

INTERVIEW I

DATE: April 30, 1965

INTERVIEWEES: Mr. and Mrs. Allie T. Hughes  
(Lorena D. Hughes and Allie T. Hughes)

INTERVIEWER: Dr. Eric Goldman

PLACE: The Hughes home in San Angelo, Texas

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EG: I am now talking with Mr. and Mrs. Allie T. Hughes, 2603 Nasworthy Drive, San Angelo, Texas. Mr. Hughes is a masonry contractor and the former Mayor of San Angelo.

Would you begin by telling us, Mrs. Hughes, when you first came to know the President?

LH: I wish I could remember the year, but it must have been about 1927, in San Marcos, Texas, and I had the happy privilege of being seated next to the President.

EG: You were both in college then?

LH: We were both in Southwest Texas Teachers College in San Marcos, Texas.

EG: Were you in the same year, do you recall?

LH: Yes, we were in college together.

EG: Was this your freshman year?

LH: I believe it was our freshman year. We have a government class and a psychology class together.

EG: That was one class, where you had both government and psychology?

LH: No, it was two separate classes. And we were seated alphabetically in a large class. There weren't many I's, so the H chair was by the J chair. Just a coincidence, don't you see? But I enjoyed our President. We would get to class early and we would talk about the

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affairs of the day and get notes from each other. Of course I copied more than he. And we would also discuss my husband, Allie. They had hunted and fished together, the twins Arlie and Allie. We called them the terrible twins on the Hill.

EG: Arlie's name is spelled, A-r-l-i-e?

LH: Yes sir. Arlie P. and Allie T.

EG: Arlie and Allie T.

LH: Yes, Arlie P. introduced me to Allie T. and a year later we were married. But, going back to our President--he was a brilliant student. I have debated with him and I have debated against him.

EG: He was especially interested in debating?

LH: Oh yes, and especially interested in government.

EG: Mrs. Hughes, would you describe what his manner was in debating? Fiery?

LH: Yes. Outstanding. He was a leader. He always knew his subject well. He loved to debate.

EG: Would you describe his voice in those days? Was it pretty much like it is now?

LH: Yes, very much like it is today. And the Professor always called on Lyndon for his opinion. I noticed that. I was glad to let Lyndon have the floor because I profited from listening.

EG: Could I shift over here now to Mr. Hughes for a moment?

Mr. Hughes, you also went to San Marcos, with the President?

AH: Not at that time. I was married at the time--that was 1927--that I first remember the President. We lived on Pleasant Street, the first street away from the college, and at that time, if I'm

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not mistaken, he had an apartment at President Evans' house. It was a garage apartment. He had an apartment there, which made him less than half a block from where I lived then. I saw him several times a week and was well acquainted with him.

EG: This apartment the President lived in--was it over the garage behind the college president's house?

AH: Yes, over the garage, behind his house. Dr. Evans' wife, Allie Evans, had the same first name that I have and she was very fond of me. I was there many times and I saw the President in town and everywhere else. I was working at the time and I know it was 1927. That was the year that they built the Science Building there and I worked on it. I had planned to go to college that term but this job started right next door and I needed the work. So I worked through that Science job which started in '27--that's the reason I am sure of the date.

EG: Mr. Hughes, did you visit the President in his apartment over the garage?

AH: Oh, I'm sure I did. We lived very close.

EG: Do you remember what it looked like?

AH: Yes, it was just a boy's apartment.

EG: Simple furniture.

AH: It was simple. Good, clean, simple furniture, that's all. He was just a normal, college boy.

EG: Did he live alone in this apartment?

AH: I'm not definitely sure. It's been so long I wouldn't say. I'm going to guess, yes.

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EG: These stories about what he did for President Evans are a little confusing. At one time he apparently worked as a supervisor at the College. Then he worked as an Assistant to the President.

