INTERVIEW II

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INTERVIEWER: Ted Gittinger

PLACE: Mr. Murphey's office, Nacogdoches, Texas

Tape 1 of 1

G: Why did Governor [Coke] Stevenson prefer Ten High?

M: Well, you're getting into the Governor's personal habits now. I could speak at length concerning Governor Stevenson as a person, but I can truthfully say that I never saw Governor Stevenson under the influence of intoxicants in a lifetime of knowing him. But I can also say that I don't ever recall a day that he didn't strike a blow for liberty, as he would say, and have a drink or two.

Governor Stevenson not only preached economy in government, but he practiced it in his private life. He was close with a dollar. As a result of that, as long as an alcoholic beverage had a certain per cent of alcohol in it, he was not impressed by the blend or the price or the name or what the society folks were drinking, and he finally found out that the cheapest and best whiskey in the world was Ten High. That was his favorite alcoholic beverage. He'd buy it by the fifth, of course. Many a time, back when he was governor, and even after he was out of the governor's office and in that short period of time before he started actively campaigning for the Senate, friends would bring him high-priced liquor, knowing that he liked to drink now and then. Governor Stevenson had a good friend who ran a liquor

store over between Mason and Junction. Kimble County is dry for hard liquor, or it was at that time, and the closest liquor store was over on the county line. I've seen Governor Stevenson load up that high expensive whiskey, and he'd go over there and trade it for Ten High and give them a little to boot. It was a good deal for the liquor store and him both, because they'd get the high-priced liquor at a little cheaper rate and Mr. Stevenson [would] wind up with three times as much whiskey when he come home.

But he was the same way about cigars. He smoked a pipe all of his life, and he didn't really start I guess habitually smoking cigars until he got out of the governor's office. I think he reached that point in age and all where carrying that old pipe and a tin of pipe tobacco and kitchen matches and all got to be a little too troublesome for him, so he started smoking cigars. And of course he smoked King Edward cigars. Here again, any cigar smoker will tell you that ain't the choice of the industry. But it suited him, as long as it burned and produced smoke I guess. And the same thing with cigars. I've seen people bring him at Christmas time and all these expensive dollar and a half apiece cigars, boxes of them, whereupon he'd take them to town to one of his merchant friends and swap them for King Edwards.

G: Did he get as good a deal on that, do you remember?

M: I imagine so. I never did become involved in the direct trading process, but he'd always come back with a heap more cigars than he left with.

(Laughter)

But Governor Stevenson was a remarkable man. You hear the phrase all the time, he was the last of an era, and I'm not sure but what he was the last of an era in politics in Texas. Because you'll have to recall now that this campaign of 1948 was the last really big campaign prior to the beginning of the era of high-priced public relations people and media directors and advertising agencies that handle the media advertising. You know, when a fellow enters into a political race nowadays to run for a state office, it's almost like creating a new corporation and going into business. He's got a director of this and a director of that. His campaign is headed up by experts in everything from telling him how to wear his hair to how to tone his voice. And of course this freewheeling campaign that I was a participant in in 1947 and 1948, it was more or less the old kind. And radio, of course, was used, oh, I'd say more so than any other media as far as getting the word out. But newspaper advertising, nailing up placards--there wasn't even too many bumper stickers back in that day. That was before the so-called bumper sticker era. This was kind of a plain country-boy campaign.

And of course when Lyndon came out with his helicopter, that was just unheard of. I heard Governor Stevenson say when somebody came to him and told him that Lyndon was going to campaign in a helicoper, they asked Mr. Stevenson if he didn't think maybe he ought to get him a helicopter. I never will forget Governor Stevenson said no, that he didn't much like to fly. I know when he was governor and was called to Washington, D.C. by Franklin D. Roosevelt on an occasion or two in

regard to the war effort, he always rode the train. He never did become too good at driving an automobile except on the ranch. Now, he was an expert at going up the gullies and across the hills and driving an old beat-up car on the ranch, but I never did trust him too much on the highway.

But I never will forget when they asked him why he didn't fly or get a helicopter or something, he lit that old pipe and told that fellow, he said, well, he'd lived a pretty long time and said in his lifetime that he could not recall ever riding in anything that sooner or later he didn't have to get out and push. (Laughter) So that was his answer about flying in a helicopter or an airplane.

But there were a lot of humorous things that happened during a campaign. You know, I was in World War II just prior to this campaign. As I've often told audiences I've spoken to around over the country, even in times of extreme danger and fear, that's been one of the strong possessions of the Americans is that we could always laugh. We could see the humor in what was going on, and of course this is true in political wars, too. In any campaign, regardless of whether you think you're winning or losing or how the thing's going, there are things of humor that will pop up in a campaign. Mr. Stevenson had a unique dry type of humor, and he used it very effectively in breaking tensions and arguments. He had a lot of Abe Lincoln in him insofar as using a little humor to soften the consequences of a conversation or an accusation or a confrontation.

I recall one time we were in Abilene and Mr. Stevenson and Mr. Johnson ended up in town at the same time. Lyndon was staying over in one hotel and Mr. Stevenson was over in another hotel. And Lyndon was scheduled to make a speech in one of the town parks right across from the hotel where he was staying. So I went over there that night just to scout the opposition. You know, we didn't end up at the same place at the same time too many times on the campaign, but since we happened to be in that situation I decided I'd go and hear what Lyndon had to say. The crowd was extremely small. I don't believe there were fifty people there to hear Lyndon speak, but he got up and give them the whole talk, you know. The next day one of the newspaper reporters who was covering the campaign, traveling with Lyndon, I saw him there on the street in Abilene before we left town, and he told me he saw me over there at Lyndon's speech and asked me what I thought of it. I told him, "Well, you know, Lyndon makes a good speech," and tried not to say anything overly critical because he was a newspaperman and it didn't make him no difference. He said, "Well, Lyndon saw you in the audience." I said, "He did?" He said, yes, when the speech was over, Lyndon came back over to his suite there in the hotel and was talking to some of his campaign people that were traveling with him, and he was mad because they hadn't drummed him up any more crowd than they did. He said, "Dadgummit"--well, he didn't say dadgummit, he said blankety-blank--"Blankety-blank, I got up there. There wasn't nobody there but twenty-five news reporters and that blankety-blank Bob Murphey!" (Laughter) Said, "That's all I could see."

