

INTERVIEW I

DATE: January 12, 1984
INTERVIEWEE: C. W. PRICE
INTERVIEWER: Ted Gittinger
PLACE: Mr. Price's office, Alice, Texas

Tape 1 of 1

G: . . . the manuscript of the hearings, and of course it makes delightful reading. But let us back up a minute, if we can. Something that doesn't get talked about a whole lot in all of this and that people forget is that there was a primary in July.

P: Yes.

G: And there was some trouble about that, too, wasn't there?

P: There was a very, very light vote. I mean in the primary; I don't remember what the vote count was in that. But then in the run-off it was a very, very light vote, and like I was telling you, Mr. [H. L.] Adams was allowed to go into the bank where the records were being kept. Frank Hamer was standing out in front with his big hat and his foot propped up behind him, leaning up against the bank door, and there was another ex-Ranger who was in on it. So Mr. Adams went in and while he was in there, he jotted down [names] out of the last 200 votes, and he also noted that those last 200 votes were written in a different colored ink. And now this I could almost swear, the first man that voted was a Tomas Acero and the last two hundred names were in alphabetical order.

G: Who do you have that from? Did you--?

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P: From Mr. Adams.

G: Adams told you. All right.

P: So when he got this, I mean he had about ten names in this last two hundred names, and so we made an effort to contact these people that they said had voted. The ironic thing was that from the time that the last person voted until the last two hundred voted, allegedly voted, there was only about fifteen minutes before the polls closed. Well, there wasn't any activity at the polls or anything else at that time.

G: Were you out at the polls that day?

P: Yes, I was by the polls numerous times.

G: What were you doing?

P: I was a very curious, interested bystander in it.

G: Were your friends running, or were you running for office?

P: No, the ironic thing about it was I first was for Lyndon Johnson. He was making his campaign tours in a helicopter the first go-round and everything, and he came to Alice and I saw in the paper where he was here. I saw all the people that were at the airport to greet him and everything, and it was the old Parr group. I got to thinking, well, if Lyndon Johnson was hooked up with those kind of people, he is certainly not the type of person that I'd want for senator, so that's when I changed and decided that I wasn't going to vote for that man.

G: So here's some background, now, that I think we're interested in, yes. There was a Parr group and there was an anti-Parr--

P: That's right.

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G: --group down here. What divided those two groups? What was at issue between them?

P: George Parr's political boss control.

G: But of course that's Duval County, supposedly.

P: No, it wasn't either. He controlled them here in Alice.

G: How did he do that?

P: Well, he had the financial institutions, and he was very free with money, and he had the district judge, which was. . .

G: Was that Judge [L.] Broeter?

P: I guess at that time, it probably [was], I don't remember, I mean I just don't remember whether it was Broeter or whether it was--

G: Well, he was holding the hearings.

P: Broeter was?

G: He held some hearings down here, as I recall.

P: Well, I guess--

G: It's not important. We can always research it and look it up.

P: I just don't remember who was the district judge at the time, but you know, when you're [controlling the] district attorney you're free from indictment and prosecution, and George controlled that.

G: Let's see. Ed Lloyd is a name that we come across very frequently.

P: That's correct.

G: He seems to have been at one point county commissioner and at another point district attorney--

P: No, no, he was a city commissioner. In fact, instead of being city

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commissioner, I think he was mayor. And George's brother, Givens Parr, was a city commissioner.

G: I thought Barney Goldthorn was mayor at that time.

P: He may have been at that time. Barney Goldthorn was mayor at one time, but I don't remember whether--well, now, Ed might not have been [mayor], but he was on the city commission.

G: Okay.

P: And of course Frank Lloyd was the district attorney, who was a brother to Ed Lloyd.

G: Right. What part was Homer Dean in all of this?

P: Homer Dean, if I'm not mistaken, about that time he might have been county attorney.

G: Okay.

P: Because he did serve as county attorney, and I think that's probably one of the things that scared Homer Dean and a bunch of them. They saw the light and that's where some of them started getting out of this politics around here, because you know when they go to asking you to do things that they're not going to get in trouble about, but that you as an official are going to get in trouble about, then that's a horse of another color.

G: All right, that sets the stage pretty well. Now let's go to the election itself. Let's go to the polls. Did you see anything irregular when you were out and about that day?

P: Oh, no, except that it was a very, very slow election. There wasn't anybody voting. There wasn't any interest, I think it was that run-off

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election, and I don't know whether there were even any other offices running that day. I don't remember whether. . . .

