

## INTERVIEW I

DATE: November 14, 1979

INTERVIEWEE: C. E. "CURLEY" DOYLE

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mr. Doyle's residence, San Marcos, Texas

Tape 1 of 1

G: Let's start with your background briefly, Colonel Doyle. You're from--?

D: I'm from San Marcos. Of course, originally, I was born in DeWitt County, and we moved up here. My daddy was a rancher. My daddy moved up here in 1910. We came up in three covered wagons and settled here, and all of us went to school. In fact, I think I am the only living person that started in the first grade on top of the hill--we called it Normal Hill, in fact, then--and went through to my master's degree without getting off of that hill.

G: That's something! Well, now, I understand that you would go to school in the summers and teach in the winters. Is that correct?

D: That's right. Starting in 1924, I got me a freshman certificate at the end of the summer of 1924 and got me a job in Christoval, Texas, just a little town south of San Angelo, and I taught there my first year. Then I'd come back in the summer, go to school, and then go teach in the winter. It took me about seven years to get my degree that way. I got my degree in the summer of 1931.

G: Do you recall the circumstances of meeting, becoming acquainted with, Lyndon Johnson?

D: Yes, I recall it very vividly. Back in those days, we didn't have student government, so to speak, but we had class officers, and the summer of 1929 I came up here, and the class met

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to elect officers for that summer session. And someone who represented what was known then as the White Stars--I didn't even know it was in existence--nominated a representative from the White Stars, and Lyndon got up and nominated someone from the Black Stars, which I didn't know was in existence but which was an organization which he had founded to combat the White Stars.

G: I think it was the reverse. I think he represented the White Stars and the--

D: Yes, that's right. The White Stars. Anyway, someone was foolish enough to nominate me, and I was elected. So after the meeting was over, he came to me, told me he wanted to meet me, and we became very good friends after that, very close friends. We had a lot in common and enjoyed one another, I think.

G: Well, now, I guess this was right after he came back from Cotulla where he had been teaching for nine months. Did he say anything about that? Were you aware of the fact that he had been away for nine months?

D: No. Cotulla or Floresville?

G: Cotulla, I think.

D: Cotulla, right. Okay. No, I was not aware of that. I probably was, but I had forgotten about it.

G: Did you have any classes with him?

D: No. I taught swimming and diving at the Sewell Park, which was the university bathing [spot] on the river there, which is now called Sewell Park, and I had him in a class we called PE class, physical education class, but--

G: Was he a good swimmer?

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D: Oh, no. No. He could swim, but that was about all. He was not an expert swimmer.

G: Well, now, also that summer he was elected secretary of the Schoolmasters' Club, and I guess this was a group composed of teachers, is that correct?

D: That's right.

G: Were you a member?

D: Yes, I was president of it, I believe, in the summer of 1930 or 1931. I can't recall. One summer I was president of the Schoolmasters' Club.

G: Do you recall his activities in this group?

D: No, not specifically. We just met. It was more social than it was anything else. We traded yarns, so to speak. Just had a good time. You know.

G: Yes. I get the feeling that there were an awful lot of clubs on that campus with the Press Club and the Harris Blairs and the Schoolmasters' and the White Stars. Why was this the case?

D: Well, of course, I didn't come in contact with too many of the clubs because my activities were just surrounded by the summer session. I wasn't there during the winter session when the Harris Blairs and Chautauqua clubs met, but we did have a Dramatic Club in the summer. But the other clubs--now the White Stars and the Black Stars, of course, they were fighting over finances more than anything else, I think.

G: Can you elaborate on that?

D: No, not really, because, as I said before, I didn't know that either one of them existed until after this meeting in which I was elected president.

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G: I guess some of the financial issues had to do with dispersing the student blanket tax money and--

D: That's right. That's right.

G: Yes.

D: And, of course, it also flowed over into the favorites, college favorites, class favorites.

G: Oh, really?

D: Yes.

G: And these were largely the girl students?

D: Yes, girls and men, too. They had favorites for men, too.

G: Well, do you recall any specifics here?

D: No, not really, because as I say, that happened during the regular session rather than during the summer session.

G: I gather that some of LBJ's good friends were Black Stars rather than members of his own group.

