

INTERVIEW I

DATE: JULY 12, 1971

INTERVIEWEE: MRS. SAM FORE, JR.

INTERVIEWER: DAVID McCOMB

PLACE: Mrs. Fore's home in Floresville, Texas

Tape 1 of 1

M: This is an interview with Mrs. Sam Fore, Jr. (To Mrs. Fore, who spells first name for him): I believe your given name is Elma . . . E-L-M-A. I am in her home in Floresville, Texas. The date is July 12, 1971, and the time is ten minutes after two in the afternoon. My name is David McComb.

Well, first of all, let me ask you a little bit about your background. Where were you born, and how did you get to Floresville?

F: I was born in Gonzales County, about twenty miles north of Cuero, Texas. I moved with my father and my brothers and sisters to Floresville when I was nine years old in the year 1901, January. I've lived in Floresville since then.

M: Did you go to school here?

F: I attended school and graduated from the Floresville High School. I went to San Marcos to the Teachers' College--in those days it was called that--for one year. I came home and taught school two years in Floresville. And I was married to Sam Fore, Jr. on July 27, 1911 at the home of my father, C. S. Teas, in Floresville.

M: Where did you meet your husband?

F: I met him in high school.

M: Here in Floresville?

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F: Floresville. He moved here two years later than I did and entered school, then we met in high school.

M: Where was his home town?

F: Cuero, Texas. He was born in Cuero.

M: And then he came here and went to high school.

F: He came here in 1902 or 1903, I don't know which it was, and he entered high school. But he did not [finish]; he went to work in the newspaper office, just as a helper and a roustabout, and learned how to set type by hand. He left high school. His mother was in very poor health and his father was a clerk in a store, and it was necessary--he just had one brother, that was Blake Fore -- for those two to make money for their own use. So he was offered this job, a very good job, in the newspaper office. He learned very quickly. So he quit school and then he studied at night some under one of the school superintendents. He belonged to a debating club here, and one of the lawyers in the town was so impressed with him; he was a good speaker. I know when he was fourteen years he made the Fourth of July speech here when they had a celebration. And this lawyer was so impressed with him, he called him upstairs in his office one day and said, "Sam, if you go to the University, I'll loan you the money to be a lawyer. You could make a career as a lawyer, and it won't cost you anything to borrow the money." Well, he couldn't see his way financially to do it. He liked the newspaper business, became fascinated with it, and when he was about nineteen, the old

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man who was editor of the paper died, and they made him editor.

M: When he was nineteen years old?

F: And he was married when he was twenty. We married when I wasn't twenty, he was. And then about a year later we bought the newspaper from this doctor who owned it. He didn't want to fool with us with his father-in-law that had been running it; he died, so we bought the paper on time, paid it out. Then my father had a lot across the street that he gave to me and we borrowed the money and built a brick building down there. Moved the paper across into there, gradually built it up to what it was. He enjoyed the newspaper work; it was his whole life.

M: Did he ever have a desire to move away from Floresville?

F: Never. Never. He bought the paper at Robstown over thirty years ago and they were very anxious for him to come down there, but he did not want to leave Floresville. This is where he wanted to stay, right here.

M: Why?

F: He just liked the town, he liked the people, he had a home here. He hired a man to run it [the Robstown newspaper] and he said, "I'll pay for it, but I'm not going to run it." So he didn't. And he owned it until he turned it over to my son-in-law, Carroll Keach and wife, Marion, in August, 1941.

M: You mentioned, and I've also read a statement that Mr. Fore made, that what he wanted to be was a country editor. Now what's a country editor? Is that a country newspaperman?

F: Well, he was interested in the people. Mr. Fore's object in

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life was helping people and he felt like that was his calling. There wasn't a boy or girl in the county that wanted a job to go to school but what he could get it for them. That was the greatest pleasure he had, and he used all his political contacts. I never knew him to ask a favor for himself. He said, "I don't need it. I make a living for myself, but these boys and girls need it." And he's asked for thousands of jobs for boys and girls and got them, too. From his home in Floresville, he could call up these people in Washington and get them jobs up there.

M: How did he make his political contacts?

F: He started with Lyndon Johnson, mainly, because he was . . . well, Dick Kleberg, yonder--Mr. Fore, Mr. K's picture on the wall--was Congressman, and Mr. Fore was a great friend of Dick's and helped him run his [campaign]. You know Dick was not a practical man. He was an educated man and a wonderful man in Congress, and he loved people and he could speak the Spanish language just like a native, but he didn't know how to manage his campaign. Well, Mr. Fore was managing it for him until he hired Lyndon Johnson. And Lyndon Johnson was 24 years old. He hired him from--he was teaching history in Sam Houston High School at Houston, and my son-in-law, Carroll Keach, was in high school, a senior, and was in his debating society. He and two other boys. L. E. Jones, who is a prominent lawyer in Corpus Christi now, was one of them, and Gene Latimer, Jr. There were three of them,

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Well, he [Lyndon Johnson] took all three of those boys to Washington with him when he was elected for Congress and took them and put them in his office, and let them finish school in Washington at night school.

M: Did Mr. Fore first meet Lyndon Johnson when Kleberg hired him?

