committee, and that was the night that I met India Edwards.

But [Coke] Stevenson was doing everything he could, of course, to prevent Johnson from claiming the nomination. That night under a large tree in Mr. Rayburn's back yard, the State Democratic Executive Committee had an emergency meeting to plan what it could do to help Lyndon Johnson keep the Democratic nomination for the Senate. I knew at the time how many people were invited to Mr. Rayburn's party, but however many it was, at least ten times that many showed, and there was standing room only in the house and grounds. Lyndon was rushing about trying to pick the members of the state committee out of the crowd (Laughter), and he found me

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and said, "Margaret, please go and find Jack. They're having a meeting of the state committee under a tree in the back yard, and I need his help." (Laughter) And the best I can remember, that's the first time that I ever had any conversation with Lyndon Johnson. I didn't say anything.

M: But he knew who you were.

C: He must have known, and I can't think when we had met.

M: You didn't meet him during his earlier campaigns?

C: Oh, I had been introduced to him, but I had no reason to believe that he'd remember me. Mr. [Fred] Korth had managed his 1948 campaign, and I had been active in it, though I didn't feel nearly so welcome in it. It mostly contained a lot more conservative people than the 1941 campaign. Mr. Wardlaw had been not especially liberal, but a very loyal Roosevelt fan, and we had been among his supporters for the seat on the state committee which he occupied while my husband was the county chairman. So we had felt comfortable in the 1941 campaign and not so comfortable in the 1948 campaign.

M: Well, was the meeting under the tree successful?

C: Yes. He kept the nomination, and he kept the seat.

M: Do you remember if he said anything about that to you other than "Please find your husband"?

C: No, I don't think he had time. He was in a great hurry trying to round up all those people when they were mixed with so many other people.

M: Did he seem to be good friends with Sam Rayburn?

C: Why, of course.

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M: I've read that the two were very close and that Sam Rayburn sort of sponsored Lyndon Johnson and gave him advice. Is that correct?

C: I had that impression.

M: So at this meeting at Rayburn's home, was their friendship in evidence?

C: Oh, yes.

M: Did you have any contact with Lyndon Johnson while he was in Congress or in the Senate, not dealing with political campaigns? Did you ever see him? Did he come through and call on you, or anything of that nature?

C: No, I had no reason to see him.

M: Well, now, let me ask you about the events of 1956. Now, did you attend those conventions in 1956?

C: Yes, before that we had more contact with Mr. Rayburn than with Johnson. The liberal-labor coalition, which is what it was in the forties, was continuously active after 1944. That year's convention startled a good many people into coming together in an organized group of which Minnie Fisher Cunningham of Walker County was the leader. And we have never ceased to operate in an organized fashion since then. So that when Mr. Rayburn found himself in need of a campaign organization after the 1952 convention, he called on us. And we had elected a member of organized labor from the north side, which is our working members' part of town, county chairman.

M: Who was that?

C: His name was Tom Ward.

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M: W-A-R-D?

C: Yes. He became the local campaign manager for the [Adlai] Stevenson operation in 1952. I was in charge of a downtown headquarters of what we called "Women for Stevenson" from which the precinct work for the Stevenson campaign was directed. This group of liberals who had been associated, by that time, for at least eight years put on a very active campaign as we had in 1948 for Truman. My husband had been president of the Truman-Barkley Club in 1948.

Then Mr. Rayburn organized a group that he called the Democratic Advisory Council, which was to perform a function similar to that the State Democratic Committee would have performed had he been able to count on the State Democratic Committee. And I became a member of that. I was not a charter member, but after a year I was chosen.

M: Were you quite willing to cooperate with Rayburn?

C: Certainly.

M: Did you have any reservations about working with Rayburn at all?

C: Well, no. He had about working with us. (Laughter) He was forced to work with us because his own friends had disappointed him, and we could understand that. After all, if you're a democrat with a small "d", you have to keep your eye on what the public opinion will support. While we felt that Mr. Rayburn practically led a double life, we could understand the tactical reasons for it. We disapproved; we felt that he and we and the whole Democratic Party would have been better off had he chosen to operate in Texas in a different way, but it never occurred to us that we were

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in a position to sit in judgment on his tactics.

M: How would you have preferred Rayburn to work?

C: Well, maybe I'd better tell you how it appeared to us that he did work.

M: Fine.

C: No one could fault him for having given the fullest, most competent, most effective cooperation of which he was capable to Roosevelt. Everything that could be done in the House for the New Deal measures, Rayburn did. That was what we sent him to Washington for. Of course, we never had a vote on Mr. Rayburn. I happened to have been born in his district, but I didn't live there when I was an adult. We were very proud of what he could do for the country from his House seat, and we would have been distressed had we thought there was a possibility of his losing it. We were among the people who went to Dallas to do him honor when he became the speaker of the House; and if his operation as speaker was subject to criticism, we weren't sophisticated enough to suggest improvement. But he seemed to feel that in order to operate effectively in Washington, he had to keep his Texas base under control. And it's that idea of keeping the natives under control that has always put a barrier between us and our representatives in Washington.

M: What do you mean: under control?

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C: Well, he just didn't want to have to be bothered with the kind of pressures on Washington representatives that come out of Texas-based conflict within the party.

M: I see.

C: There was no doubt that the mass of the voters supported the New Deal without understanding it very well. We knew that the banks did open, that there were more jobs, that most people began to eat, that school became possible for many people. Since life was better for us, we were going to vote for the Democrats. I don't know whether Mr. Rayburn was aware of Oscar Ameringer's epigram about politics being the art of extracting votes from the poor and money from the rich on the pretense that you're protecting them from one another. But he seemed to have operated so that when the poor were quiet, he could turn his attention to keeping the rich quiet, too, and also extracting four or five-figure checks from them for the operation of the Democratic Party in doubtful states.

M: Would you have preferred Rayburn didn't do this then?

C: We felt exploited.

M: I see. I see.

C: We didn't think he needed the kind of money that he got by what looked like to us like kowtowing to people who weren't even Democrats in order to be effective in Washington. It was nice to have their money to spend in Ohio or California, but we didn't see that it was essential that the interest of building a sound, informed popular base for the Democratic Party be sacrificed to

that sort of thing. And sure enough, there came a time when there was no longer a sound popular base. It seemed to us that Texas was a doubtful state in 1948. It was necessary to campaign hard for Truman for him to carry Texas. Of course, Texas was a doubtful state in 1952; we lost it. Then it looked to us as if Mr. Rayburn would see that in the future the electoral vote could not be taken for granted unless Texas Democrats put forth organized effort between elections. When we lost it, we thought he would read the result one way; and, apparently, he read it another. But while we were helping him try to pull it out of the fire in 1952, he was very cordial. He assured us that all the activity that we had been involved in was appreciated, that all the names that had been collected would be available to everybody who had been active in the campaign, for instance, and that he would encourage continuing organization among Democrats from the grass roots level up.

