INTERVIEW I

DATE: May 7, 1965

INTERVIEWEE: WILLARD DEASON

INTERVIEWER: ERIC F. GOLDMAN

PLACE: Mr. Deason's office at KVET Radio, Austin, Texas

G: When did you first come to know the President?

D: In the spring of 1927.

G: What was your relationship to him then?

D: We were college students at San Marcos, Southwest State Teachers College. We both entered in what was at that time called the spring term. It was a short term that no longer exists but about the first of April or something like that. My first recollection of him was meeting in a math class that we had together. We were sitting across the aisle from one another and got into a little argument, about what I don't remember, but I do remember that we got into an argument and got a little heated. After the class was over, I stalked out and he overtook me and dropped his long, lanky arm around my shoulder and said, "Well, now, buddy, that's just all in a day's work. Let's don't be mad at one another." I fell in love with the guy and have been ever since.

G: What other classes were you in with him and do you remember in specific Professor Greene?

D: Yes, I was in a good many classes with him. The math class, the first one I just described, was under Dr. Buckner, whom I believe

at one time had been the high school superintendent at Johnson City. But to answer your question, I think I was in two or three classes with him with Dr. Greene. Dr. Greene taught history and government; that was my minor and I believe is was also the President's minor, maybe his major. So we had several classes together under Dr. Greene. I don't recall exactly how many.

G: Mr. Deason, the President, of course, was heavily influenced by Professor Greene and has often spoke of him. Could you tell us about Professor Greene--what he looked like, what his ideas were, the way he taught, et cetera?

D: Yes, first, I will describe his general appearance. Dr. Greene was smaller than the average man; he was not too careful about his dress; he wasn't particular whether his pants were pressed or not, and he didn't visit the barbershop too often. But that physical appearance belied his mental appearance and mental agility. He thought fast, he moved fast. And he was a deep thinker and a rather outspoken man and I would say a rather unusual man. I still remember very well some things I learned under him that have been a guide in my life ever since.

One time he was discussing the different forms of government and discussing the weaknesses of a democracy and its strength. He said a democracy could be compared to a raft. You've got to cross a lake and you get on a raft and you pole it across. It's slow and it's cumbersome sometimes, but you always get across;

whereas if you started across in a speedboat, which we could compare to a dictatorship, you might run aground and you're down and you're sunk. By and large, if you want to be sure to get across the lake, take the raft. And I remember that again and again.

F: Professor Greene, of course, was a Democrat. In terms of the great issues of that day which were being discussed in public, did he have any particularly strong feelings which he expressed?

D: I can't answer that specifically. He was a Democrat and he believed in the Democratic Party which maybe at that time had not expanded in some of the things which we have today, bearing in mind this was back in the late twenties. But he was a great believer in government by the people and for the people. He was a great believer in constitutional government too and in people's participating.

G: During this San Marcos period, the President was the vigorous young leader in almost everything. Are there any particular stories about him which you remember which would illustrate that?

D: I have one or two. I remember the "Silk Sock" episode. Back in those days there was a brand of socks called Real Silk and they were sold only by door-to-door agents. Lyndon and one of his friends, Vernon Whiteside, had come from San Marcos to Austin and got themselves an agency and a set of samples to sell socks from time to time. Whiteside basically was the agent but one weekend that summer the boys decided they wanted to go to

Laredo for a little weekend outing. Bear in mind this was before 1932. One of them had a car but they seemed to have no money. That was apparently an insurmountable problem until it got around to Lyndon, who said: "Whiteside, where is that Real Silk sock kit?" So he proceeded to get the kit and disappeared for about three hours and came back with enough commission money out of the sale of the socks to make the trip to Laredo. He sold socks to college professors, preachers, and I think even some of the downtown merchants, who sold other socks in their own stores. But it illustrates the President's whole life. To him, a problem is a challenge and a challenge is an opportunity.

I might also tell you about the time that he sent me as a delegate to the Texas Press Club Association. We had in the college a press club, and those of us who edited the newspaper or annual belonged to the press club. I believe he was president of it. Our last year in school there was a state meeting at Abilene of all the college press clubs and apparently he couldn't go. He had two or three other jobs to do and he came and asked me if I could go. I said, "Well I'd like to, but I have no funds." So he said, "Give me a few minutes," and he disappeared into the president's office and came back and said the President's going to let us have ten dollars out of his contingency fund to send a delegate to the Press Club and I was assigned the job. Well, I put the ten dollars in my pocket, hitchhiked up there and back and had most of it when I got back.