F: Well, Kleberg had hired him and called Sam and told him he had told Johnson to come by here and for him to brief him. 'Course, he knew nothing about his campaign, so he came here and spent the night that night, and they stayed up till two o'clock in the morning talking over this thing and taking down notes. Sam knew every newspaperman in this district; he knew a lot of people. And then he came back, and Sam went with him and they went in the car and went over all the district. [Sam] introduced him to everybody, and he didn't have to meet them but once and knew them. And it wasn't long until he was running Kleberg's whole shebang for him--his whole campaign. And he made our house his stopping place, back and forth to Corpus Christi. He'd stop and they'd discuss things--politics and everything. Of course, Sam Rayburn was his friend and he'd made quite a few other contacts by that time. Then when this opportunity came when Buchanan died, why, he called Sam, and the editors from Kenedy and Cuero, a few of his close friends up to Austin--Tom Miller was one of them--to decide whether he was going to run or not. Well, they all put about a hundred dollars apiece in the pot, that's all they had. One old boy up there pawned his deer rifle from up at

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Johnson City. Crider, and Bill Deason, and all those boys that had been in school with Lyndon all were there to help him. And Tom Miller said, "Why Sam, Lyndon Johnson can't be elected. Nobody knows him." Sam said, "Well, they'll know him by the time of election day. Don't worry."

M: Yes.

F: And he did. And he won.

M: So Mr. Fore gave a hundred dollars to the campaign.

F: Oh, yes. And all these other men there did. For his campaign. He didn't have any money, you know. So he ran for Congress and got it by just getting out and going over the cotton patches and meeting the people and handshaking.

M: Did Mr. Fore help him campaign?

F: Oh yes. Oh yes.

M: What did he do in the campaign, do you recall? I mean did he help drive him around and introduce him to people?

F: He didn't drive him, no; he took him around and introduced him, yes. That's what he did to start with, and got these newspapermen all lined up for him, and then he printed these sheets, you know, sent them to these editors running the papers about him, you know. He used his influence that way for him.

M: I see.

F: Of course, he had a very good standing here in the town, and there were so many people here that didn't know who was running, and they'd always come in the office and ask him

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who to vote for. [It was] just a standing date they had with him to come by and ask who to vote for, and whoever he put out in the paper to vote for, that's who carried it. It wasn't anything but just his good will. They knew he wasn't working selfishly or anything, because he never wanted anything for himself, and so they had great confidence in him.

M: I see. You must have met Lyndon Johnson when he first came by when he was working for Kleberg.

F: Oh sure. He stayed the night here, you know. He'd lay down on the floor with his head on a pillow and a can of cookies in his hand and just ate.

M: What did you think about that young man?

F: Well, I thought he was a very unusual person, and Mr. Fore was so much impressed with him. He just knew he was going places.

M: Well, what do you think? You say he was unusual. What do you mean?

F: He was a very unusual man with lots of energy, and lots of understanding of people, with lots of drive.

M: Was he charming?

F: Determined. Very determined.

M: Determined.

F: He and Mr. Fore had lots in common. Lyndon would laugh; Sam always said, "Now Lyndon, turn on that giant burner." You know we used to have these oil stoves with this big burner. "Turn on that giant burner," that was an expression between

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them. Putting on the giant burner. They were both turned that way. Sam never took no, and Lyndon never took no. I remember one time when he asked Lyndon a favor for somebody, and he wrote back and told him he just didn't think he could do it. Sam said, "Well, you know, you told me never take no for an answer, and I'm not going to do it! Now you just do it!" And he did it, too. And he'd write up there and say, "Well, now I want you to get that application that I sent you out from under the bottom of that stack and put it on top, and let this man have that job." And he'd do it, too. He never refused him.

M: Did Lyndon Johnson first meet John Connally through Mr. Fore?

F: Yes. Well, John Connally had applied to Lyndon for a job when he was still in the University.

M: In law school, was he?

F: I think he was in law school. Lyndon called Sam up, I remember it well, and said, "Sam, I've got a boy that's applied to me for a job from your town, John Connally. What do you know about him?" Sam said, "He's a mighty fine boy and got lots on the ball. You better take him, quick." And he took him and was just delighted with him, you know.

There when he and John were just like this. And Lyndon told me, "I would never have let Sid Richardson have John, except that I couldn't meet his price. Richardson had offered him seventy-five thousand dollars a year, and I could not do that. I couldn't stand in his way of letting him go." And that's

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how John Connally became rich, because Richardson made it possible. Have you read the Atlantic Monthly?

M: I have not read that. You're talking about that recent article on John Connally by Ronnie Dugger.

F: Yes. By Dugger.

M: By Ronnie Dugger.

F: Ronnie Dugger. It's a perfect write-up of Connally's life.

M: You think it's accurate?

F: Very accurate. Very accurate, I think. Of course, Ronnie Dugger was on the opposite side, you know, as a liberal, but it's a very fair, accurate report of John Connally. I read it today. But John was a very ambitious young man. He was a clean young man.

M: He was a what?

F: A clean young man.

M: Clean?

F: Yes. He was active in the church Epworth League every year. He was a good speaker, just like Mr. Fore; he was a natural. He never spoke with a note. Neither did Mr. Fore who made thousands of speeches, but he never had a note. John Connally never used a note; he just got up and talked.

M: He was from a large family?

