

INTERVIEW I

DATE: April, 1965
INTERVIEWEE: JESSE KELLAM
INTERVIEWER: ERIC F. GOLDMAN
PLACE: Mr. Kellam's office at KTBC-TV, Austin, Texas

Tape 1 of 1

G: Mr. Kellam, when did you first meet the President?

K: I don't recall when we first met. The President's mother and my mother were girlhood chums and schoolmates. I would guess that I first met the President sometime after he enrolled in college at San Marcos.

G: Did you and he attend college together?

K: No, we did not. I'm somewhat older than the President and had graduated before he enrolled. However, I was in San Marcos during the summers and on other vacations, and knew him and spent some time with him when he was a student at San Marcos.

G: May I ask you about the kinds of courses he particularly liked in college. I know he liked Professor Greene very much. He admired that course. The other question concerns the kinds of jobs with which he supported himself.

K: I did not know the courses that the President was taking at San Marcos. I do know from later information that he particularly liked history and government. I think also he studied what we called then speech. Dr. Greene was a controversial instructor. Students were either inspired in his classes or they considered

Kellam -- I -- 2

him a drudge. He was an unusual instructor. He paid very little attention to his mode of dress. He had a wonderful mind. A student that was really interested in history and in government could and did find in Dr. Greene a source of inspiration and strength.

G: Did you ever take a course with Dr. Greene yourself.

K: I did not. But I knew many of my fellow students who did. I've heard Dr. Greene discussed pro and con many times.

G: We've heard from many of the President's friends of the kind of controversial and vigorous impression that Professor Greene left on the campus, but it's always been left a little general. Were there any special subjects that he emphasized? What was it that stirred everybody up so much?

K: I think history as it related to life. He related history to life. He saw in history government and, through government, the behavior of people. I have chatted with him many times; I was not one of his students but I've chatted with him on numerous occasions. Dr. Greene believed in living and living as an individual. Self expression he encouraged. Perhaps Dr. Greene taught a generation or two too soon to be universally accepted.

G: Of course the President was especially interested in debating and Dr. Greene was his coach. Do you by any chance know some of the subjects that were debated?

K: I would not remember that.

G: Is there anything else about the San Marcos period, before we leave

Kellam -- I -- 3

it, which you think should be recorded for the archives?

K: Much has been said by a good many writers who didn't know what they were writing about concerning the controversy that existed between two "secret" organizations on the campus, one called the White Stars, the other the Black Stars. The Black Stars organized prior to the White Stars and were composed of athletes. Athletes, back in those days, controlled campus elections whether by force of personality or because they were a bit more interested than the students who were not athletes. The President was very instrumental in the organization of the White Stars. I don't know much about the White Stars other than having lived to see the effects of their organization. I know nothing of the entrance requirements. I do know that the President and some of my other close friends became members of the White Stars.

G: Were these the only two organizations, or were they the two leading organizations on campus?

K: They were the two leading organizations for a period of years, whose primary interest was the election of student leaders. There were many other organizations on the campus not of a secret nature.

G: You spoke of the influence of the White Stars over the years. Would you characterize that influence for us?

K: Yes. It elected all of the student officials over quite a few years, starting during the time when the President was a student and their energy lasted for quite a few years after the President was no longer a student.

Kellam -- I -- 4

G: And they tended to elect a different type person, a non-athlete?

K: Yes, they did.

G: Mr. Deason told an interesting story, but he had forgotten some of the details about the first efforts of the White Stars which was to elect Willard Deason president of the Senior Class. There were about twenty votes lacking and President Johnson spent all night and rounded up the twenty needed votes. He has forgotten a lot of the details, where the meetings were held and so forth. Could you fill in some of the details?

K: No, I couldn't.

G: We also don't know too much about the kind of vacations or fun and recreation the President may have had at San Marcos, particularly during the summer period. Could you fill us in on that?

K: I'm under the impression, but I can't be positive about this, that the President was going to school both in the regular sessions and in the summer.

G: So he had practically no time?

K: He had practically no time. I was teaching and coaching at the time. I had returned to San Marcos for the summer vacation and, as I recall it, he was there in school.

G: Let's move over now to the NYA period. Is it correct that you were, after a short while, the number one aide of Mr. Johnson's during the NYA period?

K: That is reasonably correct, yes.