G: Mr. Deason, this man you were speaking of, Dr. Evans, the college president, apparently played a big part in the President's life there. Would you tell us about Dr. Evans, what he looked like, why he liked the president [Lyndon Johnson], what the president did for him, et cetera, whatever you remember?

D: Dr. Evans was a man who is hard to describe. He was a rather complex fellow; he didn't appear to get very close to the students or to the faculty. There seemed to be that invisible wall, at least as far as his students where concerned, which we didn't dare go beyond. Apparently though, LBJ breached that wall soon after coming to San Marcos because he was working in the president's office and seemed to have the president's ear. Though I didn't realize it so much at that time, I later came to realize that the president [Evans] had a great admiration for Lyndon Johnson.

G: What did the president [LBJ] work at? Was he a janitor?

D: When Lyndon Johnson first came there he had a job, I believe, sweeping in one of the buildings. They used student janitors for a good number of jobs and a good number of fellows got through school that way. But after a few months, he came to the attention of President Evans, or maybe he brought himself to the attention of President Evans. Anyway, he became an assistant in the president's office working under Mr. Tom Nichols, who was the president's secretary.

G: Do you know what he did as an assistant? Did he help keep records?

D: I do not know specifically. We would see him, I would say, on

assignments. He would cross the campus in that long stride, going maybe with a message from the president's office to one of the department heads in the library building or the science building or something like that. I was not familiar with his work inside the office. I saw him in there very little because, as I said, we didn't go to the president's office unless we were sent for.

G: In terms of the President's interest during those days, as a friend of his, did you think of him as a man who was going to go into politics?

D: Yes, I did. He had a natural interest in politics. Even at the age of nineteen or twenty he had a knowledge of it far beyond the average student. I think it sprang from the fact that his father was a legislator and his uncle was a judge and he had grown up in politics. He had brought it with him and he talked it with anybody who would talk it. I had always been an interested observer of politics and we talked politics. Yes, I recognized him early as a real leader, a real politician and a man with an innate desire to get ahead in the world.

G: Could you help us on two scores with respect to that? One is that people say he talked a great deal about politics. What specifically did he talk about? Was it about local candidates, local issues, et cetera? The other question is: Some people have the feeling that he probably intended to go into teaching or law, perhaps as a prelude to politics, perhaps as complete

careers. Do you have any impression as to what you think was in his mind then?

D: It's been thirty-five years and I'm not sure. He, like the rest of us, was preparing to be a teacher but these other ambitions and visions went along and beyond that. I might tell you that he took a very active part in politics while in school there. We had a young representative from Gonzales, Texas, running for the state senate, Welly K. Hopkins. Lyndon became Welly's campaign manager in and around San Marcos and organized a rally for him. I don't know how he worked it out but he got Dr. Evans to invite the candidate to come and speak in the auditorium. I well remember how Lyndon organized almost a cheering squad, at least a clapping squad for Welly Hopkins. He worked with the local newspaper there in getting publicity for Welly. And while carrying a full load of classes, and working in the president's office, he found time to help Hopkins and of course Welly was elected to the Senate.

G: A number of people commented upon the fact that they had the feeling even in those days that this man was a comer, he was sure to go some place. Did you have that feeling and, if so, just what were the qualities of this man that gave you the feeling?

D: There were about two or three qualities. One was his energy, his great desire to move ahead with things. Another was his natural political inclination to know everybody, to speak to

everybody and to be considerate of everybody. His natural inquisitiveness, his natural love of people and of doing things and of moving fast just made him stand out from the average student.

G: Before we leave the San Marcos period, are there any other facts or impressions that you think should be part of the history record?

D: Yes, I would repeat for you the White Star-Black Star story because I think that I can give you a pretty accurate summary. The Black Star and the White Star were secret organizations on the campus. For a number of years, the Black Stars had more or less dominated student activities and in 1929 and 1930, the White Stars were organized which comprised some seven, eight, or nine fellows, including the president. When the spring term came around and we were ready to make our move, it was suggested that he run for president but he turned it down and said, "Let's take old Bill--he's go no scars on him. We can elect him"--me being old Bill. So I was nominated against a very popular president who was running for re-election. We had a normal campaign going and the night before election we caucused and decided we were behind twenty votes and decided to throw in the sponge--all but Lyndon. He said, "Oh, no, if twenty votes is all we need, we've got from now until eight o'clock in the morning to get twenty votes." This was toward midnight on the . . . .