G: It sounds like people were more interested in the local offices, which were already settled.

P: They were over; they were already settled.

G: I see. Okay, that makes sense then. Was Precinct 13 notorious in any way?

P: Other than that it's where the last 200 votes--

G: But I mean was there any sign of trouble before that?

P: Oh, no, no, none whatsoever.

G: All right. What did you hear, if anything, about what the vote was?

P: When the polls closed, it was a very few minutes after the polls closed, the election judge took the returns down to the Alice News.

G: And that was Luis Salas?

P: Yes. He took them there, and I was standing at the desk when he gave the returns, if I'm not mistaken, at that time [to] a fellow named Cliff DuBois, who worked for the Alice News. It was something like Lyndon Johnson had 765 votes to 60 for Coke Stevenson.

G: More than 10 to 1.

P: That's right.

G: Was that usual?

P: Really not, when there was [not] a contested election. No, when we'd have an election around here in which there were contests, it was much closer.

G: I see.

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P: And there was a lot more activity and a lot more voting activity.

Then like I was telling you, when Mr. Adams went--and this was on a Saturday--

G: Saturday night?

P: On a Saturday night.

G: And you were there and Cliff DuBois was there?

P: Yes, and Luis Salas, and there were several other people. And I heard him tell Cliff DuBois and saw him write them all down and everything. DuBois ran across the street. I don't remember whether he phoned them in or--there was a telegraph office right across the street--one or the other, and turned those deals in to the Texas Election Bureau. Then next week when the [County] Democratic [Executive] Committee met to canvass the returns, it was 765 to 60-something, that figure. That's what they turned in. It was even printed in the paper. But I don't remember--you really make me tax my memory now--but when it came out officially it wasn't 765, it was 965, one vote one way or the other, to 60. Lyndon had gained 200 votes.

G: All right. And that's what caused the uproar.

P: That's right. That's when they started swarming in here: "What has taken place?"

G: What is your memory of the first sign that there was going to be trouble? That there was going to be an investigation, or that people were going to come in here?

P: When they had posted these returns at 765 to 60. And I think it came out in the paper the next Thursday, this little old weekly paper,

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[that] it was 765 to 60. But then when the Democratic committee met and it was 965, there was a 200-vote discrepancy, that's when things started.

G: Okay. What was the first thing that happened? Did the local people decide to do something?

P: No, we started getting some calls from the Coke Stevenson people.

G: Did they call you?

P: They didn't call me at that time directly, but I mean I think that's when [Kellis] Dibrell and this other boy--

G: [James] Gardner?

P: --Gardner, I think that's about the time they came down here.

G: Okay. So they came into town. That was the first representatives of Coke Stevenson to come to town?

P: I think so. I think those were probably the first ones that. . . .

G: Okay. In your own words, can you tell us the way things went, the course of events? Did they come to see you?

P: Oh, yes, they came to see me. Of course in those days, you know, as you voted, they wrote your name down on the voter's list and you had a number. You had a number on your ballot. And of course, I've forgotten what it was, in those days I'd even write my number down as to when I'd voted and stuff like that. But I was not voting in Box 13; I was voting over in, I think, Box number 1. We had had some real hot political races here, in the city, in the schools, and in the county. The Parr group was in complete control here. Things looked pretty dismal for ever getting out from under it, but like I said, they just

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got so bad themselves that their own bunch started turning against them.

G: Well, tell me what Dibrell and Gardner did. How did they go about their investigation?

P: Of course, when we first got the names that Mr. Adams got, we went to those people and asked them about voting that day. Some of them--I don't remember whether they got every one of them or not, but the majority of them that they talked to did not vote.

G: You say the names that Mr. Adams got--

P: Off the voter's list, and that last two hundred names.

G: Were you present when they went down to the bank to do that?

P: I was standing across the street, yes.

G: Were you? There are lots of stories that circulate about the confrontation that was supposed to have taken place.

P: No, there wasn't any confrontation, because there wasn't anybody that ran up to Frank Hamer.

(Laughter)

G: Did his reputation precede him then?

P: Oh, yes. They knew who Frank Hamer was. I mean, they knew he was in on the Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker deal.

G: Did the Parr people have some pistoleros down there at the bank?
There are some stories that there were.

P: Well, yes, but they stood off to the side.

G: I see. Okay.

P: And to my knowledge, Frank Hamer didn't even have a gun on.