AH: Yes, Dr. Bryan Wildenthal, I think, was business manager at that time, and was also a student. He's had a heart attack, is in bad condition right now, and is President of Sul Ross College. But Dr. Wildenthal was business manager and I'm sure that the President worked--I'm talking about Lyndon, President Johnson--worked with Dr. Wildenthal at that time and he did have an office, part of Bryan's office, now that was possibly in '28 or '29.

EG: He helped the business manager keep the books and so forth--clerical work?

AH: Yes, and I think that he worked in the cafeteria some and I know he sold socks because I bought them from him. He was very industrious in getting ahead and very likeable. Everyone loved him and he was a fixture on the college Hill.

EG: Do you remember how much the socks cost?

AH: I think two bits and it was hard for me to find two bits.

EG: Do either of you remember any other jobs that he had in the San Marcos period?

AH: No sir.

LH: I only knew him in the classroom. Oh, yes, I remember he painted that garage two or three times in the two or three years that he was there. That was one way he was paying his room rent. He was very, very industrious.

EG: Mrs. Hughes, you said that he would often talk with you before class. Do you recall any of the conversations, what they were about, what

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the President's ideas and opinions were?

LH: Usually it was about hunting and fishing with my husband.

EG: He loved hunting and fishing?

LH: The President was not married at that time. I was and I went to school longer after I was married, after my name was Hughes rather than Draper. So that is why the seating was as it was. Then he also liked to talk about baseball.

EG: What position did he play?

LH: I don't recall. You know I am not a baseball fan but my husband would have remembered it. My brother who stayed at the same rooming house where the President stayed was a good left-hand baseball pitcher. So we talked of M.L. Draper--my brother--and his baseball and then of course we hurried on to the text.

EG: Did the President play on the San Marcos baseball team?

AH: I don't know. I don't think so.

LH: I don't think he had time. He just knew of my brother's playing, don't you see. I don't recall whether he played on the team.

AH: Your brother didn't play on the team. He played for some other clubs. He played for a kind of senior pro club. He pitched for other clubs.

LH: But they knew each other personally.

EG: In one newspaper account, if I recall correctly, either you or Mr. Hughes mentioned the President's talking about gold panning expeditions?

AH: We had planned one. My grandparents and his grandparents were reared 10 to 15 miles from each other near Johnson City. They settled that country up there, where there is still some gold. And

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we had planned sometime to go up there to pan gold.

EG: That is, you, your brother and the President?

AH: Yes. On the Big Sandy and some little creeks, little draws that run into the Big Sandy, there is still some showing of gold there. We had talked about it many times but we never did get the time to go. Something always turned up. My grandparents came from about 30 miles north of where his people settled. The gold there has never paid off but lots of people work at it, and they've always found some showing. But we never did pan. But that's what we talked about at that time.

I was born and reared approximately 35 - 40 miles from where the President was. At Wimberley we knew **everyone in that country**--you know everyone within 25 or 30 miles. Here you don't know the people next door, maybe, but down there you knew everyone within 30 miles of you.

EG: Mr. Hughes, in these conversations you had with the President, do you recall any other things you discussed?

AH: Not that I'm sure of.

EG: Did you have the feeling that he was going to be a political figure?

AH: No, but I had the feeling that he would get ahead. His father was a state representative and had been for years and we thought possibly he would take law and probably be in state politics like his father. Of course, no one ever dreamed of his being President. But definitely he would have been the number one student from that college to try for it. He had the ambition to do anything and I don't think there's anything you can't do if you're big enough, and he was just big enough. He left that impression on everyone then, as

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a boy.

EG: Mrs. Hughes, you mentioned debates in which you debated against him and with him. Do you recall any of the subjects?

LH: I do not. I wish that I could.

EG: It's certainly taxing your memory that far back. Who taught the Government class? Professor Greene?

LH: Yes. Dr. Greene.

EG: The President admired Dr. Greene a great deal, didn't he?

LH: Very much, very much. We all did. And I was going to say, perhaps I'm repeating myself, that in those days we would choose up, the class would, to debate a subject. I was always glad to be on Lyndon's side because that side always won.

EG: Would you describe Professor Greene, please.

