

INTERVIEW I

DATE: November 6, 1979  
INTERVIEWEE: ARDIS C. HOPPER  
INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE  
PLACE: Mr. Hopper's residence, Houston, Texas

Tape 1 of 2

G: Well, Mr. Hopper, let's talk about your background briefly. You're from Lufkin, is that right?

H: I'm from Lufkin, yes.

G: How did you end up at San Marcos?

H: Well, I had a high school coach in Lufkin named Jesse Kellam who arranged that I should go out in the fall of 1926 and try out for the football team. If I could make it I would be able to get a job and go to school, which worked out about that way.

G: So you arrived on campus in the fall of--

H: In the fall of 1926, yes.

G: Do you recall the first time you met Lyndon Johnson?

H: Well, yes. I can't remember the first time I ever saw him, because being a small school like it is you run into people almost daily. During the fall of 1926 I saw Lyndon on the campus several times, but the first time that I ever really had a serious conversation with him was in the fall of 1927 which would be about a year later. I met him on the campus one day and he told me that he and a friend of his, Boody Johnson, who is no relation, had gotten permission

Hopper -- I -- 2

from the President [Cecil Evans] to use his garage apartment for living quarters but there was no furniture up there. [He said] that he and Boody had one room and I could have the other room if I wanted it, but I'd have to help him and Boody take some furniture from the old hospital. There was an old hospital there at the time that was being dismantled and there was a lot of beds and dressers and stuff available. So I met them down there one Sunday and we moved enough furniture up there to get by. We used hospital beds, these big high beds, but they served the purpose. So that Christmas when I came back from vacation I moved up to the garage apartment with those two.

That was the first time I met him, was in connection with this moving up to this garage apartment.

G: This was Christmas of 1927?

H: This was Christmas of 1927. They used the three-semester system there then and there was one term ending. It was right in connection with the ending of that term that they were taking over this place. The place was vacant, had been vacant for some time and he had found out about it. He knew that I was paying rent where I was and this was going to be a free situation. The President wasn't going to charge us any rent.

G: How long did you live there?

H: I lived there from this Christmas of 1927 until the fall of 1929, the late summer of 1929. During that period of time Boody Johnson, who was also living up there, graduated in the summer of 1928 and

Hopper -- I -- 3

left, and Lyndon lived there until the late summer of 1928, until he left to go teach school down at Cotulla. So I was living there with him from Christmas of 1927 until the late summer of 1928.

G: I see. Can you describe the garage apartment?

H: Well, it was a two-car garage with an upstairs, with stairs on the outside leading up to a little hallway. The hallway ran from the left door entrance there back to a bath facility in the back with two rooms on the right, two small rooms. They were about twelve or fourteen by twelve, something like that, big enough for two people to live conveniently.

G: But they were both used as bedrooms, is that right?

H: Both as bedrooms.

G: Were there facilities for studying there?

H: Well, just in the room. We did have a table. I remember we got a dresser, a bed, a table and a couple of chairs from this hospital that was being dismantled.

G: Did you have a rest-room there and a shower?

H: There was a rest-room there but no shower. Just across the street [was] the gymnasium. We used that gymnasium shower all the time. It was open all the time. That was the one we used for shower purposes.

G: The story may be apocryphal but I think legend has it that the business manager perhaps, or some individual connected with the university, found out about you all living there rent-free and talked to Dr. Evans about it. He said he wanted you to live there because he

Hopper -- I -- 4

wanted someone to be there when he was away and his wife wouldn't have to worry. Do you recall any situation like that?

H: I do recall this. It was in the spring of 1930, the spring that we all graduated. Lyndon came up to me on the campus one day and said, "Tom Nichols wants to see you." Well, Tom Nichols was the President's secretary and really had charge of those things. So I went in to see what Tom had to say and he said, "I hear that you and Lyndon and Boody and a whole bunch of you guys have been living up there free all this time. What about it?" I told him, "Yes, that's true." Somebody had set this thing up. I don't know, but Lyndon might have. He said, "Okay, I'm going to let you get by with it this time but you don't ever let it happen again." I was graduating. But seriously, I know the President knew we were there, knew we weren't paying any rent; so did Tom. But somebody was pulling somebody's leg a little bit, I think.

G: Did you get any impression of why you all were enabled to live there in the first place, how the arrangement was made? For example, did President Evans offer it to LBJ? If so, why?

H: The place had been left vacant for a long time. We had to do some cleaning up. It was kind of a storage place up there. We had to do that first, to get all that stuff out. It looked to me like it had been vacant for an awful long time. But Lyndon arranged for the space somehow, I don't know who from. But there was no question about the fact that it was available free. For example, when one person would finish their term and move out, whoever was left would

Hopper -- I -- 5

go get somebody to bring up there. Nobody kept any records on that.

G: Do you recall the address of the apartment?

H: It was behind the President's house, that's all. I doubt if the President's house--it must have had an address. But his house was sitting up on a high hill right there by the Main Building and I don't know what address he had. We got our mail down where we ate. We ate down at the Gates boarding house. That's where I got my mail. I imagine the rest of them did, too.

G: But you didn't have to fill out any residence?

H: Just moved in. (Laughter) You have to remember back then this school was very informal. It was very small. Everybody was poor. . . Everybody was struggling to get by. I don't guess anybody has ever done more for students than President Evans did. He just wouldn't let you leave if he could help it in some way.

G: There's also the story, of course, that you all would paint the garage in order to earn money or help [compensate for the rent].

H: Well, it was painted a time or two. Not a time or two while I was there, but we did paint it once. We kept it clean.

G: You don't recall though painting it repeatedly just to compensate for the rent?

H: No, there was nobody worrying about compensation on that place.

G: Did you ever stay in President Evans' house when they were gone or house-sit for them?

H: No, I never did stay there.

Hopper -- I -- 6

G: Well, let's talk about employment. Do you know what President Johnson did before he worked in President Evans' office?

H: Yes, when we first moved up to this apartment he was night watchman. That was one of the good jobs there. They kept the campus pretty well secure at night. There were two shifts in each area. I guess there must have been maybe six night watchmen altogether. They were favorable jobs, I think four-hour shifts or maybe five-hour shifts. And he did that. That was the first job I remember him having.

G: He did that while he was moving into the apartment?

H: I think he had that job when we set up the garage for living purposes. I think Lyndon was one of the night watchmen.

G: I had just assumed that he was already working in the President's office when he moved into the apartment.

H: I can't be sure. I know later he did work in the President's office.

G: Do you know how he got that job?

H: No, I sure don't.

G: Do you know whether it was he or Boody Johnson that arranged for living in the garage?

H: I think he did.

G: Did he? Any other jobs in addition to night watchman?

H: No, he had that job and then he worked in the President's office. He was editor of the school paper, which was a paying job. He had that job for a while.

G: Did he ever sell anything? You know, they had salesmen a lot.