F: Large family. They didn't have anything when they left Floresville. They lived in a rented house here. His father was a tenant farmer. He moved to San Antonio and got hold of a little bus line to Corpus Christi, San Antonio to Corpus Christi, and he

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and his oldest son, Stanford, ran that bus line. They kind of got on their feet. He left here owing everybody; he came back and paid off everything he owed. They finally sold that bus line during the Depression, and this ranch that was out here for sale, twelve hundred acres, he bought it for about thirty dollars an acre, cheap. And that's where he put his money. And they worked hard--a start of Hereford cattle. But he really worked too hard. He died of a heart attack on the streets of Floresville.

M: Well then, Mr. Fore met Lyndon Johnson through Kleberg?

F: Yes.

M: And gave him a great deal of advice .

F: That's right.

M: For Kleberg, and also for Johnson's own campaign.

F: Yes. Oh, he worked with Johnson every campaign he had. I just went through . . . he's got the election returns on all of them.

M: Now, what would Mr. Fore do on these campaigns for Lyndon Johnson? Would he write editorials?

F: Yes.

M: And contact . . .

F: Contact friends everywhere he knew over the state and nation. He sent out excerpts on him, you know, to different friends that would publish it.

M: Did he make speeches for him?

F: Oh, yes. In the district, he did.

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M: Do you recall when Lyndon Johnson first ran for the Senate in 1941, 1942, when he lost to . . .

F: Yes, I remember that. He lost.

M: Do you recall Mr. Fore working in that campaign?

F: He did. He worked in every campaign. There was not a single campaign he didn't work in. He believed in it with all his heart.

M: Yes. Do you remember anything about that loss in 1941? Did Johnson say anything to him, or did he come by, or anything like that?

F: No, I can't remember. I have some material on it, I think, but I don't remember it.

M: Then later, in 1948, he ran again for the Senate and won. Again, I assume, Mr. Fore was in there helping him run.

F: He was. He was.

M: But that ended on a happier note.

F: Yes.

M: He won by a handful of votes.

F: Yes.

M: Do you remember Lyndon Johnson saying anything about that campaign?

F: Nothing special, no.

M: And then, there are other campaigns that came later.

F: Yes.

M: He became Senate Majority Leader. And he had a heart attack.

F: Yes, in 1955.

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M: In 1955, and came down to the ranch to recover.

F: Yes, and we had to go up there and see him.

M: Did you go to see him?

F: Oh, yes. We went up there to see him.

M: Was he a pretty sick man?

F: Well, he was recuperating then. But he had to be quiet, you know. Of course he wanted us to come up there, he wanted to talk to Sam, so we took out up there. I know Lyndon called down here. Mr. Fore was a pretty busy man; he had two papers to run, and he dabbled in everything in the town and county, you know, was working in everything that went on. [Lyndon] wanted us to come up on Thursday. Sam said, "Lyndon, I can't come up on Thursday. I just can't do it." Well, he [Lyndon] said, "All right. Can you come Friday, then?" Sam said, "No, I can't come until Saturday." "Well," he said, "when they bring me back from Washington in a black box, you'll come." So we went on Friday evening, and stayed until Sunday. He was feeling pretty good then, but he had to be quiet.

M: Was that hard for him to do?

F: Oh, yes. Of course. If you know Lyndon Johnson, he was just a bundle of energy.

M: Yes.

F: Very hard.

M: What did he want to talk about? Do you remember?

F: Politics, politics. You know, Mr. Fore was a great football fan, and one thing that he wanted to listen to was that ball

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game that Saturday afternoon. So we stopped up there that Saturday at Blanco and ate lunch, and we pulled under the shade of a mesquite tree and he listened to the first part of that football game, and he said, "I know when I get to Lyndon's he won't let me listen." So we listened to part of it.

And I know one time when we were in Austin at a football game, playing A&M. You don't know the history of all that A&M-Texas feud, but that was the year that we beat them by six points and it just liked to have killed them. Well, just before we got ready to score, here comes Lyndon . . . spied him and he comes down there and squats by Sam--he was sitting on the end of the bench. He always sat there 'cause he wanted to speak to everybody that went by. Lyndon came down and squatted down by him and they got to talking and [Sam] missed the play. Oh, he could have killed him.

(Laughter)

M: Well, is it true that Lyndon Johnson talked about almost nothing but politics?

F: Well, I don't think exactly. Mr. Fore had an operation here in '60--he was in a hospital out here, he had an operation--when Lyndon was Vice President. And he flew down here from his ranch in a helicopter to see Mr. Fore in the hospital. Landed on the grounds out there, and stayed an hour with him. Lady Bird came with him. And he spent an hour with him. He didn't talk any politics. I remember Sam asking him how he got along

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with John Kennedy. He said, "Just fine. Now Robert's (Kennedy) another thing; I don't give him anything at all."

M: Yes. But he got along all right with the President.

F: He got along fine with John. He said, "I get along fine with John." I know the nurse brought in some shortcake; they knew he was there, and they were very thrilled. And one of the sisters brought in two plates of shortcake for us, and Lyndon said, "I can't eat that. I'm sorry, I'm on this diet and just can't eat it. You'll just have to take it away." Well, she took it away, and he sat there and he said, "Give me a bite of that," and he sat there and ate part of Sam's. But he brought him a radio, and he was awful nice to come down and see him. He was just as jolly; he didn't talk politics; he just told him everything he thought that would interest him, you know. Sam wanted to ask him lots of questions.