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G: But nobody knew that.

P: I don't know. (Laughter)

G: Dibrell has said that when they got ready to come down here, they decided not to wear coats, because they wanted people to see that they weren't armed. They'd heard lots of wild tales about what went on in the county.

P: Well, I don't remember that or not, how they were dressed, but I was with them quite a bit during this investigation. They had rooms down at the old Alice Hotel, and we'd go down there and compare notes, what one [had] found out, and if there was any kind of a rumor, start running it down. The main thing they were trying to do was find all these people that Mr. Adams had the name of that had allegedly voted and apparently didn't vote. They would try and go and confirm that they had not voted.

G: Did you meet Wroe Owens when he came down here? I believe he was one of their people.

P: Who?

G: His name was Wroe Owens.

P: The name is very familiar, but I just don't remember him offhand.

G: Our records indicate he came down for a couple of days. He wasn't here very long and certainly not for the whole thing. But I thought you might have met him.

P: I remember the name, and if he was here I did meet him.

G: He told me that they got a Catholic priest to go with them on some of

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these visits to talk to these people, because they thought it might reassure them. Do you remember that?

P: No, I don't remember that.

G: Okay. Did you go and talk to any of these people yourself, or was that left pretty much up to Dibrell?

P: No, that was left up to those investigating people. I did not go with them.

G: How long did this go on, the investigating part? Do you know how long Dibrell and Gardner were down here?

P: They must have been down here for, I would say, probably a month. Because, see, the time was running short in which to do all this, because he was trying to keep Lyndon Johnson's name off the November ballot.

G: Right. Now then, let's talk about the hearings. I'm talking about the hearings when the special master came down from San Antonio, W. R. Smith, I believe it was.

P: Yes.

G: All right. They had a little trouble serving subpoenas on people.

P: Yes, they all took vacations, I think, wanted to go to Mexico and things like that.

G: They found a couple, though. They found Luis Salas.

P: Yes.

G: Let's see. They found Luis Salas; he testified. But they had some trouble finding him.

P: Yes, they did. He finally came back, wherever he'd gone.

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G: Do you know where he was?

P: I don't remember. I don't remember. I remember them speculating where he might be, but as far as actually knowing where he was, no, I do not know. No.

G: Let's see. They didn't find Tom Donald.

P: No.

G: Do you know where he was?

P: Well, they said he was in Mexico. I don't know.

G: Did you ever talk to him about all this?

P: Oh, not particularly, no, because at that time we were very, very arch political enemies, and he wasn't going to change my mind and I sure wasn't going to change his.

G: What about since that time?

P: Oh, yes, I see him at the post office every once in a while, and we don't ever discuss any politics, but we greet each other.

G: Is there an unspoken agreement that you're just not going to bring it up?

P: Oh, no, no, none whatsoever. I'd never change his mind; he'd never change mine. I have my opinion of what went on, and he has his.

G: Well, now, you were called to testify, as I recall.

P: Yes.

G: That must have been an experience. You were a young man, a very young man.

P: Yes.

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- G: What was the atmosphere like in that hearing room? Was it pretty tense?
- P: That hearing here in Alice or in Fort Worth?
- G: No, the one here in Alice.
- P: The one here in Alice? Oh, it was very tense. I mean, they asked me about what I had witnessed that night at the newspaper when they brought in the returns, and asked me about the number of voters that day, and then if I thought it was possible for two hundred people to vote in fifteen minutes. But I just don't remember everything that they had asked me that day.
- G: Sometimes witnesses don't get asked the things they'd like to get asked. Do you remember wanting to tell them something that they just never got around to?
- P: No.
- G: Did you have some knowledge that you wanted to get out?
- P: No. No. Anything they asked me I told them what I knew about it. As I recollect, I think it was Ed Lloyd that was questioning me, something to the effect that if this wasn't a personal grudge, or I had a lot of animosity about--
- G: Well, now wait a minute, let me think a second here. Ed Lloyd, I know, was present; I didn't know he was one of the attorneys. I didn't know he was taking an active role. Do you think it could have been [Everett] Looney that--?
- P: No, I don't--I just don't remember.
- G: But they tried to make it seem like you had a--

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P: That I had a personal ax to grind in it.

G: Did you?

P: Well, I'll tell you one thing, if I could've used my pocketknife and used it on any of them, I'd have made steers out of them. They disenfranchised me with my vote.