Hopper -- I -- 7

H: I can't remember. It seems to me like he was selling ties or something at one time. I'm not sure. That's the first time I had even thought about that in all this time. But in the back of my mind maybe he did do some of that.

G: How about socks? Did he ever sell those?

H: Socks and ties, I believe that was the combination. I believe that's true.

G: Did you have a job there on campus?

H: Yes, I had a job all the time I was there. The first job I had I had to build the fire in the cafeteria stoves every morning around five o'clock, for my meals. Then in order to stay in school I had to pay the room rent myself. Since you mentioned that job thing, as I recall now, Lyndon approached me on campus that day and he said, "I hear you're having a hard time staying in school." That's exactly what he said, I remember it. Boody had told him. See, Boody was captain of the football team and he was kind of keeping up with people. I don't remember saying anything to Boody about it but it was true. I said, "Yes, it's going to be a little tough to get back next term." Then he told me about the hospital and the room and the furniture and so forth.

G: Was he easy to get along with in that apartment?

H: Yes, very easy to get along with. Lyndon was very friendly up there. He and Boody and I got along real well. They roomed in the big room and I had the little room right there in that same deal. He probably studied more than we did.

Hopper -- I -- 8

G: Oh, he did?

H: I would say he did.

G: Was he a good student?

H: He was a good student, but you know, nobody studied too much.

G: I gather there were a lot of bull sessions.

H: Yes, bull sessions.

G: What was he interested in?

H: He was interested in debate. There was a press club out there that he was a member of and was interested in. I remember that. And there was the Harris Blair Literary Society, which he was interested in and was very active in that. I'd say he had general interest in just about everything that went on around there. I do remember the Press Club and his connection with the College Star and the Harris Blair Literary Society, which was a big organization out there at the time.

G: Was he interested in politics at all?

H: Until he went to Houston [to the Democratic National Convention] in 1928 I didn't notice any particular interest in politics. But I do remember that was very important to him, to get down there.

G: Do you recall any subjects that he enjoyed more than others, say-- you mentioned debate?

H: He must have shown some interest in politics, his father having been a member of the legislature and his background generally, old family and so forth. But manifesting political activity on that small campus, there was just not much there. There weren't many options



Hopper -- I -- 9

except for his debate and his literary society, his press club, his College Star work, and then that convention which meant everything to him to get down there.

G: What was your impression of his family on the basis of his description of them?

H: Well, I visited with him two or three weekends at his home in Johnson City. His mother impressed me very much. She was a very regal lady. I knew his father, too. As a matter of fact, I remember when Johnson got me elected to president of the Student [Welfare] Council, I asked Mr. Johnson one day, "How long would it take you to teach me all you know about Roberts Rules of Order? I've got problems on my hands." So he gave me a few lessons. He pointed out something I remember, he said, "Why don't you read the charter of the council up at the school?" which I did. I found out that the president of the council could vacate the chair any time he wanted to to the faculty representative, which put me back in the voting category. Well, that slipped up on everybody. So the first thing I'd do on these things, I'd just vacate the chair in favor of Dean [H. E.] Speck and I'd get out there with the rest of them. But I liked Mr. Johnson, he was a very likeable person. And I knew Rebekah more than I did the younger ones.

G: What were Sam Ealy Johnson and Lyndon Johnson like together? Did they have a close rapport or was there at all a competition between them?

Hopper -- I -- 10

- H: No, I didn't notice anything. I believe Mr. Johnson was working for the Railroad Commission at the time and he'd show up occasionally and visit a day or two.
- G: Did they talk politics together?
- H: Not that I know of.
- G: How about LBJ and his mother?
- H: They seemed to be very close, very close.
- G: Did she seem like a source of encouragement in his education?
- H: I'd say she was one of the forces behind him all his life.
- G: You know, he wrote an awful lot of editorials when he was there for the Star, and perhaps you're in a position to answer this. Did he ever get any ideas or input or even editorial help from her on those?
- H: I don't know.
- G: The language sounds so similar, if you've read her letters, you see that [she might have influenced him].
- H: I can visualize her now as a very gracious lady and [she] must have had a terribly strong influence on him.
- G: Did he ever give you an indication of what he intended to do when he got through school?
- H: No, he never did.
- G: Did you ever get the impression either here at San Marcos or later in Houston that he was going to go to law school one of those days?
- H: I never did hear him say that. The first chance he got he went with [Richard] Kleberg to get into this political arena and from there on

Hopper -- I -- 11

it was politics all the way. I don't think he stayed here but a year or two, at Sam Houston [High School].

G: Anything else on his mother and father?

H: I can remember her a lot better than I can him. I just remember she was a very impressive person as far as I was concerned, very kind to me. I guess I was out there three or four times over the four years. Lyndon liked to take people home with him on the weekends. He took Boody, he took me, I don't know who else. But he seemed to be very proud of his home and family. The younger girls I guess were there. Rebekah probably was in school. Sam Houston, being several years younger, I guess he was still in high school.

G: Now you boarded at the Gates [house]?

H: Gates, Mrs. Gates just furnished meals.

G: Can you recall how many students would eat there?

H: Gosh, I saw a picture here a while back of our whole crew at noon one day. Before you leave maybe I can find it. There must have been I'd say eighteen or twenty, maybe more. It was a very popular place to eat. She furnished two meals a day: a noon meal and supper at night, no breakfast. It was very reasonable. I don't remember exactly what it was but it was something most of those guys could afford. She kept a pretty big group.

G: Did any students also live there or was it strictly [for meals]?

H: I don't believe so. It was a very small house. She had a son--he went to school there--and a daughter and a small daughter. I don't know about the middle daughter, I may be getting those two daughters mixed up, but a son was in school there. She had a little daughter

Hopper -- I -- 12

about so big. It was a very popular place. Most of the people who went out for athletics ate there because they could afford it.

G: Was there any identity to that place at all? For example, were the fellows who ate there all good friends?

H: I'd say they were all real good friends.

G: But it wasn't like a social club or an eating club?

H: Eat and go. You just go eat and you get out. There wasn't that much room. It was a very small house. I think she made a dining room out of her living room and then had a dining room and probably a couple of bedrooms. That's all.

G: Did any of you work there in addition to eating there?

H: No, I don't believe anybody worked there. She did most of the work.

G: We're going to, of course, get to your mother's boarding house later on, but I was just wondering, can you recall any other place where you all either might have roomed or had your meals while you were there?

H: No. As far as I was concerned, that's the only place I ate until Mama moved out there in the fall of 1929. But Lyndon and Boody lived someplace else on a couple of occasions. I can't remember-- Boody was talking about that the other day. He was trying to remember where they lived before they moved to this garage apartment and he couldn't remember. But there was a year there that he lived someplace and there were some outright boarding houses, men's boarding houses, where you took your meals and slept, too. Most of the people that were eating with Mrs. Gates had rooms all over town.

Hopper -- I -- 13

G: Let's talk a little bit about social activities there. I gather there would be dances.

