

INTERVIEW II

DATE: July 24, 1978
INTERVIEWEE: CHARLES P. LITTLE
INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE
PLACE: Mr. Little's residence, Winchester, Virginia

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G: Let's start, Mr. Little, with your background. You're from Texas.

L: Yes, I'm a native of Texas. I was born in Central Texas, in Belton, and lived there a good portion of my early life. I graduated from high school in the Depression years, when it was practically impossible to get any work. In 1933 I was offered a job as an employment service manager for a new U. S. Employment Service office to be opened in Belton and financed by the Texas Relief Commission. I was to be the employment officer, so to speak, because we had hopes that we would be getting projects into the area that would be suitable for hiring some of the large numbers of unemployed people. I was with the Texas Relief Commission from August of 1933 until January of 1936. In the Texas Relief Commission I went up the ladder, so to speak, to county administrator and to a district field representative. I was in that job when Lyndon Johnson got in touch with me to make me an offer on NYA, or to discuss it with me.

G: Had you been in contact with him?

L: I had not met Lyndon, nor had I applied. This was December of 1935, and I believe he was appointed the state director of the National

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Youth Administration in Texas about the summer of 1935, somewhere along in there. Actually I was on a job over in Tyler, Texas, checking out a local relief office for the state office. I traveled out of the state office in Austin then. I received a call from a man by the name of Lyndon B. Johnson, to my surprise, about four o'clock on a Friday afternoon. I went to the telephone. He introduced himself. I told him yes, I had read of him in the papers, of his having come back to Texas to head up the National Youth Administration, and could I be of service to him. He said, "Yes, I want to talk to you about a job." I said, "Well, thank you, but I have a job right now and am doing quite well, even though it will run out in time, I suspect." He said, "Well, I still would like to talk with you. I've had a very good recommendation on you from someone." He never told me who, and I don't know for sure to this day who it was that put in a word for me.

So he said, "I want to talk to you." I said, "Well, the first time I'm in Austin, sometime next week, why don't I call you and make a date for us to discuss what you have in mind, even though I want you to understand I'm perfectly happy where I am." He said, "No, next week is too late." I said, "Well, how about Monday morning? I could drive in on Sunday and see you the first thing Monday morning." Of course, even though I had a job it was always flattering in those days to have anybody talking about offering you employment, because we had that tremendous number of people unemployed in Texas as well

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as across the nation. Lyndon said, "Well, Monday morning is not quite good enough either." I said, "Well, would you want to talk to me Sunday when I get in?" He said, "No. No, that is not quite good enough."

So I said--just not one to close the door completely with this man because this was an entirely new approach, anybody wanting to talk to you about a job--"Well, what I could do then, instead of waiting until Sunday to drive in as I planned, I'll drive in Saturday and see you Saturday." He said, "That's not good enough." I said, "Well, what is it you have in mind?" He said, "Well, I want to see you as soon as possible." Now this was four o'clock on a Friday. He said, "How long would it take for you to drive in here?" I said, "Well, I hadn't planned to leave today." He said, "How long would it take for you to drive in here, Mr. Little?" I said, "Oh, five hours I'm guessing, from Tyler, Texas." And so he said, "Well, I tell you, I'll be in my office at nine o'clock tonight. You try to get here if you can by then." Great day! What kind of man was this? I said, "All right, I'll do it." It was a challenge to me then.

I called my wife, who was with me, and said, "Get the bags, we're going to go on in early. We're not going Sunday. We're going right away." I didn't tell her any of the details. Of course, she wanted to know why the sudden rush to get out of Tyler, Texas, to Austin.

I went into Lyndon's office at nine o'clock that night. He was sitting at his desk. That was the first time I ever met this young

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man, Lyndon. We sat and talked until midnight. I was so impressed with him. He was the first man, I suppose, that I had talked to in these depression years who had hope and vision for the future. Bear in mind the time that we're talking about is the time when there was no hope for anything. There were probably eight or ten million people unemployed, maybe more, various figures on that, maybe twelve million, which was half the population of the United States, I presume, counting families. The future looked very bleak to everybody. Here is a guy that had in his mind visions of what could be done for the young people of the nation, and our hope for the future was in young people of the nation, not the older people. He did a beautiful selling job to me on the National Youth Administration, what it could mean to young people in Texas and the nation. By midnight, when I left there, I had accepted a job for a hundred and fifty dollars a month, which was sixteen dollars less than what I was earning--just to go to work for him. Sounds low but in those days that was considered top dollar jobs.

G: Did you resist at first? Did you continue to say that you weren't interested?

L: No, I didn't. By the time I arrived in Austin my curiosity about this man had grown, due primarily to his insistence that Sunday was not good enough for me to come, but to come on in right away, I want to talk to you. I walked into his office at nine o'clock and we started talking. He spent most of the time outlining to me his

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hopes, aspirations and vision of the future and what could be done. There was no place for saying, "I've got a job; I'm not interested." Actually I had shown I was interested by taking him up on driving in to Austin to talk to him.

G: Did he say that night what your job would be?

L: He told me no more than saying that, "In time we are going to add some supervisors in the field. I am now putting together a staff. As to what your job would be here, it would be possibly in charge of some areas in the state. You are now a district--or as TRC calls it, a field representative of the Texas Relief Commission. We would have in mind for you to be a field representative." But he went on to say that, "I will lean pretty heavily on you though right here in the state office, too, in addition to what you do in the field." He went on in terms that, "You've got probably more experience than many of the young men that I am hiring because of your having served as a field representative in the Texas Relief Commission." And then, too, he touched on the fact that I was reared in a department store and had experience in the running of the business even at a rather young age. He theorized that I might have a little more background at that particular time than the others. This proved to be true.

That was the latter part of December, probably the fifteenth, somewhere along in there. Then I went to work for him on January 6, 1936 when he was just beginning to build the work experience part of the organization. After I went to work for Lyndon Johnson, I told

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him I thought he should set up or divide the organization into districts right away in view of the type of program he was thinking about operating in Texas. He asked me to outline for him the kind of an organization I had in mind.

So I drew it up in this style. Actually, I drew it up in terms of--well, let's see, where is Bill Deason? District supervisor. Now this one shows Bill as a district supervisor. Actually, he was a state field supervisor. I drew him into a box up here. Jesse [Kellam] was assistant state director. I put Bill in here as a field supervisor and then the district directors under that and turned it into him. He liked it, so we began to go into that kind of an organization then. Many months later, this kind of an organization was finally staffed and operating.

G: Did you work in Austin at first, or in Dallas?

L: At first I was stationed in Austin because that was where I was based in the Texas Relief Commission. Eventually I was moved to Dallas, but for the life of me I can't recall offhand the approximate date. Later I was placed in charge of the Dallas district, the Fort Worth district and Wichita Falls district. Lyndon appointed me as a supervisor of several districts.

G: Did you work in the Littlefield Building?

L: Yes, I worked in the Littlefield Building and I really mean worked in the Littlefield Building. I can assure you that we had the lights on in the building into the wee hours practically every night.

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G: There is a story that's told about the lateness of the hours, that at such and such an hour, midnight or thereabout, the building superintendent turned off the lights, and that the NYA people continued to work by kerosene lamps and candles.

L: In the real early days we had to work late to get the program launched. Eventually, as I recall, Lyndon had to get the light situation corrected, because we had some real, real late nights. In those early days of NYA, Lyndon was the last man out of the office. When we were all walking out to go home, and generally we pretty much quit together, Lyndon was the one that pulled the door to behind us. He was not the type of person that said, "Now you folks get this stuff out, and in the morning I want to see it when I come in." He was right there to see it before going home.