D: Oh, yes. That's right.

G: For example, Boody Johnson.

D: Boody Johnson being a good example and--golly, my memory is not quite so good as it used to be--I could name some more. Well, Vernon Whiteside was another one.

G: I think he was a White Star though.

D: Oh, no. He was--well, yes, he was, that's right. He was a White Star, but he was an athlete. He was a letterman.

G: Yes. Well, when did you first find out about these secret organizations?

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- D: That very summer that I was elected. Lyndon told me about it, Lyndon and his buddies.
- G: He did? Well, did he ask you to join, or did he--?
- D: Oh, no. No, because I don't think they were too active in the summer.
- G: I see.
- D: Just in the winter because in the summertime a great majority of the student body consisted of teachers who were there to work on their degrees.
- G: Well, what are your memories of LBJ as a student at San Marcos? Did you spend a lot of time with him?
- D: Yes, we spent a lot of time together just shooting the breeze on the Quad. That was the Quadrangle in front of Old Main, and we made trips up to his hometown, Johnson City. I had an old T-model Ford, and of course, he didn't have transportation so we would go in my T-model Ford. We made the rounds up to all of the interesting places.
- G: Do you recall any specifics?
- D: Well, I am thinking about this place up here between here and Austin. I forget the name of it. This big cave with the water dripping down. Golly, near Manchaca. Dripping Springs, up in there, but I can't remember it.
- G: Oh, was that Hamilton's [Hamilton] Pool?
- D: Yes, Hamilton's Pool. We made picnic voyages up there. Then we went to his home a couple or three times and Wimberley. Golly, we made that. We went to Ezell's.
- G: What was--Ezell's?
- D: Ezell's Cave and Hamilton's Pool.
- G: Did you form an impression of his father and mother when you visited Johnson City?

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D: Well, his mother impressed me very much as being a real educated lady and not only educated but a real sharp person, and his daddy, of course, was I thought what you might say a typical politician. He considered things from the political angle. I didn't know him too well. I only met him on probably one or two occasions and very briefly, so I couldn't--

G: Well, how did this come out? How did it reveal itself--the fact that he considered political angles? Do you recall?

D: Well (laughter) I was comparing him at that time as to my later life, my own reactions, the way I acted, just kind of--I don't know. I don't know how to explain it, but like one fellow told me one time, he said, "You ought to be able to get anybody's vote." And that's the way I felt about his father. He could get anybody's vote. He could talk them out of their vote.

G: Did LBJ seem to have much of an interest in politics then?

D: Well, yes, I would say so because of his interest in this White Star organization.

G: Was he interested in party politics? In, say, the--

D: No. He never did express such an interest to me, and it didn't become apparent in any of his actions that I know of.

G: Well, there's an indication that he may have participated in efforts to secure legislative appropriations for the college and that he worked with President [Cecil] Evans in more or less lobbying for the college.

D: Well, that could very well be, but I was not cognizant of it; however, he did work in President Evans' office, and the President thought he was A-1.

G: What did he do for President Evans?

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D: I'm not sure what all his duties consisted of. I never did become interested in it at that time, but, of course, he became, when he got the job with the Congressman from the [King] Ranch--what was his name?

G: [Richard] Kleberg.

D: Kleberg, yes. And when he got that job of course he became, I think, indoctrinated into political life and from then on it became his number one aim, I think, in life, his number one interest anyway.

G: Do you recall any of the professors that he had, like Professor [H. M.] Greene?

D: Oh, yes. He loved Professor Greene, and, of course, Professor Greene, I think, had a great effect on Lyndon. Dean [Henry Eli] Speck was another one. He was the dean of men, and he thought a great deal of Lyndon and his ability. And a fellow by the name of [Leonard N.] Wright--"Deacon" Wright, we called him--I don't remember now what his first name was; we called him "Deacon" Wright.

G: What did he teach?

D: He was an English teacher. And let's see--

G: Well, now, you said that Professor Greene had an impact on him or a great influence on him. What kind of influence?

D: Well, Professor Greene was a history teacher, and I think in his presentation of historical events he would theorize a great deal as to what could have happened had something else happened, that type of thing, and made you think deeply about events not only just what occurred but what might have occurred had something else happened.