H: Well, every once in a while you'd have a dance at the gym. Social activities were practically nil. There just wasn't much you could do. Things were pretty restrictive as far as social activities. That one dance at the college gym is the only one I can remember them having. We just wondered sometimes what people did, why they weren't studying or anything, but they weren't doing much of anything.

G: Well, I gather there were a lot of clubs, like the Shakespeare Club and Harris Blair.

H: Yes, they had the Shakespeares and Idyllics and the Mendelssohns and Harris Blair, the Newman Club, and of course there's the Nolle Scholarship Society, which I never did belong to. But there were clubs all over the place. Most of them were pretty small because there just weren't enough people there to make them bigger.

G: Were these more social than, say, literary?

H: Yes, they were mostly social, I'd think. I wondered a lot about the Harris Blair Literary Society, what they literated about, because looking at some of those pictures they weren't too literally inclined, I don't think. But there were those things. There must have been some activities going on in connection with those clubs that I didn't know about.

G: How about parties on the river? Would you do this very often?

H: Yes, occasionally on the weekends we'd go up on the Blanco River. Some of the professors had cabins up there. They'd take a bunch up there.

Hopper -- I -- 14

G: I have a note here that in the spring of 1927 Tom Connally was scheduled to deliver the commencement address, Senator Tom Connally. Do you recall if that ever took place?

H: If it did I'd forgotten about it.

G: Do you have any recollections of LBJ writing for the College Star?

H: He wrote for the College Star quite a bit. I think when he was editor--I can't remember the year that he was editor--he wrote quite a bit for the Star.

G: I gather he was editorial writer in the year 1927-1928.

H: Yes. I think when he came back there in the fall of 1929 he wrote some more articles for the Star.

G: Where did he do his writing, do you know? Do you recall?

H: Well, in the library I imagine. I know in 1929 and 1930 there was no place at home there where we were staying for him to write. But San Marcos, at that time the college had a very nice library. I thought one of the most attractive things they had was that library, a great big thing. There were a lot of students there all the time. It was kind of a study hall where most of them did their studying as well as doing library work.

G: But he did not study at home. He did it somewhere else?

H: There was very little studying done up in that garage apartment.

G: He must have been proud of his editorials because he wrote an awful lot of them.

H: I'd say Lyndon was a whole lot better than the average writer. I had forgotten about this, too. When I was a senior, before you were

Hopper -- I -- 15

allowed to have a degree, you had to teach a class in this subcollege or demonstration school that was operated in connection with the college. You had to do that to get your teachers certificate. He and I were assigned the same class. He'd teach it one day and I'd teach it the next. I remember that he set pretty high standards there for me and actually forced me to make an awful good grade because he was very good. It was a history class, so history came natural to him. He was very much interested in it. I was more interested in the chemistry and science part. We both made good grades, but I thought a lot of times my grade was made because he set a pretty high standard in his teaching. He was always well prepared and seemed to always be throwing something in there a little bit extra. So I would say, given his overall interest in things, that he was probably a pretty good writer. I don't even remember what his major was in, I think it was history, I'm not sure.

G: History and government.

H: History and government. He probably had no problem with his English either.

G: There's an indication that he was pretty close to Professor [H. M.] Greene.

H: He was, very close. Professor Greene was a very outstanding teacher. I had one class with him, with Professor Greene. He was an unusual type of professor; he would fit in good now as a teacher.

G: What was he like?

Hopper -- I -- 16

- H: Well, he'd prop his feet up on the desk. If he wanted a chew of tobacco he'd get one. His mannerisms and his personality were just not as staid as you found back in those days. You can imagine him sitting around with the Greek philosophers and around that kind of stuff. You had no pattern in there.
- G: Was he a good lecturer?
- H: Good. He was an excellent lecturer. I'd forgotten about him. [M. L.] Arnold headed the department, Dr. Arnold, and then Greene was I guess the number-two man in that department. Then there were some others.
- G: Was Greene opinionated?
- H: Very opinionated. I think he'd say just about what he was thinking.
- G: How much influence do you think he had on Lyndon Johnson?
- H: He could have had some, he could have had some. On reflection he could have, because--let's see, this was in the twenties, that was during Hoover's administration, and before that Harding I guess. Things were pretty conservative around.
- G: Did LBJ talk much about Greene or did you get the impression that he clearly admired him?
- H: I know he admired him. He didn't say too much about him. I do know he spent some time with him. Those professors back in those days, I don't know how it is now, but they weren't overloaded with classes and the classes were small. They weren't great big things like you see now. They had fifteen to thirty in a class. It just gave you a better opportunity to express yourself if you really wanted to.



Hopper -- I -- 17

G: Who else was LBJ close to on the faculty?

H: I do remember Greene specifically. A government teacher--I can't remember who he was. Of course he and President Evans were very close; they were very friendly towards each other.

G: How about Dean Speck?

H: Dean Speck was very friendly towards Lyndon. Dean Speck was an outstanding person. I think he taught history, I'm not quite sure. But he had a way with handling problems. He would make you feel like you were about that big, without having to kick you out of school. Dean Speck was the faculty adviser on the council when we were on there, faculty representative.

You know, since you mentioned that, I'd like to point out once more, people don't realize unless you've gone to a little school, a real small school from population size, how people know each other. Everybody knows everybody. You don't have so many of these lines of demarcation between the rich and the ones that have nothing. Nobody had anything. Everybody worked if they could.

G: Was there much of a distinction between the students who had grown up in San Marcos and the students from out of town? I mean, they must have had an advantage over you because they already knew each other by the time they got there and their parents lived there in town.

H: You know, since you mentioned that, I think there was. I think that people in San Marcos were a little bit clannish towards each other.

Hopper -- I -- 18

They might not have taken the college people to their bosom, so to speak, like maybe they could have.

G: Now, I gather that LBJ was elected editor of the College Star for the summer in 1928 and he was just a sophomore then.

H: I believe that's right, I believe it was the summer of 1928. I believe he was editor of the Star when he went to the convention in Houston. Now there was kind of a rule of thumb there that you didn't get those choice jobs on the College Star and the school annual until you were at least a junior, but that wasn't held to very much. I wouldn't be surprised if he wasn't editor.

G: Well, you know he went down there to Houston at the convention and his name was on the masthead or the listing as editor.

H: Yes, that's right.

G: For the summer. Now, how was he elected? Did you help him in that, do you recall? Of course, you said earlier it was the Student Welfare--

H: The Student Welfare Council did that. Now, whoever was on the council at that time did it.

G: He must have lobbied some for the job, don't you think?

H: He could have. You know, they were lobbying all over the place for those jobs when I was on the council.

G: But he didn't enlist your help?

H: Not then, no.

G: It seems odd that the three of you were living there together and he didn't use you as part of his campaign to get that position.

Hopper -- I -- 19

H: Well, I just wasn't that involved in the government of the college or the student activities at that time.

G: I believe you said earlier before we turned on that tape that you do recall his interest in the convention.