Then there were times, of course, when we could quit a little early. Some of us might go with Lyndon to his home at nine or ten o'clock at night, and sit around and talk about various things mostly NYA. Or on occasions some of the staff would go home with me. Katherine, my wife, oftentimes baked chocolate pie at ten o'clock at night when we came in. It was pretty much of a family affair, with all of us young people working together on the establishment of this new program of the National Youth Administration.

G: What was he doing most of the time with his time?

L: Well, Lyndon was not one inclined to lean over your shoulder and watch everything that you were doing, but he did supervise. In the early

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days he was on that telephone an awful lot. He was outlining to us the kinds of contacts that we should be making in the field in developing various kinds of projects. He made, of course, all of the contacts with the Governor's office and with the state advisory board. He organized the state advisory board of NYA and then encouraged all of the district directors to get out and organize advisory boards in the counties, and cities where we were trying to develop projects. He was reviewing everything that we were turning out. Back in those days he reviewed everything that everybody put out around him. He was a detail man in his thinking. He wanted to know what was going on. Everything that was happening in that office--we were a small organization--went across his desk to see. Now this does not mean he didn't delegate responsibility. He delegated, but he still followed up on everything that was delegated.

G: Let me ask you some more about this regional advisory committee. Alvin Wirtz was on that. He was the chairman, is that right?

L: As I recall. I don't remember when he was chairman, but I'm pretty sure you're correct that he was chairman.

G: One of the memos indicates that Wirtz was not among those initially recommended for the advisory committee, and then he ended up on it. I'm just wondering if you know how that came about.

L: No, **offhand** I do not know when Mr. Wirtz went on the advisory committee. It was certainly in the early days.

G: Do you recall anything between the association, Lyndon Johnson and Alvin Wirtz, in this period that you observed?

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L: Over the period of time that I had occasion to observe Mr. Wirtz and Lyndon they seemed very close. I have every reason to believe that they were very close on up until the days that Wirtz passed away, even though I imagine the records may indicate that Mr. Wirtz and Lyndon disagreed at some point.

G: Well now, Senator Wirtz died in 1951.

L: Over the years that Wirtz was on the advisory board they apparently had a very good working relationship. I have reason to believe that Wirtz was a very strong advisor to Lyndon in Texas.

G: Can you give us some specifics though?

L: No, I can't, because I didn't work with the advisory board. I would imagine that it would have been Jesse Kellam and possibly Ray Lee that would have been working with Lyndon on any matters being taken before the advisory board.

G: Where did the board meet?

L: As I recall, the meetings were in Austin, but I never did sit in on any of them. I don't know that any of our district directors sat in on them. Ask Bill Deason about the advisory boards.

G: Any more insight on the relationship between Wirtz and LBJ?

L: No, I couldn't give you any. I would think Bill would still be the best person, since Jesse Kellam has passed away.

G: How about any of the other members of the committee? I've got Lutter Stark, Governor [Beauford] Jester before he--

L: I can't help you on those.

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G: Miller Ainsworth, Wallace Reilly.

L: No, I didn't ever work with the advisory board. All I would have seen would be more or less the reports, or possibly the minutes of the advisory board meetings. I can't even recall any of those.

G: I was wondering why the NYA office was located in Austin instead of San Antonio, say, where the WPA office was.

L: I don't recall the reason for that. I'm presuming that, one, Lyndon came from that particular congressional district; and two, much of our work would have to do with the developing of projects with government, particularly with the state of Texas. It would be much easier to be working with state officials right in Austin rather than having to drive back and forth from San Antonio. As you probably know in looking at materials, in those early work project days one of our most important state-wide projects was the building of highway parks.

G: Roadside parks.

L: Roadside parks. So far as I know that was the beginning of roadside parks in the nation.

G: Did you ever get any indication of the genesis of that roadside park idea?

L: I understood, and I think I understood this really from Lyndon, that he and the head of the Texas State Highways--was it [DeWitt] Greer, do you recall, that was head of it?

G: I've got it. I'll check it. I've got it here.

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- L: Well, the two of them, as I understood it, came up with this idea of having some roadside parks on some of the highways. The legislature voted I believe in the beginning about fifty thousand dollars for the buying of materials, and the NYA paid the salaries of the youth that worked on the highway projects. I feel fairly certain that the idea developed between the two of them in discussions as to what we could do on projects on the highways.
- G: The highway department supervised the building of them and everything? You just paid the labor?
- L: Yes. We had to recruit the youth. That wasn't too easy a job in the beginning because a lot of the kids just didn't know what NYA was going to be, and they were rather hesitant to take jobs. I think one of the humorous stories--and this is just for the files and not publicity; at that time the Austin newspapers gave it a little bit of play. When we came up with this big idea of building some highway parks and needed to have some good publicity it was decided to build one just south of Austin on the road to San Antonio. Lyndon told Sherman Birdwell, who was at that time responsible for the Austin district plus doing state finance work, that he wanted lots of recruited youth to start work the first day for they would have the newspaper reporters and photographers there as well as dignitaries to turn the first spades of dirt. The head of the highway department and others came for the big start of the first highway parks.

The highway department furnished, as I recall, two trucks to haul all the recruited kids out to the park site. Lyndon was there.

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If it was Greer, or whoever was head of highway department, and reporters were there. Unfortunately not a single youth showed up, even though Birdwell and his staff had personally talked to many of them, and they promised, "Yes, we'll be there." But there wasn't one who came. Now you can imagine what a stir this caused in our organization, with Lyndon really laying the law down to all of us to never let this happen again. The following Monday they tried again, but this time you can be sure those trucks were loaded and the first roadside park work began.

(Laughter)

G: Why didn't the kids show up?

L: We don't know. At that time, when you were recruiting kids from sixteen years up, there were even parents not sure what NYA was all about. The whole idea of the National Youth Administration was new to the country. It just took a little time for acceptance of the kind of a program NYA was going to operate.

G: Did you have any problem selling the roadside parks project to the national NYA office?

L: I don't believe we did. The fact of the matter, I think that they thought it was a good idea, after Lyndon did a selling job on them. Actually Washington had more interest in library projects, art projects and things of that nature. The roadside parks went over so big that I'm sure the national office spread the idea to all the other states as soon as they could, after seeing how successful they were going to be.

G: Anything else on roadside parks while we're talking about that?

I've heard that Herbert Henderson had a role in that idea.

L: I don't know if he did or not. I couldn't tell you whether he had any, but I would kind of doubt it, myself.

G: What was he like?

L: I can't remember enough about him, just the name now. So many of these people that I didn't work with on a day-to-day basis, I don't have any firm recollections of them other than the name of what the position was at the time. That was a long time ago, we're talking about. I haven't had occasion to talk to NYA staff in years, so it presses me to recall.

G: Anything else on the roadside parks?

L: No, other than to say that they were highly successful in Texas, and were well received everywhere that we wanted to build them. I understand the highway had little or no trouble in convincing people to give land; they didn't have to buy most of the roadside park land. If they didn't already own it, it seemed like there were many people who wanted to give ground for the parks.

G: Did the President [Johnson] himself go to these people and get them to donate land?

L: No. Most of that was handled by the highway department. NYA didn't get into actually asking for the donations of land. I do remember that in the early days there was quite a bit of discussion on whether we would put any toilet facilities in the roadside parks. That was a

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big policy question for a while. They determined not to install toilet facilities more for the reason it required employees to keep them clean.