(Laughter)

G: That's pretty funny.

M: But even after the campaign was over and all of the vote counting started taking place in Box 13 down in Jim Wells County and all, there were a lot of things that occurred that you can look back now in retrospect and comment on. Of course, there were a lot of jokes going around about all of the people that were listed on the tally sheets in Box 13, people that were listed as voting that didn't vote. And of course many of them had been deceased for many years and yet they were shown as voting. The standard joke of that time and I'm sure it appeared in all the articles and books and stories that have been written about the campaign was that this Mexican woman was sitting on one of the curbs of a street down there and crying her heart out. Somebody asked her what was the matter, and she said, "Well, my uncle Jesus, who's been dead over twenty years, came back and voted for Senor Johnson and didn't even come by the house to see us."

(Laughter)

G: Have you got any examples of Governor Stevenson's humor, the way you say he could kind of defuse a tense situation with a humorous remark?

M: Well, I recall one thing he said about a very pompous lobbyist there in Austin who he had known since he'd been in the legislature and when he was speaker and lieutenant governor and as governor. It was one of the heavy duty lobbyists that was active there around the legislature. And he endorsed Lyndon when the Senate race developed. Mr. Stevenson had done him many personal favors. I don't mean he had done anything

of an illegal or unlawful nature, but he'd been courteous to him and visited with him. He was kind of disappointed that this lobbyist had come out in the Johnson camp. Some of his friends, they were sitting around talking about who was for who and who had taken sides and all this, and this lobbyist's name came up in the conversation. Governor Stevenson pointed out and said, well, that he didn't think that that endorsement by that particular lobbyist would hurt him too much, said, "You know, he ain't got too much influence. He's kind of a pompous, proud, head-up-in-the-air type of person that can't impress the common man, the average man. In fact, he's the only man that I ever knew that could strut while he was sitting down."

G: That's a good word picture.

M: Yes, said he was the only man he ever knew could strut sitting down.

But a lot of the councils of war that were held, where the strategy was planned, they'd sit around and say what was going on and what had to be done to counter this. There was always that decision to be made of where to go and who to talk to, and where you were all right and didn't need to go, or where you needed to go and patch your fences and so forth.

Governor Stevenson had a lot of peculiarities--well, I won't say peculiarities, he was like all of the rest of us, he had his likes and dislikes in life. And two of his foremost dislikes were dogs and rare meat. He was like most old cowboys, people who are raised in the ranch country, they like their meat well done. Of course, he raised a lot of goats and sheep on his ranch back during the years, and he

detested dogs because they'd kill sheep and goats. He never had a dog on his ranch as long as he lived. He just didn't like dogs. In fact, some of his grandchildren would come out to visit and have a little old pet dog or something, and he was nice about it and all, but you could tell that he just wanted them to get it off the place.

The reason I say that is it's as a background of what happened during the campaign. He had a very strong supporter who lived in Beaumont. We were going to campaign in Beaumont, and this person telephoned and told Governor Stevenson he was having some very influential friends and people out to his home there in Beaumont and wanted Governor Stevenson to come and be the honoree at this dinner party. So because of this gentleman's help and friendship and influence and so forth down through the years, Governor Stevenson accepted. And of course I went along. I was the driver; I was carrying wood and water and doing whatever was necessary.

So we drove up to this fellow's house out in the very beautiful part of Beaumont, big rich homes everywhere. I parked the car back down the block. A lot of cars were already there when we arrived. So we got out and started walking up to the house, and he had one of these wrought iron type fences around the house and fancy gate. The minute we walked through the gate there was a dog looked as big as a Shetland pony come running out from around the house and run up and liked to have knocked Governor Stevenson down, reared up and put his front paws on his clean shirt. That was our introduction. Then when it came time to eat supper, they served prime rib of beef, prettiest

piece of meat I ever saw, and I think they just walked by the stove with it. Blood was all in the plate, and it was just terrible. Governor Stevenson played around with it and looked at me and I looked at him. He made it through the dinner party all right, but going home after the thing was over he said, "That's the dangdest situation I ever got. I get dog bit going in and eat raw meat for supper." He never did forget that. (Laughter) Two of his pet peeves.

I was saying a little earlier about Governor Stevenson not being the best driver out on the highway. You'll have to recall that the way I got into this campaign was, [as] I think I told you when we visited at an earlier time, that I had just graduated from law school. This was in 1947. Governor Stevenson had announced that he would be a candidate for the United States Senate. His wife had passed away. He was batching out on that ranch, and of course after getting out of the governor's office his fences were all in bad shape. He had had people employed to look after the ranch, but they as usual didn't do too good a job. So when I first went out to the ranch to work for him, we'd campaign maybe two or three days a week, and the rest of the time we were working on that ranch.

Somebody had given Governor Stevenson a beautiful stud horse that was a highbred quarter horse, and he had kept that thing penned. It was so valuable he didn't want to turn it loose out in the pasture with the rest of the horses, and he kept that thing penned there at the house. So one day he told me [that] this old horse, he had detected [it had] a little limp. This horse was a good brood stud

horse but it never had been rode any. I'd been threatening to ride him but I hadn't got up my nerve yet. But anyway, we were going I believe to Houston the next day, and he said, "Before we leave, I want to see what's wrong with that horse out there, the way it has been limping on a hind foot."