H: Absolutely. It was very important to him to attend this convention in Houston.

G: Before the convention, perhaps a week, two weeks, Governor [Dan] Moody came to San Marcos and spoke I guess at Riverside and Senator Alvin Wirtz was there also. Did you go to that? Did LBJ go to that, do you know?

H: I went to one of those. I think Ross Sterling was there, too. It was down at the Riverside Park. If he was in town he was there, I'm pretty sure. Everybody went. There was no place else to go so you went to everything that they had.

He might have had some help from somebody outside of the college in connection with that convention. If he did he didn't say anything about it. He took the Star credentials with him, I do remember, that was part of the deal. He'd have no trouble getting in with the credentials from the Star. I don't imagine any other college paper would have either, I don't know.

G: Well, one thing that you notice in reading through those old issues of the Star was that there were several articles talking about the convention in preparation but very little reporting on the convention itself. I wonder why. Was it a policy not to report that sort of thing or do you think he was trying to keep it a secret that he had gone?

Hopper -- I -- 20

H: Well, I don't think he was trying to keep it a secret that he had gone because everybody knew that he had gone. Now soon after he came back from that convention--I guess it was held in July like they usually are--he was preparing to go to Cotulla to teach school that fall. It may be his interest drifted off into this school problem that he had and to get caught up with his work. Summer school was out. They had two six-weeks terms then starting in June and July, and I guess about the middle of August it was over with. Then he went on to Cotulla. How he got there [to the convention] and got back I just don't know. I know when he left, I know he was gone and he came back. He was very enthusiastic about it.

G: Do you have any idea how long he stayed there?

H: [He was] gone I'd say about a week or ten days.

G: We discussed this before we turned on the tape and I asked you about these things and you were certain that he didn't go back and forth every day.

H: I know he didn't. There's no way he could have done that.

G: Did he talk about it when he came back? Was he excited about it?

H: I can't remember too much about what happened when he came back. My six weeks out there was over and I was leaving. I only went one six weeks to pick up three extra subjects I needed. Then he came back in, let's see, June or July. I possibly was gone when he came back or pretty well close to leaving. Then there was another six-weeks [term] coming up that he went to school during that six weeks.

Hopper -- I -- 21

But I don't know. Reporting on the thing might not have been as important as the lead up and getting to the place.

G: Now I gather that spring and summer he worked in a campaign to improve Evans Field.

H: Yes. There was quite a program going on. Evans Field of course is not there anymore; it's just a bunch of tennis courts. But people were playing football down there on rocks and there were grass burrs and everything else. There was an effort made--I believe that was just about the time it happened--to improve the situation down there some. Everybody was working on it and I'm sure he did, too, with the influence that he had through the paper there, through the College Star.

G: Did they do any good?

H: Well, yes. They got a bunch of dirt in there and covered up some rocks. That's about the main thing they did.

G: I gather one of the things they wanted to do was get the students to pledge three dollars apiece to maybe improve the track.

H: Well, the track never was on Evans Field. It was across the river over there.

G: It was on Kyle Field?

H: Yes, it was on Kyle Field. Of course, it's all over there now. But I can't remember anything about the three dollars.

G: This is another indication, of course, that LBJ was interested in athletics as well as student affairs.

Hopper -- I -- 22

H: I'd say he was. Of course, Lyndon didn't take part in any athletics, but all during the time that I knew him he supported athletics every way he could.

G: Did he go to the games?

H: Yes, he went to the games and supported them through editorials and writings in the papers. If he had disliked them so much, he could have found better roommates than he had because he lived with Boody Johnson, who was captain of the 1927 team, and he lived with me, who was captain of the 1929 team, and we all got along fine. So I know he had no objection to athletics per se just because he didn't like them.

G: Did he ever go out for baseball to your knowledge?

H: He played baseball some during the summer, and I don't know where. But I do remember that there was some baseball, he had some experience with baseball. See, baseball was discontinued at this college about 1928 I believe. They just disbanded it. It was too big a burden on their athletic finances and they disbanded it. But I'd heard him mention playing baseball. Every little old town out there, they'd have a baseball team. I don't think it's that way anymore but used to you had these town teams and everybody had one, everybody in town.

G: There was some indication he had gone out for the baseball team at San Marcos.

H: I don't think so. I don't believe he did. If he did I didn't know it.

Hopper -- I -- 23

G: Of course, he was quite active in debate. The spring of 1928 was when he went to Huntsville for a tournament. I guess his partner was Elmer Graham. Do you remember anything about that debate tournament that he went to and his win there?

H: No. I remember he was on the debate team and was active in debate. Most all of the debaters came from this literary society, Harris Blair Literary Society, that he belonged to. But I don't remember any particular debate he had.

G: Did he ever try to get you to go out for debate or join in any of the organizations like Harris Blair.

H: No, nobody ever asked me to go out for debate. I would have been terrible. That would have been fun.

G: There's some indication that in the fall of 1928 he went up to Oklahoma City and heard Al Smith speak, went with his father. This I guess would have been while he was at Cotulla or just beforehand. Do you [remember that]?

H: It would have been just before Cotulla. I wouldn't know about that. No, I don't recall that.

G: He did go to Cotulla and took nine months or so off. Do you know why he went?

H: No, I don't. He seemed to be getting along about as well as any of the rest of us was up there financially. It was kind of touch and go all the time. You didn't have much money, but it didn't take much money either in those days to go to school. The quarterly tuition was only fifteen dollars. If you could rake up room and

Hopper -- I -- 24

board you kind of had it made. But it was customary at that time, and it was done by a lot of people, when they reached their senior year or at that point they'd go get a school and come back and graduate. A lot of people did that. There was a club out there called the Schoolmaster's Club that these people all belonged [to]. There was a whole bunch of people that belonged to this Schoolmaster's Club and it was my impression that that's what qualified you, it would be somebody who had had experience teaching school and was back at school.

G: Did he get any credit for doing this in terms of [college credit]?

H: I don't think so. The only credit you got was this practic teaching course that I mentioned a while ago that you got three-hours credit for that. You had to do it to get your degree anyway.

G: Do you know how he got that teaching job at Cotulla?

H: I believe there's a mutual friend of ours named Donahue [?] that was principal or superintendent, one, down there. What was his name? One of the Donahues that had gone to school in San Marcos was either principal or superintendent at this school and I'm sure he got it through him, Johnson.

G: This must have been a real change of pace for him. Here he is very active in student activities--

H: In the middle of everything.

G: --all of a sudden he's got to leave school and go out to South Texas and work in a Spanish-speaking school. Was this hard for him, do you think?



