

INTERVIEW I

DATE: November 28, 1979
INTERVIEWEE: ELLA SoRELLE PORTER with comments by Mr. Porter
INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE
PLACE: Mrs. Porter's residence, Houston, Texas

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- G: Okay, Mrs. Porter, let's start with your background. You're from San Marcos, is that right?
- P: Right. Right.
- G: And I understand you went to school at Southwest Texas [State Teacher's College] from the first grade.
- P: Yes, I started in the first grade on the campus there, with the exception of one year during the First World War [when] my parents thought we should go back to the farm where we could be sure of food and that sort of thing. But with the exception of one year I went through the elementary school--the sub-college we called it at the time--and the college.

As a matter of fact, while I was in the sub-college I took some courses on the college campus. We had only two years of Latin, for instance, but I walked up to the campus and took my third year Latin when I was a junior in high school, and that sort of thing. Which makes my recollection of people a little bit hazy because I knew so many people while I was in high school who were college people that

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there's sort of a blend of people. For instance, Bob Shelton was one of my student teachers. Well, I thought of myself as being contemporary with him when in reality I was in the seventh grade when he was in college. That's an example of what I mean.

But I went all through school there and got my degree and have always been proud of it.

G: What was the college like when you enrolled?

P: Well, of course, it was not anything like the size that it is now, both in student enrollment and campus, and I'm sure that looking back on it we were a closer-knit type of student body than would ever be again. I'm sure that that's true. Everybody knew everybody, at least that was the feeling we had. Of course, my memory now after fifty years, I don't remember all the people individually, but names sort of ring a bell with me and I really think I can almost identify everybody that was in my immediate group of classes, the year ahead and the year after, and of course the group that I was with.

It was not highly sophisticate as they are now. When there was a school dance, everybody went. We had a skating rink in the gymnasium, everybody skated. We really, I'm sure, were having the most wholesome good time that you could possibly hope to have in a college situation.

G: I gather that there were a lot of students there that did not have a lot of money and were going on a shoestring.

P: The ones that did have money sort of were conspicuous by their--well, I think it was the kind of situation where you didn't have money but

you didn't realize that that was different, you just thought everybody was in the same boat. Of course those years were the years when people didn't have money, and it just didn't seem to bother a lot of people. The boys on campus that had cars were unusual. Most of the people that had cars were the local people.

G: In going through the yearbook, it seems that there were quite a few more women students than there were men students. Is that the way you remember it?

P: Well, there may have been. I was not conscious of that, but that's probably true.

G: Where did most of the students live?

P: Well, I had the feeling that they all lived right around there and that it was a regional type thing. For instance, if we had someone from Beaumont or Port Arthur or somewhere, we felt like that was a long way away from San Marcos. We had a lot of people from Luling, Seguin, Kyle, Buda, some people from Austin, San Antonio, Kerrville and some from Lufkin. But those people from the more distant places such as Lufkin usually were sort of traceable to some contact with someone in San Marcos that had been there before. But it was unusual to have someone from way away in school there.

G: Where did they live on campus?

P: In boarding houses, most all of them lived in boarding houses.

G: Would these be university run or sanctioned?

P: No, they were university approved. For instance, Miss [Mary] Brogdon was the dean of women. There were rules and regulations. My mother

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took roomers is the reason why I know something about that from the other side. They had rules and regulations that she enforced, and just anybody couldn't convert a house into a boarding house. They had to meet certain requirements to do that. But I don't believe there was a dormitory at all when I was in school there. If there was I don't remember it. I don't believe there was a dormitory. I think everybody lived in boarding houses. And of course there were large houses there already. I don't know how there happened to be so many large homes there, but there were.

G: Did the students who were from San Marcos and whose families lived in San Marcos enjoy certain advantages, such as being able to live at home?

P: Well, I suppose the advantages were that we were not under the strict rules of the college about when to get in at night, and what nights we could go out and that sort of thing. But I expect that the other students felt that there were some advantages. I can remember having friends spend the night with me so they could do what I was doing, you know, and so I'm sure that there was that advantage from the social aspect. But we had to adhere to a lot of rules, and one that I recall that to me is almost laughable now is we had to wear hose up to our bathing suits in the swimming pool. And of course we found it very convenient to lose one in swimming every time. But that's really funny now to me to think about that.

G: Sounds like Miss Brogdon's philosophy.

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P: Yes! It was. It was.

G: I gather also, as long as we're going through some of the codes, that girl students couldn't ride in automobiles with men.

P: Not supposed to.

G: Well, were these rules, do you think, widely violated?

P: Yes, yes.