G: How many votes total?

D: Roughly a hundred to a hundred and fifty were in the senior class. The rest of us broke up and went to bed--all except Lyndon. He went to work. When the average man gives up, he's just beginning. Sometime between midnight and eight the next morning, he changed an estimated twenty-eight votes because we won by twenty-eight votes.

G: Mr. Deason, could you describe a bit the difference between the Black Stars and the White Stars? It's my impression that the Black Stars had represented the athletic heroes and the more established people on the campus and that you were the new, young, upcoming group, is that correct?

D: Yes, that's an accurate description.

G: Then, too, what about where the President lived when he was a student at San Marcos.

D: For a year or two, maybe three years, LBJ lived in what was called the president's garage. There was an apartment over the garage. Lyndon lived in there with another Johnson, Boody Johnson, from Houston. He was a student at that time but is now a teacher in the Houston Public School system. His name was Alfred T. Johnson but he was commonly known as Boody. There was no bath there, as I understand it, so they had to take a shower in the gym which was just across the road from there. He lived there most of the time. He ate some of his meals at the Gates' house. We did have a cafeteria but not too many of the students

ate there. Most of us lived in boarding houses and ate in boarding houses. He stayed for a short time I think at another house and maybe some other boarding houses there. I don't remember but he ate at the Gates' house and lived in the president's garage most of the time.

F: What was the approximate tuition?

D: As I recall it, it was twelve dollars or fifteen dollars a semester and then there were some lab fees, maybe fifty cents or a dollar if you were taking physics or chemistry or a subject like that.

G: At one stage, the President's family came to San Marcos, didn't they? Could you trace what you know about all the places where he lived?

D: I cannot tell you where he first lived when he came there. I just don't know. He lived in the garage and Boody Johnson graduated a year ahead of us and moved out. Lyndon dropped out in 1929 to teach school, so he was not there. He came back in the fall of 1929 and I believe that's when his family moved to San Marcos. I know where they lived but I can't remember the street--about a mile or mile and a half from the college in the western part of town.

G: Here is a letter addressed from 420 North Austin Street.

D: That was the boarding house. 420 North Austin was the Gates' house. That's where he took his meals. Mrs. Gates was the name of the lady who lived in the house. Two or three boys lived with her but some fifteen or twenty ate with her. Nearly everybody

who lived in that area had a garage apartment. That's the way they made extra money--the families who lived there. A great many of the boys lived in garage apartments and took meals either at the college cafeteria or at these boarding houses or at the downtown restaurants. You had these three places to eat. Downtown restaurants, college cafeterias or the boarding houses.

G: How much do you think the average expense per month was for a student in addition to tuition?

D: A good many students who went there existed on about thirty dollars a month. You could eat two meals a day at Mrs. Gates' boarding house for fourteen dollars, and you could get your room with another fellow over a garage and it would cost you somewhere between six dollars and ten dollars a month for room rent. Many of the boys did their own washing or they sent it home to mommy and she'd wash and iron them and send them back. So you had your twelve dollars and fifteen dollars enrollment fee, which was 3 times a year, and you had those other expenses. If you had fifty dollars a month coming from home, you were well off.

G: Mr. Deason, can you tell us a little bit about what the president's social life was like at San Marcos? A lot of people have said that he was so busy that he didn't date very much. Is this your impression?

D: Yes, that's my recollection of him. He had some dates. As he does everything else, if he concentrated on a girl, he would concentrate pretty hard, but then he would switch after a while.

G: Were you at San Marcos during the year 1928 when the Democratic convention was held in Houston? Apparently the President attended that convention as a member of the student press corps. Would you describe that story?

D: I'm sorry. I have no recollection of that.

G: Do you know anything about his writings for the college newspaper?

D: I was out one summer and that may have been during the summer I was out.

G: Mr. Deason, let's switch over now to holidays and summers during the San Marcos period. What did you do? What did he do? What did you fellows do generally?

D: You say holidays and summers. We went to school right through the summer, too, you see. The summer term started around the first of June and ended around the middle of August. That's the way he graduated in two years and three summers--something like that.

G: What would that two years and three summers be equivalent to?