M: Well, in 1960 when Johnson took the vice-presidential position was Mr. Fore surprised at that?

F: Was he what?

M: Surprised?

F: Well, not especially. He wanted him to take it.

M: He did?

F: Yes, he did.

F: He didn't have anything particularly against John Kennedy; of course he was for Lyndon to get the nomination.

F: But he thought that he could work with John Kennedy, and it was an opportunity for him to go forward, and he knew that

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Kennedy couldn't win without him. Sam knew he couldn't win without him--he wanted the Democrats to win. He was a Democrat first.

M: Did Mr. Fore happen to go to the National Convention that year? Did he go to any of the Democratic National Conventions?

F: Oh, he went to about eight or ten of them. The first one we ever went to was in Houston, when Roosevelt nominated Al Smith. I saw him get up with those two canes, on the floor, and he nominated Al Smith, way back then. We went to Philadelphia in '36, and my daughter was Queen of the Convention that year--this one that you saw in the wedding dress.

M: Yes.

F: John Garner had nominated her from Texas, and we went up there. All the states had their representatives, and they had this big . . . each one of them on a float, and they went around that Library Square there. They had the judges in the middle, and she was selected. Mr. Fore and I were at the hotel; all of the Texas delegation went on a special train and stayed at the Ben Franklin Hotel, and we took a cab and thought we'd get up there. But the Mummers were having a parade that night. We never did get up there where it was. We never did know she won it until she got back to the hotel.

M: Oh my.

F: Bob Jackson, the editor of the Corpus Caller, took her up there. He and Judge Allred escorted her. I've got a picture

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here, somewhere. She said her knees would hardly hold her when she went up on that platform, she was so surprised. She had just gotten her degree from Texas University. We had a wonderful time. We stayed a week in Philadelphia and went on up to New York. Went up to Hyde Park.

M: Did you know Mr. Roosevelt?

F: Sam had met him. We saw him make his acceptance speech that night out at Franklin Field. He had met him, yes.

M: And he knew John Nance Garner, I suppose.

F: Oh, he knew Mr. Garner well. He used to come here when I was a child, you know, with a little package of flower seed for my father. He was just a congressman then, you know. We knew John Garner. Mr. Fore went out there to his birthday parties quite often.

M: What other conventions did you go to then?

F: He went to Chicago twice. I went with him one year, and he went to Houston twice. Of course, he went to Philadelphia, and we went to Atlantic City. Where else did they meet?

M: Did he go to Los Angeles?

F: No.

M: He didn't go to that.

F: No.

M: That was the one where Johnson got nominated for Vice President.

F: Yes, but he didn't make a success of it. John Connally nominated him, you know. But we listened to it all on television. Didn't go into that.

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M: Again, did Mr. Fore campaign in 1960 for the Kennedy-Johnson ticket?

F: Yes, he did every time he ran. I can tell you that. And Mr. Fore was National Committeeman, too, one time. Also when Lyndon was elected, he was one of the electors that went to Austin to cast a vote.

M: This is in '64?

F: Yes. Johnson. That was the picture taken . . .

M: You also went to the inauguration in 1965.

F: Yes. We went to Atlantic City in '64 to the convention. Then in '65 we went to the inauguration.

M: There was no great political problem in '64, was there?

F: No. No, there was not.

M: Then everybody knew what was going to happen.

F: But you know, Lyndon was supposed to select his Vice President, announce it on a Thursday. And on, I believe it was, Tuesday night, Robert Kennedy was there and they showed this picture of John Kennedy and all the tragedy of his life, and you've never heard such clapping and carrying on. So Lyndon didn't do a thing but announce Hubert Humphrey Wednesday night instead of Thursday, because he was just afraid somebody was going to get up and nominate Robert Kennedy from the floor. Could have, too.

M: Do you think that was a possibility?

F: I do. I think he just made that announcement, thought the time was right, because that whole crowd was just wild about

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that picture. And everything was fine after that.

M: Yes. Then you went to the inauguration.

F: Oh, yes. We went up there with him on Air Force One.
Stayed at the Blair House.

M: For the sake of the tape, I should mention that Mrs. Fore told me beforehand a little bit about this. Would you mind telling that again about how Mr. Johnson called up on the phone . . .

F: No. No. Well, we were seated in the living room on a Friday night playing dominoes and Mr. Johnson called Sam and asked, "Well, you're coming up to the inauguration, are you not?" Sam said, "No, Lyndon we have talked it over and decided not to go." You remember when John Kennedy was inaugurated it was bitter cold up there, and some people didn't even get to the inauguration.

M: Yes.

F: And he said, "I don't think in my health I ought to go. I have a hard time getting around." Lyndon said, "Now Sam, I just cannot have an inauguration without you. You're just going to have to go. I'll fix it so you can. You can go with me on Air Force One; I'll send a helicopter down to Connally's strip and get you on Sunday. Come up here and we'll leave at five o'clock, I'll have the bed turned down, you can come lie down. There's a doctor on the plane; you can get there-- you'll be carried right to the door. You'll have an escort and a limousine and a driver for every place you want to go

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in Washington. Nothing is going to cost you a penny." Sam said, "Well, I'll have to let you know. I'll have to talk to Elma about that. I'll call you in the morning." So we discussed it, and called my daughter over here (Mrs. Evelyn Fore Spruce of Floresville) and we talked about it and she agreed to go with us. I didn't want to take responsibility of taking him up there. I didn't know what effect it was going to have up there in that cold climate, you know. You knew he had a bad heart.

