INTERVIEW I

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INTERVIEWEE: FELIX McKNIGHT

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mr. McKnight's office, Dallas, Texas

Tape 1 of 1

G: Let me briefly ask you to trace your background. You're a native Texan, I understand.

M: Well, briefly, I was born in Dallas in 1910 and my parents moved to San Antonio in 1918. I went through grade school and high school in San Antonio. I attended Texas A&M and actually started my newspapering at age seventeen. After graduation from high school, I worked in the summer that year for the San Antonio Light as a cub sports writer and each summer thereafter for three years, coming home from school for the summer months, and then went to work full-time for them about 1930-31.

I left the sports arena and went into general news reporting and that's where I met Richard Kleberg. I was assigned to cover his campaign for the United States Congress because of a certain knowledge of Spanish [I had] at the time. I was fairly fluent and much of his campaigning was in the southern portion of the state there where there were many Mexicans, registered voters. He gave many speeches in Spanish. We became very close friends as I followed him on the campaign. I was also a fair amateur golfer, as was he, and that sort of welded our relationship a little bit.

At the conclusion of his campaign and his victory, he invited me to go to Washington with him as an administrative assistant working in his office. It sounded like a very fascinating prospect. So I resigned from the San Antonio Light and went over to meet with Mr. Kleberg in the Gunter Hotel in San Antonio and went up to his suite. I was met by Mr. Roy Miller, who was quite a political figure in those days and heavily involved in Mr. Kleberg's campaign. After a very brief few moments, Mr. Miller told me that there had been a change in plans and that I would not be going to Washington with Mr. Kleberg. It was in the early days of the Depression, and I recall that I was making about eighteen dollars and thirty-seven cents a week as a reporter. We were paid in cash in a little brown envelope weekly. So it was with considerable interest that I saw Mr. Miller pull a brand-new one hundred dollar bill from his pocket and hand it to me. [He] said he was sorry that things hadn't worked out properly, but that he also had called and I had my job back on the San Antonio Light. He was a man of considerable influence in those days, and I was greatly relieved to know that I wasn't unemployed at the moment, although I had a hundred dollar bill in my hand, which was more money than I had ever seen.

So I went back to the--oh, before the conversation ended, Mr. Miller said that he would like for me to meet a young man in an adjoining room. He opened the door and this tall, stringy fellow just a little my senior, perhaps a year, walked in, and it was Lyndon Johnson. Mr. Miller advised me that Mr. Johnson, who I think was a

schoolteacher at that time, would be going to Washington with Mr. Kleberg. That was our first meeting. So Lyndon Johnson went to Washington, I went back to the newspapering business, and I think it's probably the finest thing that ever happened to me. I've certainly enjoyed my fifty-plus years in journalism, and Mr. Johnson obviously enjoyed his many years that led eventually to the presidency.

From that moment on, well, we didn't see each other for a few years, but we became friends. Eventually, of course, as a news reporter I spent almost ten years with the Associated Press in Texas, started as a sports editor in the Southwest and then switched again to general news and became involved in politics.

G: Before we move on to your later association with him, let me ask you, did you ever have any insight as to how or why he was substituted for you in that Kleberg job?

B: No. My memory is not that good, but I think it was the politics of the day, and certainly Mr. Miller had very good reasons for doing it. I seem to recall, but rather vaguely, that Mr. Miller was quite a friend of Lyndon Johnson's father. I don't know the relationship there, but obviously he had been processed and became Mr. Miller's choice. I must say again that it seemed like a fascinating adventure to me at the time, being a youngster of about twenty or twenty-one, but really there was never any great disappointment, because I wasn't too certain of the assignment in the first place. I really love to write, so it wasn't but a matter of a few days and weeks that I was happy again.

G: Well, it seems like, as you describe it, that you must have been Kleberg's choice and LBJ must have been Miller's choice.