G: How about just in terms of social status, the hometown students versus the students from other cities or towns?

P: Well, as I have thought before, at the time I was not conscious of there being any status in relation to that, but looking back on it now I think the local people probably were either in numerical majority or had influence enough that they felt a surge of influence. Now, it may be just a retrospective view, I don't know. But I think you could tell by looking at activities that were taking place then that a lot of the people that were in leadership roles were local people. And I expect that a good number of the percentage of the student body was local, local including nearby towns, I would say.

G: Kyle and--

P: Kyle, Martindale, Lockhart, Luling and Seguin and around.

G: Well, how about the faculty? Were they regarded in the community with esteem? Were they considered--?

P: I think so. Of course, my mother and father were the kind of people that had a great deal of respect for school and what it meant.

That's why we had moved from the farm there, so that we could all

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have the advantage of going to school, which we couldn't have afforded if we had been sent individually away to school. They took the philosophy that if my brothers got a spanking at school, they'd get one at home, too. And [they felt that] the teacher's right. So the viewpoint that I got about local people's attitude toward the faculty from my own parents was one of esteem, and some criticism. My parents sometimes would think that some faculty member is teaching the wrong thing, which is current now, too. But I sort of believe that the faculty in general in town was respected and esteemed, but I am not sure of that.

G: Any individual faculty members, say, that taught Lyndon Johnson that you recall?

P: Mr. [H. M.] Greene.

G: Professor Greene? What was he like?

P: Well, he was an individual. (Laughter) I never did have a course under Dr. Greene--I think he was a doctor--so I don't know him personally, but I just heard things that made him seem to me a very unusual person at the time. I think nowadays he wouldn't seem quite as unusual as he did then. But Lyndon really had a lot of respect for Professor Greene, and I'm sure that Professor Greene had a lot of influence on Lyndon, too. They worked together on debate, I guess; I guess it was debate.

G: Professor Greene seems like he would have been oriented more towards a student like Lyndon Johnson than a student like Henry Kyle.

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P: True, true.

G: Does that seem--?

P: True. I think that Mr. Greene would almost find the unusual person in a crowd, you know, I think he would seek them out. Although all I'm saying about Mr. Greene is really hearsay; I didn't have a course with him, so I don't know.

G: How about President [C. E.] Evans? Did you get to know him pretty well?

P: Well, yes, I knew him and liked him very much. He was a really compassionate man, I think. I think that's how he had such a relationship with Lyndon, I think he had great compassion and saw ability and saw need when it was there. As a matter of fact, I dedicated the annual to Prexy the year I was editor.

G: Well, do you recall the first time you met Lyndon Johnson and your first impressions of him?

P: I think the first thing that I knew about Lyndon--and I'm not even sure what year it was. As I said before, I don't know what year it was he was in sub-college. But anyhow, that year he was sort of in--I don't want to use the wrong word--he was a little bit hard for Miss Mattie Allison to handle. She was the English teacher and very well respected. He took some sort of section, I don't know whether it was part of a course or a whole course, in debate from her and I think she finally gave him a D or something. Anyhow, he sort of publicized this.

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G: He didn't do well in English, I noticed.

P: No. He was not a good scholar.

G: Well, we've always heard the stories about his mother as an elocutionist.

P: Yes, yes.

G: Of course, he was good in debate, we know that. But I was surprised to see that he didn't do that well in English.

P: Well, some of that was Lyndon's personality of--I can't think of the word to use, but sort of taking his chances on thinking of something at the time. In other words, I don't think Lyndon was the kind who did a lot of homework to be sure he was right when he got to class. He relied on his extemporaneous ability of coming through with what he needed to know or to do. But he always thought that was funny, that he had done so poorly in debate in high school, and yet he did well in college in debate and went on to be in political life successfully.

My parents loved Lyndon. Oh, they thought he was just--because he paid attention to them and he showed interest to older people always. I think that was one of the things that got him with Prexy, and with the faculty members that he was close with, Greene for instance. He always had some--I think some people have that ability, and he certainly had it, to be sort of empathetic with older people. My parents, I remember one time were back at the farm on voting day, down between Seguin and Gonzales. They drove all the way up to San Marcos to vote for Lyndon.

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G: Well, I guess it worked with some but it didn't work with others.

P: Right. That's right.

G: What other courses do you remember? Before we turned on the tape we were talking, for example, about P.E. Do you have any recollection of that?

P: I just know that Lyndon, in talking with me, used to--it was revealed in his conversations with me, he would love to be a good athlete. He would love to be a good baseball pitcher. And I, in my recalling, I almost thought that I was sure he made the baseball team, but apparently he didn't because I looked it up in the annual and he was not in the group there. But he, I think, would have loved to have been a good baseball player. But I don't--

G: Do you think he was physically just not suited for it?