As soon as we had lost, he forgot all of that. We were not given equal access to the names of the people that had been helpful. Of course, those of us who worked at the lowest levels were smart enough to collect our own names. (Laughter) But to the extent that he was in charge of state files--and he was in Dallas--they were not available to everybody who worked. And he not only did not encourage continuing organization, he flatly discouraged it and fell out bitterly with those of us who insisted on it. Creekmore Fath was the principal object of Mr. Rayburn's wrath then.

M: Well then, why did you cooperate with him in 1956? Matter of necessity?

C: What else was there?

M: Yes.

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C: All we wanted was for the Democratic Party to become a party with a more sophisticated membership and with a structural basis that could be depended upon. Of course, that was not what our local opposition wanted. People in Texas who can exert influence in the absence of organized political activity would rather exert it that way. But if someone is keeping politically active people organized, then everyone who expects to have a decisive voice in party policy, especially in conventions and on the state and national committees, has also to maintain an organization. Mr. Rayburn had grown up without the necessity for that, and Johnson hoped that he could become powerful without the necessity of that. They simply did not want any organized activity to be going on, because if you sponsor an organization, then you do have to keep in touch with them. And there was no organized Republican activity to speak of.

M: Well, how soon would Mr. Rayburn re-contact you, then, after 1952? In preparation for 1956?

C: It must have been late in 1954, because I remember Mrs. Keatts was the first representative to the Democratic Advisory Council from here.

M: Is that a C-A-T . . . ?

C: No. K-E-A-T-T-S.

M: Thank you.

C: She served for a year, and then I served a year, and it seems to me that I was re-elected in 1956; so it must have been in 1954. I didn't know you were going to ask me about this, I haven't

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reviewed it.

It was during 1953 that Mr. Rayburn definitely broke with our state leadership. Of course, whenever influential people are exerting an influence in a group of volunteers who are virtually without influence, there are always some who like to speak up, and it's always easy for a controversy to be going on among powerless people about what we ought to be doing so as to become powerful. There was a good deal of that, and Byron Skelton was in and out of contact with the rest of us. He was Mr. Rayburn's choice for national committeeman, since Mr. Rayburn hadn't been in a position to deliver on his commitment to Byron in 1948. Byron had been among our leaders at the time, and then he became unacceptable to many of us because he lacked initiative. He showed so little push to keep us organized and keep us developing whenever it was evident that Mr. Rayburn frowned on it.

It was not Mr. Rayburn, but Paul Butler who made the contact with us about this Democratic Advisory Council to the national chairman in Texas. But Mr. Butler assured us that he was working closely with Mr. Rayburn and that the persons who were named to the Advisory Council would be persons named in their localities, and that Mr. Rayburn also had agreed to work with them.

M: Well, then came the big fight in 1956--the spring convention.

C: Yes. Well, of course, Rayburn and Johnson needed us then. They had been through a series of humiliations at national conventions. Mr. Rayburn might have been the vice president of the United States when Roosevelt died had it not been for these undependable people

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whose influence he kept allowing to build at his Texas base. They went to national conventions, and were offensive and obnoxious to the other delegates, and came home and campaigned for the Republican nominee after participating in the national convention of the Democrats who selected the Democratic nominee. Mr. Rayburn could not be considered for the vice presidency because Texas delegations to the national conventions in the forties had been so undependable. He paid more for that aspect of his policy than anybody else. Johnson had seen that thing and was fully aware that he would never be available for a national nomination unless he could take to a national convention a delegation which did the opposite of what the delegation Shivers had led there in 1952 had done. We were aware that he was not seeking the nomination in 1956, that he knew of how little value the nomination in 1956 would be, that his eyes were on 1960.

M: But it was still important for him to build that organization in 1956?

C: Oh, yes. He had to reverse the image of Texas in the minds of the kinds of people who attend national conventions from other states. He needed us. And he had gone along all this time without having developed or even encouraged any kind of continuing organization among the Democrats in Texas; not that he didn't have personal managers in counties in Texas, but the personal organizations of Texas candidates for office are very loose affairs. They're not held together between times. And he didn't have the organization

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with which to do that job.

M: Well, the convention in Texas in the spring apparently was the one in which Johnson wrested control of the party from Shivers. Were you there at that convention?

C: Indeed I was.

M: What did you do there?

C: Well, I had to spend most of my time keeping my name on the delegation to the national convention, because John Connally kept trying to get it taken off. (Laughter)

M: Why did he do that?

C: Well, we were needed. But, of course, John Connally had been living here since 1949, and he had never made any move in the direction of assisting any kind of Democratic politician to accomplish anything. In 1952, I hadn't called him, but I sat in the office with a friend of mine with Austin connections who did call him. He was working for Sid Richardson. And she said, "You know, we're involved in the Democratic national election. Adlai Stevenson is the candidate. You're a well-known Democrat. Wouldn't you like to help with the Stevenson campaign? What would you like to do?" He told her, politely but immediately, that he was not in a position to participate in the Democratic campaign. Of course, he wasn't. Sid Richardson had been one of the ones who sent word to Eisenhower that they wished he'd come back from Europe and accept the Republican nomination for the presidency. And all Sid Richardson's associates, including Amon Carter, were actively campaigning for

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Eisenhower. Connally was not valuable enough to Mr. Richardson to be in a position to buck him.

He has said since then that he raised money for Stevenson in 1952, and I feel sure he did. People with as much money as Sid Richardson and Amon Carter had always placed their insurance money as well as their more substantial contributions in the national campaigns. It was a matter of regret to Connally, I feel sure, that anybody who was a friend of his was forced to associate with ordinary, liberal Democrats.

One of the most astonishing developments I noted in Connally was the development of John Connally's willingness to submit himself to a majority vote for an elective office. He had gotten word that there was to be cooperation between the usual liberal Democrats and the conservative but loyal Democrats in this county for that campaign. But I remember only one meeting of local activists that he even attended. The old settlers in the county, who were not above associating with us if Mr. Rayburn expected it, would meet with us; and then they would meet with him to see if he approved of what they had done when they met with us. He was the cynical influence in the coalition operation. And Raymond Buck and Hunter McLean were the decent local aristocrats who, when they had agreed to work with us, worked with us.