M: I don't know. Well, Mr. Kleberg was my only contact; I had not talked to Mr. Miller about it at all. Dick Kleberg was a most unusual man. He was very strong, he was aggressive and I think perhaps a little bit impulsive and impetuous in spots, and I think he just asked me on the spur of the moment and certainly I'm sure he meant it. I know he did. You know, he was not a politician. He was almost drafted for this job. He was a rancher and he didn't really know the game of politics, and I'm sure that the entrance of Lyndon Johnson had something to do with the political climate of those days and the obligations, of course, that politicians always have. And he had none to me, no obligation whatsoever. I don't really know the background, but I would certainly suspect that there were political reasons for it.

G: Did Mr. Miller have any reason not to want you in that job?

M: No. Well, he didn't tell me. I don't know whether he thought I was qualified. I probably wasn't, because I was a fledgling in politics. I really knew nothing about it and couldn't know very much at age twenty-one. I think the enthusiasm swept both of us away, Mr. Kleberg being a very good friend and rather fatherly in his approach to me. I probably wasn't qualified. I wasn't told that, but I'm sure there was political reasoning behind the switch.

G: But you had been in the district traveling with the Congressman covering the election, so at least you had that familiarity that Lyndon Johnson didn't have. He was in Houston teaching school. I'm just

wondering how this episode, if it typifies the relationship between Dick Kleberg and Roy Miller?

M: I don't know.

G: You said that Mr. Kleberg was almost drafted into that race. Can you recall exactly how he got into it and what his attitude was?

M: No, I don't, except that the reason I mention that is because he had no political background and to my knowledge had no aspirations. In that part of Texas, of course, the Kleberg family was very, very strong, and he had the image of a leathery, tough rancher who could get things done. I think that he sort of captivated the people's thinking and fancy at that time, because he was a different--he was a non-politician. Every now and then, you know, you like to think you can elect those, the fresh, new kind.

G: Was Mr. Miller--do you recall the ways in which he worked in the campaign? Was he sort of the campaign [manager]?

M: Other than that he was sort of--we are talking, again, about forty-five years or more [ago]--the chairman of the board, sort of the mastermind of it, I would say, and was a highly regarded political figure in those days. He knew the way around in politics; particularly in South Texas he was the acknowledged Democratic leader then.

G: He was with the Texas Gulf Sulphur, wasn't he?

M: That's correct.

G: And the Intracoastal Canal also?

M: I think that's correct.

G: Were these at all issues in the campaign?

M: I don't recall, but I don't think they were. I think that Mr. Miller was a lobbyist for those interests in Austin and elsewhere. But he was known as quite a political power in those days. And of course his son [Dale Miller] later became very, very close to the Lyndon Johnsons, and he officed and operated in Washington for--I think he's still there.

G: Anything else on Roy Miller while you're talking about him, the sources of his power and. . . ?

M: No, I simply do not recall specifics at all.

G: One other question on that: did Lyndon Johnson, to your knowledge, work in that campaign at all for Kleberg?

M: I don't recall. My job was simply to cover him. And it was a spasmodic type thing; I wasn't with him constantly. I would go and come and maybe spend a few days and then back to the office, then go back. I was in and out of the Kleberg campaign.

G: Okay. Well, do you want to move up now to your later association with him? Was this when you were still with the Light or when you were with AP?

M: I really got back into a closer relationship or association with Lyndon Johnson while I was with the AP. He was a member of Congress. I remember that I covered some of his campaigns, and we renewed our association. It wasn't a warm, close thing because we just weren't that close; we didn't see each other. He knew me as a newsman and I knew him as a United States congressman. He was always--well, not

always, but most of the time we were on friendly terms. We had some differences though that might be worth a story or two.

I remember that he campaigned by helicopter, which was a daring thing in those days. It was really quite a promotional stunt. We would land in these little old fields and so forth, and small towns. The farmers and everybody on the town square thought this whirlybird was really something. It was a great gimmick for Lyndon Johnson and really paid off. It got, of course, national publicity at the time, and he made many, many stops a day in his helicopter.

Then he ran for the United States Senate, and I again covered quite a little bit of his first campaign for the Senate.