P: Well, I don't know. Lyndon was very tall but he was gangly and I think perhaps just didn't have yet developed the muscular coordination. The way he was built he should have been a good basketball player, too, you know, because he was so tall and thin. But I think really that Lyndon just--I think he was still growing physically.

G: I noticed one of the earliest things he did on campus was to write editorials for the newspaper, an editorial writer.

P: I don't remember that, but that sounds like him. I don't remember any details about that. I know he was editor of the [College] Star, and that one of the--well, I guess the last time I saw him, as I mentioned, was when I went to Homecoming the year that they honored

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the editors of the Pedagog and the Star, and Lyndon was there and I was there. I agreed at that time with Lyndon that I would come to see him at the Ranch, but he died before I had a chance to get there.

G: Do you remember where he lived when he was a student on campus?

P: I don't associate him with living any one place permanently. I think he moved around. Of course, he lived in Prexy's garage apartment or some place there with the President at some point, but I think he was in a rooming house several different places, really. His sister, Rebekah, at some stage at the time and for some length of time, which I don't recall, stayed with us in our house so I knew her. She was a nice person. She was tall and thin like Lyndon was, too. I didn't know the other sister. Of course, I knew of his brother but I didn't know him personally.

G: Well, now, his family moved to San Marcos, didn't they, after a while?

P: Finally, yes.

G: Do you recall why they did this or where they lived or the circumstances?

P: Perhaps--had his father died at the time?

G: No, I don't think so. He was still living.

P: I don't know that detail. It seems to me they lived out close to where the Cornell Institute used to be, but I'm not sure about that either.

G: Did you ever meet his mother?

P: I think I did meet her.

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G: I have a note here that Senator Tom Connally gave the commencement address in 1927.

P: I don't remember that.

(Interruption)

G: I notice that he was active in that drive to improve Evans Field.

P: You mentioned that, and I have a faint recollection of that. But if it were being done I'm sure that I would have been involved in it.

G: Well, you were. In fact, I have a note here that you spoke to the student assembly, and you were a member of the committee.

P: What year was that?

G: April, 1928.

P: Yes. Well, I was a cheerleader that year. I checked in the annuals and apparently, I don't know how this happened, but apparently I was cheerleader two years. I didn't know you ever did that, but I'm in two different annuals because I couldn't remember when I was. But that was one of the years that I was a cheerleader, and I would have been very interested in that. Of course, later they did away with that field and moved across the river.

G: Do you recall what happened to this particular student effort?
I wonder how LBJ got involved in that?

P: Sure don't. I don't know.

G: Again, it seems like an athletic [interest].

P: Yes. Well, the fact that it was Evans Field and his feeling for President Evans, in addition to his interest in athletics, would

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have explained I think his being involved in it. And, too, Lyndon was always active in anything that put him in the public eye.

G: Yes. Very conscious of--

P: Yes. From the very first, I think one of the reasons that he was successful with what he set out to do was that he knew what he wanted to do. I think that's true of a lot of people. They float around and are very capable, but don't know exactly where they want to go. Well, he knew exactly where he wanted to go.

G: I gather at this drive, one of the plans was to get every student to pledge three dollars for the improvement of the field.

P: I don't remember that.

G: You don't? Okay.

Let's talk about the student athletes at San Marcos. To what extent did they control the campus?

P: Well, until Lyndon came along I would say that they controlled it completely.

G: Can you elaborate on that?

P: Well, I think it was obvious that they were the outstanding boys in school. They were the boys that normally were known by everybody, and the size of the student body made it possible for that small a group to have great influence, and I think they did have great influence. For instance, if the men's athletic association nominated somebody for something, that was the best you could do. That would carry more weight than almost anything else. Since there were no

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fraternities and sororities, I think the athletic organization of men on campus was just about the same as a powerful fraternity organization.

G: Would they nominate, say, girls to be in Gaillardians?

P: Oh, yes. -Oh, yes.

G: Would these be their girl friends or just--

P: In some cases, yes. In some cases, I guess not. I was not conscious of that relationship existing.

G: I wonder if LBJ was ever considered for membership in the Black Star group, the predominantly athlete group.

P: I don't know. I don't know about that. There were fairly well-kept secrets in that organization and that may have been true. I don't know.

G: But did he ever talk to you about the fact that he was not in this group or the fact that--?

P: I don't recall that he ever said anything about it, but I think it was obvious through his friendship with some of the people on campus that were in the group, that he would have liked to have been included. But I don't know that that's true.