M: Well, at the convention in 1956, Texas State Convention, you had the fight against Connally.

C: Yes. The drama in that convention was from within the group who

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were supporting Johnson.

M: Connally was trying to strike your name off the list?

C: Well, that was only one aspect of it, but of course it was one in which I took the keenest personal interest. (Laughter)

M: Yes, indeed. (Laughter)

C: I don't think it had occurred to these influential people that there was, among the organized liberals, any leadership who could see to it that if we won those precinct conventions, we would enjoy the fruit of our victory. I feel sure, though this is conjecture, that Connally was scornful of the gentlemen who dealt with us and were not able to deal us out at the level of negotiating who got what once we won the county convention. But they were not able to. Now, Mr. Buck didn't want to, I'm convinced. He wanted to deal fairly with us. And Mr. McLean wanted to deal fairly with us, but he also wanted [Connally] to think well of him. So he was the one who was really between a rock and a hard place most of the time.

We did manage to get what I thought was a fair shake, but it took very tight maneuvering and constant watchfulness among cynical politicians at high levels. And some of our best people were dealt out. Ross Matthews was. He was the member of the advisory committee with me. There were a man and a woman from each district. He was the secretary of the very large machinists' local at General Dynamics and a very personable, very responsible, popular educator. He was the only one of our labor leaders who actually educated

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members of his union to take effective part in Democratic politics.

We put on a fund-raising dinner for Mr. Rayburn in 1955. Mr. Rayburn agreed to come, and Ross and I were supposed to be in charge of it. We found out how difficult it is to stay in charge of that sort of thing, but we did. Connally devised a way to split the proceeds, when he discovered there really were going to be proceeds. So that some of the people who were asked to buy tickets were told they were making contributions to support Mr. Rayburn's library, which had not yet been built in Bonham. Mr. Rayburn had told us that he intended to come to help us have enough money in the kitty to run this campaign to win the conventions the next year. But we had to keep watching for what John [Connally] and, I'm sorry to say, Jim Wright would tell potential contributors about what was to be done with their money.

M: Now, was Connally taking orders from Lyndon Johnson at this time?

C: We don't know. I think Connally thought of these things himself.

M: And at the 1956 state convention where you were battling with him over keeping your name on the list and so forth, was Connally working for Johnson in that respect, or on his own?

C: Well, we always thought he was doing Johnson a disservice, but apparently he was serving the more cynical side of Johnson's leadership. Connally did perfectly outrageous things. We had several caucuses of the delegates to the state convention, and there were firm commitments about everything that we were going to support in the state convention. We chose every person who was going

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to represent us on a committee of the state convention. We chose the delegates and the alternates to the national convention and indicated which ones were delegates and which ones were alternates. We would not have John Connally for a delegate from this congressional district to the national convention. We said if Johnson wants him, let him make him a delegate-at-large, which is how he got there. He didn't represent us. And because we forced him to be a delegate-at-large, we didn't get to suggest another delegate-at-large, though all the other delegations with similar strength were allowed to suggest at least one more delegate-at-large. And that was how we lost Ross Matthews. We recommended him for delegate-at-large and were just not allowed one. Then when we had Mr. Rayburn here in the fall, with liberal friends from all over North Texas, not just Tarrant County, coming in for this fund-raising affair or sending contributions, Bill Kittrell brought more than six hundred dollars in cash that night. At five dollars a head, more than six hundred dollars in cash was a good deal of money at that time for that kind of function. With that sort of thing going on, Mr. Rayburn decided that he was going to accept, at that dinner, an award from some right-wing, patriotic organization which had honored, I believe, Joe McCarthy . . .

M: Good heavens.

C: . . . and some other equally outrageous people, [Bourke] Hickenlooper or something, and Bricker, maybe in their previous awards. And we had to stop that. After all, some of our people do read. Our conference over what we were going to do about that was the one conference in which John

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Connally put in an appearance. It was decided that this gentleman would not be allowed to sit at the head table at our dinner or to make any kind of speech that would be acceptable to his organization at our dinner, but if the Congressman wanted to admit him to the cocktail party he was giving in the afternoon for out-of-town people coming in, of course, that was none of our business. So that was what was done about that one. We shall never know how much more money we would have made if Connally hadn't diverted part of it to the fund for the library in Bonham. We do know that he made every effort to let a lot of people come in free without paying the five dollars at the time of the dinner. He sent some people to offer to be ticket-takers who then didn't take tickets, but just opened the door. And the seven hundred dollars worth of tickets which he was responsible for, he didn't pay for until we brought considerable pressure on him.

M: Well, now, how can Connally get away with that?

C: Well, he didn't get away with that because we didn't pay the caterer until he paid us. And when Walter Jetton kept complaining, and the florist kept complaining, and other people whose bills had been contracted by the more conservative members of our coalition operation, we said, "Well, when Mr. Connally pays us, we'll pay you." And finally--Tom Ward was still the county chairman, and Mr. Ward lived in a very modest neighborhood on the north side where the streets are not even paved. The houses are small. He lives in a better neighborhood now, but that was where he lived

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then. John Connally went out to his house unannounced one evening about five. Their door was open; it was warm weather, and they just never closed the door. And he threw in, on the floor of their living room, between seven hundred and eight hundred dollars in cash. And that was all the accounting we ever got from him about the tickets he had assumed responsibility for. We never were able to check. But he finally delivered, in that fashion, enough money for us to pay the caterer. He wanted us to have to pay the caterer out of what would otherwise have been our profits, and then there wouldn't have been any profits.

M: Just to clear up a point. You mentioned the name of your caterer. Could you spell that?

C: J-E-T-T-O-N. Walter Jetton. He was the one who catered a good many of the annual outings for the Texas Club in Washington.

M: Well, now, in 1956, Byron Skelton was chosen as the national committeeman.

C: Yes. Well, now, I didn't mean to tell you so much about that dinner. (Laughter) I thought it just was interesting. But, of course now, this was Ross's and my baptism into that sort of thing. We had never dealt with people who weren't decent.

M: Well, you were better prepared the next year then, weren't you?

C: Well, it was a continuous process. This was in the fall of 1955. The conventions came in the summer of 1956.