G: That was 1941.

M: Yes. That was the last year that I worked for the Associated Press before joining the Dallas Morning News. It was quite a campaign. He was sort of an uptight man, particularly during campaign periods, and that's when we started having some of our first differences. I'm a rather mellow fellow. I recall that one time in Waco on this senatorial campaign, there were five or six of us correspondents covering Johnson, and he had a little press conference in his hotel rooms there in Waco. And he had a very lovely, dedicated, loyal secretary; her name was Mary Rather. Lyndon, in his way, during the press conference something irritated him--and he was easily irritated--and he barked at Mary Rather and took it out on her, which was par for the course in those days and throughout his career. And she left the room, not crying, but a little beaten. And I thought it was very improper

and so forth, so I expressed my disapproval by leaving the press conference. He asked me where I was going, and I told him I just didn't care to be around any longer the way he talked to Mary. We all liked Mary very much, all the correspondents. He got up and followed me out and he said, "Now, Felix, you know me, you know I love Mary Rather. I really didn't mean it. It's just my way." I said, "Well, it's a hell of a way to operate," or something.

But anyway, that was the first little brush we had, and I came back on into the press conference. I learned over the years--and he had many, many employees and workers over those years--it was an LBJ trait. He would sort of kick them around, but they absolutely loved the guy and they'd always come back. I learned that the hard way. That was the first experience I had with him. I had lunch today with one of them, Warren Woodward. They'd get a kicking from LBJ, but they always would come back to the fold and do their job. He had loyalty like I've never known and in the strangest manner.

G: Did you have any insight as to how he was able to command that kind of loyalty, particularly the way he [treated them], as you describe it--?

M: Well, yes. He would do such things as chewing on Mary Rather and then turn right around and would do anything in the world for her, and did repeatedly, not just for Mary but for all of them. As I say, he had this very low boiling point at times, and then would turn around and have the deepest concern for their personal problems, their families, and show total compassion at times. Strange guy, always was. It was

very difficult for me to pick up all the threads on LBJ; it took a lot of years, but I finally did.

I think [there's] one interesting story. I was in Washington at that time with the Dallas News; I was the managing editor. I went to a reception one evening, and Lyndon Johnson was there. He was standing in the middle of the room talking to Senator Stuart Symington of Missouri. Mr. Johnson motioned to me and I went over. At that particular time I would not say that the Dallas Morning News was his favorite newspaper. It was a very conservative publication and we would editorially express some rather pointed opinions on LBJ and so forth. It was not his favorite newspaper by any means. So he called me over, and he started chewing on me about something. And I said to Lyndon Johnson, "When are you going to announce?" I think this was when he was a congressman. "When are you going to announce for the United States Senate?" I think it was. I'm fairly certain that's correct. When did he go into the Senate?

G: 1948. But he ran first in 1941.

M: Yes.

G: He considered running in 1942 as well.

M: I guess that was it. Well, this was later. It had to do with--oh, well, I'll pick up the threads in the editing of this. But anyway, I said, "When are you going to announce?" It was a big speculative game at those times, what he was going to do and so forth. He turned to Senator Symington and said, "I want you to be my witness to this. I'll give you the story of my announcement if you personally will

cover the first week of my campaign." And I told him, "I don't cover too many stories now as the managing editor, but you've got a deal. If you'll give me the story, I'll cover the first week." So he gave me the story, and I ran to the telephone and we broke it the next morning.

He opened his campaign in Fort Worth at a park there, a city park, and I was there. He had a warm-up deal of a few minutes before he came on for his speech, and he had a Dallas nightclub stand-up comedian warming up this crowd before Lyndon arrived at the park. This fellow told, for those days particularly, a couple of really bad stories. One of them had to do with homosexuals. It was unheard of then, you know, just no way you could do this, and he was telling his stand-up nightclub stuff. Actually he worked in a striptease joint here in Dallas. Lyndon was a friend of his father and why-- Anyway, his group had arranged for this guy to warm up the crowd, and this thing really fell very, very heavily upon that crowd. They didn't like it; they booed him. When Lyndon arrived he was told about it. He was absolutely livid, and when LBJ got livid, he was livid! He went on, he made his speech.