G: Well, now, did they control student monies? For example, were the student funds spent more for athletic programs or football trips and things like that?

P: Well, I'm sure that's true. But as a member of the student body, the money part of it was not in the picture to me. But it was obvious that they were the school representatives and I'm sure more money was spent on that than any other activity.

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G: Now, you said that they controlled until LBJ got there.

P: Well, I think when Lyndon got there that he actually had an organization of friends and he gave some competition to them.

G: Were you conscious of this at the time?

P: Yes.

G: Well, what did he do? Did he ever lobby with you or get you to support something that his group was interested in?

P: Well, I don't know what year this was, but I remember some year that he and his group nominated some girl to be Gaillardian that the other group thought should not have been nominated. It seems to me the main reason they gave was that she maybe was just a freshman or something. I can't remember all of the details. But I remember there was rather an open political campaign between the two factions on that one election.

G: Who won?

P: Lyndon's girl won. That's the reason I said until Lyndon came along.

G: Do you remember who it was?

P: I can't remember who that was. I don't even remember what year it was, but I remember that that's when I sensed that there was a little different power structure there than there had been before.

G: Well, did he approach you directly and ask you to support her or use your influence?

P: No. I was on the Pedagog staff and I sort of held myself aloof to any political influence for fear of criticism that there might not

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be a fair election. But there never was any criticism about the election that I know of. But I do remember that that--I think that's the basis of why I said until Lyndon came along they sort of ran the show.

G: Well, now, tell me about the student council. Was that just the student governing board more or less?

P: Yes.

G: Was that a prestigious thing to be on, or what was the significance of membership on that?

P: As I recall--and I shouldn't really voice an opinion--but as I recall that, it was a council that met and expressed opinions, but I don't think actually changed anything. I think it was like a lot of student councils, just sort of a nominal type of organization. However, I don't recall enough to really give an opinion on that.

G: I gather there were class officers as well.

P: Yes.

G: This was unrelated, was it, or what?

P: The class officers just held class meetings to plan things and that sort of thing. The council I think was set up and operated more as a campus-wide interest-oriented group.

G: Well, they would name the editor of the Pedagog and the Star, I understand, and you were editor of the Pedagog in 1930.

P: Yes.

G: How did you get elected or named?

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P: I suppose the council elected me, although I almost have the feeling that that was a student-wide election, but I guess I'm wrong if the council was doing that. I can't tell you. I think the council must have selected [me]. It was almost a foregone conclusion that the person that was the assistant editor the year before was going to become the editor, and that person I believe--in my case I selected Medie Kyle as my assistant, and she became editor the next year. Somebody must have selected me as an assistant. So there again, maybe the election was just a foregone conclusion, but I don't remember that.

G: You don't have any recollection of, say, one of the White Stars saying that "we want to elect you"?

P: No, I don't.

G: Well now, there were a lot of clubs at San Marcos. There were the Harris-Blairs and the Shakespeareans and the Allie Evans.

P: Idyllic.

G: What sort of clubs were these?

P: Well, they were called literary clubs, but looking back on it now I know that they were serving the purpose of what sororities and fraternities do now. There were more girls' organizations--which probably substantiates your statement a while ago that probably there were more girls than boys in school. But they were largely social. I don't remember any literary things in connection with them, but I do remember having dinners and parties and rush week and

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that sort of thing. So I think they were serving a social purpose more than anything else.

G: Well, what was the prestigious men's club on campus?

P: You mean besides the athletic group?

G: Yes. Was that the T Association?

P: Yes.

G: Okay.

P: That was the prestigious group I believe I would say. And I don't remember actually other boys' organizations. Harris-Blair probably was the only--that's the only one I can think of. Of course, there was the press group that had interest in the Star and the Pedagog. There was the debate group. But I can't think of other men's organizations that stand out in my memory anyhow.

G: Anything on the Press Club? LBJ was in that, and you were in it.

P: Yes. I don't remember anything special about that. I think you automatically were in the Press Club if you were on the staffs of the paper and the annual.

G: Did that have regular meetings?

P: I don't think so. If so, just to elect officers and that sort of thing.

G: Now, you were in the Mendelssohn Club, too, is that right? Was that another sorority or--?

P: No, no, that was a music group. That was a singing group. That was the choral group.

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G: And the Shakespeare group was your sorority group?

P: That's right. That's right. You can tell by looking in the annuals that those organizations didn't take in a lot of members. I suppose that was the basis of their prestige largely, because there were others organized later. I think perhaps Shakespeare was the first one that was organized, and I have a feeling that Idyllic was the second one that was organized. Then after that there were several, and they were organized because those two, you know, couldn't take in or didn't take in very many members.