D: It would be equivalent to a little over three years. Fall term, spring term, winter term, and summer term.

G: Was it a two year course?

D: No, it was four years. You got a BA or a BS degree when you graduated. But by going summers, you could finish in three years and by taking extra loads, you could finish in a little less than three calendar years, which I believe he did.

G: Mr. Deason, one final question on recreation. Was there a

place where you all went and had cokes and sat around and talked? What was it like?

D: There was a place where we sat and talked, two places actually. One was a confectionary called the "Bob Cat," which was at the foot of the hill. That's where we'd normally hang out. The bull sessions would go on and we would drink cokes or sit on the curb and smoke and carry on our sessions. On the campus there was also a water fountain and there were great sessions that took place around the water fountain, sometimes real bull sessions. I think maybe we learned more there than we did in the classroom at times.

G: What did you talk about?

D: Oh, everything that students talk about. Sometimes we'd have some pretty hot arguments about economics or about government, politics, football or sex--those things that go along with a normal person's life.

G: In these discussions did the President line himself up with what might be called the more conservative or the more liberal group, if those words had any meaning in this connection?

D: Those words had no meaning whatsoever. They just hadn't come into existence as far as we were concerned there. There were basically what we called two groups--the town boys and the college boys. The college being located in San Marcos, a small town, most of the sons of the merchants and the lawyers and the doctors had automobiles. None of us had automobiles at that time. So naturally the town boys had a little running start on us in courting the girls and there was some jealousy there that

sort of divided us into two sections. Beyond that there were no liberals or conservatives unless you would say that the fellows with automobiles were conservatives and those that didn't were liberals.

G: Was prohibition an issue? Did you talk about prohibition?

D: Probably we did talk about the Ku Klux. It had just gone over the hill a few years at that time--I just don't recall specifically.

G: Do you have any recollections of the graduation exercises at San Marcos?

D: I graduated at the end of the spring term in June and Lyndon graduated at the end of the summer term in August. He had dropped out a year to teach school and so by putting in two years and three summers, plus the other springtime which we talked about in the beginning, we got out the same year.

G: And that was August of 1930?

D: August, 1930, he graduated.

G: In September, 1930, he went to Houston to teach school?

D: Yes, he went first to Pearsall. He got a job at Pearsall, Texas, and had just started working maybe a week or so when the Houston system notified him that he had been chosen for a job down there. Pearsall released him and he went to work as a debate coach in the fall of 1930.

G: Is one of his reasons that he went to Houston because of his Uncle George, who taught in the Houston school system?

D: Well, it could have been but it was also an opportunity to coach debate which he was very fond of.

G: Let's move on to the NYA period, Mr. Deason. When the President came to run NYA in Texas, is it correct that he asked you to be the number two assistant, and Mr. Kellam was the number one assistant?

D: I believe that the NYA was created in June or July of 1935. Lyndon was appointed state director for the state of Texas. I was living in Houston and he called and asked me to meet him in Austin for a couple of weeks. He wanted me to get my vacation, and then help him with the new project he was undertaking. I met him here and he told me what the NYA was and I think I was the fourth person. He already had L. E. Jones, and Marie Lindau and Al already there working. L. E. Jones was the boy who debated for him in high school in Houston. And he hired Marie, the little girl, right out of business school here. At the end of the two weeks, he said, "Go back to Houston and get a leave of absence for six months." And I did that. It's been thirty-five years and I haven't been back yet to claim my old job.

G: Would you tell us about the NYA work?

D: Well, of course, the first job was to put together a staff, which he did. Jesse Kellam was brought in as soon as he could get him released from the State Department of Education. He was assistant to the state school superintendent and he asked the superintendent to release him. It took a few weeks for that to be accomplished.

Sherman Birdwell was brought into the picture and then we started adding the other folks. The NYA consisted basically of two divisions: the student-aid division which concerned part-time employment for students in college and in high school, sixteen years or over. So the student-aid broke down into two divisions: the college division and the high school division. It was part-time employment for students from needy families and need was established by the Relief Administration of the state. The high school people decided need for high school, the college officials decided for the college group. Now the other major portion of NYA work was what we called work projects, that was for out-of-school youths between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one, I believe. They were certified to us by the Relief Commission. We set up various types of work projects. One of the very early ones and one of the successful ones, the one that brought a lot of notice all over the state and over the nation, was the state roadside parks. The [Texas] Highway Commission, of course, built the highways and maintained them and it made some effort to establish roadside parks.