G: Was he unconventional in any of his political beliefs? Did you get that impression?

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D: Greene or Lyndon?

G: Greene.

D: No, I can't say that because my association with him, I didn't have any classes under him but only through conversations. I recall talking with him in the presence of Lyndon on one occasion. It might have been more, but on one occasion I recall going up to his house, and Lyndon went up there for some reason, and just conversation.

G: The image I have of him as being that of a rather country-like man who chewed tobacco and--

D: Lyndon?

G: No, Professor Greene.

D: Oh, yes. Yes, some people would classify it down-to-earth man. Yes, even his home surroundings indicated such. He didn't go for any frivolity.

G: What was his home like?

D: It was just that old one-two-three-four, just the bare necessities, and let's take it or leave it.

G: Yes. Was there anything in his philosophy that would lead to living a rather bucolic or more or less back-to-nature existence?

D: I don't know. I don't know what was the source of it.

G: Did you ever travel to Austin with LBJ?

D: Are you talking about our college life now?

G: Yes.

D: Well, I'm sure we did, but I don't recall any specific event. We did a lot of traveling together.



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G: Anything else on your years at San Marcos?

D: No. I don't recall any other event of import.

G: So then I understand you were responsible for Boody Johnson receiving a job. Was it Galena Park?

D: Yes.

G: Were you down there, or were you then in Beaumont?

D: No, I was at Daisetta. I was coaching over at Daisetta, and I got a job at Galena Park. They offered me the principalship there, and it was a much better salary than they were paying at Galena Park [Daisetta]. Boody was also at Daisetta at the same time I was, so when I went to Galena Park, we needed a coach, so I asked Boody if he would like to have it, and he said he would. So I got him the job there, and he came over and actually lived with me. I rented a house, and my wife was teaching in Houston, in the Houston city schools--well, one of the elementary schools--and Boody lived there with us. Then, as I told you before, I was elected superintendent, but I chose to resign and not accept the job and went to Beaumont, and Boody likewise went to Pasadena. He got a job over at Pasadena as a coach, and then that was in 1930. Then Lyndon got a job at Central High School there in Houston in 1931, I believe it was. Do you recall what year? Was it 1931 or 1932?

G: No, it was in the fall of 1930.

D: The fall of 1930. Well, then in the spring of 1931 he and Boody came over to Beaumont to see me, and then I think--I don't recall now what was Lyndon's next assignment. He stayed there a couple of years.

G: Yes. Was that the only time you saw him while he was down there teaching school?

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D: Well, I saw him on another occasion when I came to Houston, and we got together for a little yippity-split.

G: Anything on his teaching experience that you recall? Did he talk about it? Was he interested in it?

D: Yes, but I don't recall now. As I recall, he was teaching public speaking, and I can't recall now any specific incident in connection with it.

G: Was he living with his Uncle George, do you remember?

D: Well, I'm not sure of that. It seems like that was true. His uncle was teaching there in the same school.

G: Well, then he received an appointment to be Congressman Kleberg's secretary.

D: Sometime very soon.

G: That would be late 1931. Did you see him any during the period that he was working for Kleberg?

D: No, I don't believe so.

G: Of course, he was appointed in 1935, I believe it was, to be the director of the National Youth Administration in Texas.

D: Yes.

G: And you were appointed to the board of the advisory committee of the NYA. Do you have any insights as to why you were appointed, why he asked you to be on the board?

D: No. No, I don't know other than we were friends, and he probably wanted some input from someone in the school business. I think most of the other advisory members were not connected with school. None of them were except Dr. Homer P. Rainey, who was

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president of the university [University of Texas], but I think he wanted someone connected with public schools because there was a big program in the NYA for the public schools.

G: Well, how did he notify you that he wanted you to serve on the committee? Do you recall?

D: I don't recall now. I guess he called me, but I don't recall.

G: You were in Beaumont then?

D: Yes.

G: How often did the committee meet?

D: Well, as I recall, four times a year, but I met more than that because he would call me up to Austin on special meetings to meet with a couple of them. There would be three of us meeting, and we would discuss some phase of the program, the NYA.

G: Were they usually the same three?

D: Well, I remember Beauford Jester and Dr. Homer P. Rainey and Lutcher Stark and some fellow from West Texas. I can't recall his name. They were usually the ones that we met with.