So we went out there. At the particular pen there behind the house--they were not working pens, that is it was just a corral but didn't have a working chute--there wasn't any way we could get that horse in close quarters and look at him. This old horse, he kept his tail up most of the time, and so we went out there and we tried to get up close to where we could catch him by the mane, hold him, and look at that hoof. He kept running away from us and going over to the other corner of the pen, so forth. So finally I said, "Well, I'll just go get a rope and we'll throw a loop on him and snub him up to that post, and by gum we can look at him then. So I went and got a lariat rope and throwed a loop on this horse and was just fixing to snub him on this post there out in the middle of the pen, and that old horse reared and jerked back. And I'm telling you, I don't know if you've ever had a rope burn or not, but I got the worse rope burn that I ever had in my life. The thing blistered, popped up just immediately, and I never had anything hurt in my life like that did. We went inside and put Unguentine and whatever he had for home remedy there, but the next morning, I'm telling you, it was painful. And I told him, "I just don't believe I can drive to Houston." He said, "That's all right, I'll drive." And he did. That's the only way we'd have

gotten there. But I'll never forget that trip, I'm telling you, especially when we started to--Houston traffic was nothing like it is now, but it sure was worse than it was at Telegraph, Texas. My hand got well quick. It was still painful. That was the only part of the whole trip that I didn't drive. I drove every step of that campaign.

G: That's funny. Were you the only two in the car on the way to Houston?

M: Yes. This was prior to the time that these reporters started traveling with us. Now, as the campaign progressed--this was kind of the little skirmishes before the actual campaign developed and you got hard at it where you worked, campaigned every day. Like I said, we were campaigning maybe a couple of days out of the week, where we'd be invited to speak, or where somebody was giving an appreciation banquet for him or something, we'd go to it. But we weren't out really making our own decision as to where to go and all; most of these were invitations from various towns to come. But after the campaign really got under way, so to speak, most of the time we had at least one, sometimes two or three reporters that would ride with us. This was back in the days that if the reporter could, he rode with the candidate. Of course, you didn't tell a reporter no, you can't ride with me, if he asked me. Of course, that was a bunch of characters, too.

G: Do you remember any of those reporters especially?

M: Oh, yes. I remember practically all of them. Of course, Booth Mooney was traveling with us at that time quite a bit. The one that was a genuine character that I remember, and I just thought the world of him, but he was a character. It was an older gentleman by the name of

Byron Utecht, B-Y-R-O-N, Byron, U-T-E-C-H-T, Byron Utecht. He had been the political editor for the Fort Worth Star-Telegram for many years and he had written for all the wire services and was an excellent analyst and political writer. But he was quite a character.

I never will forget down at Port Arthur one time he was traveling with us. He was a very serious-minded person and very precise in his speech, just like he wrote; he was very precise. We drove into Port Arthur and checked into the hotel, and he had to go file his story with Western Union. This was back in the days when the reporters still filed their stories with Western Union. So he left the hotel. We told him that we were going to eat supper. We'd gotten into Port Arthur I guess around four or five o'clock in the afternoon. He wanted to make the first edition, got his story in. So we told him we were going to eat supper about six, six-thirty. So we sat around there and waited and waited and waited. Utecht never did come back. Well, we got a little worried about him.

Finally he came striding in very briskly. You could tell he was upset. I said, "Byron, where you been?" He said, "I'm too embarrassed to tell you. I'm just not going to tell you." I said, "Well, can I help you in any way, anything?" "No, you can't help. Nobody can help. Just utter stupidity. Utter stupidity." I laughed at him, I used to kid him a lot, and I said, "Byron, you can confide in me. We're great friends, you know. Maybe I can help you in some [way]." He said, "If you won't tell anybody I'll tell you." I said, "All right, I won't tell anybody." He said, "Well, I went and filed my

story at Western Union. I came back to the hotel. I went up to my floor, to my room, and my key wouldn't work. I fumbled and fussed and tried to unlock the door, and it wouldn't unlock. I just went down in the lobby and asked to see the manager, and I told him, 'I am terribly displeased that Governor Stevenson and his entire entourage is stopping here and paying good money to stay in this hotel, and you give me a key that won't unlock my room.'" Said they were very apologetic and they sent one of the bellboys back up with him to unlock the room and said the bellboy couldn't unlock it either. And he said he got to looking at the key and all and said, "Bob, I was in the wrong hotel." (Laughter) Back at that time there was one hotel on one side of the main street there in Port Arthur and another one over on the other side, and old Byron got turned around when he went to Western Union, and they had the same floor and the same room number. But of course the key wouldn't work.

G: Of course it wouldn't work.

M: He said, "I made a perfect ass out of myself! I made an ass out of myself!" in the wrong hotel. We never did let him forget that the rest of the campaign. Whenever he'd go to file his story, we'd say, "Now, Byron, think anybody needs to go with you to bring you back to the hotel?" (Laughter)

G: Reporters have a reputation--I don't know if it's always justified--about being kind of hard-drinking fellows. Did they ever get any of that Ten High during this campaign?

M: Oh, yes. And of course the reporter's no different from the average public. Some are worse than others. There were some that hit the bottle pretty hard after the workday was over, and others that would have just a sociable drink, and some that didn't drink at all, you know, teetotalers. Yes, there were some real characters.

I tell you something, there was a great difference between the reporting that was done back in those days and the reporting that I see in recent campaigns in the last, say, ten or fifteen years. Those people back in those days were highly professional in reporting the facts. Of course, they're human beings like everybody else, and I'm sure that some of them were for Lyndon and some of them were for Coke Stevenson. But they never did let their prejudices or bias show in their reporting. They reported exactly what happened, exactly what was said, and they didn't let their own personal preferences and all show through in their reporting of the campaign, basically. Now of course there was, even in those days, exceptions to that rule. But the good reporters, that is the people that represented the major papers or the wire services and all, were excellent reporters. I'm talking about people like Bill Gardner, who was with the Houston Post, and Sam Kinch, who was with the Fort Worth Star-Telegram. And Dawson Duncan, Dick Morehead with the Dallas News, Allen Duckworth with the Dallas News, Tootie Thornton, who was with the Dallas News, Roy Grimes, who was with the San Antonio Express News. These people reported it like it was, and I think if you will review the newspaper writings of the day--I'm sure that you've got them in the files there

at the Library--you can see from the reporting that it was accurate and it was to the point and it was well written and it was factual. There wasn't any personal opinions or innuendos or sly things thrown in to show how the reporter felt about it. Now editorialwise, that was something else, you know. Editorialwise, well, they'd take after them.