Hopper -- I -- 25

- H: I would think it would be tough for me to do something like that. He just dropped everything for a year. He was just out of the whole picture for a year. Now, see, he had gained a year in effect. He and I both entered in 1926, and here we are in 1929 and I'm still a junior and he's passed that because he's gone to summer school all the time. So he lays out a year and comes back and graduates on time.
- G: I can't see any evidence that he was there before the spring of 1927, say that semester that started in March and went through May, you know, the short [semester].
- H: Of 1927? From the spring of 1927 on. You know, since you called the other day I checked the 1926 Pedagog to see. In the back of my mind I thought Lyndon was in the subcollege during that year qualifying for college since he came from such a small high school. A lot of them did that; that's what the school was for. I couldn't find his picture in there any place. That began to make me wonder that maybe he didn't come there in 1926.
- G: A lot of sources indicate that he went to the subcollege in February and March of 1927 and then moved up to the college in late March. But I don't know.
- H: I was surprised. See, looking through those Pedagogs, there's very few individual pictures. People had to pay so much to get their picture in there. There's a lot of group pictures. I looked through the summer of that year in the group pictures and he's not in there. Neither are any of the other Johnson children in there. The thing

Hopper -- I -- 26

that popped in my mind: look, was he really not there in 1926 or maybe he just didn't have his picture made?

G: In any event, he did go to Cotulla, but you don't recall any particular reactions that he had to having to go or going? He didn't commiserate with you about it?

H: No. He just might have been influenced by maybe somebody else who had done the same thing and [said], "Look, you can go over here and teach and come back with a thousand bucks and have a little easier time during your senior year."

G: I wonder if he had to help support his family?

H: It could have been. It could have been something like that, I don't know.

G: In any event, did you hear from him while he was down there? Would he come back any on the weekends?

H: He came back a time or two, but I never did hear from him.

G: Of course when he came back he had more money than he had [before].

H: He had more money than anybody.

G: Was this evident? You mentioned that he had a car.

H: I believe he had a car. I believe that's what he had, a car. Of course, he didn't have to work any more up there, but he did. He still worked. Lyndon was always very neatly and well dressed all the time. He wore a tie, most of the time a coat, a jacket. That was not the general rule of everybody, but Lyndon was very neat in his appearance and very neat in his dress.

Hopper -- I -- 27

G: Do you think the fact that he was working in President Evans' office influenced his dress?

H: It could have had something to do with that.

G: Do you recall who took his place while he was in Cotulla, in Evans' office?

H: No, I sure don't. Tom Nichols was the President's secretary and then he had these assistants. It seems to me like there was a girl in there. I would stop by occasionally to see President Evans. He was one of Jesse Kellam's great friends. He was always telling me about Jesse. He said, "You know, Jesse never would wear a hat when he was playing football." That's the way it started off. He said, "You wear a hat, don't you?" I said, "Yes, I sure do, and everything else I can get on out there." But he was a very interesting guy to talk to. He always liked to talk about Kellam. For some reason he was one of his favorites.

G: How about LBJ? Was President Evans fond of LBJ as well?

H: Yes.

G: Do you think the fact that he did work in the President's office and had this influential position caused any jealousy or resentment on the part of some of his fellow students?

H: I don't think so.

G: You don't recall it?

H: I don't think so.

Hopper -- I -- 28

G: Let's talk about the White Stars and the Black Stars. You were a member of the Black Stars. Do you recall how you became a member, how you were asked to join?

H: As I remember somebody came up to me on the campus one day--I'm just about to remember his name; he wasn't an athlete, he was a nonathletic person on campus--and asked me how I would like to join a social organization that was more or less a secret social organization. I tried to find out what they did. About the only thing I could find out from him was that two or three times a year they'd go up in the hills there and have a barbecue and drink beer, which was not generally available at that time on account of prohibition. I didn't think anything more about it. Then it wasn't long until somebody came and asked me if I could attend a meeting with a group of guys. Well, being a freshman and trying to, I guess, get along with everything, I did. I said, "Sure." So we went up into Wimberley Hills and had a big feed up there, barbecue, a lot of bull, and accomplished nothing. [We] ran through an initiation there that I can't [recall]. I think they had a belt tandem you had to run through.

So I was a freshman and for four years we did about the same thing a couple of times a year. I saw no significance to it except you were up there with the guys that you knew pretty well. It was not a big group; it was kind of a small group. I placed very little significance on the thing, actually. I've never been a great joiner. I don't join much of anything. But I did get into that.

G: How many members do you think there were at one time?

Hopper -- I -- 29

- H: Well, I was trying to think. I'd say a top of maybe twenty-five or thirty, and it was kind of a cross section of everybody up there. I heard later on it was a bunch of athletes trying to run the school but there was as many non-athletes on that thing as there were athletes.
- G: Oh, really?
- H: Yes, there was a pretty good cross section.
- G: Can you recall any, for example, who were not athletes?
- H: I'm having a hard time remembering some of them who were. I'd have to go through that Pedagog to try and pick out some of them.
- G: Perhaps you can do that and just insert it in the [transcript]. Well, was there a political component to it? Did you all vote for each other for offices, or nominate each other?
- H: Well, it did have this political connotation to it. We would decide who we were going to support for certain jobs and get out and hustle for them. Not necessarily for them, for the ones that were on--I don't think any Black Stars ever got elected to anything. I certainly wasn't elected to the president of the council by them because I was nominated by a fellow named Frazer.
- G: Hollis Frazer?
- H: Hollis Frazer, to be a candidate for the council. After I got on the council, well, Lyndon nominated me for president of the council. The only Black Star on the council was Felix Brandt. He was the one you mentioned a while ago. He was a Black Star and that's all that were on the council, out of eight.

Hopper -- I -- 30

G: Now, you asked LBJ, I understand, why he nominated you for president of it.

H: Yes, I did.

G: When was this, do you recall?

H: Well, sometime after that. We roomed together there at the house; we slept back on that back porch. And it came up, "Why me?" I felt like I had my hands full with that football business. He said, "Well, I just want to get you up there where you can't vote."

G: Do you think he was serious?

H: I think he was kidding. See, he knew that charter existed there that the school had set up on that thing as well as anybody did. I didn't know it; he did.

G: Why do you think he did nominate you, then?

H: Well, we were awful good friends. I think he probably just did it because maybe he didn't want to be the president.

G: Well, now, you didn't know that he was a member of the White Stars while you were rooming together?

H: I don't think the White Stars got started until I was just about leaving.

G: Late 1929.

H: 1929, and I was leaving in the spring of 1930. That's when it got started.

G: I think in one of the biographies of LBJ there's an indication that you and Elvin Read and Fenner Roth and LBJ were living together. Two of you were Black Stars, two of you were White Stars, and both

Hopper -- I -- 31

of you knew that the other one was a member of the group. But as you recall, this was not the case?

H: I believe the White Star group got started when Lyndon came back from Cotulla and found out that there was a Black Star situation there. Fenner Roth had been a friend of mine all my life and I was responsible for getting him out there to play baseball but the baseball team disbanded. Elvin Read, I didn't know him too well because I had been gone from Lufkin three years and this kid had come on after that. I took him out there because Jesse Kelleem asked me to. Well, I don't believe Elvin was ever a Black Star while I was there. I just don't believe he was. But Fenner and Lyndon were White Stars.