M: Yes.

F: So, we decided we'd go, but we hadn't had a chance to call him. He called the next morning at about 8:30 to tell us that he had arranged for a helicopter to pick us up at the Connally ranch at four that afternoon. So we went, and Connally and his wife also went on the same helicopter and went across and got on the plane, and of course there was quite a group on that plane. Nothing would do him but Sam must go lie down. He said, "I don't want to lie down, Lyndon. I want to sit up and talk." [Lyndon said], "No, you're going to lie down here a while now first." So he took him back there to his bed and put him in the bed, made him take off his shoes and lie down. So he lay there about thirty, forty minutes, then he got up. That's where they made the picture, right there where he was sitting there talking to Lyndon by themselves. Then we went up in the car. Of course, Lady Bird's brother and his wife were there, Lyndon's sister and her family. There were quite a few relatives and friends

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on that plane, a very pleasant trip. And we got into Washington [and] it was three degrees. I never was so cold in my life when we got off that warm plane and got on that helicopter to go to the White House. But we got there. The helicopter, of course, landed real close to the Blair House and we went right on in there and everything was fine. We had a wonderful stay. His aunt and uncle stayed there at the Blair House, and Margaret Truman and her family stayed there.

M: You were in Blair House, too?

F: Yes, they were, too. The only ones there were his uncle from San Antonio and his wife, and Margaret Truman and her family, and of course that was a great privilege to stay there and see that Blair House, even. All you had to do was walk across to the White House any time you wanted to and look around over there, so we had coffee in the Green Room. We just really had a wonderful stay. And at the inauguration we had seats up on the platform with the notables--we got to see everything and it was warm back up under the shelter. It was a perfect trip. Mr. Fore never felt bad.

M: How long did you stay?

F: We stayed from Sunday through Thursday. And we came home in a jet plane that belonged to Mr. Clint Murchison. Mr. Fore and Mr. Murchison had a big time. Mr. Fore never saw a stranger. They got to talking about the Dallas Cowboys. You know Mr. Murchison owned the Dallas Cowboys--actually they were owned by the Hunt Family--so they really had a ball coming home. Murchison wanted to take us on to Floresville. Sam said, "You can't take us to Floresville,

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it's got bad weather, and we couldn't land there. My son-in-law is going to meet us in Austin." And we couldn't land in Austin. [Murchison] said, "I'll take you on to Floresville." He said, "Well, you can't land this jet on that strip out there at Connally's, it's not built for that jet." [Murchison said], "Well, I'll take you on to San Antonio." So we did. We came on to San Antonio, and just telephoned my son-in-law on the road, you know, that we were coming on to San Antonio. But it was just raining the whole time. And that night after we got home and got in bed it was about ten thirty; the phone rang, and it was Lyndon. "I just wanted to know if you got him home and got him tucked in," he said. I said, "Why sure. He's all right, he's in bed." "I just wanted to check and see. Well now, just wait a minute, I want you to talk to Hubert and Muriel." And I had to talk to Hubert Humphrey and I had to talk to Muriel, and Lady Bird, and Sam had to get up and talk to them, too. Well, he made it awfully pleasant for us; we got to go to everything. We went to John Connally's reception. Everything they had, we had somebody to take him in a wheelchair, but he wanted to walk everywhere he went--that wheelchair was in that limousine. We had a White House limousine, had a Captain that was an escort and driver, too.

M: Did Mr. Fore have a heart condition?

F: He had what you call a fast heart. He had these attacks sometimes. But he wasn't sick a day he was up there.

M: Don't you think it's strange that somebody like Lyndon Johnson

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would do all this for you?

F: He's that type of a man. He never forgot his early friends and he really loved Mr. Fore. He loved him. He was that kind of a man. He never did forget, and there's other people that I know of that he has done things for. He didn't forget his poor relatives, either. He took . . . what was her name that lived up there in that little house there with him up there? Oreole.

M: Right.

F: He was just that kind of a warm person.

M: Did Mr. Johnson then have much later contact after the inaugural with Mr. Fore?

F: Well, yes, they wrote each other, and we had been up to the ranch, as I say, when he had these notables up there, you know, several times, and we went up there one time on a personal visit one Sunday. I remember Mrs. Carpenter was there and Lady Bird, and so on. But, of course, he didn't have as much time then as we used to have, but he never lost contact with him, ever. And he came to Mr. Fore's funeral.

M: Yes, I've read that. Was Mr. Johnson at the ranch then?

F: He was at the ranch. It was Christmas Eve, you know, when he died, and so he was home for the holidays.

M: And so President Johnson came over. . . .

F: Did he say anything at the funeral?

F: No. We didn't ask him to. He just came out to the car where I was with Lady Bird and spoke to us when he came out of the church.

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M: Yes. Have you seen much of the Johnsons since then?

F: I had lunch with them in February. I was up at Fredericksburg to the Historical Association meeting, a delegate, and we had always sent Lyndon peanut products. You know we have a peanut festival here once a year.

M: That's why you have a peanut in the town square? In the courtyard.