G: Were the girls in the Shakespeare group mainly from San Marcos, as you recall?

P: Well, I expect they were, but I was not conscious of it at the time.

G: How did they regard Lyndon Johnson?

P: I don't really think at that time that there was any particular known feeling of regard for him any more than any other boy on campus. But I do think that it's true that most of the girls in that group were more closely associated with the T Association than with any other group on campus. That's just a figment of my imagination probably, but I don't think that--I don't recall that Lyndon was popular with the group, but I also don't recall that some other boys were not popular with the group. I suppose in a small town such as San Marcos that there is a certain amount of cliquishness automatically, and it certainly I think was evident there.

G: Well, you happened to be a friend of Lyndon Johnson and you were a member of this group. If other people--

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P: Right. Right. Well, you know, I think I was not very much of a political character at that time. I think since then--well, when I worked on Lyndon's campaign the first time he ran down here, worked with Roy Hofheinz and his wife on his campaign, I think that's the first time that I really became politically alert. I was not politically alert on campus, so I think I was open-minded about everybody and I think that I saw some things in Lyndon that I thought were interesting. I think that I saw that he was sort of clamoring for recognition and in some cases was being thwarted. I don't know, I can't tell you when I first knew Lyndon except as a student in sub-college, or became friendly with him, but I was friendly with everybody regardless, I think, looking back on it. I don't know that that's true, but I had no feeling of segregating one person from another because he was aligned one way or another. I guess what I'm saying, I was politically naive.

G: Or at least removed from it.

P: Right. And I was very young. I was only sixteen when I went to college, so maybe that explains why I was not politically oriented at the time.

G: Let me turn this off for a second.

(Interruption)

P: Strahan[?] probably was, too.

G: I have a note that in 1928, in June, Governor Dan Moody and Senator Alvin Wirtz came and spoke at Riverside right near the campus. Do you remember that occasion?

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P: No, I don't.

G: One of the events that summer was the 1928 Democratic [National] Convention in Houston.

P: Yes, yes.

G: LBJ went to that convention. Did he ever talk to you about that?

P: No, but you see now that illustrates my point, that he was politically oriented from the very first, and I wasn't from the very first. I remember the convention and reading about it in the newspaper, but I don't remember that. I didn't even remember that he went, if I knew it.

G: Was it common for students to be interested in state and national politics at that time?

P: Not at that time.

G: But he was?

P: He was, that's right.

G: Why do you think he was interested?

P: Well, I think that from the very first he knew that he wanted to be in politics. Uncle George [Johnson] perhaps interested him, too.

G: Of course, his father was in the state legislature, too.

P: Yes, yes. And then, you see, Uncle George lived here and it was easy for him to come down and go to the convention.

G: LBJ was on the debate team. Do you have any recollections of that?

P: No, I was not involved in debate. As a matter of fact, I don't think any girls were. I think it was all boys at that time. But they were fairly successful and I think that his interest in that also exhibits his interest in the political aspect of development.

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G: How popular was debate at San Marcos at this time?

P: In my recollection, not especially popular.

G: The students were not regarded as the campus heroes, the debate students, such as the athletes?

P: Not that I recall, no.

G: If you wanted to be a social giant, you were an athlete rather than a debater, is that [right]?

P: That is correct. (Laughter)

G: One interesting feature of that student newspaper was that every year the different classes would put out a special issue of the paper and they would compete. Remember that? The freshman issue and the--

P: Yes, I remember that.

G: Did you do any work with LBJ on that?

P: I don't recall that I did.

G: LBJ worked for President Evans in that--

P: Right.

G: What did he do, do you remember?

P: I don't know, but I think his generally recognized title was secretary to the President. Because he actually worked in Prexy's office, which was, as I recall, the most prestigious thing that Lyndon did while he was in school. At least in my simple thinking at the time, I had so much respect for the President that the President would pick someone good to be his secretary. I think that was true with some other people, too. I think they had a lot of respect built on just the fact that President Evans selected him to do that.

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G: I wonder how he got that job.

P: I have no idea. I have no idea. Probably through Professor Greene, but I don't know.

G: Well, Tom Nichols was officially the secretary, wasn't he, the business manager or something?

P: Right.

G: And yet LBJ was able to work himself into a job or get a job there.

P: Well, the title that he had--and I don't know whether he was called secretary or not, but I think he was--Prexy was probably helping Lyndon not only by having him do that kind of work, but also helping him financially, by whatever title he attached to the job.

G: You know, we've heard stories that he took that position as simply a messenger boy position and parlayed it into a reasonably influential post. Do you have any recollections of that?