We were both staying at the Fort Worth Club. I wrote my story, and about three o'clock in the morning I got a phone call, and it was from Lyndon Johnson. And he said, "I'm down in the lobby. I've just read the Dallas News and I want to thank you." I said, "For what?" He said, "For not mentioning that terrible incident last night, the very bad stories this guy told before my speaking." And I said,

"Well, Senator, he's not running for the United States Senate, you are." So he said "Thanks." He felt certain that the Dallas News would report this and really give him a bad show. We didn't.

So we developed a little closer relationship from there on. I covered him for eight days, all of his speaking in the first eight days of that campaign, and fulfilled my end of the bargain. We got along a little better after that. I don't want to overstate our relationship at all; we were never angry enemies or anything, we just thought differently, and he was a tough-minded man. He would tell me what he thought and I would tell him what I thought, until the time that he became president of the United States. Then it was sort of a one-sided conflict after that.

He was a very, very strange and strong man. As he did with his employees, well, he would blow hot and cold on our relationship. He could be very, very nice to me and to my family, and was, and then he'd chew me out and we'd get off the track and then back on. Two or three times while we were in Washington at newspaper meetings, well, he would invite us to the White House. The last time, he was president then, and I was the president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. We had a big formal banquet scheduled, and Lyndon asked four or five of us from Texas over to the White House. It was sort of a command performance and we went. It was three o'clock in the afternoon. And he talked and he talked. He was having lunch when we arrived at three, and we were up in his quarters in his dining room. At six o'clock, well, I was very jumpy--Jack Valenti was with

him then--and I had to go. Each time I would say, "Mr. President, I"--he'd never let me finish, he'd start another story. Anyway, I got out of there about a quarter of seven and had a hell of a time finding a cab to get back to the hotel, get my tux on and everything else. And I always thought that he knew that. But he talked nearly four hours to us and on every subject. Damn interesting, I might add. He just was testing, you know. All of us had to go to that banquet, me in particular. So he finally released us. It was very, very late.

I think it was on that occasion that he told us the story of Lynda [Luci] and his midnight visit to the Catholic Church there in Washington after the bombing of--was it Haiphong harbor? It was a very dramatic story, and he asked us not to say anything. We respected that, and about three weeks later I read it in the New York Times. Audience was a little bigger, I think.

On another occasion three couples of us went over. They were showing us through their quarters, Mrs. Johnson and the President, and I never will forget one thing. We were walking through the rooms, and there was a little man behind us with an inexhaustible supply of Scotch and soda. It was about the cocktail hour and we were having a drink. We got to the balcony and the President opened the windows and he was showing us out over the garden and so forth. He said, "You guys have any questions you want to ask?" Shored a little bit by that Scotch, I said, "Well, there's one thing on my mind," and he said, "What is it?" I said, "Do we call you Mr. President or Lyndon?" And he turned on me and never answered, but I got the message. He really

gave me this sharp look, and I responded in a few seconds by saying, "Yes, Mr. President." It became obvious that it wasn't old Lyndon anymore.

He was a fascinating man. Once when I was on the News, and then I came over here--and his great friends were here on the Dallas Times Herald: Mr. Tom Gooch and Mr. Edwin Kiest, Jim Chambers, who's still on the paper and the chief executive officer, and Albert Jackson was a particular friend, now deceased. I really believe that the Times Herald family at that time had more clout with Lyndon Johnson than any group I knew of, nationally or Texas, any of them.

But I hadn't been here too long--I left the News in 1958 and came to the Herald--and we had an editorial one day that was highly critical of Lyndon. He called; they just buzzed me and I picked up the phone, and he was on the other end of the line and he chewed the hell out of me! He really chewed on me. And then--

G: What was he upset about, do you know?