G: Would you describe how the President approached you to take this

Kellam -- I -- 5

job? What your job was at the time, what he said to you, etc?

K: I came into the organization on leave of absence from the State Department of Education. I was at that time serving as deputy state superintendent of public instruction. The President secured from Dr. Woods, who was state superintendent, my leave of absence for thirty days to be of assistance in setting up the school and college aid program. At the end of thirty days, money, rules and regulations had not come forward as soon as the President had hoped they would and he went to Dr. Woods, with my hearty approval, and requested that I be given a year's leave of absence. About the time that that year's leave of absence was expiring, the President resigned as state director and I was named to succeed him.

G: Mr. Birdwell, who of course worked with you during this period, remembers a meeting at which he believes you were present in a cafe where you had a cup of coffee with the President and he first told you all about the NYA job and asked you to come. Do you remember that meeting?

K: Yes, I was there. As a matter of fact, if I may inject this fact, I was in Corpus Christi on a brief vacation and received a wire from the President which said he had been named state director of the National Youth Administration and: "Would you like to work for me and with me in that organization? I'll be in Texas in a few days." I was checking out of a hotel when I received the wire so I checked out and got into an automobile with my brother who was there with me on vacation and my wife and drove to San Antonio,

Kellam -- I -- 6

saying to them that I must find out what the National Youth Administration is. I would like to work with the President, but I don't know what the National Youth Administration is. Furthermore, I had just received a promotion in the Department of Education. So I wired him later that day, saying: "I would like to work with you. What is the National Youth Administration?" That was the gist of my reply. The President was down in Texas within a matter of days. He called me and said, "I will be in San Marcos at seven or eight o'clock in the morning. Will you call Sherman Birdwell and tell him that I would like to talk with him?" I arranged to call Birdwell and arranged a meeting at one of the cafes in Austin, Texas.

G: Do you remember what cafe that was and could you describe it for us?

K: I believe that it was Miller's cafe. A few tables, a few chairs.

G: A little restaurant, a coffee house?

K: Just a little restaurant, a coffee house, yes.

G: Mr. Birdwell remembers that the President spoke with a great deal of feeling about what this job was and what NYA could mean and how kids like himself who had had difficulties getting their education would have a chance under this program. Do you remember that, too?

K: Yes, the President was thoroughly sold on what the National Youth Administration could do to keep youngsters in school and provide work and employment for those who had been forced to drop out of school. He was doing a selling job. He wanted Sherman Birdwell to work for him. He wanted him to go to work for him and he sold him and hired him that morning.

Kellam -- I -- 7

G: He was also talking to you at the same time?

K: No, he wasn't.

G: You had committed yourself?

K: My commitment was one of being on leave of absence. I did not have a fundamental decision to make at that time.

G: Mr. Birdwell recalls that you drove around the countryside while the President was describing the vision and dream of what the NYA could become. Do you recall that?

K: I have no recollection of that. I remember the meeting at the cafe and that he sold Sherman Birdwell before he left on going to work for the NYA.

G: So far as the operation of the NYA is concerned, would you characterize what you men working there, the President and his associates, felt to be the most important project you were engaged in?

K: I think the most important project was the work with the State Highway Department in building roadside parks. The President did not want a dollar of these funds that had been made available for out-of-school youngsters for their benefit to be spent for supervisory personnel or for overhead, unless it was absolutely necessary. So he went to the state highway engineer and said to him in effect, "Why aren't you building more of these roadside parks?" At that time the State had very, very few. The engineer told him that they did not have the personnel or the dollars to do it with. He said, "Well, you've got a good organization, you've got strong supervisory personnel. Suppose you had all the unskilled labor that you wanted? Could you

Kellam -- I -- 8

increase the number of roadside parks you've been building and is the Highway Department dedicated to doing that?" The man said, "Yes, I could build many more of them." He said, "All right, where do you want good able-bodied manpower delivered to you in the morning?"

G: The next morning?

K: In the morning. And the gentleman said, "You're taking me a little fast." From that conversation, there was developed the pattern for the organization. They did have good foremen. Through that project, NYA provided the unskilled labor which gave these boys an opportunity to work with skilled workmen. And many, many of the leaders now in the State Highway Department started as NYA boys on roadside parks.