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And among the other commitments we had made were commitments about the policies we would support. The reason that we had some sense and some firmness and some direction by this time was that Mrs. R. D. Randolph from Houston had assumed leadership there and Walter Hall was helping, too. They were both real sophisticated, and we had good leadership. At Mrs. Randolph's suggestion, though I'm not suggesting that she personally dreamed up the strategy, we had a good representative statement of policies of the Johnson people. (Laughter)

We had decided that it was unwise to allow the state committee to plan the national campaign. The new state committee would be coming in so near to the time of the national convention, that we thought it would be better, if we won the state spring convention, to decide in the spring convention on a national campaign committee so as to avoid this thing that had happened in 1952. A good many of those same people who campaigned for Eisenhower in 1952 were still on the Democratic State Committee. We decided that what we'd really like to do was to elect the state committee at the spring convention, but the law says you elect them at the fall convention. So we decided that we'd better make a definite effort to replace members of the state committee who had been disloyal to the national nominees in 1952. As it turned out, what we did in that convention was to name a different national campaign committee from the state committee to name a national campaign committee which would function

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instead of the state committee in cooperation with Rayburn and Johnson to try to win the 1956 election.

Well, we had taken a position on that, much to the chagrin of our conservative colleagues at the local level, I'll admit. But they had agreed that we would support that action, but that we would not initiate it. That was clearly understood. We had had to give on the point of initiating it. We would happily have gone over to Dallas and made the motion to replace the state committee, but we had agreed that if the motion were made, we would support it. Well, apparently what Connally was trying to do statewide at that point was to get everybody to agree not to make the motion. He succeeded with us that far. But the motion was made, I believe, by people from Waco, and he got up and made the principal speech against it. Well, his delegation was firmly committed for it. We had people by that time who had been through all the conventions since 1944, learning what conventions are supposed to do and how they operate, and this one in 1956 was the first one that we had won in a spectacular way. Everybody there knew what was going on. And we had also agreed that John Connally would represent us on the credentials committee of the state convention. But when he made this speech against the policy that we were committed to, everybody began to say, "Caucus, caucus. Let's replace John Connally on this credentials committee." We didn't want to do it, because we'd been through a good many hassles already getting to that point. We knew that if we ever made one breach in the agreements that we had

made before we got to the convention, that numerous other alterations would be proposed. It wasn't the Tarrant County caucus, incidentally, it was the Twelfth District caucus--it was a five-county district then-and [the caucus] would be in perpetual session if we ever broke the plan that we'd made ahead of time. So we didn't want to break it. We did see--well, there was a good deal involved in the report of the credentials committee, too, because the credentials of the Dallas delegation were in question. We did hold the committee chairmanship for John, even after he had made this speech. Then he went into the meeting of the committee on delegates to the national convention, of which he was not a member. No, I'll take that back. It was Hunter McLean who went in to committee. Hunter was also to be a delegate to the national convention, and he and I sat side by side in reserved seats at Chicago after all this happened. Hunter went in and asked them to remove my name because I was not acceptable to John Connally. I was told that he had said that I was not acceptable to Lyndon Johnson. Well, in the course of Lyndon Johnson's active career, there had never been, at any time, a campaign when I hadn't been actively involved in supporting him and when I didn't have the usual acknowledgments of my active support, including a special long distance telephone call to me in the presence of a caucus of his supporters in connection with this very convention. So I spent a good deal of time in the corridors trying to find Lyndon

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Johnson. I wanted him to tell me that I was not acceptable. Well, of course, you can't find Lyndon Johnson unless he wants you to, and I found Connally instead.

Then Jim Wright found me. We had been very active in Jim Wright's 1954 campaign for Congress, which he had made over the strenuous objection of all the influential people who were fighting the liberals of this convention. He had been an outcast from Parker County. He got to the Congress from this district. So Jim had considerable obligation to the varied people whom Connally was fighting, and he paid them off. He kept that situation from exploding by withdrawing himself from the delegation. I've forgotten just how that balanced it, but it did. And then he asked me to stop making a fuss about it. Well, there was a good deal else going on. So I was happy to stop making a fuss about it.

But I did confront John [Connally] in the corridor at one point and said, "I'd like you to know, John, that it was I who insisted that you keep your committee chairmanship after you had made the speech denouncing the policy we had agreed on." And he said, "I was told the opposite." Which is about as near to being called a liar as I've ever come.

Meanwhile, the burning question in the state convention was who was going to represent Texas on the next national committee.

M: Right.

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C: We had had a candidate. Of course, we wanted Mrs. Randolph to be the national committeewoman.

M: You were supporting her?

C: We were formally supporting her. She was the only woman who was in a position to serve on the national committee and deserved the honor.

M: Did you agree to Byron Skelton?

C: No, we didn't. Because we couldn't; we couldn't agree. I did my best to keep what I felt was a personal commitment to Byron. I was disappointed in him, as many others were. There had been a meeting back when this Advisory Council was formed, I suppose, when Mr. Rayburn showed his disapproval of those of us who had been impatient because he hadn't kept his word by shaking Creekmore Fath out of our organization. Creekmore Fath was the secretary, if I remember, at that time, and Byron was chairman.

M: How does he spell his name?

C: F-A-T-H. We had sent Mrs. Keatts and another long-time local activist named Jack Avery to a conference in Byron Skelton's summer home at Salado where this had taken place. And our representatives there had voted to keep Creekmore in his position of leadership. They had been outvoted, but they remembered that Byron--I feel sure acting directly under Mr. Rayburn's administrative suggestion--had done what he could to shake Creek out of the organization. They had enough voice in the local caucus to keep us from supporting Skelton, and we supported Raymond Buck.

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He's a son of a pioneer judge and a very long, active political volunteer who, though he had become a very rich man during the New Deal, had remembered under whose administration it was he became a rich man. He had been a faithful supporter of the Democratic ticket, even in 1952 when it took a good deal of courage for a man in his position to support Stevenson. He had been decent in dealing with us in the coalition operation in 1955 and 1956. We made a sincere effort to sell him to our liberal friends in other parts of the state. We knew he wasn't a liberal, but he was a rich man and a loyal Democrat who had enough sophistication and enough decency to represent Texas presentably on the [Democratic] National Committee. And if he could go with Mrs. Randolph, she knew what was the right liberal thing to do, not that she would be able to influence him. They would probably not vote together. But there were both kinds of influential Democrats, and we didn't see anything wrong with that. We were looking for people with character who had contributed to the operation. We supported them, but we couldn't get the liberals from other parts of the state to buy Mr. Buck.