F: Yes, and Mr. Fore borned it--promoted it the whole time. Every year after it he would send Lyndon a big box of peanut brittle and peanut products. And shelled peanuts, and peanut butter that was made here by the Home Demonstration ladies, you know. You remember in Lady Bird's book she talks about taking that peanut brittle out from under the bed and eating it? She had been hiding it from Lyndon; that's what we sent her. We sent him peanut brittle in Washington all the time. And at the ranch, too. So I had fixed him a box and I had written them that I was coming to Fredericksburg, and I said, "I'm going to leave this box at the Boyhood Home for you when we go through Johnson City." We went on up by another road, though; we didn't go up by Johnson City going up to Fredericksburg. We were a little late, and so we didn't come back until Sunday. We just kind of stayed and looked around up there, you know, and so we were over there in the Johnson Park. They had had a barbecue out there the night before, and we were over there that morning looking. If you've ever been up there, they have a lot of exhibits

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in there, and I signed the register. This boy said, "You're Mrs. Fore?" And I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, you've got a package for Mr. Johnson, don't you?" I said, "Yes, I'm going to leave it over there at the Boyhood Home. How did you know I have a package for him?" He said, "Well, my wife works over there and he told her you were going to bring it."

So we got on over there to the Boyhood Home at about twenty minutes till twelve. These two ladies that were with me had never seen it, and they wanted to stop and see it. I got to the door with the package, where the lady said, "You're Mrs. Fore?" I said, "Yes." She said, "Well, Mrs. Johnson wants you to call her." I said, "Well, you see if you can get her on the line." She went on in and called her and I talked to her. She said, "We want you to come out and have lunch with us." I said, "Well, I've got two ladies with me and we're on our way home. It's twenty minutes to twelve now." She said, "That don't make any difference. Come on. Wait a minute, here comes Lyndon on the phone." [Lyndon said], "Elma, now we're not going to take no for an answer. You just come right out here and have lunch. We're going to have lunch in just about thirty minutes. You just come right on out here and eat. Nobody here but Bird and I and the children." He had Luci's two children. I asked the ladies if they wanted to go, and they said they would, so we went out and had lunch with them just like we were any other folks. There was cordwood piled up on the back porch. He brought the

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little girl out--Luci's little baby--and she was just a darling little girl. He said, "Take her. Take her." So I had to hold her, you know. He said, "She's the prettiest baby you ever saw." I said, "Well, I'm sure of that." He said, "Well, she looks just like my mother." We went in and sat down to the table, and they had a Mexican lunch that day. It was all in appointments of Mexican; Lady Bird had fixed it real nice. They had this Jap boy waiting on the table. Lyndon sat down and [Lady Bird] said, "Elma, you sit there by Lyndon because I know he wants to talk to you." So I sat there and he just asked me a million questions. He just fired them to me about all the family and what we'd been doing, this, that, and the other. Lady Bird sitting over there asked me something about the meeting up in Fredericksburg. He said, "Lady Bird, just keep quiet till I get through, and then you can talk to Elma all you want to, but I want to find out some things." So she let him talk. He ate his chili in a bowl with a spoon just like he always did when he came by the house.

M: Yes. What kind of food did he like to eat?

F: He loved chili better than anything in the world. He liked Mexican food.

M: He liked peanut brittle.

F: He loved peanut brittle. Oh, he just loved that. She did, too. She liked watermelon. Mr. Fore was always sending her watermelon up to the ranch. Every time he'd get some fine

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watermelons, he'd get somebody to take her up three or four over there. He would have him up there when he'd have John Kennedy up at the ranch, you know.

M: Oh, is that right?

F: There was a whole bunch of people down there at the gate, and my grandson drove Mr. Fore up there. Lyndon had called him to come when they got to the gate. Why, they called the house and [Lyndon] came down to the gate and told Sam to come get in the car with him and John Kennedy. And he did and took them all over the ranch. So he got to meet John and talk to him, you know, and be with him.

M: What did they talk about, do you know?

F: I don't know. He said one thing; he said Lady Bird asked John, "John, we're going to have broiled steak for supper. How do you want yours cooked?" He said, "I don't care. I'm so hungry, I could eat it any way you fix it."

M: Well now, you've seen Lyndon Johnson for a long time.

F: Oh, yes.

M: Why was he a successful politician? What is there about him that made him win?

F: For one thing, he was smart. He knew how to handle people. He had a great understanding of people and situations. He could analyze a situation. I know at one time during the Depression, the Robstown Bank down there, one of the banks, was about to go under. Sam's friend was president of that bank, and he asked Sam while Johnson was under Kleberg.

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Can you do anything to help us out?" Sam said, "I don't know, but I'll try." He sent for Lyndon; he came down here, stayed all night here. They went down to Robstown the next day. He sat down with those men at the bank; they went over everything. He said, "Men, I'm going to do what I can." That was when they first had this Federal Land Bank down at Houston. He went down there and got them all straightened out and got them set up again. And they didn't go broke. He pulled them out. Sam said the men were just amazed at how he could grasp that situation and could analyze it and figure out a way for them to be solvent. That they just didn't know; they thought he was a wonder. And he was.

M: So, he was smart; he was intelligent.

F: He was smart; he was intelligent. He had an acumen for a political situation that most people didn't have.

M: Did he have a good memory?

F: Oh yes. I reckon he did.

M: He remembered people?