P: No, I don't, but that's perhaps the most logical explanation of it that I've heard. That's probably true. Lyndon had a lot of energy. He was in motion. He worked diligently at what he really wanted to do.

G: He had the job.

P: Yes.

G: And he had the White Stars. Where else did this energy channel itself?

P: Well, in his debate work. He would really work hard on that. I don't think Lyndon did a lot of hard work on his courses. I think

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Lyndon could have been a better scholar than he was. He simply, I think, focused his energies where he was most interested and let everything else go at just whatever luck he could luck out with. But he had a lot of energy. I can just see him. He never walked anywhere at a slow pace, he'd just, going like that all the time everywhere, in a hurry. If I were describing Lyndon I would say he was somebody that knew where he was going and he was going in a hurry and always in motion. He really. . . .

G: Was he known as quite a persuader then?

P: Well, he was trying to be a persuader all the time, and I think another thing about Lyndon, there are some people that would have I think backed off when they would lose a contest, but not Lyndon. He'd come right back, hit the same place. He really was a competitor.

G: Can you recall any examples of this?

P: Well, I think in the political aspect of running somebody for an office. He loved organizing a political campaign and pushing somebody for an office. In that case that I mentioned to you, he pulled it off, and on some others, too, I'm sure, but that one I happen to know about.

G: The one that I suppose has been talked about the most is Willard Deason's election as president of the senior class. Do you remember any of the specifics?

P: I remember that was sort of bitter and ugly, and I think some ugly things came out of it, but I don't remember the details.

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G: Did they ever use leaflets in these campaigns, leaflets condemning the Black Stars, the other group?

P: I think so. I think so, but I'm not very good at picturing that political situation, for the reason that I've mentioned that I really was naïve about politics. I really was.

G: Well, now, LBJ was chosen as the student editor I guess at one point. I gather there was some suspicion among other students that President Evans had influenced his selection.

P: Was Lyndon editor of the Star for a whole year or was it the summer?

G: I think it was the summer.

P: I think so, too. I think so, too.

G: But do you recall any of [this]?

P: No, you see, I don't think I even was going to school that summer. I didn't go all the summers I was there, and I don't--somehow I must have had some impression that this was different by thinking that he had been editor in the summer.

G: I gather he wanted Southwest Texas to have a journalism school and they didn't. Did he ever express that desire?

P: No. Can you turn me off for a minute?

(Interruption)

G: I gather that he developed the nickname Bull Johnson. Did you ever hear of that?

P: Yes. Yes.

G: I wonder why they called him that.

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P: Well, I think the association of that word at that time was somebody that was always talking a lot and saying a lot that maybe people didn't believe or didn't have a lot of respect for. That was the connotation of that word at that time anyhow.

G: Did it fit him?

P: Well, I suppose the people that called him that--I never did call him that--thought that.

G: Was he more serious than the other students, would you say?

P: Serious about his particular interests, yes, I think he was. In other words, I think Lyndon had a perspective that compared with other people the way it compared with mine, I think he knew where he was going or where he wanted to go, where the rest of us didn't know.

G: Now, after you graduated in the--

P: 1930.

G: --spring of 1930 and he graduated in August.

P: Yes.

G: And then you came down to Galena Park, is that right?

P: Right.

G: And I believe you saw him a few times when he was teaching in Houston.

P: Yes, that fall, yes.

G: Can you elaborate on that?

P: Well, if he was going up to San Marcos or Austin, he knew that I was in Galena Park and we'd go together. I'd go home and visit my parents.

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I don't recall that we did that very many times, but I do recall that Uncle George and I took him in Uncle George's car to--I can't remember whether we took him to Austin or San Marcos, I know I eventually went to San Marcos--when he took that job with [Richard] Kleberg. It seems to me that wherever we took him, he was going to go from there to Corpus [Christi] or meet Kleberg somewhere else. I'm not sure about that.

G: What do you remember about that trip?

P: Not anything particular except that Uncle George was very proud that he had gotten this job, hated for him to [leave]--he enjoyed having him here in Houston. His Uncle George was I think a great influence on Lyndon. I think that he encouraged him to do a lot of the things that he did. Of course, he had encouragement from his mother, too, I'm sure. But Lyndon had his ear to the ground about opportunities all the time.

G: Did they get along well together, Uncle George and LBJ?

P: So far as I know. Now, I was never with him except those little bits of time. I remember one time that I was going home with Lyndon that he was teaching a night class down there at Sam Houston [High School] in speech. That's what he taught was speech. Somehow the arrangement was such that I needed to be in so that we could leave right after that class, so I sat in the class and thoroughly enjoyed it. He was just really putting on a good one.