M: I've forgotten.

G: Do you recall what he said?

M: Well, he was the Senate majority leader at that time. He was just bitter about the content of this editorial. We had been critical of him, and he wasn't accustomed to that from the Dallas Times Herald. Then he called either Mr. Gooch or Albert Jackson, and he told them, "I told you guys not to hire that son of a bitch from the Dallas News." We've discussed that later and both had a pretty good laugh about it.

Then when he became president, it was not uncommon at all to get a telephone call from him. I got three or four at least, maybe more.

G: Was this usually if he was unhappy about something that was in the--?

M: Yes. If he didn't like your editorial viewpoint, he'd damn sure phone and tell you so, just pick up the phone. He did it all over the country. I've compared notes with other editors and it was not me in particular or the Dallas Times Herald. But he would do that when he was president. Many of my friends around the country have told me they've had telephone calls from him.

G: Do you think he had an unrealistic notion of what the relationship between the president and the press should be?

M: Well, I think so. He thought that they should not be critical. It was sort of a one-sided approach. I was told, and I think this is correct because I knew many in his office, that there was a lady whose name I cannot recall at the moment, but one of her chief tasks there was to read all these papers every day and then she would pick out particular things. He couldn't read them all. You know, he was an avid reader and he read the major publications every day, and she would give him clips out of the others. That would bring on the telephone calls. He was in constant touch, and he hated criticism.

G: Was that Willie Day Taylor?

M: I think it was. I think it was.

G: Did you ever get an opportunity to observe the relationship between Alvin Wirtz and Lyndon Johnson, particularly in these campaigns?

M: No, I didn't.

G: Did you know Senator Wirtz?

M: I knew him only casually. I did not know Senator Wirtz.

G: How about Buck Hood? What role did he play in the campaign?

M: Heavens, I hadn't thought of Buck Hood in many, many years. Buck Hood, as I recall, was sort of the idea guy and did quite a little bit of it. He had a very keen political sense. I don't know whether Buck ever did any writing for Mr. Johnson; I know he did a lot of his campaign publicity stuff. But Buck Hood was a very keen little character, believe me. He looked innocent enough, but he had a very keen and sharp political mind. I hadn't thought of Buck Hood in so many years, but I remember that he was always around.

G: He was writing for the Austin paper.

M: That's right.

G: This era of Texas politics seems to be characterized by journalists taking sides and even serving a hitch on the campaign. Is that right?

M: Well, they used to get leaves of absence and work for these guys. I put a stop to that on both the News and the Times Herald. You're either a reporter of news or--you just can't go for four whole months and work for a guy and then come back and be a good journalist and judge of things, because there comes the time when you must report things that your old employer might not like. I didn't think much of that, but in those days it was done all the time.

G: I gather that LBJ had a better rapport with the reporters than he did with the publishers.

M: I think that's right.

G: The [Houston] Chronicle, for example. He may be clobbered on the editorial pages, but he'd get good [coverage].

M: Well, that was right to a degree. Some publishers, his close friends, got along fine with him, but the hell-raising came from those who ran a newspaper as you should, letting the old chips fall. He didn't like that particularly at times. He had a very thin skin.

G: How about Charlie Marsh? Did you ever--?

M: Well, I knew Charlie, but not all that intimately. I knew others, Charlie Green and the others of the Marsh-Fentress papers that I was closely associated with. I was strictly in the news side in those days, not in the administrative end at all. Charlie Green and the Waco people, Harry Provence, Pat Taggart, all of those over the years I knew very, very well, but not too much about Marsh. Actually in those days he didn't surface too much, you know. He was very active behind things, but he really didn't surface too often and become a visible man in politics.

G: Anything on Herbert Henderson, who traveled with Johnson, did a lot of speech writing I think? This was just 1941, I believe.

M: I don't recall him. I recall the name, but I don't know him.

G: Of course, that was a four-way race, the special election, and Gerald Mann, Martin Dies, and W. Lee O'Daniel [ran].

M: Yes.