F: He remembered their names, the people, and too, anybody did him a favor, he wrote them a letter. And as he used to tell Sam, "Old Joe Blow would carry it around in his hip pocket for six months because the Congressman has written him a letter." And that was one of the secrets of his success. The little man got the attention.

M: So he wrote lots of letters.

F: He wrote lots of letters, and he never forgot his friends

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that had favored him. And his wife was a great asset, don't forget that.

M: Now, how is that? What did she do that helped?

F: Well, in the first place, she financed him the first time he ran, you know, after he was in and ran the second time for the Senate. Her father was a well-to-do merchant over in East Texas, and I have read that [Lyndon] borrowed ten thousand dollars from her for his first race. Then she had some money and put it in that radio station there in Austin--you know how it grew--and got the television station. That's where she made her money, really. Lady Bird is a very understanding person, and a person with many facets to her life. She can be nice to people, and she knows how to let go and go on to the next thing, and she was always--

M: What do you mean, let go and go on to the next thing?

F: She didn't attach herself to one group or to one person, you see. She could be nice to me if I went up there, and then she had another group over there in the living room, but she'd come in and talk to us and be with us. Then she had to go in there with them; well, she'd just excuse herself. She's that kind of a person. She could keep all those things in her mind and handle herself with dignity and poise under any kind of situation. And she was dedicated to Lyndon and to his welfare, and that was her object in life, to serve. I've never heard a word spoken against Lady Bird Johnson. Never have I heard a word.

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M: Is she a smart woman?

F: Smart woman. Very intelligent. Very intelligent. Well bred.

M: Has she got a sense of humor?

F: Oh yes. Oh yes. Her mother was an educated woman and a woman that believed in integration long before anybody else did. They lived over there in East Texas where they didn't, and she was kind of outstanding herself.

M: What do you think about the way Mrs. Johnson played the role of First Lady? Do you think she was a good first lady?

F: Absolutely. I think the best since Abigail Adams. I wrote her that.

M: Why do you think so?

F: I think she had character to begin with, and she was dedicated to the job and to her family as well. She had breeding, character, and dedication.

M: Did Lyndon Johnson have a sense of humor?

F: Oh yes. He liked to joke as well as anybody. Sure.

M: Do you remember any jokes?

F: I can't remember jokes. I hear them, but I can't remember them. But he and my husband could have more fun together just telling them, and talking. I believe they could stay up all night and talk.

M: They'd talk about politics?

F: Yes. And [about] their friends and what happened. Lyndon would be telling what happened, you know. Sam knew so much.

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He had a passion for newspapers. He read everything that went on in the nation's capital, everything that went on in the Congressional Record. He knew so many men that were in Congress, and Lyndon could tell him so many interesting things that went on in the Congress. And my husband never forgot anything he read. He'd keep it all right up here. He took about five dailies and he never went to sleep at night that he hadn't read every one of them.

M: So when they got together, they would talk about politics.

F: Oh yes, and personalities.

M: And Mr. Fore would know a great deal about it?

F: Oh yes, he did. Oh yes. He could tell you every legislator from every state and how they voted, and all that. He had it stashed away in his mind, and he was also an avid sports fan. Never missed a football game in Austin that came. He played baseball as a young man, you know; he was quite a catcher on the local team. He loved sports of all kinds. He always said that was his vacation, going to conventions and going to the ball games.

M: When Lyndon Johnson would ask your husband for advice, what kind of advice would it be? Would it be how to handle a particular event or person?

F: About individuals as a rule.

M: About people.

F: Yes. And about his value, and his role in politics. Mr. Fore had a pretty broad knowledge of people, and he couldn't

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mention a town in the state he didn't know somebody in it. And he had a warm personality and people liked him and they knew who he was.

M: Did Mr. Fore have anything to do with this trip in 1963 that John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson made to Texas when Kennedy was killed?

F: No, We were enroute to Austin for that dinner that day when he was shot. We didn't know it had happened until we got there. We didn't have our radio on.

M: Mr. Fore didn't have anything to do with the planning of that trip?

F: No, we had tickets for the dinner; we were going to the dinner that evening.

M: Did Mr. Johnson call Mr. Fore shortly after... .

F: No.

M: He didn't call up Mr. Fore.

F: I can't remember that he did. He had too many other things to do. We saw John Connally shortly after; he was out here at the ranch. We went out and talked to him.

M: Yes, well, he was wounded.

F: Yes. He called Mr. Fore to come out there and he told him all . . . he wanted to know about it.

M: Well, did Mr. Connally say anything then about the trip or the assassination, or why Johnson came to Texas that particular time?

F: Well, of course they came for political reasons, because . . . then Johnson wanted them to come to Texas so he could take a

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look at him with Connally with him, you know, because of the influence it would have in Texas. They were planning a big deal in Austin for him that night.

M: Did Mr. Fore ever get together with Mr. Johnson and Mr. Sam Rayburn? There is supposed to be a strong connection between Lyndon Johnson and Sam Rayburn. Is that true?

F: Oh yes, there was. Oh yes. He was very devoted to Mr. Rayburn. You saw this picture here of John Garner's birthday where Rayburn and Johnson and Truman all were there. Oh, Lyndon and Rayburn were just buddies. They were very close.

M: And Mr. Fore, also.

F: Yes. Yes. He knew them both well. I have a number of letters from Mr. Rayburn.