G: This type of project, the roadside park project, seems to reflect some of Mrs. Johnson's later interests in beautification and enabling people to enjoy the highways more. Did she have an active role here in that project?

L: Not that I recall, other than through Lyndon of course. I really wouldn't know. In that connection we miss Lady Bird very greatly around Washington. The beautification program of course has held on to some extent, but when she was there we had a lot more beautification in the nation's capitol.

G: I've got a note here that says the NYA also built school gymnasiums, or worked on those.

L: Yes, we built school gymnasiums. A number of the larger types of projects that we got into came after Lyndon came to Washington. In the time that he was the state director he, I would say, laid the groundwork for much that we accomplished in NYA after he went to Washington. Also, I would add to that even though Lyndon was in Washington he still had a great interest in the success of NYA, and he continued to be probably the best friend on Capitol Hill that the NYA ever had. The NYA lasted, I am sure, a couple of years longer than it would if it hadn't been for the support of Lyndon in Congress. Then he and Jesse Kellam, who followed as state NYA director, were

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very close. Every time Lyndon came to Texas he visited NYA projects, and we ended up with many pictures of Lyndon inspecting projects in Texas.

G: I gather that he was very concerned about the NYA's operating expenses, and how much it cost to put a boy or a girl to work and making sure that most of the NYA money went into the actual employment of the youth rather than the overhead.

L: This is definitely very, very true. That not only applied to the youth, but he was one to hold down the expenditures on staff and expenditures for paper and pencils and everything like this. Our budgets were not too great, so he had to be pretty tight-fisted on handling the money. So far as the youth were concerned, he wanted every dollar that he could put into paying the youth to really go to the youth rather than to buying materials. Most all of our projects were developed in terms of our underwriting the pay of the youth with the sponsor of the project paying for all of the materials and the supervision.

G: Did you get any insight into his relationship with Congressman [James] Buchanan while he was NYA director?

L: His relationship with him, so far as I know, was good. I just don't remember enough or have any comments of interest. I recall, all of his relationships with him were very good, though.

I might mention one thing that we included in the final report on NYA. It's a few paragraphs to try to show how interested Lyndon

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was at all hours of the day in getting his job done in NYA. After he was appointed as the state director of the National Youth Administration he came to Austin on the train arriving about eight-thirty or nine o'clock in the morning. Instead of going to the hotel or any other place, he got off that train and went directly to the Capitol to see the Governor, to talk NYA and what he expected to do with it and things of this nature. He was on the go every minute. Apparently, he set up a very good working relationship from that very minute with the Governor and others at the Capitol in Austin.

G: Did he ever talk to you about that meeting with the Governor?

L: He did. He told me about his going to the Capitol and talking with the Governor about NYA. But I can't recall any particular details of what he said about it.

G: I gather that some of the projects had to do with the elimination of traffic hazards like mailbox turn-outs and guardrails and filling in ditches, things like that, safety projects.

L: Yes, there were projects of this nature, but we had so many different types of projects I couldn't even begin to recall all of them. Let me look here. Well, I can't lay my hands on it right now, but I thought I remembered seeing a list of various types of projects that might be of interest to you. What I am looking through here is a rough draft of a final report on NYA in Texas, of which you probably have a copy down there. The report is in the Archives. It goes back to the beginning of the NYA and carries it on up through about 1943. It has, I believe, a list of various types of projects that NYA worked on.

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- G: I suppose that as NYA director LBJ traveled a good deal. I've got notes here on trips to Washington, a conference in New Orleans, a regional conference of NYA state directors and another [trip]. I think he was going to go to New Mexico on something. Do you recall anything in connection with these trips?
- L: The only thing that I can recall is the fact that he did travel. Most of the time in those days he traveled by train back and forth to Washington, which as you may not know, was about two nights and a day and a fourth, between Washington and Austin. I can recall a number of times listening to Lyndon relate conversations with people on the train. He traveled with Congressman Bob Poage of Waco a number of times, and also with Speaker Sam Rayburn. I believe it was at Denison, Texas, somewhere along in there, where the train conductor would hold the train, waiting for Mr. Sam to get there. He would apparently go home some long weekends and then leave on Sunday night or Monday morning returning to Washington. If Mr. Sam wasn't there waiting to catch the train the conductor on occasion would hold the train thirty or forty minutes for Mr. Sam to arrive from Bonham. I've heard Lyndon talk about having met Mr. Rayburn up there and going back to Washington with him, at which time they talked about the old days when Sam Rayburn served with Lyndon's dad in the Texas Legislature.
- G: Did LBJ ever talk about how he had gotten the NYA appointment? Who had helped in that respect?
- L: No, I don't recall any conversation on this. Since he was working for Congressman Kleberg, I presume that Kleberg's recommendation would

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have helped him quite a bit. But I do not recall ever talking with Lyndon about it.

G: Anything else on Lyndon Johnson and Sam Rayburn?

L: Back in those days, no. Any knowledge that I had of a working relationship between Lyndon and Sam Rayburn would have been after Lyndon came to the Congress and became the majority leader. Do you want to get into anything beyond just the NYA days?

G: If you have something.

L: I recall one other item on the early relationship. Soon after Lyndon came to Washington as a congressman I had occasion to be in Washington with him. I recall saying to Lyndon, "I will look forward to reading one of your first speeches on the floor." His reply was, "Well, you'll have to wait for a year or so. I do not plan to speak on the floor of the House until I have something to say, and then, too, Mr. Sam tells me that a newcomer to the Congress should sit and listen for a year before he starts talking. I think it's good advice. So I do not plan to have much to say. I will listen for a year before I make a speech." I believe he did. I never tried to check dates and look back to see if he did this, but I have reason to believe that he followed Mr. Sam's advice.

I think in the early days he was guided by Sam Rayburn, especially on the House activities. In later years I'm sure he and Mr. Sam were on such good terms they could have had some differences over various things, but not in the early days, because he had such great respect

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for Sam Rayburn. Lyndon was unusual for a young man. He always showed great respect for older people and tried hard to learn all that he possibly could from older people. He went out of his way to have time with the older members of Congress. Doubtless that mind of his was like a sponge soaking up every tidbit of information and guidance available. He made the most of what he was learning from the older people who were in the Congress. It paid off.

G: In August, 1936, there was a banquet for Richard Brown. I believe the Governor was there and presented Brown with a western hat and made him an honorary Texas Ranger or something. Remember that banquet?

L: I remember, now that you mention it, but I had completely forgotten the banquet. I was there, but I can't recall any details. I remember the hat that was given Brown. You did talk to Mr. Brown?

G: Not yet. I hope to see him.

I guess there were some problems due to the size of the state and the distance from one office to another. Is that the reason that the district offices were increased from four to twelve?

L: We covered the state with the district offices. When we started into this work project program I suppose we all were just feeling our way in those days, because we had not had anything like a WPA or an NYA, or a CCC, which came later. So it was "a feel your way" type of proposition, not something you could go back and read past experiences and find out how you ought to do it. Everything was experimenting. We did begin with just a few districts because we had a small staff.

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Then as we developed the program and were receiving a little more money from Washington Lyndon was able to increase the number of districts in the state. But I can't for the life of me tell you at what time there was an increase. Obviously the chart you are showing me was from later years.