G: But you weren't aware of this at the time, is that right, or were you?

H: Well, I wasn't aware that there was a White Star deal. This all came up later. I was surprised when I first heard about it that they made such a big deal out of it. I think one reason why the White Stars overshadowed the Black Stars so quick and kind of put them in oblivion was the fact they weren't ready for anything like that. They weren't that important. The White Stars became a lot more important in school politics and affairs than the Black Stars ever did. Maybe it's because the competition made them that way, I don't know.

But Lyndon and Fenner became associated, their chemistry was just right. They liked each other right off the bat. And even

Hopper -- I -- 32

though Lyndon and I had some differences politically on that council we'd go home and talk about it, and sleep right there on the same bed. There never was any animosity between us at all. I think his indication of his ability to compromise and to see two sides of things probably began to develop along about that time. Because I kept thinking to myself, well, we just argue like heck up there all the time on that council and go home and laugh about it and continue the argument without getting mad at each other. And he holds no grudges and neither do I.

G: Could you win an argument with him?

H: Not too well. He was a logical [person], this business of "let's reason this thing out," but usually he won. But compromising, I think, was one of his greatest attributes.

G: Can you recall a particular issue that you all would work out that you maybe argued about?

H: We argued for months over the distribution of the blanket tax fund.

G: How did he want to spend it?

H: Well, he was a debater and I was captain of the football team and the faculty representative gave us the budget at the beginning of the year, just how it was set up for the prior year, where athletes got X amount, debate got X amount and the band got so much, different ones. They had a Chautauqua group that lectured. So that was all set up. And athletics of course was getting all of it, mostly, and Lyndon wanted to increase especially the debate part and the others, too, the band.



Hopper -- I -- 33

So that's where the argument started was over how much the debate should be increased, say from 2 per cent to 4 per cent from these others. We just argued about that thing, politicked the members of the council and everything else getting ready for the final vote. When it finally came, what I did, I vacated the chair in favor of the faculty representative, and I had the floor so I put my proposal up on the board: "This is the way it is and I move that we accept it like that." But it went to a vote and I lost. So then it was a matter of Lyndon proposing his and voting on it and me trying to stall it as long as I could till I'd get to that one vote down there that he had been buying coffee for for a long time. The way it finally turned out, we compromised it. We just kind of split it down the middle. But he didn't have to do it because he had the votes to win it.

That was one thing. Everything else was just stuff that didn't amount to anything.

G: Was the College Exchange ever an issue? I gather that it would turn its profits--that was the bookstore.

H: The bookstore and the candy store.

G: I gather that it would turn its profits over to the T Association, which was lettermen, wasn't it, the varsity lettermen?

H: Yes.

G: And to the YMCA and YWCA, I gather. I've heard that LBJ objected to having these profits turned over to the T Association and moved to eliminate that.

Hopper -- I -- 34

H: I think we did that, too. I think [the way] that finally was resolved [was] that the income from that bookstore, which wasn't too much, finally went to the general fund of the college and they split it up the way they wanted to. They got that completely out of the picture by putting it back in the general fund. But we did have some problems there. The T Association had no room. Everybody had a room to meet in but the T Association, and that came up. We had no problem there. Lyndon supported that 100 per cent, so we got a room where we could have our little old meetings. Lyndon was later made an honorary member of the T Association.

G: Oh, he was? Was this after he graduated?

H: It was after--I think he was a senator maybe, later on.

G: Well, the Student Welfare Council also had other authority, in addition to distributing funds. Can you recall some of the other powers that you had as Student Welfare Council?

H: Well, we had the power to take those four main jobs: editor, business manager of the College Star and the college annual, and the distribution of the blanket tax funds. Those were two of the biggest jobs that we had.

G: Now LBJ must have lobbied to fill those positions.

H: When he was on the council?

G: Yes.

H: He did, but I don't remember that we had any problem with it. Ella So Relle was one of them and they were good friends. She became the editor of the Pedagog and John Dezelle, who was also a good friend

Hopper -- I -- 35

of Lyndon's--you had his name there a while ago--was made business manager of the Pedagog. I don't believe we had any problem there. It seems to me like we had some discussion or problems over the business manager of the Star. I can't remember who got it.

G: Was Mylton Kennedy--

H: Mylton Kennedy was editor.

G: Was he a Black Star or a White Star, do you know? He played tennis, I know.

H: I believe he was a Black Star, if I'm not mistaken. I can't be sure. This whole Black Star thing was blown out of proportion, as far as I was concerned. Well, I can't remember. Kennedy was a very popular person in that school and he and Lyndon were good friends. I believe he followed Lyndon as editor of that paper. Now, he was a journalism transfer from the University of Missouri, I remember that.

G: I think perhaps one of the reasons the rivalry between these two clubs has received some significance is the oft-told story of the election of the president of the senior class I guess in January, 1930, when Dick Spinn ran against Willard Deason and John DeZelle.

H: Was that in the fall of 1930?

G: It was January of 1930. It was for the spring--

H: Spring term?

G: Spinn had been president in the fall and was running for re-election. The story goes that the White Stars had never been able to elect their man to that spot and LBJ went out the night before, on election eve, and managed to change enough votes to get Bill Deason elected.

Hopper -- I -- 36

H: Bill was elected.

G: Yes.

H: Here's a funny thing, in my position I would have voted for Bill Deason, Black or White Star, and some of my best friends on that campus later turned out to be White Stars: Bill Deason, Lyndon Johnson, Fenner Roth. I remember those three. I don't remember the rest of them.

G: But you don't recall this as an issue at all?

H: I remember Bill getting the job against Dick Spinn. Dick Spinn and I worked together in the cafeteria and I knew him pretty well. I had a job picking up paper on the campus, that was one of my jobs, and Dick would do it when I had to leave on football trips and stuff. But I would say this, that if the White Stars had organized as strongly as it seems to me now they did organize in the spring of 1930, they could have won all those elections because I don't think the opposition would have been there. I don't think the so-called Black Stars were ever that well organized, the leadership. They had the leadership there to do whatever they wanted to do.

G: Let me ask you about living in your mother's house. She moved to San Marcos in 1929?

H: Summer of 1929. My sister graduated from high school in Lufkin. She married a fellow and he died right away in an accident up in the lumber camps up there. So when she wanted to go to school she and Mama came out together to kind of help her through this period. But when they got out there I had a place to stay myself and my

Hopper -- I -- 37

brother was entering the University of Texas at the same time. So we got to looking around for a place, and the only place we could find was this 305 West Hopkins. That place was, as I recall, three bedrooms upstairs and a porch out on the back. It was an awful big place and it was furnished for practically nothing rent. So she said, "Well, let's all move here. You move in here with us." Then Fenner Roth, I believe it was, said, "Well, why can't we move in, too, and Read." So they moved in and then here came Lyndon back from his--I don't know where he stayed that summer. So I ran into him on the campus and he wanted to move out there, too.