G: Did you spend time in each campaign or did you pretty much stay with LBJ's?

M: No, I divided time. I traveled about two weeks with each. I kept telling them about W. Lee O'Daniel. Nobody believed me. I think the first time that O'Daniel came into prominence, he was running against Bill McCraw for governor and everybody thought McCraw had a shoo-in. I followed this man O'Daniel for ten days in West Texas, and I could not believe it. I was with the Associated Press then, I think about the last year I was with them. No, before that. And I would file these stories saying there were five thousand people there. I'd get a call from the office saying, "You mean fifty? Is this a typo?" And I'd say, "No, there were five thousand there," and then eight thousand and ten thousand. They didn't believe it. You could tell within three weeks that he was going to beat the hell out of McCraw, which he did. And they couldn't believe it.

G: Did this stem from his popularity as an entertainer?

M: Yes, strictly. Corn pone. He had this traveling band with him, western band, the Light Crust Doughboys. And he had barrels that he would [pass around]. The family, the kids, Mike and Pat and the girl--

G: Molly?

M: Molly O'Daniel, who later wrote a column for us, briefly. They would go around the crowd with these barrels and they'd just pour the money in. You wouldn't believe it. I was very unpopular with the O'Daniel entourage because I wanted to know how much money they were getting in those barrels, and they were getting plenty! It was just incredible. He would do this noon broadcast every day, continued it, with

the Light Crust Doughboy group. These people out in the sticks just thought he was the man, you know. He came on. Then I do remember the four-man race: Jerry Mann, O'Daniel, Lyndon Johnson, and--

G: Martin Dies.

M: --Martin Dies.

G: Well, Lyndon Johnson in that election had a 5000-vote lead on election day I believe. He lost by 1311 votes. Did you see evidence that he had been counted out in that race?

M: Is that the missing box race?

G: No, that was 1948.

M: That was 1948. In 1941--

G: In Jim Ferguson's area, I suppose, the Dies' totals came in very small and O'Daniel's quite large.

M: I'd have to go back and really--I really don't recall. I recall the four-man race, that it was very, very close. Martin Dies had a built-in vote on the big un-American issue, you know. It was particularly solid around in East Texas. Since you've jogged me a little bit, I think there was the switch, Dies' votes. I'm just a little fuzzy on that. Having covered so many stories and written a few million words, I can't put my hands on things.

M: Of course, that would make Coke Stevenson governor, get O'Daniel out of the state. I wonder how many of those votes were actually pro-Stevenson votes?

M: Quite a few, I would say.

G: Johnson ran as FDR's supporter.

M: Right.

G: Do you recall anything of this aspect of the campaign?

M: No, except the general tone of it being he was FDR's boy. Of course, he had been extremely active in the Roosevelt picture; he was always, and much was said and written about that. I'm trying to think, the youth corps activities, the WPA, and all that--

G: NYA.

M: Yes, and the--

G: CCC.

M: --CCC. It was quite an issue.

G: Anything on his travels in 1941 through the campaign? You mentioned Waco, I believe.

M: Well, I don't know except that it was a grueling thing. He never stopped. We barely had time to file our stories. We were constantly going, and the energy of the man was unbelievable.

G: I gather that reporters were even riding in the same car with him, say in 1941.

M: That's correct. We did.

G: Did you have to drive? Did you have chores?

M: No, he'd sort of take us in platoons, you know. I can recall one campaign where I was the driver, the tire changer and everything else, and that's when Dan Moody ran. Just the two of us, the two weeks I was with him. I was the driver, and we had many a blowout in

those days and I changed I don't know how many tires for him. And it was hot!

G: Was that 1942 when Allred ran against O'Daniel in the Senate race?

M: Well, it was the last time Dan Moody ran. I think it was 1942, against Jimmie Allred.

G: There seems to have been a good deal of hostility between Dan Moody and Lyndon Johnson. Do you know anything about that?

M: I think that's correct.

G: Do you know the source of that?

M: No. But it was obvious.