G: I've got a note that in 1935 there were four district offices: one in Austin, one in Houston, one in Dallas and one in Lubbock. Z. S. Armstrong was in charge of Dallas; Joe Skiles was in Austin; W. O. Alexander--

L: Now that was in 1935. That was primarily when the program was student aid. Of course we continued to have it, too, but the work project program didn't come into being until near the end of 1935 and the beginning of 1936. So somewhere in those months after the work project program started we redrew these district lines and added other districts.

G: The work project must have really increased your need for manpower and a larger budget. It seems like it would be a program that would require more overseeing by the NYA itself rather than, say, the host institutions or something.

L: I think of it in these terms, that in 1935 in the student aid program it was primarily just what the name implied--aid to students. Then we instituted a work project program for youth who were not students, but were unemployed. The student aid program continued as a major part of NYA, as did the work project program.

Now in terms of our needing a whole lot more people, we didn't have them. We started up with these district directors directing the

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program. Take Tony Ziegler, for example. Tony was a master at developing projects with local sponsors. His highway contacts were excellent; he worked with the district highway engineer, and with the cities and county governments in developing work projects such as clerical work in libraries, clerical work in the public offices and hospital aid projects. Then of course we opened resident projects for those young people who, because of distances more than anything else, had to come and live and work in one location. We had residence projects at Prairie View and later at Buchanan Dam, as two examples.

We needed more people but had to get by with relatively small numbers. In the Dallas district up here that I was supervising at one time, I don't think there was more than ten or twelve people in that office until we expanded into war industry training. Most of the projects were being supervised by people who were being paid by the project sponsors.

G: Let me ask you about some people from the national office who would come down. In addition to [Richard] Brown you had Russell Ellzey. Do you remember him? He was a field director.

L: Yes, I don't remember his visits, though.

G: Nothing in connection with why he was there or anything like that?

L: The people that came down to take a look-see in those days, wanted to make the trip to Texas, and supposedly they came to see how good we were and what we were doing. I have every reason to believe that

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90 per cent to 98 per cent of the reports that were made in Washington on the Texas organization and program were very, very favorable.

Lyndon had an excellent working relationship with the national office.

We went all out in showing these Washington people what we had and really put our best foot forward. I'm very honest in saying it was a good organization. It was a hell of a good organization with so many people that were hard workers--we felt like we were going somewhere.

G: How about Doctor Mary Hayes? She was a director of guidance and placement, I guess.

L: Yes, I remember her, but I don't remember seeing her in Texas. She probably was there.

G: Did Aubrey Williams come while you were [there]?

L: Yes, Aubrey Williams came down, but of course he came later. I don't remember him coming to Texas while Lyndon was state director.

G: How about Eleanor Roosevelt's visit? Do you remember that?

L: Yes, Mrs. Roosevelt came though after Jesse Kellam became the state director. I am sure her coming to Texas was probably helped along, or could have been instigated, by Congressman Johnson. She came to dedicate the "Little Chapel in the Woods" at Texas Woman's University in Denton. We built a chapel there when I was the district director, and she spoke at the dedication ceremony when we finished the chapel.

G: Was she impressed with the NYA in Texas?

L: Oh, very much so. She went all out complimenting us. We showed her several projects out of Houston on one of her trips, I recall. We

met her in Houston when she had a speaking engagement. Jesse Kellam was actually the one that carried her to several of the projects with W. O. Alexander, the district director in Houston.

G: LBJ did travel with her on occasion on some of these, did he?

L: I don't remember when Eleanor Roosevelt was down there that Lyndon was in the state at the time. I don't believe that she came while he was the state director.

G: There was one point, in June, 1936, when President and Mrs. Roosevelt came to Texas to visit the Texas Centennial Exposition, I think, in Dallas. Reportedly, LBJ prevailed on the President to dedicate a roadside park outside Dallas en route. Do you remember that? Wasn't that the occasion where the NYA boys all had their shovels in hand and sort of saluted the President with their shovels?

L: Yes, that strikes a familiar note to me, but I can't remember my being there at that roadside park. I do remember very vividly another time that Lyndon was with the President in Texas. It was when Lyndon was first elected to the Congress. Let me see something here. If you'll excuse me, I think I might have a picture made when Lyndon met the President. Yes, here it is. You probably have one of these pictures as I gave a copy to the archives for the LBJ Library.

When Lyndon was elected to the Congress, he had just been released from the hospital after undergoing an appendicitis operation and had lost an awful lot of weight. President Roosevelt was to come in to Galveston, Texas from a deep sea fishing vacation, so Governor Jimmie

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Allred, in the middle [of the photo], called Lyndon and said, "Would you like to go down to Galveston and meet the President?" Lyndon did not know President Roosevelt personally at that particular time. He said yes, he would like to go. Lyndon packed his bag to go to Galveston, and intended to go from there to Washington to be sworn in as the new congressman.

Well, this is an actual picture of the Galveston meeting. I guess this was the first time he shook hands with President Roosevelt. The President at that time congratulated Lyndon on his successful race for Congress, and as he told me later, he [Roosevelt] said, "I'm looking forward to working with you in the Congress." Then before they parted, the President said, "Lyndon, are you coming into Washington right away?" He said, "Yes, Mr. President, I'm on my way in now." He said, "Well, how would you like a ride back to Washington on my special train?" For a young congressman, you know, that was just great. He said, sure, he would like to go on the train to Washington.

Well, I knew by the newspaper accounts that the President was coming to visit Elliott Roosevelt in Fort Worth on this particular trip, so that meant the plans were for the President's train to come to Fort Worth. I was in Dallas and went over to Fort Worth late that afternoon, like a lot of people, to see President Roosevelt come in. I took rooms at the Worth Hotel. I took two rooms at the Worth Hotel just in case Lyndon would come up and spend the night at the hotel if he was on the train. I met the train and was standing about two or

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three cars from the end of the train where the President was getting off. There was a large crowd at the end of the train and I couldn't get nearer.

It just so happened Lyndon stepped off of a railroad car about fifty feet from me. I called to him. Of course they had everybody behind ropes. He came on over to visit and we talked while the President was saying a few words at the end of the train. Then Elliott and his dad and all of their party took off for Elliott's home. Then after the crowd was dispersing, the train started to pull out. Lyndon said, "I got to go. I have to get on this train. I don't know where it's going." He started for the train, and the Secret Service wouldn't let him back on. They refused to let him on the train. He explained who he was, but he really had no congressional identification or anything. Finally one of them said, "We'll have to check you out," and he went on back toward where the President had gotten off. The train was still jiggling back and forth as trains do in railroad stations--you may not know this, you're too young. He came back and said, "It's all right, he's Congressman Johnson." So he got on the train with it pulling out slowly.

I stood around and waited for about thirty minutes, thinking they were just shifting the train in the yards. But it so happened that the train was being moved to another station in Fort Worth. There were two railroad stations then. When I found that the train was parked at the other station I went there and had no trouble getting

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on the train then, because there were no guards about. Here was Lyndon, sitting in a railroad car that was half dark. He was really dejected. He was all by himself. There wasn't another soul in the car because everybody had gone in separate directions, and the President had gone to spend the night with Elliott Roosevelt. Lyndon was going to sleep on the Pullman.

So when I walked up behind him and touched him on the shoulder I said, "What are you going to do? Just sit here?" He said, "Well, it's all I can do. I'll go to bed." I said, "Well, come on up to the hotel. I've rented a couple of rooms at the Worth. Why don't you come on up and spend the night with me, and I'll be sure to get you back to the train." He said, "Oh, that's a great idea." He got his bag and moved to the Worth Hotel with me. We spent a portion of the night talking (until about one or two o'clock) about a variety of things; of NYA in the past; the time that he had been the state director; and what the future held for him.