G: What was he like as a teacher?

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- P: Very enthusiastic and very--he was making an assignment for them to make a speech based on their life depending upon selling something. They had to sell it. And that's what he wanted them to do at the next class meeting. I enjoyed seeing him as a teacher in a class. You know, that I think is normal.
- G: I understand he taught a group of bankers, maybe taught them speech or something like that in the evening. Was that this class or were these high school [students]?
- P: I don't know whether that was this. See, in connection with the school there were evening classes offered for adults. They got paid extra to do that, and Lyndon was teaching an evening class. On that one occasion I remember visiting that class, so that it must have been a weekend class so that we could leave immediately after and drive home. I remember that.
- G: Anything more on that trip with Uncle George and LBJ? Did you ever get any insight as to how he got that Kleberg appointment?
- P: No. If I had been a little older at the time I would have been interested in knowing, but apparently I just didn't ask any questions at all. I just thought he was changing jobs. I told you, you know, that this friend of mine here told him that she sure hated to see him leave. If he'd stick around here he might become an elementary school principal. (Laughter) You see, I was not teaching here in this school district at this time. I was out at Galena Park. Was that in 1930?

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G: That would have been 1931, late--

P: 1931, yes, because I was--

G: It would have been probably November or December.

P: Yes, because I was thinking that he was here one whole year when I was out there because we apparently--and I never did actually, I was never a date of Lyndon, we never dated. We were just friends. On those trips he just knew I was over there and that I'd like to go to San Marcos and we'd just get together and go.

G: Was Uncle George giving him advice on that trip, do you recall?

P: I don't recall that there was a lot of discussion about--they were discussing the mechanics of where he was going to go. I don't remember the details. But I don't remember any discussion about the trip. I know that Uncle George--something gave me the feeling that Uncle George was very much in favor of him taking this job and that he thought it was a good thing to do. But Lyndon was always conscious of opportunities and that was one that came along.

G: You mentioned earlier that you saw LBJ and Mrs. Johnson as they were on their honeymoon.

P: Yes. I can't remember details of how this happened, but my sister lived in Aransas Pass and I was at her--what year? Do you say he married in 1934?

G: Right, late in [1934].

P: Well, I suppose I was visiting my sister at the time. That was before I married. Anyhow, I don't know whether I knew they were in Corpus

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or he knew I was in Aransas Pass, but somehow he wanted me to meet his wife. I had never met Lady Bird at the time. I went to Corpus and they were staying at, I think, the Nueces Hotel, but I'm not sure what the name of the hotel was. The thing that I remember about that was that when I went to visit them, some friends of his, as a joke, had set up a baby bed in their room and all sorts of baby toys, and we thought that was very funny. That was the first time I had met Lady Bird. They were on their way to Mexico I think at the time on their honeymoon. She was interested in archaeology I think or something like that, and I thought was very nice and very attractive and it seemed to me like a very good match, as it turned out to be apparently.

G: Did you have any other contacts with him when he was working for Kleberg or when he was teaching school in Houston?

P: I don't remember--at one time he was here and I think this was when he was with the NYA in about 1937 maybe and was here on some sort of business. I was getting ready to get married just a little bit later and I visited with him and some other people from the government, I don't remember who they were. I mentioned the funny thing was that he asked me at that time how much it would take to pay me per month to not work for the rest of my life. Since I was making a hundred and thirty dollars a month, he and I agreed that two hundred dollars a month would be just about right. If I could just get guaranteed two hundred dollars a month for the rest of my life I'd quit working.

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But I think that was when he was probably with that National Youth Administration, I'm not sure.

Then of course the other time was when he first, I guess, was elected to Congress, when he met President Roosevelt down at Galveston.

G: Now, describe that episode.

P: Well, Lyndon had been elected and Lyndon had had some kind of an operation, I can't remember what. But anyhow, he was to meet President Roosevelt in Galveston, and apparently--again, I don't remember details--Roosevelt had come down on a train but had brought his car, his limousine. The train apparently came to Houston but not to Galveston. I'm not sure that that's true, but for some reason I rode with Lyndon in the President's car from Houston to Galveston. I'll never forget that. When we got to Galveston, the President was out on his ship fishing. I can't remember, but it seems to me that Lyndon stayed in Galveston and this man brought me back to Houston. That part I'm not sure of, but I don't remember that Lyndon came back with me from Galveston. I was just there a few hours. He just knew that I would think that was fun, to ride in that car to Galveston, so he called me. I remember that the hotel at Galveston, knowing that Lyndon had been elected, knowing that he had had this operation, and I suppose just as a welcoming gift, had a big fruit basket prepared in his hotel. Lyndon, when he went up to the room and found that, I was down in the lobby, he came back and brought it down to me. I said, "My word, I never saw such a--" There it is right there.