G: Mr. Kellam, is there any other one project which you would name as being one that you men and the President were especially proud of?

K: Any number of them. To name one in which the President saw great possibilities, initiated when he was director and carried out after I became director, many, many times having been prodded by him and the late Maury Maverick, was the La Villita project in San Antonio. The project encompassed the restoration of old San Antonio. Within a half dozen blocks of downtown San Antonio is the little block called Old San Antonio. When we went in there, it was a bunch of shacks. Maury Maverick, who was then the mayor of San Antonio, arranged an exchange of land. The city secured

Kellam -- I -- 9

title to the properties and what is now La Villita stands where at that time you had what amounted to a slum area. In connection with the project came shops, copper-working, ceramic work, weaving. Not only did they restore old buildings, but they put in those buildings these shops where youngsters were trained in the handiwork and handicrafts of that area.

G: So there were a number of things of this type that you felt equally proud of?

K: If you will cast your eyes up and forward there, you will see an NYA project [looks at photograph]--the little chapel in the woods on the campus of the State College for Women. Aubrey Williams was national director when I was named to succeed the President. He summoned me to Washington and said, "Kellam, you haven't got but one way to go and that's down. This man Johnson was operating the best NYA program in all of the states. On his recommendation, I'm going to name you his successor, but I tell you in so doing, that you can't do a better job than he was doing. I hope you can do as well." So we carried on a well-launched program.

G: As you know, Mr. Kellam, we are interested in the colorful details as well as the big, significant things. Do you by any chance remember what the first day was like in the NYA office then, the day when you all got together for the first time?

K: Well, then as now, the President liked to communicate and my most vivid recollection of early days in the office was the telephone--people installing telephones.

Kellam -- I -- 10

G: You made some earlier reference to your initial part in the NYA program and that related to the school and college aid programs?

K: Yes, let me tell you an incident in connection with that program that will set forth what it meant to the students, as seen by the then Dean of Men at the University of Texas. He was a gentleman by the name of V. I. Moore. I forget the number of students the University could accommodate; the maximum any student could be permitted to earn was thirty dollars. Dean Moore, in order to accommodate twice as many students as could otherwise be accommodated, split the jobs, each one of them into two parts, so that no student at the University could earn more than fifteen dollars because they had so many cases where fifteen dollars cash was the difference between a student's remaining at the University and having to drop out. Dean Moore brought down to the office here in Austin one afternoon the applications from the University and said to me, "Kellam, I feel as if I have blood on my hands. I have done the most difficult job that I have ever done in my life. If I had four times as many jobs for deserving students at the University, I would still not have enough. In making these selections that I hand you now, I feel that I have blood on my hands."

G: That is the kind of incident which gives the real mood and tone of NYA and it is the sort of thing we are especially anxious to have. Are there more things of that type which come to mind? Or perhaps you will think of them as we go on.

K: I'll try to as I go ahead.

Kellam -- I -- 11

G: Reference has been made to some cooperative living arrangements that were set up for college students. They could maintain their own residence and thereby diminish the cost to them. That was an NYA instituted project? Is that correct?

K: No, I have no recollection of that. We had this in connection with the out-of-school NYA program: Girls from disadvantaged homes who had been forced to drop out of school or lost the desire to go to school, most of them because of financial situations, were placed in what we called "residence centers." We employed a lady trained in the fundamentals of homemaking, usually a person who had majored in home economics. The girls would live in these homes and undergo a training program in the fundamentals of homemaking, to the end that they learned to preserve vegetables, to prepare meals, to build a balanced diet and in addition to that, they frequently made curtains, even made clothing sometimes. But it was a training program for young girls who had dropped out of school.

G: Before we leave the NYA office, do you recall by any chance what the President's NYA office actually looked like? Did he run a very tidy office in those days? What color was it, et cetera?

K: There were several telephones and he kept the people who worked with him informed of what he was doing and what he expected them to do.

The most difficult assignment I ever had was dictating a letter for his signature, which I frequently did as assistant director. It wasn't too hard to dictate a letter for my own

Kellam -- I -- 12

signature, but to dictate one for the President's signature required a great deal more thought and preparation. He would not hesitate to send one back with a marginal suggestion. He was never rude about it, but he didn't hesitate to make corrections. One of his favorite expressions was, "This sounds wooden-like. Be human, write the man as if you were talking to him. Get away from wooden-like, stilted expressions."