Lyndon was despondent for he felt terrible physically. He was physically weak. One of his remarks then to me was, "You know, I feel like maybe I made a mistake running for Congress. Here I am"-- I think he said seven thousand dollars in debt--"and I don't know any way in the world I'm going to pay out of debt. It's going to take a long time to do it." At that time I said, "Oh, come on now. You're not so bad off. The future looks bright for you. Fact of the matter, it's so bright, and we have so much confidence in you, I think you

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are going to be in the White House some day." He laughed at that, and said, "All I want to do now is to be a good congressman, I guess. Since I'm elected I'll do my best, but I just feel like the devil right now." Anyway, I got him back to the train the next morning. I later learned that he flew back to Washington as the President decided to lengthen his return schedule.

When I was in Washington that same year we talked about his illness and how he felt. He had completely recovered from his operation, and everything seemed to be looking up for him as a young new congressman. He had on an occasion gone to the White House to be greeted by the President. Lyndon supported the New Deal in his campaign and in all of his talks with various people, so he was a strong supporter of Roosevelt. From the very beginning he was considered a Roosevelt man, and he was proud of it. He felt like a lot of his being a "Roosevelt man" began with Jimmie Allred's taking him to Galveston and introducing him to the President, and then his being honored with an invitation to ride the President's special train enroute to Washington. That pretty much marked him in the eyes of the press and the members of Congress, that he was going to be a Roosevelt New Deal supporter. He was a strong ally of the President on legislation coming to the Congress.

(Interruption)

G: Let's talk some more about the conversation that you had that night when you stayed up until one.

- L: Details are hard to recall because it was the type of conversation of reminiscing on what we had accomplished in the National Youth Administration, and talking about why he ran for Congress and what he could do in Washington for his congressional district. It was a rambling conversation, like two people might have when leaving one type of activity and going to another. That night was one of the nights where Lyndon wasn't telling any funny stories. Of course every time I was ever with him he always had some excellent stories to tell. I wish I could recall many of them that were real funny. Everything was very serious that night. He was just down in the dumps.
- G: Did he talk about his conversation with President Roosevelt on the train?
- L: No, he did not. I did get the impression that once he got on the train he did not become a close associate with the President, who was two or three cars back. After all, you see Lyndon was a newly elected congressman. He wasn't part of the President's party in the President's car. All he was doing was riding back up to Washington, as I understood it.
- G: I gather that at one point on that train ride they talked about naval affairs and going on the Naval Affairs Committee.
- L: That I wouldn't know.
- G: He didn't say anything about that?
- L: I had heard someone make a comment along that line, that the President said he would like to have him on Naval Affairs, but I don't know

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where or when. I don't know whether it was on the train or whether it was in Washington at some later time.

G: Anything on his recuperation or anything else at this juncture?

L: You might like to hear one little thing that I started to mention a while ago. In the early days we had a number of district director meetings in Austin where Lyndon pretty much laid out for us what had to be done and pushed us hard on the development of projects across the state. In one of the meetings in the early days I recall he said something like this: "All of you are going to have to work harder than you've ever worked in your lives to get this program going. I want to tell you that tonight I want you to go home and kiss your wife and tell her goodbye, and I want you to put a package of aspirin in one pocket and a package of Feenamint in the other pocket, for hereafter you're really going to have trouble with headaches, seeing your wife, or even going to the bathroom."

Then another little thing that I recall that was amusing to me. He scolded me one time for putting his name in something as L. B. Johnson. He said, "Well now, C.P., you don't know this, but I've told some of the other boys. I want my name on everything as Lyndon B. Johnson, whether it's letters or whether it's on a project out in the state or whether you're referring to me, especially talking to the newspapers. It's got to be Lyndon B. Johnson." I said, "All right, I'll do that. But I don't understand why." He said, "Oh, some day you'll understand why. But I want one name, and not two or

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three names. I want no confusion over it. I would like for you to always use Lyndon B. Johnson." So I did, and everybody else did. We seldom used L. B. Johnson. He corrected it very quickly.

Then I suppose that it was some time after he started running for the Congress, in one of our conversations I said, "Did you have in mind that you were going to run for office when you told me to always use your name as Lyndon B. Johnson?" He said, "Yes, exactly that. I had hopes that some of these days that I could run for office. This came sooner than I expected, of course, with Mr. Buchanan's death." I said, "Well, give me the background on it. I'm not a politician, as you well know, but why?" He said, "Well, if you can get before the people a name that's familiar, and they have little or no preference when they go to vote, they will more than likely vote on name recognition. If they go down the ballot and they see the name Lyndon B. Johnson and my name has been in the newspaper many times, the chances are I'll get the vote because it's a name that they recognize. I just want one name always, because I am running for office." I thought that was rather interesting. And over the years I have noticed this to be very, very true in talking with some people, as to how they voted. They'll vote for a familiar name even though they don't know the candidate listed.

G: It's a good story. Was there a problem getting the national office to approve appointments and projects?

L: I don't recall that we had so much trouble there. It seems to me that once they approved a type of project, the state director of NYA had

the full authority to approve other like projects. I'm not aware of the fact that we had to send all projects to Washington.

G: I gather they had to approve appointments of NYA officials.

L: In the early days I think that may have been true.

G: And that it was sometimes frustrating to get their approval on certain [appointments].

L: Slow I would say.

G: And that there was also this WPA coordinating committee that had the power to disapprove NYA projects.

L: For a time when we were under WPA they did, but that was short-lived. Lyndon and the state director of WPA worked together pretty well and the projects went through rather rapidly.

G: What was his name, Harry Drought?

L: In the early days.

G: Was he replaced, or did he stay in that?

L: I can't remember when he left.

G: Was there a friction here, a problem with him?

L: In the early days there appeared to be some friction, for the reason that WPA wanted to exercise full authority over NYA, and Lyndon was not of that nature, you know, to say, "Yes, sir; yes, sir." He and the WPA state director had some, as I understood it, pretty hot sessions at which they did work out their differences resulting in a most cooperative relationship after that. We felt it some when we were out in the districts because the district directors of WPA pretty

much would mirror the thinking of the WPA state director, so we had some difficulty with the district and local WPA director. After Lyndon and the WPA state director worked out their differences the cooperation flowed down to the districts and we had less trouble.

These are earlier pictures of Lyndon. I don't know whether you have these or not. I think the [LBJ] Library has copies.

G: I gather that there was some problem in Fort Worth with regard to WPA and NYA.

L: What do you have reference to there?

G: My impression is that it was just a policy that the WPA there felt that it was more important to hire adults than youth.

L: Tony Ziegler would know more about it than I do. I do know Tony had some difficulties in dealing with the WPA director, who was a very strong-willed individual. More than once I made trips to Fort Worth to sit down with Tony and the WPA director to try to work out difficulties or misunderstandings. They all seemed to work out, though.

G: Did LBJ support you on these things? Did he get involved in any of these?

L: Very definitely. Most of his was by telephone as you might imagine.

G: Really?

L: Yes. Even in those days he used the telephone just like he did in the latter years.

G: Can you elaborate on this situation?