The wildest sort of negotiations were going on backstage about who were to have those two seats. Because, as we understood it, Mrs. Randolph was not acceptable to Johnson. The committee on party officers just couldn't find a team that had a chance of being accepted by the convention and also could get Johnson's approval. Kathleen Voight from San Antonio was

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a woman who had been active enough to be entitled to the honor, but she was hardly sophisticated or prosperous enough to serve on the national committee.

M: Yes.

C: There was an effort to team her with Connally, among others. And there was an effort to team Silas Grant's wife with Byron Skelton. All sorts of partnerships were being suggested. Oh, yes, and someone who has served on the national committee since, Mrs. Lloyd Bentsen, was proposed to serve with Byron. And, of course, Mr. Rayburn would have been happy to have Mrs. [H. H.] Weinert go on serving until the day she died. That was the controversy that was attracting the most attention.

But the reason Connally couldn't have it was that his own caucus wouldn't support him. (Laughter) At the point where we realized that he was about to be nominated, we decided to switch our support from Mr. Buck to Byron Skelton. Up to that point, most of our people had supported Byron Skelton. And rather than see John Connally nominated and then have to come out just flat against Connally--

(Interruption)

M: Well, then Byron Skelton, of course, was elected.

C: Yes. In the course of all this discussion--of course, much of it went on before the actual session--I said, "Well, who do Rayburn and Johnson think they are? How do they think we won this thing?" Johnson had been quite candid about admitting that

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he knew how we won it. Hunter McLean was his direct contact man in the county at that time.

M: Yes.

C: We had an office; we still have a downtown office. We had had a downtown office operating at the same address under the same name ever since Stevenson lost in 1952. We figured the thing to do then was either more or nothing, and we decided to do more. The reports from the precinct conventions were coming in to our office. Hunter McLean was on our steering committee. He had agreed to help; and we had annual elections. We had elected him to our steering committee, and he attended the meetings. He was in our office. And Lyndon Johnson was furiously trying to locate him. Well, Lyndon Johnson had never heard of our office. [Inaudible] Finally, somebody suggested that he try what was called Mrs. Carter's office. It never was that. (Laughter) And he did, and Hunter was called to the telephone. (Laughter) Apparently Johnson said something pithy about: "Why haven't you been where I could locate you to find out how your precinct conventions are coming in?" And Hunter said, "Well, the reports are coming in Mrs. Carter's office, and I'm here." And Lyndon said, with sort of a note of sarcasm, "Well, please thank Mrs. Carter for me." (Laughter) There was no doubt that Mr. Buck understood it, and was free to acknowledge it. He said, "Well, you people are doing all the work, and we're just providing some advice and financial support and leadership."

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M: Yes.

C: Mrs. Randolph hadn't been able to understand why we welcomed the support of these conservative people with open arms. And I said, "Well, it's a negative asset: they provide a sort of umbrella of respectability under which we can continue to operate. They really add very little to the operation, because they've never done any precinct work. But they keep the newspapers from sniping at us. And they make it unfashionable for people to gather in fashionable places to make disagreeable jokes about us. And if there are upper middle class people who have just come to town, or have been sympathetic all along but tentative about cooperating with us, they feel they can afford to do it in the company of a McLean and a Buck.

Well, having been born to the purple herself, Mrs. Randolph couldn't see the value of having somebody born to the purple. But we saw it. And when they were willing to go the way we were going anyway, we collaborated. But Mr. Buck was quite generous and open about saying, "Well, you've done the work." On the other hand, we didn't dare put him in a position to name all his conservative friends to key committees. We wouldn't elect him chairman of the county convention, for instance, because whatever discretion he was allowed, he would certainly have used. So we didn't allow him any. We asked him

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to nominate Tom Ward for chairman of the county convention,
and he did it.

M: Yes.

C: He made a rather ungracious speech. That was the only ungracious thing he did. But maybe he really didn't know what to say about Tom that would have been more suitable. He had never worked with Tom until then. But, you know, as we operate the county convention, the chairman of the county convention names the key committees, and Mr. Buck would have named them from the elite precincts if he'd been the chairman. So we just didn't make him the chairman. (Laughter)

In that context, you know, if the caucuses . . . (Laughter)
If you really enjoy this sort of thing.

Another very disagreeable thing Connally did was to keep his fellow delegates from his own district from getting hotel rooms.

M: How can you do that?

C: Well, he was the one that was in charge of the state committee's arrangements for hotel rooms, and he would promise the reservations and then just not deliver. You were supposed to have a certain piece of paper to present at the hotel, and he simply withheld the pieces of paper for his district. After a very strenuous Sunday afternoon caucus, we held the line on the agreements that had been made.

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I said to Mr. Buck, "Now, I've got to find some friend of mine in Dallas who'll let me stay with her, because your friend John Connally has seen to it that we don't have any hotel reservations." And he said, "What do you mean, no hotel reservations? Tom has a suite in the Adolphus Hotel"--which was the convention hotel--"and that's for everybody." I said, "Well, of course, I'll feel welcome in Tom's suite, but I've got to have a plain room with a bed and a basin, where I can sleep and wash my face and get up and go about contacting other delegates about your candidacy for national committeeman, among other things." And he said, "Well, you go over to the Adolphus Hotel"--and I don't think I mentioned his candidacy for national committeeman--he said, "You go over to the Adolphus Hotel and tell Mr. So-and-so that I sent you and you're to have a room." It hadn't occurred to Mr. Buck that we would even go to spend the night. I guess he thought we just wanted the honor of sitting in the seats on the day of the convention. Maybe he didn't go to spend the night, I don't know. John was already over there, and Hunter was on his way. And I said, "No. I'm not going to do it. If Tom Ward can't get a hotel reservation except this suite where everybody can come and go, if Jack Avery can't get a hotel reservation; if Charlotte Keatts and Ross Matthews can't get hotel reservations, and they're as much

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entitled to it as I am; and if I can't get a hotel reservation in the usual way, I won't get one." I said, "The chairman of the delegation has got to have the reservations for his delegates, and I'm going to get one in the usual way." But John had already fomented a quarrel between Tom and me about something else that same day; he was good at that, too. Tom wasn't even speaking to me at the moment.

I went home to pack my bags, not knowing where I was going to put them down. I thought I'd start at the Adolphus. When I got to the Adolphus, Tom Ward was waiting at the steps to carry my bag himself and make sure that I got a hotel room in the usual way, because Raymond Buck was in town and had seen that Tom got our credentials. We went through that sort of thing about every small detail of this whole operation.