LH: He was a very, very individual character. A very down-to-earth man, very much on the level with his students.

EG: Was he humorous?

LH: We always looked forward to that class. He began his classes by discussing the Mutt and Jeff cartoons. I am sorry to say that I never read anything but Mutt and Jeff in the funny papers. I didn't have time. I was a serious-minded student. Perhaps I feel I am too much so. He would begin by discussing that comic strip with his foot upon his desk. And, bless his heart, he developed lumbago but still left his foot on the desk.

EG: Did he have certain points that he especially liked to make?

LH: Yes, a lot from that comic strip. He said he didn't want anyone in his classes who didn't read Mutt and Jeff, so I felt a little guilty because I didn't read enough of them.

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EG: Of course he was a Democrat. Were there any particular public figures that Professor Greene especially liked or disliked, do you recall?

LH: I don't recall. In those days I didn't pay too much attention to Democrats and Republicans.

EG: Did he particularly admire Wilson or Bryan?

LH: I don't recall.

EG: One of the big issues was prohibition in those days, wasn't it.

LH: Yes. I believe that that county is still dry. That has always been a dry county as long as I remember.

EG: Do either of you remember whether Professor Greene had any opinions about that? Was he for it or against it?

LH: I don't recall.

EG: I gather that one of the things that the President derived from Professor Greene was an even greater interest in public affairs but the Professor stoked this interest?

LH: Yes, yes. He did definitely in all of us.

EG: Is it true that the President would go over to Professor Greene's house with him sometimes and sit and talk?

LH: I am sure he would. I've heard that, yes. He did. He was the type. He was getting ahead, he was learning, he enjoyed it. He enjoyed learning.

EG: What was Professor Greene's manner? Was he a soft spoken man, or a loud spoken man?

AH: As I recall, he was soft spoken. He was a rugged individual.

EG: A small man?



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AH: Yes, he was a small man. He had a big family. He had a little ranch and I used to go up there with him. I would hunt there while he worked. He had seven or eight children.

EG: What did you hunt for?

AH: Deer.

EG: Is that what the President hunted when he was with you?

AH: Oh, yes, mostly deer. Oh, we had a few timber wolves and few turkey--around Wimberley, Texas. But most of the hunting during that time was deer hunting.

EG: What about fishing? What did you catch mostly?

AH: There was good fishing there. I don't remember, but bass fishing, I think, was the main thing.

EG: And this hunting and fishing would go on in the Wimberley area?

AH: Yes. We planned lots of trips that we didn't get to make. We talked about it all of the time and, if we did get a chance, we would go. But between my work and his college we didn't go that much. And of course he had many other friends that he planned trips with. He stayed busy.

EG: Mrs. Hughes, do you remember who the psychology professor was? You don't recall? The psychology professor did not make the impression on the President that Professor Greene did?

LH: I don't believe so, except that it gives you some of the inner thinking of the President, don't you see?

EG: Was the President particularly interested in psychology?

LH: Oh, yes. He was interested in everything.

EG: Would you say that his favorite course was the Government course?

LH: I believe so. History and Government. Social Science.

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EG: Do you remember any of the books that you were assigned or read in those days? Again this is taxing your memory awfully hard.

LH: It really is, I am afraid. There's been a lot of water under the bridge. I've taught in the primary grades for 15 years so I have been out of contact with that sort of thing except in my club work in San Angelo. We have had a lot of Texas heritage programs and American heritage programs. I have managed to get myself appointed to that committee--if I had to be on one, that was the one that would be dear to my heart. And the older I get, the more I enjoy my Texas heritage and my American heritage.

EG: Do you remember what the President's social life was like in college?

LH: I didn't know him socially at all. I knew him scholastically and my husband knew him more socially, in the sports world.

EG: Mr. Hughes, do you remember what his social life was like while he was in college?

AH: No, I really don't. Of course I didn't go anywhere evenings and I wasn't out with that crowd of the President.

EG: What did they do for fun?