G: Did Moody talk about Johnson?

M: Well, of course Moody was a very conservative man and certainly their philosophies were poles apart. He was the Ronald Reagan type of those days. He thought Lyndon was just a direct offshoot of the FDR social programs, and he made quite an issue of that. Well, they were just thoroughly incompatible. That was part of Moody's campaign.

Jimmie Allred, I would alternate, I'd travel with him also. He was a strong Democrat, but in Texas that was probably the beginning of some changes in the Democratic leadership. They were more moderate in some respects. Jimmie Allred was a party man but would express his opinions on a lot of the FDR programs because it was popular in Texas. He was quite a fellow, later became a very good federal judge, sitting judge. He was very competent as a judge.

G: I gather that LBJ was really tempted to run in 1942, after having lost in 1941.

M: I think he was, and why didn't he? At that time, of course during the war he gathered the image of a military man, went to sea, which I think was important to him at that time. I think it was the war more than anything else that delayed that decision. He thought it was well to have a regular military service. And also he had plenty of power in the House as a Roosevelt man, and I think the timing was poor, plus the fact that he wanted in his record military service.

G: You mentioned flying on the helicopter in 1948 when he ran against Coke Stevenson.

M: I only made one flight with him.

G: Any other memories of that 1948 campaign? That was the narrow margin.

M: Well, the 1948 campaign, of course, is a considerable part of history, not just Texas history. At that time I was on the Dallas News, after the war, and was then the managing editor; I had been assistant managing editor in the early days. But the Texas Election Bureau office was in the Dallas News building and I was one of the directors of the bureau. Traditionally, the chairmanship of the Election Bureau rotates from year to year from the Dallas News and the Dallas Times Herald editor, because of the proximity to the office as it is here in Dallas and you have to sign checks and so forth.

So that was a rugged four days there, and I was living with it at the News. Many, many stories. I remember those little twenty-four hour periods there, I never left the office when we were trying to find out where these votes were. We'd get changes and errors and more changes, and it went on for days and nights, eighteen or twenty or

maybe a hundred [votes] at a time, and then the final big change. The Texas Election Bureau was, and still is, noted for really incredible accuracy. Robert Johnson, the manager, who's retired now, he would take a pencil--that was before computers, he wouldn't even use an adding machine, everything was manual in that vote tabulation--and he could give you, every hour, percentages that would hold up. He was the infallible man on that. So he kept telling us on the Johnson thing that the election wasn't over, and he knew precisely where the votes were coming from, he knew the history of them, the background. It was quite a guessing game there, but he was right all the way. And in those three or four days, well, we would never declare a winner because he could see the shifting of those few votes, and it was precisely as he forecast, finally.

G: I wonder why Stevenson didn't contest that election?

M: I don't know. That will always be a mystery to me. There are speculations and assumptions and so forth on certain things, but I'm not too sure that they want a full recount on a lot of things, you know.

G: You mentioned the helicopter ride that you took. Do you remember where that was?

M: Oh, just vaguely. I think it was in Central Texas, somewhere around the Waco area. Oh, yes, it was. One of the stops was in Waco because I remember we stopped at a shopping center in a triangular type of arrangement and nearly blew everything out there. Created a lot of late afternoon traffic snarl. I just vaguely remember that. He'd get

out of that helicopter with his cowboy hat and gear on, you know. They loved it.

G: Tossed his hat to the crowd, did he do that?

M: Well, I don't remember him tossing his hat, but he'd climb out of that thing with his ranch garb on and everything.

G: Who were the reporters that generally covered him and that traveled with him in that campaign, do you remember?

M: I'll try to remember a few. Robert Hicks [?] from the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, who was an extremely able political reporter and analyst. He's dead now. There was a man from Houston who's now dead whose name was--oh, he was an Austin correspondent for many, many years, very competent man, Ed--he finally lost his eyesight. I can see his face now. There was Olin Clements [?], who later went with the Associated Press, was with the Houston Post. Let me see. . . .