So we all set up a little boarding house deal out there, with Elvin and Fenner and Lyndon and I. That's where we lived during the senior year. I'd kind of slacked off a little on holding down two jobs and only had one, which I felt like my grades had to be improved. Read had a job being on the football team and Fenner had a job. See, Fenner was a skilled painter when he came there. His stepfather was a painting contractor, so he could paint. He was a good one. So he had no trouble getting a job even though the baseball team had disbanded. So he worked as a painter. I believe Lyndon went back to the President's office, I'm not sure.

G: Now what job did you have? Did you still work in the cafeteria?

H: No, at this point I was working in the library.

G: I see. That shows in the yearbook. I think it mentions you were in the library.

Hopper -- I -- 38

H: Yes. I worked in the library and I had this job of picking up paper on that quadrangle over there. The wind usually took care of that.

G: Well, what was it like living in that house on--was it West Hopkins?

H: I believe it was West Hopkins. The house has been torn down. But it was a nice pleasant arrangement we had. My sister was there. We were all busy. Lyndon and I were busy in our senior years, with football and basketball. He was in and out all the time. We had very little time there other than just meals that I can remember.

G: You did have your meals there?

H: Meals and room and board. Lyndon and Mama were very close, they got very close to each other. She thought a lot of him and actually followed his career right on.

G: You indicated that she said that he always paid his bills on time.

H: Yes, she happened to make that remark one time when some of the rest of us were a little bit behind.

G: That was an indication that he had plenty of money.

H: Yes, he had whatever it was, thirty dollars a month. It wasn't much.

G: And he bought a car, I guess.

H: Yes, he had a car.

G: His senior year I guess he was not as active in debate as he had been before, is that right?

H: I can't remember that he ever got back on that debate.

G: There's an indication that he again went to Huntsville as a representative of the Press Club.

Hopper -- I -- 39

- H: Well, he was on the Press Club. I didn't get the chance to check the book there on the Press Club but I know he was active in the Press Club, he and Babe Kennedy [?]. Quite a few of those boys in the Harris Blair Literary Society was also in the Press Club. It kind of seemed to go together.
- G: Anything else on living together?
- H: No. I can't remember any incident that happened during that past year except our serving on the council. I feel like our year at the end of that council was very productive because we had settled some problems that we had had there before. Dean Speck thought we had done quite well. It was about equally divided between boys and girls. I know there were some girls that we used to spend quite a bit of time trying to influence. He was pretty good at that.
- G: Do you recall who they were?
- H: I remember the [Ruby] McCord girl was on there. She was torn a lot of times between Lyndon and I on some of that stuff. She was a wonderful girl.
- G: Good. That's a good lead. Anyone else?
- H: Who was on the council?
- G: Or that might have been, say, a swing vote?
- H: She was the swing vote. The rest of them were solid one way or the other. As I remember, there was nine or seven on there.
- G: You give me the impression that you might have been a swing vote at times.

Hopper -- I -- 40

H: Well, I wasn't as set in my ways on some of these things I guess you might say as some of the rest of them. I know at one time I mentioned to two or three of those leaders in the athletic office what our problem was up there and they showed no interest in it one way or the other, because the coaches knew they were going to get what they needed anyway, so why argue about it. So I kind of got into the same attitude. Why should I beat my brains out here when nobody seems to be too interested in what we're doing? Maybe Lyndon's approach to this thing is correct. I kind of slipped into it.

Actually, in retrospect, he was correct. All the debate got was what that blanket tax appropriation said it was. Now if athletics got in trouble they got theirs someplace or other. If we were supposed to play McMurry College in Brownsville we got there and we got back. There's no question about it; the schedule was set. If we had to be in Kingsville to play Texas A & I, we knew we were going to get there and back. So it wasn't that big a deal with the athletic side of the thing when you got right down to it. Lyndon kept pointing this out and actually he was right on that.

G: You went to coach down here?

H: In Humble.

G: In Humble. And he went to Pearsall for a month or so, I guess. Of course, he stayed through the summer, I guess, and graduated in August.

H: Yes, he was a summer graduate.



Hopper -- I -- 41

G: But then he went to Pearsall and taught for a month before he got that teaching job here.

H: This job came late, I remember that. I didn't know exactly what happened there.

G: Did you know G. Preston Smith?

H: Yes.

G: I guess he was coaching debate for a while and maybe he got another job or something.

H: G. Preston Smith left San Marcos with good jobs in school systems. He was superintendent here and there and every place. He had a high regard for Lyndon, and he could have gotten him that job. As a matter of fact, when I went to Humble I already had a job at La Grange. This job here was so much better I had to give it up, plus the fact that the La Grange job required teaching physics and chemistry and math and everything else. This one required no teaching at all.

G: Did you see much of him after you got down here?

H: Well, yes, we'd meet in Houston on weekends occasionally and have lunch.

G: You recalled I think before we turned on the tape about your having an operation.

H: Yes. It was in the fall. Football season was almost over in Humble and I had an emergency appendix problem which required an operation here in the Baptist Hospital. Lyndon and Ella So Relle, who was a good friend of both of ours, came to see me quite a bit when I was in the hospital. As a matter of fact, they were the first people

Hopper -- I -- 42

I saw when I came out of ether. There was Lyndon and Ella standing at the foot of the bed. Then I visited with him quite a bit with his uncle, his uncle's house here on Hawthorne Street, on weekends.

G: What was his uncle like?

H: Well, as I remember, he was a teacher in the public schools here. I can't remember just about how old he might have been then, but Lyndon seemed to think quite a bit of him and we spent quite a bit of time there. We'd go there quite often to see his uncle. I can't even remember his uncle's name.

G: George.

H: George, Uncle George, that's right. Lived in a big house there on Hawthorne Street.

G: Did LBJ seem enthusiastic about his teaching?

H: He did. He did. He had a real good debate team out there, some kids that later became quite prominent. As an attorney, I think, one of them--

G: L. E. Jones.

H: I think that's who it was. But anything he did he was enthusiastic about, I don't care what it was. Even climbing that hill up there he'd walk all over the sidewalk getting up there. He was just always in high gallop. He seemed to never relax.

G: Anything else on your friendship while you were down there?

H: No, he left to go with Congressman Kleberg and I didn't see him much anymore until he got in the NYA work.

G: I wonder how he got that job.

Hopper -- I -- 43

H: I don't know. I don't know.

G: Do you recall his having worked in Welly Hopkins' campaign for state senate while he was at San Marcos? Bringing Welly Hopkins to the campus at San Marcos?

H: No, I don't remember that.

G: Do you recall him ever having done anything for Kleberg when Kleberg ran down in that [election]?

H: There must have been--I don't remember any connection between [Johnson and Kleberg]. I wasn't surprised when he took that job because of his interest that seemed to be cropping up every once in a while in connection with politics.