AH: Not much. They would walk over to the Bob Cat and drink a coke and sit and talk.

The Bob Cat was sort of a local gathering place. A little cold drink fountain, just off the campus. Right at the campus entrance. That was about the size of it. There wasn't much to do. Of course those days we didn't have the money to do the things that they have now. That was about the size of it. He was very busy. I am sure that he wasn't out too much nights because he worked more and studied more than anyone else there. I am sure of that.

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EG: Mr. and Mrs. Hughes, what did the President look like in the San Marcos days?

AH: A whole lot like now, only slimmer. Seems to me that he looked taller than he does now. Evidently he wasn't but he is a little fleshier now. He was just a big, all bone, Western boy, that's all.

EG: He had curly hair in those days, didn't he?

AH: Oh, yes.

EG: And his manner of conversational speaking--some people have said that it was much quicker than it is now.

AH: He was aggressive, yes, he was aggressive. And he had a quick answer for anything. He was a lot of fun to talk to and to be with. You could just walk down the street, four or five blocks with him, and have a big conversation and enjoy it. He is one of the people you meet in college or anywhere else who it's a pleasure to talk to.

EG: Was he a great practical joker in those days?

AH: Oh, yes.

EG: Do you remember any of them?

AH: No sir, none that I can tell. (Laughter)

LH: About his appearance. I could tell you very well from a photograph that I saw two Sundays ago in my little hometown of Pontotoc, Texas. Mr. McLeod, Mr. John McLeod of this little town, was on the rural electrification committee that brought electricity to the Hill Country and here is a picture.

EG: Of the President?

LH: Yes. Mrs. McLeod said, "Lorena, I have something to show you." Mr. McLeod has passed on and she is getting up in years. So she

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walked over to the wall and she worked and worked to get something off the wall and I thought, "Well, what is she going to show me?" And it was a picture of her husband, Mr. John McLeod, and the President and the committee and under this he had written a nice tribute to Mr. McLeod and she had this hanging on her wall.

EG: This is Mr. John McLeod. And what is the name of her hometown?

LH: Pontotoc, Texas.

EG: This would be a picture of the President when he was in the early years of his period in Congress?

LH: Very slim, very nice looking. Mrs. McLeod had a son, Paul McLeod, who was in college with him at least in the summers. Now I think Paul attended school in summers. But he knew him well too. He was a real good friend. Paul is with Humble Oil Company at present in Odessa, Texas.

EG: In those days, did the President talk at all about his future ambitions? What he hoped to do? Was it the assumption that he was going to be a teacher?

LH: I gathered that he would be a teacher. I can't recall if it was our freshman or sophomore year. He told me awhile ago that he started in 1927, so evidently we were freshmen.

AH: He had another good friend there, Emmett Shelton. Emmett had planned on taking law and did. The President's intentions, then, I'd rather guess were to take law, that is, to take it later. His father was one of our State Representatives and Emmett Shelton's father was also.

In those days it seems that teaching was a stepping-stone to whatever you planned to do in that country and in our world.

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Financially we all used teaching as a stepping-stone to a higher calling and I feel like that was the way he achieved what he planned to do in life. And now it has been so wonderful that he has become the President.

EG: You have been very kind. I don't want to keep you too long. May I ask you: Were there any stories or anecdotes about the President that you remember during that period that are especially characteristic of him?

LH: No, but I do recall this. I don't think he would object to my saying this. He was long, tall, and lanky and he would sit with his legs crossed and the professor would say, "Lyndon, would you unwind your legs and tell us about this?" So this was always a joke, you know, because really he was tall, and he did have to kind of unwind to get up.

EG: I gather from this account in the paper that he was the leader in this class. He was the one most likely to answer the questions?

LH: Definitely. I don't think the class could have gone on without the President's opinions. The professor wanted that. Of course, I was sitting taking notes all the while.