G: Mr. Birdwell said that he remembered that there were frequent staff meetings and then a little later, he wasn't sure that they were frequent. Do you recall that?

K: We would not have staff meetings on a regularly scheduled basis. In the beginning, I'm sure that we met as a staff more frequently than we did as we went along. Later, as we got going, the President tended to meet with the individuals with whom he needed to meet in terms of that portion of the job that had to be moved. We functioned through about five divisions and he dealt more with division heads than he did with all the divisions at one time. Specifically, we bogged down in the student aid program because we were late getting instructions and were late getting money. The county school superintendent would write to us and say, "You notified us that we would have this program and we haven't received the rules and regulations." They would write in a week later and say, "I wrote you on such and such a date and I haven't heard from you. Please let me know how to proceed." We had a young man whose name I don't recall who was head of the student aid division, the payroll department; I was the head

Kellam -- I -- 13

of the division as a whole. We would work in those days until around seven p.m. Usually, I would go home with the President for a quick dinner and we would be back in the office by eight p.m. or a little after. This particular evening, when we got back to the office, he asked me how we were getting along in processing applications. I replied that we had a considerable stack of unanswered correspondence in the school aid division. He said, "Let's go over and see it." The whole staff of the student aid division was working. It was by that time around nine in the evening and the stack was at least a foot high. He saw a man busy dictating and he asked him what the trouble was. The man said, "Well, we get so many communications here. I'm working my way down as fast as I can. The trouble is, I answer a letter from Mr. X and then when I dig down further into the mail, I find another letter from Mr. X. I really wouldn't have had to write the first one if I had answered the second one." The President said, "Well, what are you doing about it?" He said, "I'm catching up as fast as I can." The President said, "Let me show you how to catch up faster." He turned the stack over and said, "Answer from this end of the line."

G: Harry Ransom of the University of Texas was during NYA days a newspaper reporter and he said it was his impression that the NYA period for the President was a kind of turning point in his political thinking. Mr. Ransom said that up to that time he had been a young man in Texas with a brief experience in Washington, but he had never

Kellam -- I -- 14

seen at firsthand that certain problems had to be dealt with by the federal government: that the states couldn't simply manage them. He also hadn't seen how government which he, like a good Texan, hadn't been a bit skeptical about could do a very human, personal job. This was Ransom's impression. In the course of the many conversations you had, and the staff meetings and so forth, do you also feel it was an important turning point in the sense that Mr. Ransom meant?

K: I don't know that I could share that judgment. Over the years I have not seen anything other than a refinement of thinking. I have seen no departure. I haven't seen a corner turned in the President's thinking, politically or in the field of education. Perhaps it's been there but if so, I haven't seen it.

One of my early discussions with the President on the political front was had in 1932 or 1933. I know it was when he was serving as secretary to Congressman Kleberg. I was refereeing a football game in Corpus Christi and, as I went to the bench at the end of the first half, I heard my name called. As an official, you learn not to turn when your name is called; I continued on for my jacket. As I picked my jacket up, I heard my name called again. That time I could tell it was in a friendly fashion. Since it was a rather insistent call I turned--the game was a sell-out and boxes had been placed along the sideline--and I glanced over and saw the President. He yelled and said, "Come over here. I've got some people I want you to meet." I met Congressman Kleberg and several other people in the

Kellam -- I -- 15

box. The President invited me to spend the night with him. After I had showered following the game, I went with him and we dropped by to get a midnight snack and talked, I guess until two or three o'clock in the morning. He asked me at that time what I was going to do. I told him what I would like to do. He said, "Are you doing anything about it?" I said, "No, no, I haven't." He said, "Let's get started tomorrow." It was from that conversation that he started to get me a job in the State Department of Education. That was what I wanted. He worked at it long and hard for a good many months. During the conversation that night, after we had talked about what I would like to do, I called the President by name and I said, "Now, what are you going to do? What do you plan on doing? Are you going to be a secretary to a Congressman the rest of your life?" "Oh," he said, "I don't know. This I do know, I'm going to stay in public life in some capacity. That's what I want to do." That surprised me a little bit.

G: Why did it surprise you?