G: Was that the only grudge you had? So they'd disenfranchised you. Did you have any other reason? I mean, you were on the anti-Parr side; was there a history which the lawyer could have got at, of making you appear to be a--?

P: Oh, well, he probably--and I admit I was very, very prejudiced about lots of things. My daddy was sheriff in this county for twenty-six years, and he'd been approached by George Parr and them to--if he was to summons jurors and things like that for them, [if] he'd play ball with them, well, they wouldn't oppose him and everything. My daddy wouldn't accept their offer.

G: So they--?

P: In the last election that he ran, well, he had a heart condition and it was during the war, and I felt like that they contributed a lot to his earlier death than he might have had.

G: I see. So they made it pretty rough on him? Was he defeated then?

P: The last time he ran. But prior to that time they didn't--I mean the last time he ran, he was sick, he didn't get out of Alice but one time during the campaign. He just wasn't able to get out and do what he would ordinarily have done.

G: Sure. Who was that--Hubert Sain--that won?

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P: Yes. Hubert Sain.

G: He was the Parr candidate.

P: Yes.

G: I see. Did you stick around then for the testimony of anybody else at those hearings? Were you able to hear the testimony of--?

P: If I'm not mistaken, they wouldn't let us stay in there. I think they made us get out.

G: I see. Well, they invoked the rule, as they call it.

P: Yes.

G: I see. I see. So what did you do while you were waiting--?

P: Out in the hall.

G: Sitting around and chewing your fingernails?

P: Well, no, I wasn't chewing my fingernails, but I was kind of enjoying it, because they had them in a tight spot.

G: And all you had to do was tell the truth.

P: That's right. All I had to do was [tell] what I saw and what happened that day.

G: Who would you have liked to have seen on that stand that didn't get put on it, other than Tom Donald? I presume he's one.

P: I just don't remember. I don't remember who was--

G: Was Ike Poole in town then?

P: Yes, he was here.

G: Do you know where he is?

P: Didn't I tell you I think he's down in the Valley?

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G: Yes, but I've gone through every Valley phone book and I can't find him.

P: Maybe I can find out for you.

G: Did you talk to any of the Parr people while all this was going on? Did you know or care about any of them well enough to talk to them while this was going on?

P: Oh, no, I felt like they were all in the same boat.

G: They were all crooks?

P: Well, I wouldn't say they were all crooks, but they were all involved in a very shady episode, and a lot of them knew a lot more than they would tell.

G: Do you know what happened to Box 13?

P: No, I don't. I don't know what ever finally happened--well, it was finally destroyed.

G: Yes. But do you know who the culprit is? Let's assume for a minute that the two hundred names were added, which seems a likely explanation. Do you know who did it?

P: Well, the rumors are and it was alleged that Luis Salas and Hubert Sain--it was done over in the jail.

G: Yes. That's where the ballot boxes were kept.

P: That's where they took them to add the names.

G: Oh, I see. Didn't they take them there initially, right after the election?

P: I don't know whether they took them there or whether they took them to the district clerk's office--I just don't remember at that time--or

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the county clerk's office, I'd say, if they had--because as I recollect, I don't know whether those boxes were impounded. They were not impounded, I don't think. No, they were not impounded the night of the election. So they did not go to the district clerk, they went to the county clerk. And there is where Hap [H. C.] Holmgreen had the falling out with them.

G: How was that? Tell us that.

P: Hap Holmgreen was the county clerk, and they came to him and wanted the ballot boxes.

G: Who came to him?

P: I don't remember who Hap said, I just don't remember who it was. But they wanted the ballot boxes, and Hap was a supporter of theirs; he was pretty much of a Parr man, going along with them. But when they came to him and wanted the ballot boxes, he realized they weren't going to be getting in trouble, he was the one that was going to be getting in trouble, so he wouldn't give them to them.

G: How did that affect his standing with the Parrs?

P: Oh, from then on they didn't get along at all. They ran opponents against him and tried to defeat him and never were able to do it.

G: Okay, so while Mr. Holmgreen had the ballot boxes nothing happened?

P: No.

G: Whatever happened, happened after he--?

P: After--that's right.

G: Okay. They took them, apparently, from there to the jail.

P: Yes.

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G: All right. Now, Hubert Sain was the sheriff, so he has charge of the jail. Who was the jailer, though? You reckon--?

P: I don't remember whether it was Stokes Micenheimer, whether it was Mike McConnell [?] or--I would almost say that Stokes Micenheimer was the acting jailer at the time.