AH: The thing that impressed me about the President was: when he was first elected to Congress, about 1937 I guess, I didn't live in his District. However, I did work for him. All of my people lived in his District. I sent him a wire. He was in the hospital. It was the day of the election and I warned him to never mind, that he had it won anyway. He didn't have anything to worry about. I had the nicest letter back from him stating that he expected letters

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from people in his District but his friends outside of his District, when they were interested in him, he knew that they were really interested. I still have the letter. I wish I had hunted it up before.

EG: Do you remember what the campaign was like, Mr. Hughes?

AH: Yes, sir. He ran principally, I think, to support President Roosevelt's policies. I think that was his main ticket, which I think was right and of course that elected him--that and his friends. Everyone that knew him, worked for him.

EG: Did you see him campaign?

AH: No sir. At that time I didn't live in his District. But I wrote every friend I had and all of my kinfolks lived in his District. We had moved away. About '31 we had moved up into Mason County. Then when he was elected Senator, I went there and I worked on large farmers and ranchers in that hill country in those counties down there. Stevenson, his opponent, had been their Representative, and had represented all of those people in State Government. He was strong. But Lyndon had helped us get REA in there. I talked to everyone I could and he was elected by some 180 votes--very little. Stevenson was ahead right up to the end of it. But I wired him and congratulated him on being the youngest Senator in the United States. I had a nice letter back from him. Even before all the votes came in, he couldn't keep from writing and telling me how much he appreciated it. It had given him heart--he had been pretty blue he said. It made him feel better. I have that letter from him too.

EG: Did either of you know particularly well the President's father or mother?

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LH: No, I didn't know either one. I am sure I met his father but I didn't really know him and I never met his mother. I do recall.... He had one or two sisters that I knew in San Marcos. But that is all of his family that I did know.

EG: One of the things that strikes you is the way that the President of San Marcos, Dr. Evans, seems to have taken to the President. What was Dr. Evans like?

AH: Dr. Evans was the grandest man that ever lived. He was a grand old man. If there ever was a grand person he was and so was his wife. Dr. Evans' idea was to help people who wanted to help themselves, not only Lyndon. He had lots of boys he thought lots of. He went all out and he encouraged them.

EG: What did he look like?

AH: Well, he wasn't too large. He was sort of short and dumpy. In later years he got some moles on his face that he didn't have earlier. He was there many years. He had all the time for anyone for counselling.

EG: I gather that while the President was in San Marcos, he was more or less the favorite of Dr. Evans?

AH: No, not only of Dr. Evans. Of everyone else--the students too. I wasn't a student at that time but he was my choice of all the kids that I knew.

EG: What did people like so much about him?

AH: He was aggressive, just full of ambition and he had time to talk to everyone.

EG: Sometimes people who are aggressive and full of ambition are not as popular as the President was.

AH: He was very diplomatic and he was genuine. He was sincere in what he

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was doing. And you knew that. As he is today, we feel. Of course, Texas is different from any other state, I think. I mean we're friendly down there. Here I can hardly keep from speaking to the people on the street. At home, if someone across the street didn't holler at me, I wanted to know what he was mad about. The difference is that down there everyone is friendly, everyone speaks, everyone has time to stop and talk to you a minute. The population there was possibly less than 5,000 at that time. I think the fact that Lyndon wanted to help people then carries on through his poverty program that he is advocating today.

EG: So along with the ambition and so forth there was this attitude of helping?

AH: Definitely.

EG: Helping them in what way?

AH: Helping them to help themselves. He didn't want a handout. He didn't want a dole. He never had one.

EG: In the college itself, he helped by his general friendliness toward people....

AH: That's right. He was very, very outstanding. He was sincere. He had a good word for everyone and something to say to everyone. And you couldn't possibly pass him without talking to him. He was just that type of person--you wanted to speak to him. And you wonder how he can ever crowd in another moment, like today. He saw us. It was something we had not expected, but he took time for even us.

EG: You have been extremely helpful, Mr. and Mrs. Hughes. Thank you very much.



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Allie T. Hughes  
Donor

Mrs. Allie T. Hughes (Lorena)  
Donor *Draper*

April 10 th, 1977  
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