After I had got settled in my single room at the Adolphus, I went out to see what was going on. The people who might know seemed to gathered in Ed Levee's room. Ed Levee was from Texarkana.

M: How does he spell his name?

C: L-E-V-E-E, I think. He had been a sort of over-age Young Democrat when we were Young Democrats. (Laughter) And he'd been on the state committee most of the time in the forties. He was pretty well lit by then. I came in and I had already spoken to Byron Skelton and told him how disappointed I was that I hadn't been able to get our caucus

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to see it my way, and he said, "Well, I'm not too surprised. I remember how strongly your delegates felt about the meeting in Salado." So that was all he said.

Byron was in this room, I think. I don't remember who else was there, but they were all the sort of fence-straddlers who would be listening to the gossip, and that's what I was there for. (Laughter) After a while, Ed looked at me and said, "Who's going to be the national committeewoman after this convention?" I said, "Well, I don't know, Ed, but it's not going to be Lloyd Bentsen." The conversation flowed, and Ed had another drink, and by that time I was across the room from him. He looked up and pointed his finger at me. He said, "Lloyd Bentsen can't be the national committeewoman. He's a man." (Laughter) And I said, "Well, Ed, that's the point I was trying to make. I'm glad you got it. The women who've done this work are not here to see the national committeewoman's seat go as a consolation prize to some man who doesn't get to be national committeeman." And so somebody put me down as opposed to Mrs. Bentsen.

Apparently there was enough opposition to Mrs. Bentsen that she was stopped. When I found some of our friends trying to sell Raymond Buck without success, I said, "Well, what is all this about Mrs. Lloyd Bentsen and Byron Skelton? Byron Skelton is Mr. Rayburn's candidate." I said, "Didn't Rayburn and Johnson figure they'd have to settle for him, and we were going to have the national committeewoman? That's one and one."

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M: Yes.

C: I said, "How did they figure it?" And they said, "Well, apparently, they figured it one for Rayburn and one for Johnson." (Laughter)
And, apparently, that was the way they figured it.

And the only way we got them persuaded that that was not going to happen was that at the large caucus the night before--the committee opened on Tuesday morning--Johnson was booed. Now what difference did that make? I thought everybody who took an active part in politics was booed some time or another by some of his friends or some of his enemies.

M: Yes.

C: But it just destroyed him. The Houston delegation were able to make all kinds of deals about small arrangements which it could see were important, because Johnson had been booed. And what they used for leverage to make the arrangements about how the convention was going to be conducted the next day--when, incidentally, Mr. Buck was the temporary chairman of the convention: everybody trusted him for that--you know, what they were asking for were things that would give these people a feeling that they were really participating in the convention--what they used for leverage was that they could undertake to say that if the people kept feeling they were participating in the convention, Johnson would not be booed again.

M: Now, is this how Mrs. Randolph got elected?

C: Yes. She insisted that the test vote in the convention come on the matter of replacing the people on the state committee, and I

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spoke to her representative. I have visited with Mrs. Randolph frequently. But she's a woman who was as old then as I am now. She had a younger man doing most of the wheeling and dealing.

And I said to Ed, "We won't get but one shot at it. And we'll have a lot better chance making a test vote on her nomination than making it on some convention policy. And he said, "Well, that's what she wants it on." I said, "Well, do you think we have as good a chance to win on that"--which would be offensive to a good many leaders of delegations, to have one of their duties taken away from them--"as we would on just nominating her for national committee-woman?" He said, "No, I agree with you"--he wanted to vote on nominating her--"but I've been forbidden to do it that way." He said, "Are you going to talk to her about it?" And I said, "Yes, I will."

So we went to her suite, where she was explaining it to numerous other people. I wasn't the only one who had the same idea. And she said, "It doesn't matter whether I'm on the national committee or not. The important thing is to keep faith with these people in the precincts. They did all this work so that there would be the kind of leadership in Texas to make a strong campaign for the national nominee. And we have to use all the strength we've got seeing to it that they get what they did the work for. They didn't do it so I could go sit on some national committee."

Well, of course, most of them had, because they figured if she

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sat on the national committee it would be a pretty good national committee and a lot better one because she was sitting on it. But we couldn't convince her, and we lost the vote. The roll call vote was on this business of replacing the state committee as the national campaign organization, and we didn't win it.

But then, just as Jesse Andrews from Houston nominated Mrs. Randolph--and all the time they knew what was going on about the other matters--her partisans had time to solidify her support, and it became obvious that she was going to be the national committee-woman. Poor Grover Sellers was chairman of the committee on party officers, and he sent word to Rayburn and Johnson that they might as well be graceful about it, she was going to win it, so why not bring in a report recommending her. And he was told not to do it. So the committee brought in a report that Byron Skelton was recommended for the national committeeman and the committee had no recommendations for national committeewoman.

Then others were nominated. I believe Mrs. Voight allowed herself to be nominated, but I'm not sure about that. I just don't remember who else was nominated, because Mrs. Randolph already had the votes. I know who else had been discussed. We had been approached on behalf of each of the candidates that Mr. Rayburn and Johnson had hoped to sell. I do remember that she was nominated from the floor, because they never ended the battle, and elected, after her supporters had lost on the first vote.

(Interruption)

M: We were talking about the election of Mrs. Randolph, and how she

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was nominated from the floor and elected. The Johnson people did not support her, but had to accept her, I suppose?

C: Well, we were all Johnson people.

M: Yes, [but] the immediate Johnson faction.

C: She was not the first choice of Johnson and Connally.

M: Then there was this second convention in Texas in the fall, and Mrs. Randolph did not get through the door.

C: That's right.

M: Now, what happened there? Did you go to that convention, incidentally?

C: Yes, but I was not a delegate. Without the umbrella of conservative local support, we didn't win the second round here. Now, in Houston, they did. They were cheated of their credentials. We were not. I believe we contested our opposition's right to the seats, but we were a minority in the second round of the convention here.

M: What happened to your support, then? Your conservative support?

C: The attitude of hostility--I mean the hostility of the established influential local people--asserted itself again when the umbrella of official approval was withdrawn. It was that simple.

Johnson was directly responsible for that, in a very open and prompt fashion. As soon as we had won the conventions for him, he went back to Washington. And at the airport, he gave an interview in which he said the recent round of Texas conventions was a rebuke to

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the right wing of the Texas Democratic Party. He had just succeeded in vanquishing them in a convention fight, and now he said, "We intend to vanquish the liberal wing of the Democratic Party." Just like that, as soon as the convention was over. And he did it, except that in Harris County the liberals won. The liberals still win in Harris Country, and they usually win in Bexar County. But, as I heard Billie Carr tell Birch Bayh's task force for the McGovern Committee in June of this year, "It has been a long time since the management of the state Democratic Party has made the mistake of seating both Houston and San Antonio in the same state convention.