G: Did Governor Stevenson have papers that he liked and some that he didn't because of their attitude toward him?

M: Oh, yes, this is natural and normal, still is, in politics. I'll say this about Governor Stevenson, he respected a truthful journalist, and I presume--it's my opinion, it's not just mine, I've seen it stated by people in the press corps--that he probably had the best relationship with the press of any governor that ever held the office. He had the respect of the press corps and he respected the press corps. He was probably the only governor that ever had a daily news briefing. He would meet with the Capitol press while he was governor every day. He might not have any sensational revelation to make to them or any announcement that was earth shattering or anything, but he gave them the opportunity to ask any questions or explore any realm of state government, anything they wanted to ask about, and he would field their questions. And there was a mutual respect there. Many, many times he would say, "Now I'm going to tell you this but it's off the record," and I don't know of a single instance that any reporter ever violated his confidence. When he said, "Boys, this is off the record," they quit writing. Or if they didn't quit writing, they never published

it. On the other hand, he never did mislead or lie to the press, and they knew that and respected him for it.

He would have the Capitol press to press parties out on his ranch, which was, oh, not over a hundred and fifty miles from Austin out to Telegraph, about a hundred and forty miles to Junction and about fifteen miles on out to the ranch. He'd have a big bash every summer on the banks of the Llano River where they'd stay two or three days out there and camp out. They'd have fish fries and barbecues and steak fries and mountain oysters and what have you. It was just a good time of fellowship and friendship.

G: You might tell the folks who eventually see this what a mountain oyster is. Not everybody will know.

M: Well, if I can put it in as delicate of terms as I can, mountain oysters are the male organs of a bull, a bovine bull, that you get when you castrate the bull to make a steer out of it. As we used to say, when you remove his social standing.

(Laughter)

G: Did they cook them in the coals in those days?

M: Right. Throw them in the campfire and when they're busted open, they was ready to eat.

G: On a slice of bread was the way I remember it.

M: That's right. Or potatoes or what have you.

(Interruption)

G: You had just finished telling us about mountain oysters.

M: Yes. Well, I'll tell you about Mr. Stevenson, he was a pretty good camp cook. Governor Stevenson never was a card player; I never did know him to gamble any. One thing, he was too close with his money to gamble it away. And he never was much of a fisherman. I don't guess I ever saw him standing on the bank of a river or creek and do any fishing. He certainly didn't play any golf, thought that was a waste of time. But if he had a hobby it was hunting. He loved to hunt. He'd range from Wyoming to Montana. He'd hunt elk and moose, go down in South Texas to hunt mule deer. And of course around there where he lived was the best deer-hunting country in the world, round that hill country, and he loved to hunt those white-tailed deer. He didn't care much about squirrel hunting or anything of a lesser nature, but he loved to hunt turkey and deer and elk, moose, and he loved life around a camp. Before you leave I'll show you a picture I've got in there of one of his hunting trips that he took. They usually had a pretty close-knit little group that would go hunting together, seven or eight men. And of course because of the positions that he held in the state government and all, he got invited to go a lot of hunts where there was good hunting. This was his hobby. When he took time to enjoy himself, he did it hunting. He loved to hunt.

Old Judge [J. B.] Randolph was a district judge in that district, Kimble County. Where Governor Stevenson lived was a part of the district, and Governor Stevenson and Judge Randolph had been friends for years. Judge Randolph was one of the ones that usually went on his hunting trips. Governor Stevenson used to laugh and tell a story

one time. You know, hunters are good about coming in when the sun goes down and telling their experiences of the day. Everybody went in a different direction or took a different stand or something, then they'd come in and tell their tale of what they saw and what happened and all, around the campfire. Governor Stevenson and a Texas Ranger captain that usually went with them by the name of Gully Cowsert [?], and some of them made up one night that Judge Randolph had been bragging about a big buck that he'd been seeing and he told them he was going to get him the next day. He knew right where he traveled and right where his path was, and he was going to get him a big buck the next day. So Governor Stevenson and this Ranger captain got Judge Randolph's rifle and put the wrong size cartridge shells in the magazine of the gun that night. The next day they all went off hunting and the Judge come in a little early, red-faced and red-eared, about he'd seen this big buck and he tried to throw a shell in his gun. He couldn't get the shell to go in the barrel of his gun. Of course, Governor Stevenson and all of them were poker-faced about it telling him what hard luck that was that he didn't get that buck. But these were just little old things that here were grown men, leaders in industry and politics and everything else, this was part of their practical joke and this was part of their enjoyment of life.

G: Did he ever say that he went hunting with George Parr down in South Texas? Parr was a big hunter down there.

M: I never did know of him going down there on any social trips. He had visited with George Parr on numerous occasions. George Parr would get

a bunch of his people together for some celebration or special event or something, and Governor Stevenson has been in Parr's territory on numerous occasions. But as far as I know, he never did hunt or socialize directly man-to-man. In other words, they weren't that close personal friends, they were political friends.

G: Right. Right.

Let's talk about the reporters some more, out on the banks of the Llano. You said he was a pretty good camp cook. What were his specialties?