G: Mr. Deason, do you know who thought of the roadside park project?

D: I really don't know, but I think Lyndon Johnson thought of it. I learned of it through him. He took the idea to the State Highway Department and between the state highway engineers, that staff and Lyndon's staff, the details were worked out. The State Highway Department supervised the building of them, furnished the

technical help, the bookkeeping, the timekeeping, and they furnished all the material too. So the only money which the NYA put into the parks was the labor of the youngsters. Outside of maybe the district supervisor, the entire funds for the roadside parks went into youth labor.

G: We know that the President was particularly proud of the roadside park project and certainly should have been. Do you recall any other projects in which he had special interest during the NYA period?

D: The President only served in the NYA from June or July of 1935 until April of 1937, when he resigned to run for Congress. There were also school gymnasiums.

G: When you say school gymnasiums, do you mean the building of school gymnasiums with NYA labor?

D: Yes. Not only school gymnasiums but also vocational agricultural buildings--additional buildings that a school district might need. It might have some funds to furnish the materials but with the abundant supply of unemployed labor in the area, Federal funds furnished the labor and sometimes part of the materials and we worked with the sponsors who were local school districts, as a rule, putting up things like that.

G: Mr. Deason, would you describe for us a typical day in the NYA office? What was the boss like; how did he operate, et cetera?

D: The hours were long and hard, particularly in the beginning. We had to get the show on the road, so to speak, and there

was lots of red tape to cut through and he cut through it. He had his problems in doing it, but we worked long and hard and where a normal man would give up, he was just beginning. I recall a little incident when we were having a meeting one Sunday. The district men, working out of the district, would work six days a week. Then on Sundays we would bring them into Austin to review the week's activities and outline what was ahead. One Sunday, the President stood up and described some of the problems we were having but he said, "We all have them but we are going to meet them." He rammed his hands into his coat pockets, one hand in one side and one hand in the other and said, "I carry Ex-Lax in this pocket," and he shook it and you could hear a little Ex-Lax rattling in a tin can. And he said, "In the other one," and he shook it, "I carry aspirin. Take both Ex-Lax and aspirin, but we have got to get the job done and we're going to do it."

G: Mr. Deason, during this NYA period, are there any other incidents that you recall which would characterize the President's way of working?

D: Let me tell this little story which I think typifies his operation. There were five of us who had been to San Antonio on some sort of a mission, inspecting projects and getting things going. We had worked pretty hard and about two or two-thirty, we had started home. One of the boys in the back seat said, "Are we going to have any lunch?" Lyndon was driving and he wheeled into a drive-in roadside stand and the girl came out and he said: "Bring five

bottles of milk and ten hamburgers and make it in a hurry."

G: Aubrey Williams referred to the Texas NYA as the most outstanding in the nation. Did it receive much national publicity?

D: Well, yes, by Mr. Williams at the meetings. We would go to national meetings. Sometimes he complimented us to the point that it was almost embarrassing. We worked hard and were real interested in what we were doing. I have never seen any other organization that had the esprit de corps that this one had. You will recall that the President was under thirty years of age. He gathered around him a bunch of young men. At that time, the Depression was on and it was easy to hire young people who were outstanding in their field and able, willing and anxious to work. He was a keen judge of human nature and he built himself a staff that just wouldn't quit. One or two of them did quit but they couldn't go the pace. That's the reason they quit. They just couldn't gear themselves to go Lyndon Johnson's pace so they just had to fall by the wayside. They didn't make the team, so to speak.

G: Mr. Deason, I know you're not talking about this because you don't think it's important but in terms of a detailed, colorful story, would you tell us specifically all the little details about the office.

D: His office was just an ordinary little office in the Littlefield Building. I guess it was twelve by twelve. It was on the sixth floor, 603 or 605, I think, maybe his was 601 and the entrance was 603 and the adjacent room was 605. But we had two girls in

the reception office and the rest of us were pretty well crowded up, having two or three in an office in the beginning. Gradually we would scrounge around and get a little more space. But people were always stacked on one another. There wasn't time for sitting back with your name on the door and taking pride in the appearance of your office. That wasn't uppermost in anybody's mind. There was a job to be done and that was what we were thinking about. The President came to work early and we would work late.