G: So he would have had to cooperate.

P: Yes.

G: Because he had obviously had the keys and so forth.

P: Well, I don't know whether he had the keys or not, but--

G: Well, he'd have had to let them into the jail.

P: Well, yes, yes.

G: Okay. All right. But you think it was Luis Salas who physically--?

P: I don't know whether he was the one who was supposed to have done the writing or who did it. I mean it's just--

G: When do you think it was done?

P: Man, I don't know. It was some time or another after--it was done after those returns had been turned in, and then [when] this investigation all started, they had to try to do something to put some evidence in there that somebody had voted.

G: Did you ever wonder why they didn't just go to Duval County? Why did they come over here?

P: Duval County was being watched very closely. It was kind of like one of these invasions, these armies, a diversionary invasion. This was a situation over here where they were in control to the point that they

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could pull an act like this and not be scrutinized or caught until after it was all over with.

G: I see. Why did Tom Donald have a bad conscience, as apparently everybody thinks he does?

P: Well, Tom Donald worked for the Parrs in the bank. And everything, his whole livelihood and everything that he had was at their beck and call.

G: So if he didn't serve properly he was out of a job.

P: He would be out, too.

G: I see. Okay. So you were kind of enjoying yourself at the hearings; you figured that the other side was--

P: Damn right I was enjoying myself! (Laughter)

G: How'd you react when the word came down that the hearings had to close?

P: Well, I guess I was just like any other loser; I was pretty upset about it.

G: What did you figure had happened?

P: That they'd gotten to Hugo Black.

G: All right. So what's the next act in this drama? Do we go to Fort Worth next?

P: No, if I'm not mistaken, Fort Worth took place before this deal down here because Judge [T. Whitfield] Davidson appointed Smith to come down here and hold this thing.

G: All right.

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P: See, when we were in Fort Worth, if I'm not mistaken, Jimmie Allred was in the courtroom for Lyndon Johnson.

G: That's right. No, I misspoke myself. I was thinking about the [State] Democratic Convention, which was also held in Fort Worth.

P: Oh.

G: But you were referring to being in Fort Worth--

P: Yes, as a witness before Judge Davidson's court.

G: I understand. How did you come to go up there? Well, I mean, somebody's got to suggest you, and somebody's got to pay your way and so on.

P: I guess it was through Dibrell and. . . .

G: Gardner?

P: Gardner. And in that whole investigation deal, you see, and since I had been in that newspaper office the night that the [election] judge, Luis Salas, brought the returns in, and heard what he had given and. . . .

G: Right. Is that all you did, you testified there the same way that you testified down here?

P: If I'm not mistaken, they wouldn't allow my testimony, because they said it was hearsay.

G: Okay. You could testify that there was a conversation, but not as to what was said, is that it?

P: That's right.

G: Doesn't seem to make much sense, does it?

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P: Well, a lawyer's got a way of getting out of everything that they get into.

G: Yes. Did you go to the convention?

P: No, no, no. It was a stacked deck from here. (Laughter)

G: Did you figure that it was all over after that?

P: Oh, I really didn't know. I knew it was going to be a battle, but I just don't remember what. . . . It would be interesting to go back and find--I mean, I don't know where you would get it, whether you could get a list of the delegates to the convention.

G: Well, we have a list of the executive committee which reported to the general convention that Lyndon Johnson was the nominee.

P: Yes.

G: Twenty-nine to twenty-eight was the vote on that one. Ed Lloyd was the member from this district, and he was paired with a woman named [Mrs. Henry D.] Lauderdale from Mercedes. I don't know if you knew her or not.

P: No, I never did hear the lady's name, don't recollect hearing it.

G: And of course Ed Lloyd's gone, so I can't get his version of it. But was there any aftermath to all of this here, in Jim Wells County?

P: Oh, it created lots of bitterness, and it started a lot of people to thinking that this wasn't the healthiest condition to live under. I guess out of every bad there's bound to come some good.

G: What good came from it?

P: At that time it caused a tremendous amount of participation by voters

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in the county. We had big percentage turnouts from then on; we had hot elections, and they were eventually all defeated.

G: So you think this started the downfall of the Parrs?