M: Well, of course, his main specialty and what he took pride in cooking were these old steaks about as big as a saddle blanket. He'd have these big steaks cooked. He'd get that mesquite wood and live oak wood and get it just right. As somebody once said, "Coke says you can get a good scorch on them steaks," and he did get a good scorch on them. He could cook a steak to where it would melt in your mouth and continued to up until his death. Last time I visited his ranch, took my wife and youngest daughter with me, one of the first things he wanted to do was go down on the river and cook some steaks, and we did. At that time he was eighty-six years old.

G: Well, it's hard to cook a steak well done and still get it tender, isn't it?

M: Well, I think it depends on two things. One of them is the quality of the steak and the other one is the manner in which it's cooked. Now I know if you go in a restaurant and order steak well done you're making a serious mistake, but he'd cook them slow. And when I say well done,

I don't mean burnt. It was just to where there wasn't any bloody substance oozing out of it or there wasn't any red center. As a lot of people say, "I'd like my steak with a red center." He liked his to be cooked all the way through. But he enjoyed good meat. When he died he still had enough teeth to eat it. He never did lose his teeth and as far as I know never brushed them.

G: Is that a fact?

M: I don't ever recall his brushing his teeth. (Laughter)

G: My gracious.

M: He always told me, he said, "The good Lord created teeth to last a lifetime," and he expected his to do it.

(Laughter)

G: That's a strange approach, I must say.

M: He had a little fear of the dentist chair. I recall in 1947 or the early part of 1948 he moped around there all day one day. I kept asking him what was the matter, and he said he had the toothache. Old Dr. Smith was the dentist there in Junction, and he'd say, "I just hate to go into Junction. Old Dr. Smith will want to punch on it and drill in it and all." I said, "Well, you can't go around here with a toothache in this campaign. You're going to have to do something." So he finally got in the car. I had some chores that he told me to do, and he said, "I'm going in to do something about this tooth." He stayed gone about two hours and drove back in. I said, "Well, what did you do about your tooth?" "Oh," he said, "he sat me down, he looked at it and probed around, liked to kill me. He wanted to do a

root canal and put in a filling and all, and I just took all of it I was going to take and I just told him, 'Pull it out.' He didn't want to do it, said it could be saved, and I said, 'Well, I don't want to save it, get it out.'" To make a long story short he said he pulled it.

(Laughter)

G: Well, that was the quick way out of it all right.

M: Yes, he pulled it.

Those were great days on the Ranch. I'll always recall the year or so that I spent on that ranch with him. We were batching. We were the only ones there; there wasn't any womenfolk. This was in the lull before the storm, so to speak. This was in the months immediately preceding the election campaign, and it was a pretty leisure time. Like I say, he was making appearances and all but he wasn't actually engaged in a day-by-day campaign. I absorbed a lot of wisdom by being around him and listening and observing and talking and all. He had a lot of wit. I think the last time you were here maybe I mentioned a story about the time he went over to the little old Telegraph store to get him some sugar and cigars and a few little old things he needed around the house there. He came back to the ranch, and I said, "Well, what's going on over in Telegraph?" He said, "Well, that old woman told me one of the Jacoby [?] boys"--I believe it was he said, or somebody, anyway--"horse threw him, broke his leg. Somebody was in a car wreck." I've forgotten now who it was but some neighbor down the road had a car wreck. Somebody had died. I said, "Well, there was a

good bit of news, wasn't there?" He said, "Yes, I believe that old woman loves to tell bad news better than anybody I ever saw." (Laughter)

G: Well, some people say the only news is bad news.

M: Well, that's what that fellow said. You know, all these diet books are coming out now. You can go into a book store and buy fifty books that's been published in the last year on how to lose weight. Some old boy said, well, he didn't need those. He'd found the ideal diet. It's called the good news diet, and he said, "The secret is you just eat on them days you hear good news."

G: That will take the weight off of you.

M: That will take the weight off of you. (Laughter)

G: But I don't suppose Governor Stevenson found much wit in the outcome of the election, however. I understand he took that pretty hard.

M: He did, and it lasted for a good time after the election. As we have discussed previously I think, I don't think Governor Stevenson was hurt as much personally, he didn't take it as a personal affront that "Lyndon Johnson beat me." In other words, he didn't take the loss [personally]. I'll tell you about Governor Stevenson. He really had no great ambition. He wasn't heck bent to go to Washington. In fact, had he been elected he would have dreaded living in Washington, D.C. But I think what hurt Governor Stevenson more than anything else is that the American electoral process failed, and I think historians would agree that on this particular occasion in this particular race that the election process did fail. Because I think the man that got

the most legal votes did not go to Washington. I think Mr. Stevenson won the election on legal votes, and I'll always believe that, and I think that belief is shared by a great many people who have looked very closely at the election.

G: It is. Sure it is. There's no way of ever finding out anymore.

M: No. No.

G: That's what we'll always--

M: Deputy [Sam] Smithwick and some of them that could have answered the question passed out of the picture before there was any real investigation. In fact there never was any real investigation after that trip that was made down to Alice immediately in the days just after the election, the week after the election. But other than that there never was any real investigation or never any grand jury investigation or congressional investigation. The facts were never submitted before a court of law.

G: I'm trying to remember if we talked last time, if we addressed the question as to whether Governor Stevenson ever talked to you about why he and Parr had had that estrangement.

M: Yes, I think we did.

G: I thought we had.

M: To the best of my recollection, I think I told you at the time that, to be perfectly candid and honest about it, I don't remember the details of the thing, but it was over appointments. It was over appointments.

G: Well, that fits with--

M: Parr had requested, while Governor Stevenson was governor, certain judicial appointments in his bailiwick down there in South Texas, and Governor Stevenson wouldn't do it. He knew the character and background and conduct of the people involved and he just wasn't going to thrust them on the people.

G: Did the name Truman Phelps ever come up in any of these discussions?

M: That name rings a bell, but I can't recall any specific details. I don't recall anything of a material matter about it.