G: Did you ever travel with Stevenson in that campaign?

M: Yes.

G: Could you contrast the style of getting around?

M: Oh, yes. Well, Stevenson, of course, was a traditional; he drove in a car from one stop to another. He was just the old country rancher, the honest John guy, you know. And like you said, why he didn't ask for the recount has always bothered me and many others. I don't know whether they wanted to get into the whole thing or not, you know. In getting into a recount, as I recall, there were some other areas in the Valley and down towards Laredo and so forth, Webb County, where maybe

there was a shift of votes in Stevenson's favor. But again, I'm a little fuzzy on that.

G: Harry Benge Crozier.

M: Harry Benge Crozier was one.

G: He traveled a lot with Stevenson, didn't he? Was he a Stevenson supporter?

M: I don't remember, but you know he was with the News for many, many years. But he was an old veteran. I don't know whether he traveled with LBJ or not, I just don't remember. We had--oh, Allen Duckworth, who's dead. He was a great political writer for the Dallas News, really one of the best I've ever known. He had that real touch. Although the News was constantly prodding LBJ and Sam Rayburn, they loved Duckworth because they respected him as an individual. The News editorially was on Rayburn and Johnson quite a little bit, but Duckworth, he got a lot of beats from both of them because they liked him and trusted him. He was a very fine and fair political reporter.

I'm trying to think of a couple of more things on Johnson. One of the things I would like to say is that as Senate majority leader, regardless of our editorial feeling for him--and then when I came over here, [there's] certainly a different atmosphere on the Times Herald--but I thought he did a magnificent job as the Senate majority leader. I thought during World War II and immediately thereafter, but particularly at the outset before he went into the service, that he showed real class as a bipartisan leader with Senator [Arthur] Vandenberg. They got things done, and I think [that's] one of the real reasons

that we moved forward so rapidly in our war effort. I don't think I've seen bipartisan leadership like that since. It doesn't exist anymore. But Lyndon Johnson and Senator Vandenberg gave this country a lot of balance in the Senate and made the climate possible for the eventual victory by laying a lot of groundwork in the Senate there. They moved things and they moved them in a hurry. The war effort, there's no such thing as delay on the things we needed, and the appropriations. Everything they conceived was well done, and I thought that was Lyndon Johnson's brightest hour by far, as Senate majority leader, far exceeding his performance as president, although I didn't think he was a bad president. But he showed a lot of class in those days, that he wasn't a hundred per cent politician.

I also want to say that I think his performance as president of the United States was, overall, very good. I didn't agree with all of his programs, but I didn't doubt his sincerity. We just didn't agree with a lot of it. He gave the country good leadership on damn brief notice. I think he did an overall good job particularly in really grabbing the ball after President Kennedy's death.

G: Anything else on LBJ or your association with him?

M: I don't know, but I'll try to think of some. I've really been a little busy since you called, and I just jotted down a few reminders. I think I've covered most of them. I'll try to remember some. I'd like to get briefed a little better on a transaction we had with him when we bought his television station. There was quite a story. I'll talk to my colleague on that.

G: Good.

M: We had made the deal to buy his station in Austin, and then all of the hierarchy from the Los Angeles Times Mirror [Company] came down, signing of the contracts and so forth at the Ranch. Lyndon, and I thought it was rather typical, but I'll have to substantiate and get this a little better, because I wasn't there at that meeting. I had been there. So we got everything signed. I think the purchase price was nine million something. Then old Lyndon said, "Well, let's talk about the transmitter." Well, the station's no good to us without the transmitter. He said, "Oh, now that's a separate deal," so we had to give him another million for that. But I can polish that story a little bit. I think it's fascinating. It was typical of LBJ.

G: Perhaps we can have an additional session.

M: Well, either that or I'll write some stuff for you.

G: Either way.

M: Oh, there's some things like that I think that we can talk about. He was quite a man. Another story I was trying to think of last night. But I will, and I'll drop you a line.

G: Well, I certainly do thank you.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I

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