L: That's so long ago in talking about our difficulties with WPA. It was more the same as I was touching on before, of the attitude of the

state WPA on wanting to exercise control on everything. It went down through their own WPA district directors. It meant he was trying to exercise control over Tony Ziegler and all the decisions on the various kinds of projects that Tony was trying to develop with sponsors. Sometimes developing projects with sponsors it might be with one of the WPA's project sponsors, but it would be a different type of project. I remember the WPA director voicing his feelings about his having full authority. And when he said, "I don't want your NYA boys working on this project, this is WPA," it was a matter of getting Tony and the WPA director together to see if there was good reason for the same sponsor to have an NYA project and a WPA project. Some of those sessions developed major differences, and they were difficult to straighten out. In the long run all of us, both WPA and NYA worked well together.

G: How did Lyndon Johnson work this thing out? How did he resolve it?

L: About like he did everything else. It was just pretty damned straightforward. He didn't mince words on his authority which he had under NYA. Usually the WPA [district] director would have to check back with the WPA [state] director just as we checked back with Lyndon. When it was necessary for Lyndon to take part in some of our WPA-NYA district problems he would do a lot of that through me or through, say, Tony Ziegler. I was the supervisor of three districts and Tony was under me. I would get into some of the Fort Worth problems by being in the organizational line and having to report to Lyndon on the

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outcome. Now Lyndon was one, as you have determined in reading the record, who made decisions. Some people felt Lyndon Johnson, especially when he was the majority leader, as I've heard them say, talked all the time and you did not have a chance to get a word in edgewise and such as this. I never found this to be true, and I like to argue with people who want to play up this as a way Lyndon operated. I found Lyndon very willing to listen if you had something to say.

In Fort Worth during NYA we had a project supervisor who was padding the payroll--he and one of the women supervisors who was his assistant. They reported to Tony Ziegler. Tony called me and told me that he had run onto something that looked pretty bad. What had happened, these project supervisors were not taking names from the payroll when youth left the project and the youth's checks would continue to be issued. The WPA finance office issued checks for NYA on the basis of certified payrolls signed by the supervisor. The supervisors had the checks mailed to a room in the federal courthouse where they had a small office, so there was no problem in their picking up the checks for their own use.

I discussed it with the supervisors and confronted them with the evidence of payroll padding. Ziegler was present, too. He said that it would be better if I could handle it for him, since he had to live with the situation day by day. The man supervisor so much as said, "Yes, that's what's been done." He tried to use the excuse that actually it was the woman supervisor padding the payroll. Then I

found that he was helping her spend the money, so he was just as guilty as she was, and more so for he was her direct supervisor and had full knowledge of the payroll padding.

I called Lyndon and suggested I come in to Austin and make a full report. I got to Austin about eight-fifteen the next morning and verbally reported on the situation. I took it from the very beginning, all the details, how we'd run onto it and the investigation we had made. I talked for two hours, and he didn't say a word. At the end of it he said, "All right, what is your recommendation?" I said, "Well, there's no question in my mind about the guilt that's been admitted to me. I think the supervisor should be fired and the assistant be further investigated since she made up the payrolls." He reached for the telephone, called Fort Worth and told Tony to send the supervisor to Austin. The supervisor arrived in Austin about 5:00 p.m. and Lyndon told him he was fired and the reasons why.

This is the way that he worked. He backed you up. He apparently had enough confidence in me and had in hand the papers I brought in, such as the payrolls and things like this on which to make the decision. It was very clear that hundreds of dollars were involved. I suggested to Lyndon that I talk to the supervisor and tell him that he was dismissed. He said, "No. I'm the state director. I'm going to do it myself. I don't want you even in the room when I do this." I don't really know how it was said, but the action was final. But he was dismissed, and later charges were filed against both supervisors. Lyndon was a man of action from the very beginning.

G: I gather that he had a disagreement with Brown and Ward [?] in Washington about a raise for Ivan Baker, whom the latter favored giving a promotion to and he didn't. Do you remember anything about that?

L: I don't recall a thing on this one, sure don't.

G: I don't have a name for this other, but I've heard that there was some woman in the NYA office that Lyndon Johnson felt was troublesome.

L: NYA state office?

G: State office, I think.

L: Troublesome.

G: Or that there was some internal problem there.

L: No, it doesn't strike a familiar note with me, sure doesn't.

G: I've heard another story, too, since we're on the subject of personnel, that he visited one project--just a surprise visit--and decided that one of his supervisors was not doing his job properly and suspended him on the spot.

L: That doesn't strike a familiar note to me either.

G: Did he often go around and look at the projects?

L: Oh, yes, he got out. Every time he made a trip he stopped to look at projects, wherever he would go.

G: Would it be accurate to assume that the supervisors, or the project supervisors, didn't know when he was coming, that he would just walk in?

L: I had heard from the San Antonio district director, because it was very easy for Lyndon to get down there, that this was done. I wouldn't

say frequently, but certainly he did walk [in] on projects unannounced. Now of course like any good district director in any organization, when the boss is coming you try to be prepared for his coming. Lyndon didn't always announce it that he was coming. It wasn't unusual for him to come into Dallas and even call me up in the middle of the night for something.

G: Is that right?

L: He had no respect for hours of the day or the night. If he was working, he just thought you ought to be. I think one of the funny ones to me, he called me one time about two o'clock in the morning in Dallas. He was passing through Dallas. The first thing he said, "What are you doing?" I said, "I'm sleeping!" You grew to expect those things and it never bothered us because in those days, strange as it sounds, you didn't have overtime. You didn't have overtime pay, and you didn't have the eight-hour work day and the forty-hour week and things like this. It never crossed anybody's mind that such hours were down the road for any organization. Everybody was just glad to have a job.

G: I gather that the NYA in Texas was actually more of a crusade than an organization, with the spirit behind it, the dedication that was there.

L: That's one way to put it, very definitely. There was a tremendous--

G: Did you think of it that way at the time?

L: No, not so much as a crusade. But it's more like I was trying to voice in the beginning of our conversation, when I was interviewed and Lyndon expressed hope for tomorrow that none of us had ever felt

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because we were in a sense Depression babies without an optimistic outlook or hope for the future. The great Depression of 1929--and then by 1933, 1934 and 1935 you were still living in a depression with high unemployment. With millions of people out of work, and many emergency Roosevelt programs in progress, we still faced dark days. You have read of the dark days when hundreds of banks were closed, and business bankruptcies were common across the nation. So when you have somebody who came along like Lyndon Johnson, that's voicing a tomorrow with hope and giving you vision of what could be done, you can build "spirit" on it. All of the staff was composed of young people who didn't have a lot of experience, but a lot of energy and willingness to go somewhere with a LBJ to lead while they were going. We did build up some sort of a spirit and, as you say, maybe a crusade, but I never thought of it as that. Much of the NYA spirit seems to still exist among those former NYA employees living today.

G: I get the impression in correspondence during this period that people tried to get him to slow down even then and relax.

L: We all voiced that, but I think a lot of the time when we were voicing it we were also thinking about ourselves. "It's time for you to slow down," because we were all just working ourselves to death along with him.

G: Was he able to relax though, let's say if you were over at his house on Sunday afternoon?

L: Well, I can remember being in his living room with him stretched out on the divan, doing the talking from the divan, and the rest of us

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trying to keep up with his thinking and planning. But for him to go to the bedroom to rest and take a nap, that wasn't Lyndon Johnson. He could be lolling about in a big chair and say he was resting, but all that time, boy, mentally he was really churning.

G: Did he think about things other than NYA? Did he seem to be concentrating on that one thing, or was he interested in sports?