G: What did Governor Stevenson think of LBJ as a person, do you know?

M: Oh, he thought he was an opportunist. He thought that he was a very shallow person who would do anything and say anything to anybody to get elected. He felt like that he never did have a full grasp of the basic concept of the American government. Now, he gave the devil his due, so to speak. Lyndon knew how to get things done in Washington, and he was an expert on parliamentary maneuvering, he was an expert on arm-twisting, he was an expert negotiator. I don't know of anybody that's ever served in the Congress that was better at passing a legislative program than Lyndon Johnson was, and Governor Stevenson recognized that fact. He said, "Old Lyndon can get anything done he wants to up there in Washington." But of course he was critical of him as a citizen who should have been interested in what is good for America and for the American people rather than what is good for the party or what is good for Lyndon. He said Lyndon never could distinguish the fortunes of the United States from the fortunes of Lyndon Johnson.

That he based his service on what's good for Lyndon is good for the country.

Of course Governor Stevenson was very critical of Franklin D. Roosevelt back when it was not popular to criticize Franklin D. Roosevelt, back when the great bulk and majority of the American people thought that Franklin D. Roosevelt was the savior of the country. Governor Stevenson was very critical of what he called socialist-type legislation that Roosevelt was advocating. Governor Stevenson was an excellent constitutional lawyer. In fact, he was an excellent any kind of a lawyer. Governor Stevenson could have become a multi-millionaire if he had wanted to move to Dallas or Houston some just to practice law. And being a good constitutional lawyer, he saw what was later proven even before the Supreme Court back in the court days, that much of what Roosevelt was doing to try to bring this country out of the Depression it was in at that time, might have been, for the present, beneficial in some areas but that it was totally foreign to the concept of constitutional government. He told me many, many times, "I won't live to see it, but you're going to live to see it. Franklin D. Roosevelt is taking this country down the primrose path." And of course Lyndon, his political life was based on his discipleship to Franklin D. Roosevelt. Lyndon grabbed the coattails of Franklin D. Roosevelt at the outset when he made his first race for Congress and he never turned loose of them. I suppose if you look at the public utterances and public statements by Lyndon Johnson that he quoted Franklin D. Roosevelt more often than any other one politician.

G: Well, right after he won that Senate race I think it's fair to say that he got a good deal more conservative in his public utterances and made peace with the oil industry and so on. But his defense of that was that nobody ever criticized Hubert Humphrey for speaking out for the dairy interests.

M: Well, Lyndon was a past master at deciding the way the people felt and going in that direction. That's what made him such an excellent politician, getting elected.

G: Did he ever make any overtures towards patching things up with the folks on the Stevenson camp after the election that you know of?

M: I could be wrong as I could be about this because I don't have too many facts to back up what I'm going to say, but I don't feel that there was a vindictive type of action taken against Governor Stevenson or his followers. If you will trace Lyndon's campaign and his post-campaign or postelection policies and so forth, you will find in many instances that Lyndon treated his enemies better than he treated his friends. Because Lyndon, he already had his friends, and he was trying to convert his enemies. And here again is a perfect example of what a good politician was. Lyndon was forever--if he found out somebody was against him, his main goal in life was to convert that fellow and to get him over on his side.

I saw this to some degree when I ran for sergeant at arms of the Texas House of Representatives in 1949. Now, this was in January of 1949; this was right after the 1948 election. There was no one closer to Mr. Stevenson's campaign than I was. I was with him night and day,

the only one that was with him night and day. I'm sure Lyndon had many friends in the Texas Legislature that supported him. I daresay had Lyndon wanted to he could have passed the word down, "I don't want Bob Murphey as sergeant at arms of the Texas House of Representatives." Of course, I'm sure he had more major things on his mind than worrying about who was going to get elected sergeant at arms of the Texas House of Representatives, but I can see that some people would have wanted to gut anybody that was close to the Stevenson campaign.

G: I wouldn't say that because the only evidence I have is that Lyndon Johnson was never too busy to pay attention to anything political.

M: Political, or any detail. I think you're right on that. So I give Lyndon the due there. Of course, Mr. Stevenson had a lot of friends in the legislature, too. I was running immediately after Ernest Boyett, whom I understand you've spoken with. Ernest Boyett served as sergeant at arms of the Texas House of Representatives for many years, and in fact took a leave of absence to serve as Governor Stevenson's executive secretary during the time he was governor. He was still sergeant at arms of the house. Back in those days sergeant at arms of the house had a considerable amount of influence that he could wield in various directions, employed a lot of people, hired a lot of people. It was a pretty good plum. Like I say, I'm sure if Lyndon had sent down the word, I don't say that I would have been defeated, but I would say I would have had a harder race for sergeant at arms of the house than I did.

G: How long were you sergeant at arms?

M: Two terms. I was elected in 1949 and retired or quit, didn't run anymore, in 1952. I served from 1949 to 1952.

G: Did you have any contact with LBJ during that period?

M: None specific that I can recall. I don't recall any specific direct contact that I ever had with Lyndon or his office.

G: Were you involved in the political campaigns in 1950 and 1952?

M: Not directly, of course I've always maintained an interest in politics and still do. But the last statewide campaign that I took any real active part in was that [Ralph] Yarborough-Shivers campaign for governor. I was very active in that on the side of Allan Shivers. But I traveled around, made speeches. In other words, I worked hard for Allan Shivers in that race, and that's the last race that I put forth a great deal of effort in. I always supported Price Daniel when he was running. But after Daniel went out as governor, that was about my last statewide interest to any great degree.

G: Were you at all involved in the fight between the various Democratic factions when Shivers was leading the Texas delegation?