K: Well, quite frankly that a young man would be interested in continuing in public life. It was out of my field. I didn't look on that as something someone I knew would aspire to. He got talking about various individuals in the state and their political philosophy. Finally, I said, "What is your political philosophy?" The man thought a few minutes and said, "If I had to sum it up, it would be: Never pass up an opportunity to do an honest favor for an honorable friend." That I remember as if it were yesterday. That is a direct quotation,

Kellam -- I -- 16

word for word.

G: I certainly see what you mean. In terms of the longer NYA story, did you get the feeling, as the President went on, that he was satisfied with the way things were working? There has been one suggestion by a friend that he was so ambitious to do the kind of job that needed to be done that he felt a certain amount of frustration.

K: If he felt any frustration it was, because he wanted to move a bit faster than the national office would permit him to move. He was impatient to get going. I saw no frustration as such, other than the impatience with the receipt of rules, regulations, and money.

G: You mean there was always a rule to bother with, always a regulation to bother--

K: The thing he objected to was, if the national organization said that we want to start roadside projects, he disliked waiting for the rules and regulations that surrounded roadside parks. He wanted to get going.

G: Did the President make any public addresses or write any articles during the period that he was the NYA administrator?

K: He made frequent talks. I don't know that he did much writing in that period.

G: To what kind of groups did he speak?

K: Luncheon clubs, chambers of commerce, state press association.

I recall one talk that he made in San Antonio to the San Antonio Rotary Club. I said to him in substance, "Are you looking for

Kellam -- I -- 17

trouble?" The San Antonio Rotary Club, even in those days, was known as a rather conservative group of gentlemen. I said, "Of all places to accept a speaking engagement--the Rotary's club in San Antonio! Why not the Lions Club, the Kiwanis Club, any club other than the Rotary Club. You'll be lucky if you're not thrown out." He had a prepared speech as I recall it. He threw it away on the basis of some informal conversation he had with some of the individuals before the luncheon started and said in opening his talk to the group, "Several of you gentlemen told me before the luncheon started that San Antonio takes care of its own." Then he said, "You're right, I saw you doing it on the way to this meeting. I passed the alley--and he gave the location--and saw two children that couldn't have been more than twelve years old getting their lunch out of the garbage cans. Yes, you're right, San Antonio takes care of their own. Now let me tell you how your government's going to be of assistance, if you want it."

G: What was the reaction to that speech?

K: He didn't get thrown out. He got a nice hand when it was over.

G: What was the President like personally in those days, Mr. Kellam? Was his manner of speaking quicker or more slow than now? Was his gait of walking faster? You know, the little details of personal manner.

K: He never went any place leisurely. He has always been a fast walker and if anything, talked at a more rapid clip than he does now. Of course, I need not tell you that in those days his words

Kellam -- I -- 18

did not have to be as careful as they are now. He was a fast talker. He was a fast walker.

He drove himself and either drove or led those who worked with him and for him at a hard clip. More nights than not, we asked the building in which we were housed would they please leave the lights on another hour. In those days, our office was in the Littlefield Building here. At that time, the Littlefield Building generated its own power and direct current. Normally they stopped the elevators and cut off the lights at eleven p.m. Many, many times he had the building manager agree to leave the lights on until midnight. Occasionally he could persuade him to leave them on until one o'clock in the morning. The building manager finally complained to the building owner. We still kept the lights on after eleven o'clock frequently.

G: You know, one of the things that has fascinated us in the course of this work is that in every job the President drove himself and drove or led, as you say, everybody else around him and yet he had very few people ever quit him. Now there was some special quality of leadership there and you who were so close to him, could you describe what it was?

K: It would be inaccurate to say that the President drove the NYA staff at a hard gait. He himself kept a fast pace and drove himself and carried himself pretty fast and pretty hard. There was something about the example that he set that caused others to want to get out or to keep up. Those who wanted to get out, got out.

Kellam -- I -- 19

B: But not many did get out, did they?

K: Very few because people react, I guess, to leadership or to example. It's also in the nature of the people that he surrounded himself with. They were all superior people.

G: Did Mrs. Johnson participate much in any of the NYA work?