P: Basically, yes. Because, see, up until that time George was involved in these different political races, and he had made inroads into Nueces County, and what this all did, this focused national attention on it. Always before it was just kind of a laughing matter about what came out of Duval and about dead people voting and these lopsided returns that always came out. I mean, whoever he was for might get 4,000 votes and the opponent would get 20. It started other people to realize that things like this just do not exist, that there's got to be something wrong someplace, and it caused other officials, I mean state officials that had always accepted the lopsided vote before, to realize that "wait a minute, this may not be such an asset. It might incur the wrath of other--" Of course, in those days, well, it was strictly local things and a few state deals; you didn't have the federal laws and federal people that involved FBI, and Justice Department and things like that getting involved in situations like this.

G: Did the FBI come and talk to you at any time during all this?

P: I'm going to be honest with you, I just don't remember.

G: I know that they did some investigating, but I don't know how extensive it was.

P: Yes. Now that you've mentioned it, I remember them being here, but I don't remember whether I talked to any of them or not.

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G: Now, Luis Salas surfaced in I think it was 1975, may have been 1977, I may be off. And there was a big splash in the newspapers because he said he was going to tell the truth about it and he wanted to clear his conscience. Did you read those articles, do you remember?

P: I remember about them, but I don't remember exactly what all he said.

G: I thought you might have seen some points where you'd agreed or disagreed or thought he was--

P: I just don't remember.

G: Okay. What kind of a fellow was Luis Salas?

P: He worked for the railroad here for years, and he was a perfect tool.

G: Explain what you mean.

P: Well, he would do things for those people, and he was a kind of a--one of their lieutenants. I really don't know what he got out of it, except a blemish on his reputation.

G: Was he a tough guy?

P: No. No.

G: They say he rode with Villa at one time.

P: Well, I don't know whether--I tell you what, he would have had to be pretty damn old to have been with Pancho Villa, because Pancho Villa was dead a long time, I think, before Luis Salas was ever big enough to--or even maybe before he was born.

G: Well, he was in his seventies, I guess, when he surfaced with this story, but that would have made him born in 1903-1904. He'd have had to have been a pretty young man to have ridden with Villa at any time.

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Because I think Villa's career, active career, ended, what, about 1920 or so?

P: I just don't know.

G: Well, that's neither here nor there. Did you ever meet Lyndon Johnson?

P: Yes.

G: When did you meet him?

P: The first time I ever met Lyndon Johnson was when he was a secretary to Richard Kleberg.

G: Is that right?

P: Yes.

G: Tell us the circumstances of that; that sounds like an interesting story.

P: I just don't remember too much about it other than my daddy was sheriff here, and he was a very good friend of Richard Kleberg's, and at some time or another during Mr. Kleberg's tenure in office when Lyndon was his secretary, Lyndon would be down here, and I was with my father when they were in Alice.

G: I see. Then you met him through your father?

P: Yes. Yes.

G: You say that was the first time you met him; was there a subsequent meeting?

P: No, I don't ever remember meeting him face to face after that.

G: You'd said that at first you were going to vote for Lyndon Johnson until you saw that he was the Parr candidate.

P: That's right.

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P: I don't remember. I've talked to numerous people on the phone that are looking for information, or to confirm something, or something like that.

G: Right. Did anybody ever threaten you?

P: No. No.

G: I've had people tell me that they had been threatened.

P: No, they didn't threaten me.

G: Maybe because you were a former sheriff's son might have had something to do with--

P: No. Let me tell you something. When people are in the wrong, they can't fight very, very strong. It's when you're in the right that you can stand up and look anybody in the eye, and if somebody's wrong, they're not going to give you much static.

G: What was the source of Parr's power, in your estimation? How did he stay on top for so long?

P: He was dealing with a bunch of people that didn't know how to combat him, and it was easier to go along; he had full control of all the offices; he had full control of the courts, and with the bloc of votes that he had in Duval County, he could for all practical purposes elect any district judge or any district attorney, and that is the key to political control in any county or any political deal. If you can assure people that they are not going to be indicted, that they are not going to be prosecuted or tried, you can get by with lots of things.

G: The county judge, the--

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G: That changed your mind. Why were you going to vote for him? Was it because of your earlier meeting with him?

P: That's right. That's right.

G: He impressed you?

P: Yes.

G: I see. I see. What kind of a fellow did he impress you as?

P: Well, I just really don't know. I have forgotten how many people were in that race besides Coke Stevenson in the primary.

G: In the first--?

P: Yes.

G: There was a three-man race. [George] Peddy was the third man, a fellow named Peddy, P-E-D-D-Y, from Houston.