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G: I'll be darned.

P: And I didn't think of that until I was talking to you the other day, and I was sitting at that phone and I remembered that that basket-- and of course Lyndon gave the basket of fruit to me. I was real pleased; I thought that was real nice. But that was sort of exciting to me. I was fairly young.

G: Was there anyone else in the car?

P: No.

G: Just the chauffeur?

P: The chauffeur and Lyndon and I. The chauffeur up front and Lyndon and I in the back trying to talk to him. It seemed as far from here to that--it seemed so far to me at the time. And the man that was the driver was certainly a nice person and very friendly. I remember his comments about the people in Houston sure do drive crazy, you know. I thought he was driving fast but the top was off that, it didn't have a top on it--

G: A large touring car.

P: --and the wind was just blowing. I remember at that time that we all had the feeling that you wore a hat if you went anywhere, and I had on a new pink felt--what time of year would this have been?

G: This was in May, I think.

P: Yes. Well, anyhow, it was a spring, pink felt, floppy-brim hat, and I was fighting my hat all the way down there and back. But that I remember quite well but not details. I just remember that it was an event that I thought was sort of exciting.

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G: But he just called you from Houston on the spur of the moment?

P: I think that's true. I think he must have called when he got to Houston from wherever he was. He had been in the hospital.

G: Well, yes. Did he look quite thin?

P: Yes. Yes. He was not completely over that siege. Was it gall stones? What did he have?

G: No, an appendectomy.

P: Appendectomy. I couldn't remember what it was.

G: Now, was he excited about going to Washington again?

P: Oh, yes, excited just about getting to ride back. He went back on the train with the President from down here. He thought that was going to be nice. I, later I think, got the impression that they got very well acquainted because of that arrangement.

G: Yes, I think that's right. Well, did he say anything about his campaign or his election? Do you remember?

P: No.

G: You said that he offered you a job?

P: Well, I don't know whether that was when it was or not. At some point--we laughed about that. He knew I wasn't going to go up there, I'm sure. But I had worked on his campaign here. Roy Hofheinz was of course, as I recall it, in charge of the campaign here. I was teaching, and I could get high school kids. My job was to take the high school girls and put them on the corner and hand out these stickers. So I had worked on his campaign, which was unusual for me. I never had done any political work before.

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G: This was 1941?

P: I don't know what--no, it wasn't that late. It was earlier than that I think.

G: Well, that was his first statewide [race].

MP: That's right.

P: I didn't think I was married when I was working on that campaign.

MP: Yes, you were. At the hotel, Hofheinz got up in the chair and--

P: Okay. It was after I married then. I couldn't remember.

MP: [inaudible] I made the remark that Hofheinz was the one that should have been running.

P: Anyhow, that was real funny. Roy had his children all working on the campaign, the little bitty kids, and later on I taught Fred Hofheinz three years at Lamar. I never did mention to Fred that I saw him in the campaign years before.

G: Anything on the campaign?

P: Well, I was so naive about political campaigns and politics in general that I just took a job and did what needed to be done, and was pleased that he was elected, of course.

And on another campaign that he thought he had won and lost, what was that?

G: That was the one in 1941 where he lost.

P: Okay. We were going through Johnson City, and the news had come out that he had won, so I dropped a card in the post office at Johnson City, just thought it would be kind of funny to send him a card from

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Johnson City, congratulating him on having won, and then later on it developed that he had not won, which was quite a shock.

G: Well, is there anything we've left out.

P: Well, I can't think of anything. You know, I haven't given a whole lot of thought to politics and Lyndon's involvement, except that at some point after--I think when he became vice president with Kennedy, I write a letter to him. Because I had fought people objecting to him for years and years and years, you know, in politics. I had always defended him, because I think he had done so much good for so many people. So when he became vice president I began to hear a different tune from people. So I wrote him a letter and told him that I congratulated him on taking that position with Kennedy and that I was hearing a different tune in relation to him and that I thought he was on the way to building a better backing. But his politics success here was not easy. You know, it was nip and tuck I think all the way. I think it was after that that he had been to somewhere where he brought the camel trainer back, and that's when I saw him, the time that Kennedy spoke out at Rice Stadium. That was after I had written him the letter, too. He had had his first heart attack I think at that time, too.

G: Well, I certainly do appreciate your taking time.

P: Well, I don't think that I've revealed any--

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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