L: After we got the program going there were occasions when he would take off and go with us to the golf course. When we had a district directors' meeting and possibly finish up a little early we might be able to talk him into going out and playing a few holes of golf. We had a heck of a good time. But even then there was lots of conversation on what was going on in the program. There were very few times that we would really take off like that. He was a lover of football and the Southwest Conference, then just as later when he lived in Washington. He loved the sport of football. I'm sure he did go to a number of games, but I never did go to any with him. We talked football, but mostly in the early days.

G: Would the regional directors meet in Austin?

L: They were district directors.

G: District directors. How often?

L: I can't recall our having any certain time. It was more in terms of when we were pushing some part of the program that he would call them in.

G: What time of the week would you normally meet?

L: Usually, we met in Austin over a weekend.

G: So you could be on the job in the week. (Laughter) I have a note here that LBJ was very impressed with a Mrs. Val Keating.

L: Yes, Mrs. Keating was the director of social work for the Texas Relief Commission. I have every reason to believe Val Keating maybe was the person that recommended me to Lyndon Johnson.

G: Is that right?

L: You see, I was a field representative in the Texas Relief Commission. When Lyndon was first starting the program I know that he and Val Keating did a good deal of consulting in the early days about young girls in the NYA program and such as this. Mrs. Keating wasn't a superior to me in terms of the organizational line in the Texas Relief Commission, but she did have opportunity to observe my field work. She was a very fine person, and most outstanding in the field of social work. She became the Director of Social Work in the Works Progress Administration in San Antonio and came into Washington to the WPA national office as National Director of Social Work or some such title.

G: Let's see, I've got the freshmen college centers.

L: Freshmen college centers.

G: Offering academic work of freshmen year rank to young men and women, tuition-free freshmen courses, I think, for those who couldn't afford to go off to school.

L: That must have been under the student aid program, and I didn't work on that side of the organization at all.

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G: I hear President C. E. Evans introduced this idea. Did you ever meet him?

L: San Marcos?

G: Yes.

L: I met him, that's all. I didn't know him well.

G: The resident training program?

L: Yes, resident training programs were what I was touching on a few minutes ago, about our bringing in women to resident projects where they could live and work. There were also a number of boys' projects, and later we had a big program at Buchanan Dam when we were training boys to be welders and machinists, etc.

G: You mentioned, I think in your earlier conversation with other former NYA people, that those welders had moved out to California, a lot of them, and become welders out there.

L: Well, after the war broke out we went into a very large-scale training program of welders. I shipped to California a number of times from Dallas NYA trained welders for employment in the wartime shipbuilding industry.

G: Gibb Gilchrist was the name of the highway department guy.

L: That's the man. Gibb Gilchrist, yes.

G: Your memory is coming back very sharply now.

L: Gibb Gilchrist, yes. In fact, he has a brother that still lives in the Washington area.

G: Is that right? Can you think of anything else here that I haven't asked you about?

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L: I'm sure after we finish and my mind keeps turning about NYA something will come up, but I'm finding difficulty recalling so many things since I haven't talked with anyone about NYA in a number of years. Offhand I can't think of anything at the moment.

G: Anything on his association with members of Congress like Maury Maverick?

L: Mayor Maury Maverick, of course, was very helpful to NYA in the days when we were working on the La Villita project in San Antonio. At that time I know that he and Maury Maverick were fairly close, so it seemed by Lyndon's comments about him.

G: Whose idea was the use of NYA projects for La Villita?

L: I understood that it was the Mayor himself that really wanted to get us into it. As to whom had the original idea, I wouldn't know. I believe that a Fenner Roth became the district director about that time and a Hirschie Johnson became his assistant. I don't know whether it was on the basis of Fenner or Hirschie contacting the Mayor Maury Maverick and suggesting the project or whether Maury Maverick came to NYA.

Occasionally we ran onto some real good but ambitious projects when the sponsor was unable to sell the project to the WPA for adult workers, because under WPA they could, as I recall, pay for materials and NYA couldn't. Then when WPA would turn it down, the sponsor might turn to us and ask us to take over the program. We built the "Little Chapel in the Woods" in Denton pretty much on the basis that the

president of the college, Dr. L. H. Hubbard, was unable to sell it to WPA, so he called me in Dallas. I had known Dr. Hubbard for years and asked if I thought our young people could build such a building for the college. I told him they could under good supervision. We got together and built it. I don't know whether you've ever seen the chapel. It's a beautiful little building. In fact I'll see if I can't find you a picture and show you before you leave. We did develop a number of outstanding projects. NYA did the original beautification of Dealey Plaza in Dallas where John Kennedy was later killed. WPA also did a great deal of work on that one, too.

G: What did the NYA do with that?

L: When we took it over it was nothing more than three streets coming together. We made a nice park out of the area. Then in later years before WPA ended they came in and built a good deal of the concrete work that's on it now. NYA was the first to lay it out, clean it up and plant grass and flowers to make it a park.

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G: I was going to ask you about the NYA projects for black youths. Do you recall some of the particulars?

L: Yes. We had a number of NYA projects for black youth. In fact, I suppose one of the most important was the resident project at Prairie View [A&M]. For many years we trained a large number of young women as domestics. In this day and age it would be frowned upon, but in that day it was welcomed training.

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G: Did you get any insight here on Lyndon Johnson's attitudes on race in your experiences with him?

L: He really pioneered in NYA in the development of work projects for Negro youth in Texas. He had every one of us driving all over the state taking Negro youth to NYA projects. I can't recall anything that he might have said or done that would indicate that he had any feelings about race other than feelings he exhibited in later years when he was supporting so strongly equal rights legislation.

G: I gather that he earned the esteem of people like Mary McLeod Bethune back then.

L: Very definitely. She came to Texas, and I know that when she came to the state she received the same kind of treatment that was given to any other person coming from Washington, regardless of their color.

G: Was he still director when she was down there?

L: I don't believe he was director when she came. It might have been after Jesse Kellam became the director. I'm not sure of the date of her visit. But I do know and have every reason to know she was most appreciative of Lyndon's support of NYA in the Congress. I had the assignment to carry Mrs. Bethune around in North Texas and show her NYA projects. She was quite an interesting person.

G: I bet she was.

L: She really was, a very forceful individual.

G: Really? What was she like?

L: Highly interested in NYA. Most intelligent. Good speaker and commanded attention wherever she went.

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G: Let's see, I think Juanita Saddler also worked with some of the black projects. Do you remember her?

L: Saddler's a name, but I don't remember a face with it. We had a number of women directors of resident projects. Most of these pictures that you see here are taken at resident projects around the state. But I can't place a Saddler at the moment.

G: How about Lawrence Westbrook, who was evidently a friend of Lyndon Johnson's in WPA?

L: I do remember having met Mr. Westbrook, but I had no occasion to deal with him. Mr. Westbrook was in the national office, as I recall, and made trips to Texas. I think at one time that maybe Lyndon carried Westbrook around. It seemed like he was in Austin for a purpose.

G: Sam Gilstrap is another name.

L: Another name, and I can't remember Sam Gilstrap other than by name.

G: Anything on Mrs. Johnson during this period?

L: She was even then a very important member of NYA, but we didn't see Mrs. Johnson in the office. She was always present when we'd go home with Lyndon. She was the same supportive person to Lyndon in the early days as she later was when he got into politics.

G: Let's see, I think they were living in Doctor [Robert] Montgomery's house, that rented house on San Gabriel, then.

L: I don't remember the address, I can just remember the house, but I suppose that's where it was. Jesse Kellam later bought it or rented it, I believe.

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G: I have a note here that in February, 1937, LBJ spoke at Baylor University to the faculty and some of the students up there.

L: I don't remember anything on that one.