Maybe once a month he would say, "Well, now let's play awhile." Saturday afternoon we would take off and all day Sunday and there would be no meetings. We would play golf, ride horseback or go to San Antonio for the weekend or something like that. He played as hard as he worked but he worked a hell of a lot longer--oh yes, he would play too. He played some golf, not a lot.

The President and Mrs. Johnson lived in Dr. Bob Montgomery's house which they rented. He was in Washington on special assignment so he rented them the house for a year.

G: Where was that?

D: It was over on San Gabriel, 280, as I recall. I lived with him. There was an upstairs there and an extra room so L. E. Jones and I, being bachelors, rented the room from them. We didn't take our meals there. We ate over around the University at the cafe, but we lived upstairs in Dr. Bob Montgomery's house. As I recall, the President lived there for a year or so and then moved out to a duplex just off 34th Street.

G: Does the Montgomery house look now pretty much the same as it did then?

D: I haven't seen it in twenty years; I guess it does. It was a nice, substantial little house and I imagine it is still there and the duplex is still there. When he announced for Congress, we used that as his headquarters. In the beginning, at least, that's where the announcement emanated from.

G: Let's move on now from the NYA period. You worked with the President during his first congressional campaign, did you not?

D: Subject to the Hatch Act, I did.

G: Would you describe what you know about how he came to run for Congress, the beginning of the campaign, the campaign and so forth. Would you just go into that and give the story.

D: As I recall, I was living in San Antonio at the time and heard about the death of Congressman Buchanan. I didn't have to ask anybody what was going to happen and I just assumed it would. Within a few hours after his death, Lyndon called me and said, "Do you know what has happened?" And I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, you better get on over here." So I got into my car and drove. It was on a weekend, I believe either Saturday or Sunday, and I drove from San Antonio to Austin.

G: February or March of 1937?

D: Oh, it was March or April of 1937, as I recall it; I think it was early April. He was living in the apartment off 34th Street. When I got there, Mr. Claude Wild was there. Ray Lee was there

and Jesse Kellam. Mr. Sherman Birdwell was there and a few other persons whom I don't recall right now.

G: Where was that?

D: The apartment on 34th Street. When he called me, he didn't mention running. He didn't mention the death. He just said, "You know what's happened?" I said, "Yes," and he said, "Well, you'd better come on over here."

G: You just assumed that he would be running?

D: That's correct.

G: After you all got together in the room, do you remember what Mr. Johnson said. Did he say he was going to run for Congress right away?

D: Yes, as I recall it. There was just talk about what his chances were; how the campaign would be put on and what would happen. Yes, when I arrived there were several of them already there and, as I recall it, the conclusion was pretty fairly reached that he would run.

G: Was the conclusion reached that he would win?

D: Oh, yes. We were young enough and ambitious enough that we just assumed if we went into it we would win.

G: Because as you know, we were visiting Mr. Wild this morning and he didn't think . . . . Well, now the campaign gets underway. How was the announcement made, in the terms of the public? How did he declare his candidacy, when and where?

D: I don't remember. I believe that he opened his campaign in

San Marcos or in Johnson City; both were in his district and I'm not sure.

G: Could it have been at his boyhood home, on the porch of his boyhood home, did he make a speech there--was that possible?

D: It could have been. I have read that; my recollection is that it was at San Marcos.

G: Now in terms of the campaign itself, one of the interesting things in itself was that he decides to be an all-out Roosevelt backer. How was that decision reached, do you know?

I do not know. I know that he was a great admirer of Roosevelt and was working in the Roosevelt Administration and I think probably he felt that it was right and that maybe there was a little expedience in endorsing the court program. He ran on the court-packing program which was an issue at that time. I think probably some of his advisers--and this is some recollection and some conjecture--thought that with nine men in the campaign maybe that was a good course to pursue.

G: Harry Ransom, then a newspaper men, says he mentioned that he vaguely recalls that the campaign began and ended with a very interesting voluntary cavalcade of some Mexican-Americans, Negroes, and a lot of people who had been attracted to the Johnson candidacy for unusual reasons. Do you remember anything about this cavalcade?

D: No, I do not.

G: In the course of the campaigning itself, what was the President like as a campaigner?

D: I didn't see him speak a lot, as I said. My aid was limited by the Hatch Act.

Have you talked to Carroll Keach of Robstown, Texas? Carroll drove him around a great deal.

G: Is he a newspaperman there?

D: Yes.

G: What newspaper?