M: Yes, I was a delegate to the state convention from Nacogdoches County. I've always been a conservative Democrat, still am. I never supported the so-called liberal element of the party, of which Ralph Yarborough was the head. Of course, I was a pretty young man to be as active as I was, especially back in those days. Young men weren't as active as they are now. You see now young men twenty-nine, thirty years old, that have leading roles in these national campaigns and all. But back in those days a young man was to be seen and not heard kind of. But

I've seen my peers, so to speak, my contemporaries in politics have just about all died off. Of course, I'm sixty-two years old. I'm not a young man anymore, but these people that were my contemporaries when I was very active in politics, they just about all passed by the wayside.

G: Because they were ten, twenty years older than you were.

M: That's right. That's right. They were at least that much older than I. I felt real bad about when Governor Stevenson passed away in 1975. I don't know of anybody that had a greater flow of friends than Governor Stevenson did in his political life. He had very loyal friends. When he passed away, at the funeral and in the days after the funeral and all, in visiting with Mrs. Stevenson, the second Mrs. Stevenson and all, it was amazing how many of Governor Stevenson's contemporaries and friends went before him. Of course, Lyndon went before him. We started a little campaign to build a little memorial center there in Junction to commemorate Governor Stevenson's life and so forth. In trying to get contributions to help build this thing and all, it was just amazing when you sat down and started making a list of who would you ask for a contribution, the ones that had the money and the power and the influence and all that were his friends were all dead. He outlived his contemporaries. He was eighty-seven when he died. People like John Nance Garner and all of the war horses of politics that were active at the same time he was, they all died before him.

G: I was going to ask you when you were talking about Governor Stevenson's

attitude toward Franklin Roosevelt whether this struck kind of a natural alliance between he and Mr. Garner.

M: He and John Nance Garner were great friends. They both came from that ranch country. John Nance lived down in Uvalde, which is not too far from Junction. He and I visited down with John Nance on several occasions. I've sat and--they both liked a little drink of whiskey and both liked cigars and both liked to hunt. They had a lot in common. They were cut out of the same cloth. They had the same early hard life. They were raised in that old rocky, hilly, hard country, ranching background. Both of them got into politics. John Nance went national; Governor Stevenson stayed in the state level. But they were good friends, they were good friends.

G: Well, that is hard country down there, but it grows big deer.

M: Yes, it does, it sure does. I've hunted out there for years and years and years. In fact, during the time that I was living with Governor Stevenson, he was a great conservationist. This was back before conservation was all that popular with average people. He took care of the deer on his place almost like he did his sheep and goat and cattle. He raised deer. He would not allow but so many to be killed off of there each year. Other ranchers was letting them kill all they wanted for the hunting money, you know. Governor Stevenson was very careful about preserving his deer and looking after them and so forth. Another thing, he loved the country. There wasn't a day passed that I can recall on that ranch that he didn't do something to improve the land. Now he might not have done anything but cut out some cedar

brakes to let the grass grow or to burn some brush or to stop and roll a big rock in a gully where it wouldn't wash anymore, but he was constantly looking for some way to preserve the land.

G: You know, that's interesting because everything you've said for the last five minutes, if you had left Governor Stevenson's name out and inserted Lyndon Johnson, I wouldn't have changed anything. Because as soon as he could he got a ranch and he came back to it as often as he could.

M: I tell you the difference I think between the two men. It would be the difference between a plantation owner and a slave back in the early days of this country. Lyndon had the land, he had the cattle, he had the ranch, but Lyndon didn't get out there with his pocket knife and castrate them calves and work with the cowboys and get his hands dirty. He got in his Lincoln convertible and drove his visitors around and pointed out his cattle.

G: Well, he was the manager, there's no question.

M: This is the basic difference between the two. I've seen Governor Stevenson work on that ranch to where he was just totally exhausted, building fence and digging post holes to put corner posts and this type of activity. Of course, I wasn't close to Lyndon, but my understanding is that as far as actually getting out and sweating and working that Lyndon didn't do too much of that. But he still had a love of the country.

I would say in the campaign, in the race and the election of 1948, that it was one of the--not <u>the</u> last, because it's going to always be

the conservative and liberal element, at least in the foreseeable future. I think eventually there will be an evolution to where it will be like probably in England and other places where it will be the conservative and labor factions. But at least now we call it the liberal and conservative. But I think that race in 1948 was one of the stand-out races of where there was a clear-cut philosophy of government involved. So many times now in the present-day races there's not a lot to choose between. There's not all that much black and white, cut and dried difference between candidates. They all more or less are for and against the same things. But Governor Stevenson's philosophy of government--the least government is the best government, totally opposed to bureaucracy, totally in favor of fiscal responsibility--the history of his legislative service in Texas reflected that feeling.

On the other hand, you had Lyndon, the fair-haired boy of Franklin D. Roosevelt who was riding hellbent for leather for the perfection that everybody was a king and we weren't going to have any poor people, we weren't going to have any disadvantaged people, everybody was going to live and be happy forever after. The liberal outlook that all you got to do to make everything perfect is just spend a little more money. This was the basic philosophy of government that was put forth in that 1948 campaign, was on the one hand a very, I won't say ultra-conservative, neither will I say ultraliberal. I don't think Lyndon Johnson was a raving liberal, as we would describe a person. I think he was more of a moderate. But I say if he was walking the fence and

was going to fall off on one side of the fence, that he would fall on the liberal side. And there was a clear-cut liberal versus conservative philosophy of government involved in that 1948 election.

G: I think you're right. Johnson used to tell Hubert Humphrey that he and his friends were bomb throwers.

(Laughter)

M: Well, of course, out there in the ranch country I could tell story after story. You've probably either recorded them or heard them or something else. They tell after Lyndon got elected president that for security purposes they went out there and built about a twelve or fourteen foot mesh wire fence around Lyndon's ranch to keep sight-seers [out], to make it easier to police, so to speak, for security reasons. And said somebody stopped at that little old country store out there just east of where you turn off to go to Lyndon's ranch--what's the name of that little old town? It's got a post office there that's painted red, white and blue [Hye, Texas].