K: I would answer your question by saying that Mrs. Johnson's greatest contribution was maintaining a home to which the President frequently brought his co-workers. There were times when I felt as if I should either share in the grocery bill or pay board because our work was so close that more evenings than not, the President would say, "Come have a bite to eat with me." Made no difference whether we got home at seven o'clock, eight o'clock or nine o'clock, Mrs. Johnson would have a meal prepared soon after we got there. At that time we had no "help." My mother is a wonderful cook, but Mrs. Johnson is the first person who could ever cook spinach the way that makes me like it. She could cook round steak and make cream gravy that was out of this world. The President frequently had people staying in the home. Mrs. Johnson, with no help, maintained a well-run, efficiently operated home as a base of operations from which the President came and went.

G: Could you fill out the picture of the places the President lived during the NYA period. There were two places: the San Gabriel Street home and the 34th Street duplex. Is that correct?

K: That is correct. When he first came here, he and Mrs. Johnson occupied the home of Dr. Montgomery.

Kellam -- I -- 20

G: Now this was a two-story home? A white clapboard home?

K: No, a white stucco. And a very nice and comfortable place with a beautiful yard. Rather hard to keep, I would think.

G: How about the furnishings?

K: As I recall the furnishings, they rented the place furnished.

G: How about the 34th Street duplex? Was that wood?

K: That was wood and a very unusually constructed duplex in that rather than being a central entrance, the entrance to the two apartments was at either end of the building. It was two-story and had a drive-in garage.

G: Who were the neighbors, do you recall?

K: I do not remember the name of the people. But I do remember that after the President was elected to Congress--in those days you could depend more on an early adjournment--the Johnsons would move out in the morning on their way to Washington and Mrs. Kellam and I would move in that afternoon. And then when the Johnsons would return after Congress, we would move out. We shared the same building.

G: During the early NYA period, apparently Mr. Birdwell stayed at the Johnson home on San Gabriel Street and so did Willard Deason.

K: I'm confident that was probably right and then after that, somebody else did.

G: So some of the staff were usually actually staying there, renting rooms?

K: Right.

Kellam -- I -- 21

G: Did the President's parents in any way participate in the NYA work? Did they ever come in from Johnson City and offer perhaps some advice or suggestions?

K: I could not answer that with any degree of intelligence.

G: It has been mentioned that a person he consulted with with some degree of frequency was state Senator Wirtz.

K: Yes, I'm sure that is correct. Senator Wirtz was a member of the state NYA advisory committee and a man that he had known for many years, in whom he had complete confidence, and a gentleman that one could talk with. If you asked him for advice, he never gave it to you. But after a conversation with him, after you had sought his advice, and been in a discussion with him, you left knowing what should be done. He was a very astute and able man.

G: You mentioned earlier that at that time Maury Maverick was the mayor of San Antonio. Was there a connection between Maury Maverick and the President?

K: Maury Maverick--I would suspect, I do not know, but I would suspect that he met Maverick when Maverick was in Congress, and he was serving as secretary to Kleberg.

K: Malcolm Bardwell, a San Antonio man, I believe was secretary to Maury Maverick and Bardwell and Lyndon became friends and then that snowballed.

G: I don't want to take too much of your time and therefore I'm going to move on to the congressional campaign. Now, of course, I realize you men were under the Hatch Act and so forth but participated as

Kellam -- I -- 22

friends. In terms of that campaign we've talked with a number of people and they have given us the broad outline of it. Are there any particular points of importance about it or colorful stories which you think should be added to the record?

K: I'll tell you one amusing incident following the election. As you remember, the President underwent an emergency appendectomy, I guess it was the day before the election. He was in the hospital, Brackenridge Hospital as I remember, and was having a great deal of company the day following the election, more so than on the day of the election. The doctor said to Mrs. Johnson, "You must stop this parade of people coming in to see Mr. Johnson." She said, "Stop it, Doctor? He's promoting this."

G: We have heard varying reports how Mr. Johnson announced his candidacy for Congress. Do you recall the place and the occasion and exactly what he did?

K: It was typed out about one-thirty or two o'clock in the morning in the duplex on 34th Street and taken to the paper.

G: Did he make his first speech on a porch in Johnson City or to the student body of San Marcos?

K: The student body at San Marcos was his first official speech.

G: And what was the nature of this speech?

K: I heard it, but I couldn't recapture much of it for you other than the fact that he was friendly toward the administration. He said he was young enough to be physically able to do things and if anyone thought he was too young, he assured them the years would

Kellam -- I -- 23

take care of that.