G: What was the format of the meetings? Can you recall? Would LBJ, for example, give a presentation of what the NYA had been doing?

D: Yes, he'd give us a background of the problem that he wanted to discuss. He would give us the background, and then each one of us would comment on how this program could progress and some phases of operation, how it would be best to put it into operation. But, gosh, that's been a long time ago for an old man.

G: Well, do you recall any of the specific problems? For example, maybe, getting youth registered or notifying students that this program was available?

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D: Yes. What type of work would be acceptable for high school students to do and obtain NYA funds. What kind of projects should be inaugurated. That is an example of one session. I don't recall all of them.

G: Do you recall the conclusion of that?

D: I recall going up to what is now Lake LBJ and the LBJ Dam and the Buchanan Dam where they had NYA students working and getting them together and talking to them, giving them a pep talk. And, also, I went to San Angelo on a project, and I can't recall all the details of that one, but he sent me out there to do something about a program out there they were having trouble with.

G: Oh, really?

D: Yes, just troubleshoot.

G: Well, I gather Jesse Kellam was the assistant director in charge of the education program.

D: That's right.

G: Did you work much with him?

D: Oh, yes, and, of course, we had several district, NYA meetings in Beaumont when Lyndon and Jesse would come down there and attend the meetings. Lutch Stark would come up from Orange, and I think Beauford Jester came to one of them down there. You know, they were just conferences, and I'd get leading citizens in the city to attend, you know, to get them interested because those programs touched every walk of life. For instance, the parks, you remember, that they built on the outskirts of town.

G: Roadside parks.

D: That was a wonderful project then. We still are reaping the benefits from that one.

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G: I wonder if LBJ ever thought of the statewide network that he had created through the NYA as a political springboard, more or less, for running for elective office.

D: I don't know.

G: Did you get the feeling that he was interested in running for office while he was NYA director?

D: (Laughter) Well, that guy was a human dynamo. He was going night and day. I recall him wanting me to go to Washington to work with him up there, and I told him that I just couldn't because he would want me to work thirty-six hours a day. He would work twenty-six; he'd want me to work thirty-six, and I just couldn't see it.

G: Was he also this way at San Marcos, do you recall?

D: Yes, he was going all the time. He was a human dynamo; he really was. Of course, I just have to talk about his summer school escapades. I don't know about his regular term. I just wasn't there.

G: Anything else on the NYA that you recall?

D: No, not really.

G: I believe you indicated there was a banquet when he resigned from the NYA to run for Congress.

D: That's right.

G: Where was it?

D: It was in the Littlefield Building, and as you saw from the picture that I have, we had some notables in attendance there. Dr. Rainey and Mr. and Mrs. Kellam and Ed Clark and Bob Montgomery. He asked me to be master of ceremonies, which I felt honored to do, and we

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bid him farewell and wished him luck, of course, and installed Jesse in the NYA. Rather he was already installed, but we gave him an unofficial installation.

G: Well, was there, do you think, an understanding that if for some reason LBJ did not win that election that he would be able to come back and continue as NYA director?

D: I don't know. That I don't know about. Why? Has that been told by someone in authority?

G: No. No, it's just that in going through the NYA records I noticed that Jesse Kellam was not appointed until after the election.

D: Oh, I see. Very possible. Had I been in the position, that's the way I would have had it, too.

G: What did you do in that election to help him?

D: Well, when he announced, I took off from my job in Beaumont and came to San Marcos and spent two weeks up here. Of course, my mother and father lived here so I stayed with them, but I campaigned up here for two weeks for his election.

G: I believe he had his opening speech here at San Marcos at the college.

D: Yes, I think so.

G: Do you recall that?

D: Yes, but I was not here then. I came up right after that. He had already made the announcement. Yes, actually I participated in all of his elections except the first one in which he ran for the Senate against Pappy [W. Lee] O'Daniel. I was in the service at that time was the reason I didn't participate. I was down at Camp Hulen.

(Interruption)

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G: Let me ask you about two occasions in the 1940s when you got together with President Johnson. One in 1941. In the fall of 1941, President Johnson and Mrs. Johnson came to Beaumont and Port Arthur, and he delivered an Armistice Day address there, and I believe you took them around. Do you recall that occasion? It was just a month before Pearl Harbor.