G: Is there anything else on LBJ during this period that you recall or that sheds light on him as a college student?

H: No. I think right now, at this time, with all the big colleges and the overflowing of students, it's kind of hard for a person now to imagine a situation that existed in poor small colleges at that time, where everybody knew everybody, and everybody knew that everybody else was in about the same boat they were financially and every otherwise. The economic demands of that school attracted certain people out of the small towns and small farms and a lot of people from the Valley. The Depression was going on. Or it hadn't started yet, though, had it?

G: Well, it hit while he [was there].

H: Yes. So in retrospect, Lyndon was a little above the typical student in accomplishment, gradewise, his interest in things, the

Hopper -- I -- 44

attitude the people had towards him. He was friendly to everybody. If this White Star thing was as serious to him as it appears to be I would be surprised if it ever was that serious to him. Because he knew Boody and I were Black Stars and his attitude toward us never changed.

G: How did college affect him? How did these years at San Marcos change him? Or did they enable him to grow? Was he different, was he more developed in any ways after he left?

H: I don't think basically that he ever changed. When I was with him a few times in the intervening years he was just exactly like the Lyndon Johnson we had up in the garage apartment. Friendly, sense of humor, he'd kid you a little bit. And Boody tells me that that was the situation even after he was retired from the presidency. I don't know how much you can grow in a little college. I think when he left there he had accomplished everything there that you could accomplish. He'd had all the good jobs, he was well regarded. Of course, nobody could see what was ahead, that this was a future president of the United States. You didn't think about that.

G: Did you see him as unusually ambitious though?

H: That I saw, comparing him with the rest of us who were more or less coasting. He had a desire to excel and do things. I can't say that we had no ambition at all, but he was in a bigger hurry than we were. He would run up the hill and we would walk up the hill. He was in a hurry to get up there and the rest of us weren't, I guess. But to see what was coming, nobody saw that, I don't think.

Hopper -- I -- 45

Tape 2 of 2

- G: One of the points I forgot to ask you about, and it's certainly appropriate, is the question of LBJ being brought up for membership in the Black Stars. Do you recall when he was brought up?
- H: Yes, I remember that he was brought up at least twice. One of those occasions was before he went to Cotulla. He received one blackball and you had to be unanimously selected.
- G: Do you have any idea who?
- H: I have no idea and never could even guess who did that. Later on, even after Boody Johnson had graduated and left, I brought his name up again.
- G: This would have been--
- H: It would have been a year or maybe later. It would have been about the time he came back from Cotulla.
- G: What happened here? Was he blackballed with just one [vote]?
- H: One blackball again, and it could have been the same person. I suspect it was the same person.
- G: I think there was some indication, I've read that it was someone whose girl friend LBJ had been courting that resented it. Have you ever heard that story?
- H: No, I don't know. I don't remember him going with anybody particularly at that point. That was before he came back from Cotulla and right afterwards. I know the girl that he was going with when he came back from Cotulla wasn't involved because she didn't, as far as I know, even live there. She may have, but that wouldn't be it.

Hopper -- I -- 46

G: That was Carol Davis?

H: Carol Davis. I just don't know who did it, but I do remember this in connection with that. At the time, Boody Johnson was the head of the Black Stars. They did have a guy [who was] head of it each time; they had a president or something they called him. Boody had the constitution and bylaws up there at the garage apartment. Lyndon saw them, asked Boody, "What's all this?" And Boody told him just what it was, just very honest with us, "You, sooner or later, will find out." Because he thought he'd be in there, and didn't really try to conceal anything from him. I know that's the first time Lyndon had any idea that there was such a thing as a Black Star or what it was.

G: Now was this in the garage apartment?

H: It was in the garage apartment before Boody Johnson ever left. So Lyndon knew about the Black Stars a year or two before anything was ever done about trying to set up a contrary organization or anything.

G: It seems like he would have asked you to get him in.

H: Well, I thought he was in. I thought he would be in next time.

G: Did he ever talk to you about it?

H: He never did mention it to me one way or another.

G: Did he ever know that he had been blackballed, do you think?

H: I think Boody might have told him that he got one blackball. When he got that one blackball others had been blackballed, too, and

Hopper -- I -- 47

gotten in, with more blackballs than that. But this was just a matter of bringing this thing up again.

G: Where would the Black Stars meet?

H: Out there on the hill, in nobody's house, just out--

G: Just outside?

H: Outside.

G: And it was a secret vote?

H: Yes, secret vote.

G: You literally used--

H: A secret ballot. You'd write yes or no down when somebody came up. Absolutely secret.

G: Was there any sort of code that the one who blackballed would indicate that it was he?

H: No, strictly secret ballot with a no vote being the blackball and that was it. There had been so many of those before, not so many, but some, that I know, talking to Johnson about it--Boody that is-- [we thought] that we'd get him in next time. In the meantime he saw the constitution and bylaws and knew something was up. It would be naturally curious for anybody as prominent as Lyndon Johnson was in that school to wonder what goes on here that I'm not involved in or I don't know about. Boody and Lyndon being as good friends as they were, Boody just told him, "Here, here's what it is. You'll find out more about it later," or something like that and passed it off.

Hopper -- I -- 48

G: In these meetings, membership considerations, did you speak in his behalf first?

H: Yes. You'd put up somebody. You'd give a spiel.

G: You two were the sponsors, is that right?

H: Yes. He sponsored him and then I picked the ball up after he left. You'd have several guys come up and you'd vote on them one at a time. You'd have a sponsor, you'd have a spieler, or somebody would go through all this record that a person had there in the school.

G: Do you recall any other White Stars that were blackballed?

H: I sure don't remember them.

G: Did LBJ have a nickname while he was there?

H: No. Some of them called him Bull Johnson. You know, at that time there was an outstanding football player at [Texas] A & M College called Bull Johnson and Baylor had one called Boody, and all the Johnsons were either Bulls or Boodys. That's the only thing I ever heard him called. They called other Johnsons up there the same thing.

G: Is that how Boody Johnson got his name?

H: Boody Johnson got his name from the Boody Johnson at Baylor. His name is Alfred. I don't think Lyndon ever had a real nickname. Lyndon was all I ever heard him called. He didn't abbreviate it or anything.

G: Well, thank you again.

[End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview I]



GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE  
LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON LIBRARY

Legal Agreement pertaining to the Oral History Interview of Ardis C. Hopper

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, Ardis C. Hopper of Houston, Texas do hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title, and interest in the tape recording and transcript of the personal interview conducted on November 6, 1979 in Houston, Texas and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

(1) The transcript shall be available for use by researchers as soon as it has been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

(2) The tape recording shall be available to those researchers who have access to the transcript.

(3) I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcript and tape.

(4) Copies of the transcript and the tape recording may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request.

(5) Copies of the transcript and tape recording may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

Ardis C. Hopper  
Donor

April 26 1982  
Date

D. W. Wang  
Archivist of the United States

May 10, 1982  
Date