G: That's where he used to put his mail, that was where he got his mail.

M: That's right. I never can think of the name.

G: Near Stonewall. Yes.

M: I've been there jillions of times. But anyway, they say that a fresh bunch of reporters came--you know Lyndon loved to come back to the ranch as often as he could from Washington. They said a bunch of reporters came with him and drove from the Austin airport out to the Ranch and were stopped, getting a Coca-Cola or something at this country store. They asked a bunch of loafers around there, "Why are

they putting up that great big tall fence?"--they were working on it, you know--"They're building a mighty big fence. What are they doing that for?" And one of these old nesters around there said, "Well, they're building that to keep Lyndon's cows from getting out and going back home." (Laughter)

G: I thought you was going to say it was a deer fence.

M: No, they said Lyndon's cows get out and go back home. You know the biblical saying that a prophet's not without honor save in his home community applies to all of us. As you probably know from interviews or reading or listening that a lot of people around Fredericksburg and Stonewall and around that country, they didn't like Lyndon.

G: Gillespie County. Well, Gillespie County was a Republican county.

M: That's right. And by the same token there were people around Junction that thought Mr. Stevenson wouldn't give enough money for charitable purposes and they didn't like the way some of his law practice was directed for certain people around. He had his critics in Junction just like Lyndon had his elsewhere. So you know, this is natural. This is part of it. They say a man's kingdom is his home, and yet sometimes that's where he gets the least respect.

G: Well, I know he didn't carry Gillespie County very many times in his races, but then no Democrat did. They voted Republican anyhow.

M: They're very conservative, those German heritage, German people.

G: Well, part of it goes back to the Civil War.

M: That's right.

G: You know, they had a tough time. In fact, they had martial law. The Confederacy couldn't hold them down.

M: That's right. That's right.

G: And they always blame the Democrats for that.

M: But all of this is part of Americana and the history of Texas. Texas politics is an intriguing and interesting story that reads almost like a novel if somebody were writing it. We've had our share of characters and escapades and electoral oddities and what have you.

G: Did you ever read that book by J. Evetts Haley?

M: Oh, yes. A Texan Looks At Lyndon?

G: Yes. What did you think of it?

M: I've read it very carefully and with a critical eye, because I was a part and parcel of a lot of that that he was writing about, and so I was reading it with a certain amount of factual knowledge in my own mind. I would say it's a pretty accurate report of what went on. There are a few minor discrepancies on details that really don't have a lot of significance, but basically what he said about the events surrounding the whole affair are pretty accurate, yes.

G: I see. Okay. Of course, he talks about more than that, but--

M: Well, of course, Haley was an ultraconservative, even perhaps more so than Governor Stevenson. I think perhaps his prejudices and biases and so forth shone through in his writing more than a normal reporter-type individual would have written. But by the same token, as I say, I would stand by my statement that basically it's an accurate report.

G: What haven't we touched on here about 1948 that you'd like to get on the record that we don't want lost for posterity?

M: Oh, gosh, I don't know. A lot of this stuff, time erodes your memory of details and all to some extent, and yet some of the things that happened and occurred all seemed like they just happened yesterday. And other things seemed like happened a hundred years ago. I never will forget, being just a young boy out of law school, I went out to that ranch I think with one suit of clothes and about seven or eight pair of Levi britches and a couple of pairs of boots. I wasn't too well situated to make a campaign among civilized people. I never will forget in 1947 we had an occasion, Mr. Stevenson went over to San Antonio to speak to some group. I was wandering around San Antonio there and came across Stein's Clothiers. I don't know if you remember Stein Clothes, S-T-E-I-N, I believe it was.

G: On Alamo Plaza I believe, right off Alamo Plaza.

M: Well it's right there on one of the main streets.

G: On Houston Street.

M: Houston Street, that's right. But anyway, they were having a sale, and I went in there and was looking around. They had a blue suit that I thought at that time was a beautiful suit, a light blue suit. I remember I went back to the hotel, told Mr. Stevenson I was a little low on money but that I'd found me a good suit of clothes and I needed to make a little better appearance in going around after the campaign got under way. But to make a long story short, he gave me the money to buy that suit. It cost ten dollars and fifty cents. He said he

thought I made a good buy. (Laughter) I kept that suit for years and years after that, just because of the circumstances and what I gave for it.

G: Well, the first suit of clothes I ever bought came from Stein's.

M: Oh, they were good, workable, wearing clothes. They wouldn't have put your picture in Esquire with one of them on I don't think, but as far as I was concerned it covered your nakedness and gave you a pretty good appearance.

G: You all didn't get your boots down there at Lucchese's, did you?

M: No, no, no. They were way too expensive, way too expensive. There was an old man, an old Swede by the name of Eddie Lowgren that made boots in Junction. I've still got some boots that he made for me back in the forties. He was an excellent bootmaker, excellent bootmaker. The first really fancy pair of boots I ever had Eddie Lowgren made and they cost me fifteen dollars. That same pair of boots now would cost I'd say about four-fifty, four hundred and fifty.

G: You couldn't get them soled for what you paid for them.

M: No. No, they'd cost twenty-five dollars to get a half sole and rubber tip put on the heel now. Had some done just the other day.

G: Well, Lucchese did all the movie stars I think.

M: Yes. It goes back to the old saying we used to have. See a boy with a pair of fancy boots on, we'd say, "Are you a cowboy or is that mud on your boots?"

(Laughter)

G: Well, all right, sir, we can at least pause at this--

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview II

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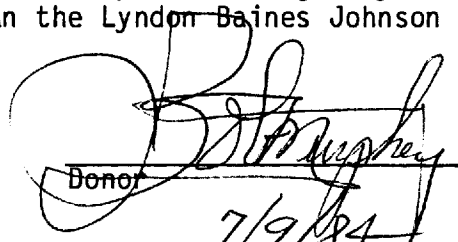

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