G: He resigned right after Buchanan's death. Were you privy to any of these decisions. I think the funeral was on a Friday, maybe.

L: No, I really wasn't. Things happened pretty fast at that time on Lyndon deciding to run for office. It came as a very great shock to everybody working in the NYA that he had decided to run for office. We hated to give him up. In the beginning there was much talk that he didn't have a chance to be elected. Because after all, he was just a youngster as people looked upon him, and only headed up NYA. He was not known in Texas other than for the NYA program at that time. He had not wet his feet in the political world in Texas.

G: There is a story that he had to be introduced to the mayor of Austin when he decided to run.

L: That's hard for me to believe. Miller I believe was the mayor, if I recall. Is that about right? I'm surprised I even thought of the name.

G: Tom Miller.

L: Well, that surprises me, but on the other hand that's entirely possible that he might not have had any occasion to deal with him up to that point.

G: My impression is that he gathered together a lot of his NYA people that weekend when he was trying to make the decision whether or not to run. Were you there?

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L: I was in some of the sessions. I don't recall any one that I was in where it was being discussed as to whether "I do run" or "I don't run on the basis of what you people might think." It was a discussion--well, not a discussion, it was more like saying, "I have this opportunity now. I would like to run if I can be elected." But I wouldn't say it was in any vein of, "Let's kick it around and see if all you folks think I ought to run." Now it might have been when he was with Bill Deason--they'd been together since school days--and maybe Jesse Kellam, I don't know. Maybe in the small group like that they might have discussed whether he would run or not. You can ask Bill about that. But when we had district directors together, as I recall, it was just Lyndon telling us what he thought his chances were and that he was going to announce.

Now I do recall that soon after he announced and was running, he visited my office in the Littlefield Building and suggested we go downstairs and have a cup of coffee. I went with him. As we were sitting having coffee he took out one of his cards "Lyndon Johnson for Congress" and said, "Well, I'll give you the first one." I kept that first card over all these years, and a few months ago I mailed it to Lady Bird. She has it.

G: I gather that if he had lost he would have gone back to being NYA director.

L: All we can do is surmise. I would have every reason to believe that there would have been little opposition, if any, to his returning.

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The only person that could oppose it might have been the newly elected congressman. He might have voiced an opinion that Lyndon shouldn't be reappointed. From the standpoint of relations with Washington, and the Texas NYA organization, everybody would have wanted him to come back.

G: Jesse Kellam was not named permanent director until after the election.

L: That's as I recall. I don't remember exactly how it was, but in my mind I have the impression that his appointment was slow coming about.

G: Congressman Kleberg didn't support him in that election, did he? Do you remember anything here?

L: I don't recall that. Anyway, there would be no reason for him to come out for Lyndon as he was in another congressional district.

G: There was some speculation that Buchanan's widow might run. Do you remember that?

L: Yes, I hadn't thought of it, but I do remember there was speculation. But, of course, from the very beginning I seem to recall that the Austin paper and others in the district felt that the very popular county judge in Georgetown had the best chance of being elected to replace Buchanan. I'm hard pressed now to call his name. But it was the county judge in Georgetown that Lyndon ran against and won. All early predictions were that the county judge would have a pretty easy time of winning the election against Lyndon.

G: Was that Polk Shelton?

L: No, not Shelton. That's not the name. Maybe I'll think of it. Whoever he ran against at that time.

G: [C. N.] Avery was another one of the opponents.

L: But anyway, the county judge was really supposed to be the front runner.

G: Was it [Sam V.] Stone?

L: That's right.

G: Is there anything else that we've left out? Any more anecdotes?

L: Probably if I'd sit down with a group of NYA people and kicked about some of the old days a lot of little things would be coming back very rapidly. At the moment I can't think of anything else.

G: I certainly do thank you.

L: I do want to say one thing to you, though, that to me is very important. Lyndon Johnson's family was highly important to him, Lady Bird, and then later of course the girls. Even though he was a person who was constantly thinking of everything but family on the surface, underneath it all he was very much of a family man. I think that Bird and Lyndon were a perfect couple in terms of having a successful marriage. The picture I have up there, that Bird autographed to my wife, Katherine, and me, of them walking together, holding hands, seems to reflect the great love they had for each other.

Lyndon was one who hired attractive young people (with the exception of me). The girls employed were efficient and very capable, and were all very attractive women. He wanted attractive young people on the NYA staff and on through the years in Washington I observed he continued to hire young staff.

G: Anything else?

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L: We think of Lyndon as being such a dynamo and the people he surrounded himself with had to be people, maybe not dynamos, who had the constitution to stand up to working with a dynamo. It's hard to believe that you could find a woman that could live with a dynamo, like Bird living with Lyndon. But she lived with him and went with him step by step all the way up that ladder. If he hadn't had Lady Bird, in my opinion, there's a question as to whether he would have ever risen to the heights that he did, because she was such a strong supporter who really stood behind him. She was subject to his beck and call, I mean night and day.

As an example over in Tyler, Texas, when he was running for his first statewide race for the Senate and was scheduled to speak and campaign in Tyler, Texas--

G: 1941.

L: Yes, it must have been that year. As an example, I called over to a sister of mine in Tyler who was married to a Doctor Coates and told her that Bird and Lyndon would be there on such and such a day. I wanted her to get in touch with Bird to see if she could be of any help. She on her own decided that she would invite a dozen of the doctors' wives and others to a luncheon at the hotel just for Lady Bird. Well, they had the luncheon. Lady Bird appeared. She sat down at the luncheon, and somebody came with a message that, "Lyndon wants to see you." Lady Bird excused herself and went to Lyndon. She did his bidding and came back. During the whole luncheon note

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after note came for Lady Bird, "I have to have this," or "I have to have that." She had to run and do this. She apparently lived that kind of life with Lyndon all through the political years, of being at his beck and call. Then I have seen here at times when Lyndon would be trying to sell her on something, and she was not a rubber stamp in any sense. She had a mind of her own and was not dominated.

G: Can you elaborate on that?

L: Nothing special comes to mind. Once in NYA they discussed some finances. I heard her say "No, Lyndon, I don't think that is right, and I don't think we should do it." He didn't. They had a good relationship. Where people maybe on the surface thought that she would just, "Yes, yes" him, it wasn't true at all. I know his career was heavily influenced by a wife who had a mind of her own. Doubtless she gave him advice and tried to keep him as much on an even keel as she possibly could. Even though Lyndon was a capable, powerful, and most remarkable man, there is no doubt that Lady Bird was a major contributing factor to his successful career. Lyndon Johnson should go down in history as being the greatest Majority Leader in the Congress and one of the greatest Presidents.

G: I certainly do thank you.

[End of Tape 2 of 2 and Interview II]

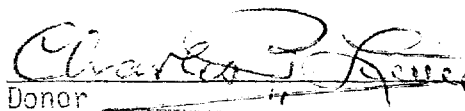
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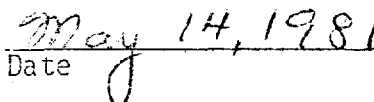
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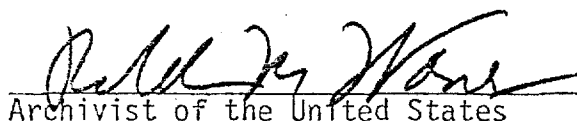
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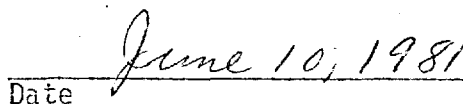
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