G: About the victory celebration, the President was in the Seton Hospital and apparently he had some friends over there that night who were being happy with him. Is that correct?

K: I do not remember.

G: But then Claude Wild was in his office and there was also a celebration going on there?

K: I'm sure it was. I don't recall. But that was the campaign headquarters.

G: Were you in any celebration that night?

K: Several of them, as I recall.

G: Did you visit him in the hospital the night of the election?

K: I don't recall. I wouldn't say. I suspect that I did.

G: On the meeting with FDR, it is clear it was Governor [James V.] Allred who suggested that FDR invite this young man over to the Gulf Coast and then the President takes him on the train part of the way back. Is there anything that you can add to the record beyond that?

K: I could not be helpful there.

G: It has been stated that when he visited the then President Roosevelt off Galveston, one of the things that the newly elected Congressman suggested to him was something related to a naval station or a naval base. Could that be correct?

K: Could be. That would be about the time they were building the naval base at Corpus Christi or where they wanted to build one. But if

Kellam -- I -- 24

a naval base entered into it, it would be the one in Corpus Christi. If you recall, his first committee assignment was with Naval Affairs.

G: In talking with Harry Ransom--he was then a young newspaper reporter--he mentioned that one of the things that he vividly recollected about that campaign was the fact that an apparently spontaneous demonstration took place. There were a whole variety of people participating--university students, Negroes, Mexicans, business people; in fact, even a woman who was an aristocratic leader of the community and who eventually participated very actively in this campaign. Do you recall anything to that effect? He said that there was such a cavalcade at the beginning and a cavalcade at the end of the campaign and he was struck by them.

K: I don't remember anything about that.

G: Could you describe any of the specific speeches or the visiting and the people-to-people kind of campaigning that the President did at that time?

K: I think his most effective campaigning was hitting a small town and going up one side of the street, into every building and office and store, then doubling back to the other side.

G: Why is it that he won, Mr. Kellam? It was a conservative district and he was campaigning New Deal. His opponents were very experienced, well-known politicians; he was not very well-known. Apparently he didn't even know the Mayor of Austin when he started to run. Was it this intensely personal campaigning that did it?

K: That would be my analysis basically, his intensely personal campaign-

Kellam -- I -- 25

ing and the sincerity and the drive of the man himself. He was a youngster who gave evidence in talking with you of being honest and wanting to serve. And goodness only knows, he's got enough drive to be effective. Then he pointed out on numerous occasions that to be effective, you need to elect them young, get a good man, elect them young, and keep them there. That's the way you do it.

G: Do you remember any other points that he especially stressed during the campaign?

K: He was trying to be elected congressman.

G: That does summarize it, doesn't it?

K: I'll tell you one story about him. I've told you about the drive and the manner in which he operated. Occasionally we would both become, I won't use the word exhausted, but tired. He would say to me, "Let's go to San Antonio, or to Dallas," or to some other place. One of those occasions--we couldn't be out too long--the President said, "Let's go over to San Antonio, look at some of these jobs you've been talking to me about, and come back this afternoon. On the way to San Antonio, we drove by a particular job about which I had some questions. I had discussed it with the President and he had reservations about it. We drove up to the site, found a foreman and no youngsters. Without identifying himself, the President asked the man if he knew of the work going on at this site. "Oh," he said, "Yes, yes, I'm the foreman." The President said, "Where are the youngsters?" "Well," he said, "some of them didn't show up today and I worked them a while and then I excused them." We engaged him in a conversation a while longer and got some of the

Kellam -- I -- 26

details of his job, thanked him and told him that we had enjoyed talking to him. Later in the afternoon, we were both talking with the district supervisor and told him to shut this job down, transfer the youngsters to some other job and fire the foreman. That afternoon the foreman reported to the district director, his immediate superior. His superior said to him, "Did you have any visitors today?" "Well," he said, "as a matter of fact, I did. I did have two visitors. Along about, oh, shortly after lunch, a couple of men drove up and one of them seemed particularly interested in what I was doing and what was going on. As a matter of fact, he talked as if he was a man who could speak with authority." The District Director said, "He can and did. You've been fired since three o'clock."

G: Thank you very much, Mr. Kellam. You have been of enormous help.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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Carolyn Kellam Curtis
Donor

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