In Fort Worth in 1956 in the fall, it was Houston that was not seated. So Mrs. Randolph and her delegates and a number of other good liberals sat in the Pioneer Palace all day on the same fairgrounds with the Municipal Auditorium and did not enter the convention. Of course, Mr. Rayburn and Mr. Johnson would have been very pleased if she had come in without her delegation. They didn't want to have the national committeewoman snub them, but she wouldn't come in except as a member of her delegation.

I went in as an observer about the middle of it on some credentials that were given me by a friend from a rural county. The ultra-conservative local people, the ones who made the business of keeping liberal Democrats out of the conventions here, scouted the state convention and made a list of all the local people who were in the auditorium without being delegates. Because, of course,

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they had armed Rangers on the doors to see that only people who were delegates with credentials came in. But there's nothing in the law or the tradition of the Democratic Party to say that a proxy can't be a person from another county, and my credentials were given me by a person from a rural county who decided to go home early; there was nothing going on here anyway. (Laughter) But I was later asked by a Tarrant County grand jury if my credentials were authentic. They called me in connection with another matter; but apparently they called everyone that these ultra-conservative scouts had listed; and most of us knew nothing about the other matter. They asked us one by one, in a situation where we were not supposed to say what we'd been asked until that term of the court was over, anyway, whether our credentials were genuine. The district attorney who had been one of my high school students and was doing the questioning didn't quite have the nerve to ask me from whom I got the credentials. If he had I guess I'd still be in jail for contempt, because I wouldn't have told him. (Laughter)

What happened there was that Mr. Rayburn and Mr. Johnson just gave the party machinery back to the same people who had double-crossed Mr. Rayburn in 1952. And, of course, we didn't carry Texas for the Democratic nominee that year either.

M: Did Rayburn and Johnson campaign for Stevenson in 1956?

C: Oh, yes. But by that time what has looked to me like the Connally influence was dominant again in their counsels, and they had separated themselves from the only organized support that they

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could have commanded. Just by asking for it, they could have commanded it. Not that we didn't also campaign for Stevenson; we did. The thing about it that many people don't understand is that it was nothing that the liberals did in 1956 that caused us to begin to lose after that. It was something that Johnson did.

M: Now what was that?

C: He just separated himself from us. He used us.

M: If Johnson then had supported you . . .?

C: If he had continued at the head of the Democrats of Texas. We were the Democrats of Texas. There was no other group in Texas who could be depended upon to support Democratic nominees. And he cast us aside. He was in a position to do it. But we had never been a majority, even within what was called the Democratic Party, and that's what many people don't understand. They say if the liberals hadn't been so cantankerous when they won something, they'd still be winning. Well, that wasn't what happened. We had been a minority; we were a minority at the time that these conservative, but loyal, people joined us with sufficient strength to make a majority. And as soon as Johnson had the one thing he needed--which was a delegation to the national convention who would go home and support the national nominee--he announced publicly that he didn't need us anymore.

M: So then, liberal strength really doesn't decline, does it?

C: Well, the fact that since 1956 we haven't been in so powerful a position in another convention, at least, does not prove that

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liberal strength has declined. Now I think perhaps it has. One of the reasons is that what happened in 1956 has been misrepresented to so many people who don't understand it.

There's always the business of picking off as many people as you can from a faction with whom you had formed a temporary alliance--that's a conventional practice of influential people--and then persuading them after they've become disillusioned, if they have sense enough to become disillusioned, that the choice they made was still the best one. Because you can say, "Look at those liberals who didn't think the same way. What have they won since?" And, of course, what the turncoat doesn't realize [is] that he's part of the difference to which his attention is being called.

But the irony of the thing is not that I and my friends, or people that happened to be associated with me temporarily, are not influential, but that there is no dependable Democratic Party. I've never been involved in an effort to strengthen the influence of people whose views correspond to mine. I've been involved all my adult life in trying to strengthen the Democratic Party in Texas, so that the national Democratic Party could count on them. And that was something in which Johnson had a much greater interest than ordinary volunteers like me.

M: Well, you would think that he'd welcome such an organization.

C: No, having lived as long as I have and seen what I have seen, I understand why he doesn't. When you involve yourself with an organization, then you become responsible to majorities within

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that organization.

M: You have to be responsive to them?

C: You have to be responsive to whomever you associate yourself with. And he wants to do things for us, but he doesn't want to do things with us.

M: That's an intriguing statement.

C: You see, Mrs. Randolph and Ralph Yarborough have provided us with a different kind of leadership. They're part of the Democratic Party. And there are many others; they just happen to be the best known ones. But there are many very able, useful, dedicated people who are willing to . . . (tape ends abruptly)

Tape 2 of 2

M: I was wondering if you had anything to do with the 1960 campaign.

C: Well, we made a try in 1960.

M: Now, did you support Johnson for the presidency?

C: No, I supported Stevenson.

M: In 1960?

C: Well, I mean, oh yes, we supported Stevenson for the presidency, but I don't believe he was even nominated. We supported Johnson for vice president, but for the presidential nomination, no. We supported Stevenson.

M: Yes, that's what I'm talking about.

C: We supported Stevenson. And, of course, he didn't win the state convention.

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M: That's right. And the conservative faction went then and supported Johnson.

C: Yes, yes.

M: And then Johnson accepted the vice presidency. Were you willing to accept Johnson as vice president?

C: Certainly. I was surprised that he was willing to be the vice president.

M: Why?

C: Because the majority leader of the Senate, it seemed to me, was more influential. And he was a superb maneuverer as majority leader in the Senate, and I couldn't see him giving up the sort of thing that he did best to play second fiddle to a younger man in a position where he would probably have very little opportunity to influence anything. That's the traditional position of the vice president.

M: What about that in 1964? Did you support Johnson for the presidency?

C: Certainly!

M: Why?

C: He was doing very well.

M: And what do you mean by that?

C: Well, I mean that when he came into the presidency under the most difficult of circumstances, he immediately began to use the skill that he had developed while he was becoming majority leader and serving as majority leader. He got all the New Deal measures off the back burner and into the statute books, all the unfinished

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business of the New Deal; and then he proceeded to get a greater portion of Kennedy's program enacted into law than Kennedy could have gotten enacted into law had he lived. That was an impressive record of accomplishment. He was entitled to our support.