M: Well, in 1956 there was sort of a state fight between Mr. Johnson and Sam Rayburn on one side, against Alan Shivers on the other. Did Mr. Fore have anything to do with that?

F: Yes, he sure did.

M: What happened there?

F: Well, I can't tell you everything that happened. There was a lady talking to me about that not long ago about that fight they had up in Ft. Worth. I didn't go to that convention.

M: Did Mr. Fore go to that?

F: Oh yes. Oh yes. He went to all the state conventions, always a delegate.

M: Whose side was Mr. Fore on?

F: Well, you know whose side he was on; he had no time for

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Alan Shivers. You know, he went for Eisenhower.

M: Alan Shivers did, yes, and Mr. Fore didn't like that?

F: No.

M: So he was with Lyndon Johnson then, against Alan Shivers?

F: Oh yes. You bet. And Alan Shivers changed his party, and that's what broke his neck. That's what's going to happen to John Connally if he does it, too. If he changes parties it's going to break his neck. And the crowd is not going to follow him. They think they will, but they won't.

M: Did Mr. Fore say anything to you about that '56 fight in Fort Worth?

F: Oh, at the time, why sure. The feeling was running high. And even up here in San Antonio when we had the . . . what convention was that . . . that must have been the district convention. What was that? We went to . . . they had a fight up there about something, too, I know. I know John Connally came down. When they wanted to unseat the delegates. I was there that day, but . . . I tell you, it's been a long time ago. I can tell you that. Oh yes, he was against Alan Shivers, I can tell you that.

We knew Alan Shivers when he was just a young lawyer, before he ever married. And I know how he made his money, too: he married part of it. There was a pretty big split in the Democratic Party that year.

M: Sure was.

F: It worked out all right though, finally.

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- M: Well, Mrs. Fore showed me a little clipping here, which I might read into this record, in which it says, quote, "Senator Johnson told the Senate that Reverend Fore's uncle and Reverend Sam L. Fore of Austin" according to this article, "offered as Acting Chairman of the U.S. Senate a prayer." And Lyndon Johnson was there and then told the Senate, quote, "Senator Johnson told the Senate that Reverend Fore's uncle, Sam Fore, Jr. of the Floresville newspaper was" and this is Johnson's quote, " 'one of the men who guided my footsteps in the early days in my life.' " To the Austin minister he attributed "meaningful guidance of my footsteps today." This is from a newspaper clipping.
- F: What do you think about this other one?
- M: Now, this one . . .
- F: [It] refers to when Mr. Fore appeared on the [Hugh] Downs program.
- M: You may have the wrong one there. That's about a Forestry Service.
- F: Oh. That's the wrong one. That wasn't the one I wanted at all.
- M: But I'll let her tell the story.
- F: Well, all right. We were at the inauguration, at the Mayflower Hotel. They had a reception for Connally, and Mr. Fore was tired of walking down the long hall. He went in where there were some chairs to sit down. We discovered we were in the Hugh Downs television booth, so he came over and talked to Mr. Fore and asked him where he was from and what he was

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doing up there. He told him he was from Floresville, Texas, and he came up there to see his friend Lyndon Johnson, that he'd known for thirty years, be inaugurated as President. [Downs] said, "Well, you're the man I'm looking for. I want to get you on television." And so he did and Mr. Fore told him what his relationship was with Mr. Johnson, and how he had known him since he was a young man of 24 and how he'd watched him climb steadily up the political ladder. And [he] said, "We have another boy down in Texas that's going to be President some day, too, and that's John Connally." And so it was written up in all the papers about what he had said about John Connally. So it's been repeated recently, what he had said--predicted.

I know one time John Connally was at a rally over in Seguin, he told them that Mr. Fore had done more for him than any other man besides his father in his life.

M: And to summarize, then, people like Lyndon Johnson would say this about Mr. Fore because of the long acquaintanceship and the advice.

F: The help he had been to him.

M: Along the way. . . .

F: In his political career. And when he married in San Antonio, he and Lady Bird went to Mexico on their honeymoon, and soon as they got back to San Antonio he brought her back here and they spent the night with us. We never had met her. And that was the first time I met Lady Bird. I had never met her before.

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M: Were they still an excited young couple?

F: Oh yes. They were a very striking young couple. Lyndon was a handsome young man.

M: Was he eager to get back to work?

F: Oh yes. He was eager to get back on the job. And we visited them in Austin. They were living up in Austin, there. We visited them there, too. And they used to come down here and visit us when he was N.Y.A. director in Austin.

M: And again, Lyndon Johnson and Sam Fore would discuss politics?

F: Oh yes. Always planning, plotting, getting somebody this and somebody that, you know, but it was an exciting life. I always enjoyed it, too; I enjoyed the politics as well as he did.

M: Well, I have no more questions for you. Is there anything you'd like to add to this? Any experience you had with the Johnsons?

F: I can't think of anything.

M: Well then, let me thank you very much.

F: Well, you're entirely welcome. I hope I've been some help to you.

(End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I)

Gift of Personal Statement

By MRS. SAM FORE, JR.

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

In accordance with Section 507 of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) and regulations issued thereunder (41 CFR 101-10), I, Mrs. Sam Fore, Jr., hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a tape and a transcript of a personal statement approved by me and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

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Signed Mrs Sam Fore Jr.

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Accepted Harry J. Wacker
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