D: Robstown Record. Carroll had also been on his debate team in Houston and had worked for him in Washington.

Also, you ought to talk to Sherman Birdwell. I think Sherman would recall his campaigning better than I do.

G: In terms of the campaign, one of the interesting things is, of course, the illness that comes and the use that was made of that in the campaign, which I gather was very effective. Mr. Wild says he think it swung a lot of votes. Was the campaign, in your opinion, won or lost before that time? Was that an important factor in the campaign?

D: I doubt that the appendectomy two days before the election had a major effect. I think the election was won up and down the byways of the district. He campaigned harder and he campaigned longer. He was younger than most men in the campaign. His legs were longer and he moved faster. And he had hit these little villages. He went up one side of the street and down the other and he shook hands with everybody he saw--young folks, old folks, the kids. Regardless of race, color, or creed, he said,

"I'm Lyndon B. Johnson. I'm running for Congress and I want you to vote for me." And he was moving so fast that he didn't hear the answer because he was on to the next one. That way he could make many, many towns. It was a new speed in campaigning. I think the other candidates were using the traditional way of campaigning in those days and he just out-campaigned them. In my judgment that's what won for him.

G: How did he travel around?

D: In an automobile. Carroll Keach drove him a great deal of the time and there may have been other folks to drive him. I just don't recall. Maybe Lady Bird drove him part of the time.

G: Was there a campaign theme like "Youth and Progress," something of that sort?

D: I do not recall that there was a campaign slogan like "Youth and Progress." Maybe there was.

G: Was there any that you can remember?

D: No, I don't remember other than that the court-packing was an issue. He endorsed President Roosevelt's plan to pack the court and that was somewhat of an issue, and then there was some anti-New Deal feelings in the community. He didn't mince words. He took the New Deal side of it and he campaigned on that.

G: Did he use the radio much in campaigning?

D: I do not think that he used the radio too much. Maybe he made two or three talks, maybe four; I'm not sure. But, in my opinion, as I said before, I think the campaign was won largely by handshaking

and seeing folks.

G: Do you remember an acceptance speech that the President perhaps made when he became aware of the fact that he had won?

D: He was in the hospital, and I don't believe that he made one. I don't recall that he did.

G: Did he make one after he left the hospital--an official announcement?

D: I don't recall--I think probably none, at least to the newspapers.

G: You mentioned earlier about his advisers. Did Alvin Wirtz play an important role as an adviser?

D: Yes, very much. Alvin Wirtz was a wise man, and he advised him not only in this but in many other things.

G: Would you care to talk about some of the things they may have discussed and in what ways they may have influenced the President?

D: His association with Alvin Wirtz goes back to the beginning of the NYA days. We had a state advisory committee made up of outstanding citizens and Alvin Wirtz was chairman of that committee. We had educators, businessmen, professional men, some women, and some Negro people even at that time. I believe the president of Prairie View College served on the advisory board along with Alvin Wirtz, Beauford Jester who later became governor of Texas, Mrs. Wienert who was many years national committeewoman, and Curly Doyle who was superintendent of schools in Jefferson County, Texas. There were others I don't recall right now.

G: Was Roy Miller one of his advisers?

D: Conceivably. Roy Miller was not living in Texas and we did not see or hear much of him at that time. I just do not know how to answer that question.

G: Mr. Deason, you've been very kind. We don't want to take too much of your time. Those are the specific things we wanted to cover. Are there any comments, stories, et cetera, about the whole period that you think ought to be in the history record?

D: There are a lot of them. You've been shooting questions at me pretty fast and I don't have them organized. Maybe at a later date, I can put some of them together for you. I just do not have them right now.

G: Do you recall the President's going to Washington in 1937 after being elected to Congress? Was there any send-off party?

D: I don't recall specifically. I know you are familiar with the story of his riding on the train with Roosevelt.

G: Only in part.

D: He went to Washington on the train with President Roosevelt shortly after he was elected to Congress. You will recall that he had an appendectomy one or two days before the election. He recuperated, after he was able to leave the hospital, at Lady Bird's home in Karnack for a week or so. When he was able to travel he met with President Roosevelt who had been fishing off the shores of Texas and the President invited him to ride back on the presidential train, which he did, if my memory serves me correct.

G: Mr. Deason, thank you very much sir. You have been very helpful.

(End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I)

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By WILLARD DEASON

to the

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