M: Did the liberals in your area look upon President Johnson as a liberal?

C: No.

M: Did you agree to his policies, such as aid to education, housing, welfare?

C: Oh, yes. It was the domestic program that impressed us. But Johnson was an active and competent promoter of policies whose time had come; their time had come because people more liberal than he had made sacrifices for them. He has never involved himself, as a leader, in educating his constituency. Someone else has had to do the educational work on which his successes as a manipulator are based.

M: And he didn't even do this while president then?

C: No.

M: He didn't try to build a base in Texas, even while president?

C: No. Not among the ordinary people. No. His concern in Texas was with the influential.

And, of course, somebody told [John] Connally in Washington that he never had been elected to anything, so he came home and got elected to something, and that renewed his credentials as an advisor on tactics in Washington.

M: Did you have any contact, any personal contact with Lyndon Johnson

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during the 1960s?

C: No.

M: While vice president or president? Did you have any contact with him then after that 1956 fight?

C: He wrote us off then.

M: That finished it.

C: Yes.

M: Do you have any evaluation of such a man?

C: Well, yes. He belongs to his time and place as we all do. He's a man of tremendous drive, and he has tremendous accomplishment to his credit. And he's a tremendous cynic, and he's made some outsized mistakes.

M: What do you consider his mistakes?

C: His failure to grasp the international situation.

M: Vietnam?

C: Yes.

M: How about his domestic program?

C: I think he did as well as could be done, for then. I think he did better than anyone else in the same position could have done at the same time. He kept as much that was constructive--in the sense that it kept opening opportunities, which is my test--going as could be kept going. He looked ahead to the next step in all the constructive areas of domestic policy and pushed harder than the Congress was ready to follow him which is as hard as the executive can push. Of course, the credibility gap opened, for one thing,

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because he kept saying that we could make this progress on the domestic front while we continued to fight the war in Vietnam. But I think what he was doing was taking the best possible position for reconversion from the war-time economy to the domestic tasks that often have priority, and he knew what the right ones were. His tragedy was that he could not see how to get out of this terrible situation in Vietnam, which he did not get into by himself. Of course, he made the government wind up the villain.

M: Were you surprised when he chose not to run again.

C: Yes.

M: Why were you surprised?

C: I just didn't realize that he was an heroic figure until then-- heroic in the literal sense of larger than life, bigger than the ordinary man. I didn't think about his choosing that way out of the corner into which he was being pushed.

Of course, it's a measure of his hypersensitivity. I remembered that he couldn't stand being booed at the 1956 convention. He couldn't stand being defeated any time. But quite apart from that personal frailty, which it is, it was a big man's way to get out of a tremendously difficult situation. And what he said that time was all the right things to say. He said he didn't want what he was going to do from then on to be judged in the light of possible partisan advantage. There would have been no way to keep every move he made from being judged in that light had he not withdrawn. It was the right thing to do.

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M: Well, now, let me ask you an open-ended question in order to wind up the interview. Is there anything I should have asked you about that, in my ignorance, I didn't ask you about, or any comment you wish to make?

C: There are one or two things. I think it's important that he was the first president to come from a southern state since Reconstruction. I think it's good that the Southwest has been opened as a region from which potential national leaders will come.

M: You think this has changed.

C: I do. I think the fact that he has been the president has made other people from the Southwest who would not have become known at all, perhaps not even in government, eligible for national audiences which they merit. I thought about some of those people. Bill Moyers is one, and Willie Morris is another, and Ramsey Clark. I think it's remarkable that people like them have come into positions of national recognition, national influence. And I think the fact that there was a president from the Southwest is a part of that.

Also, of course, for those who believe that a business and financial elite does run the country, he was able to open that elite to a few rich men from the Southwest. They're getting frozen out already. So that what they bought with those munificent contributions was not quite all they hoped to buy. But it's all right to have some newcomers from the Southwest in that way, too.

Then, I think that the sort of crude in-fighting that we

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talked about more than I had thought we would is a sample of his candor in using and exposing the cruder methods of political advancement, as he found them. He didn't invent them. But when he discovered that influential people, who are sometimes able to do a little more subtly some of the crude things he did too, were already doing them, he played the game according to the rules he found. It never bothered me much that somebody undoubtedly cheated when he first went to the Senate, because somebody undoubtedly cheated back in 1941 when he didn't get to go to the Senate. And in both situations, he accepted the game as he found it. It was the only one in town.

M: Is this necessary?

C: Yes.

M: For a politician to do that?

C: Of course, some politicians can influence the level of decency in which the game is played, and that's one of the things that unknown volunteers do. In the years when they do win, they can establish a tradition of decency which, if they win as much as twice in a row, becomes a custom; and the people who are willing to play dirty think that's a customary barrier there--they can't play any dirtier.

So that he could have moved somewhat in the other direction. He could have made it more decent instead of more brutal, but I don't blame him for playing it the way he found it, and I don't blame him too much for being candid about the way it's really played. He is rid of the charge of hypocrisy in this aspect

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of his conduct.

But the most serious limitation that he suffers is the narrowness of the life he has led. All his life he's been a secretary to a congressman, or a member of Congress, or a maneuverer in some way in a rather narrow portion of even the Washington society where he was present. I think he felt his limitations, and he knew that he was not at home with some kinds of people. That was the reason why he was so sensitive to criticism and so insistent on 110 per cent loyalty, repeated over and over, by the people who served him and advised him. He was without experience of other cultures or other ways of looking at life, which made it important for him especially in international policy, to be able to draw on the superior sophistication of people with whom he had needed to associate. Now, Truman was a more modest man who was able to get better advice to supplement his limitations than Johnson was able to get, because the people with the broader experience wouldn't tolerate his Napoleonic bad manners. So he found himself locked in with a few fanatical advisors who were mesmerized by their own anti-communism. And that's tragic.

It was part of his limitation that he could not believe there was a military operation which could not be won with American technology and money. He did not know there were people in the world whose values were so different from his that they could die for the difference. He hadn't seen anybody die for a cause. He never even made a sacrifice for a cause. He had supported many worthy

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causes, but only at the point where supporting the cause would also advance his interests. And he didn't know there were people whose motivation was different from that. But there are.

M: Maybe on that point I should call the interview to a halt. I thank you for your time.

C: I'm so glad you came.

[End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview I]

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