D: Yes, I remember it well. I took Lady Bird to a meeting of the ladies of the city, which was held downtown in a federal building, and then I escorted Lyndon to the park where the speech was made. He was accompanied by Jesse Kellam and John Connally and W. O. Alexander. I believe that was all, all that I recall now, and Bill Deason was there also.

G: I gather he was very concerned about our lack of preparedness.

D: Yes, I think that was the key to his speech that day.

G: Did he talk to you about it?

D: No. No, but that was the main point of his speech, as I recall.

G: Anything else about that visit that you remember?

D: Well, that night he came up to my house in Beaumont. We came back to Beaumont, and they stayed in Beaumont, and he came out to my house and we played poker, had a good time. That's all.

G: Now, again, you were overseas, I think, in the latter part of World War II when he went to Europe. Went to Paris, I think, and he sent for you or something like that?

D: Yes. I was up at Kassel, Germany, and he had me ordered down to Paris, and he was staying in the George LaFitte [V?] Hotel, and he had a room reserved for me, and, golly, it was the most beautiful room I ever saw, and the food was delightful. I had been eating

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10-in-1 rations, and to come down there and feast was wonderful! For three or four days he took me to the Folies Bergère. And he was interviewed in my presence by a lot of newspaper commentators.

G: Were they American or European?

D: No, French. I presume French. There might have been an American among them, you know, but they spoke English so I can't say, but I'm sure one of them was French because he had a very decided French accent.

G: What were they asking him about, do you recall?

D: No, I don't recall any of the questions now.

G: What was the purpose of his mission?

D: That I don't know. I didn't ask him. I know he was met at the airport by a contingent of navy personnel, so it's very possible that there was some phase of his visit that had to do with naval operations over there, but I don't know what they were.

G: Well, he was on the Naval Affairs Committee.

D: That's right. He was chairman of it.

G: No.

D: He wasn't chairman of it?

G: No. Could it have been with regard to surplus material?

D: I don't know. No, I just don't know.

G: Surplus navy material?

D: No, I don't know. I didn't get involved in any of that.



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G: He was in Paris. Do you recall any other places that he went in Paris while he was there or things that he did?

D: No. Of course, I wasn't with him every minute of the time so he could have done something else that I don't know anything about, but I don't recall him doing anything.

G: Do you recall any additional places that he went on that trip, say other cities or other countries while he was--?

D: I don't know.

G: You don't know that. Is there anything else that you remember about it?

D: Well, no. Are you talking about the trip or later that year?

G: The trip.

D: No, nothing else. In 1948, when he ran for the Senate against--

G: Coke Stevenson.

D: Coke Stevenson. In the first primary, he and Coke were in the run-off, and he called me up and told me that he ran very poorly in Jefferson County. There were six in the race, and I think he came out number six in the first primary and I think Coke led the ticket. So he wanted me to go to Beaumont and see if I couldn't straighten the thing out. He said he would take care of my leave and everything up there in Washington, and I said, "No. You leave everything alone, and I'll take care of it." So I got leave and went up to Beaumont and campaigned for him, and we beat old Coke pretty bad.

G: Was it, do you think, primarily in that first election a question of his stand on Taft-Hartley?

D: I don't know. I don't know what it was.

G: I gather that that was--well, Jefferson County did have quite a bit of organized labor in it.

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D: Oh, man, yes!

G: And I gather that where Stevenson was sitting on the fence, LBJ came out in favor of Taft-Hartley. He didn't talk to you about that?

D: No, I don't recall it. He could have, but I don't recall it now. I don't recall the issues that were involved.

G: Anything else that we've left out?

D: No. Well, there's a thousand things we've left out, but I can't think of anything of great import. I think we have covered everything.

G: Okay. Well, I certainly do thank you.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I

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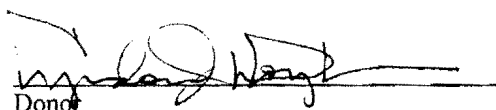
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C. E. "CURLEY" DOYLE


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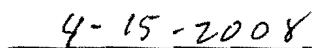
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