P: Yes, well, I've even forgotten that. I had, well, I guess you might say known of Lyndon Johnson through my daddy in that he [Johnson] was working for Mr. Kleberg.

G: I'm trying to think of where we go from here. What is there about Box 13 that we need to talk about that we haven't brought out? What seems to you the likeliest explanation of what happened to that box when they tried to get at the polling materials and verify who was on the voting list and so on?

P: Well, what happened was, if I'm not mistaken, Smith was standing there with the pliers and they were getting ready to open the box. I've forgotten who brought the message to the courthouse that Hugo Black had ordered the investigation closed.

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G: Now, he did open some boxes, I believe. Is Precinct 13 what they call the Nayer School?

P: Yes. That's right.

G: Okay. But you don't have any knowledge of what became of the poll lists?

P: No. No, I don't.

G: Luis Salas said that his copies were stolen out of his car while he was parked outside a beer joint.

P: Yes.

G: Do you think that's true?

P: No.

(Laughter)

G: I'm sorry to ask such an obvious question. I heard that Luis Salas is dead; did you--?

P: That's right.

G: He moved to Houston, I heard, and--

P: I don't know, I think he moved up there with some of his children or something.

G: Has anybody ever come and talked to you about this before? I mean, a lot of people have written articles; newspaper reporters have written articles.

P: Oh, yes. I've just talked to James Rowe and there have been several people who've called me.

G: Did Ronnie Dugger ever come and talk to you?

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P: Not so much that, that district judge is the all-powerful.

G: That's right, that's right, and the district attorney.

P: That's right.

G: And I suppose--

P: And of course the sheriff is very important, because when it comes to going out, I mean if they call for a jury or something like that and they don't get it, and that sheriff goes out and picks proper people to come up and serve as jurors, they can acquit the devil himself.

G: Was that common? Was that the way it went around here?

P: Oh, yes. They had jury commissions and jurors that were almost old professionals, I mean, they were called so many times.

(Laughter)

Your grand juries, you know, the same old people on the grand jury.

G: You said that some people after this broke with Parr, left him.

P: Yes.

G: I think you mentioned Homer Dean was one that saw the light, as you put it.

P: Well, he was not very active with them in supporting them openly anyhow.

G: So he didn't have much of a relationship to break off, I guess?

P: No, no, because he was just a young lawyer. Parr's whole connection over here was basically between the Lloyds and Parr.

G: Of course Homer Dean was in the Lloyds' law office at one time.

P: Yes, but he wasn't that big in the office; he was in the office and he

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was later county attorney, you see, so it really didn't--but he wasn't county attorney too long, really.

G: Let's see. Did you know Richard Barton from I believe over in Benavides?

P: I've met him, but I didn't know him that well, no.

G: What else should we bring up here, out of the fifties, let's say, out of the later developments? To your knowledge, did LBJ ever come down here after that?

P: No, I don't--not to my knowledge.

G: Some people say that he actually avoided the Parr people and that they were kind of insulted by that.

P: Well, I've heard things to that effect, but I actually do not know.

G: You knew Clarence Martens, didn't you?

P: Oh, yes, I know Clarence.

G: What was his role in all this?

P: He was the Democratic [county] chairman, and Harry Lee Adams had defeated him. Tom Donald was supposed to have been his secretary, and they had these records down there at the bank, and they were supposed to turn the records over to Harry Lee Adams. But they wouldn't do it.

G: If there was a law to that effect, why wouldn't they do it?

P: There again you go back to your district attorney and your district judge.

G: I see. Okay. So that was Clarence Martens' role in all that.

P: Yes. And I've forgotten what it was, but anyhow, Dibrell and the investigators got Clarence Martens and interviewed him. It happened

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down at the old Alice Hotel. He was about to give them some papers pertaining to all this, and his wife came rushing into the lobby and grabbed the papers out of Clarence's hand and stuck them down inside the front of her dress in her bosom and took off down the--wouldn't let Clarence give the papers to them. (Laughter)

G: Did you see this happen, or did one of them tell you?

P: They would tell us about all this.

G: I see. Dibrell was telling you.

P: Yes.

G: I see. I see. You don't know what he was about to give them or anything?

P: I don't remember. I don't remember whether that was one of those poll lists or what it was, but it was something that was very, very strategic, or very important, in this whole investigation.

G: He was called to testify, I believe, wasn't he?

P: Yes.

G: And of course, he was important because he certified--

P: That's right.

G: --the poll results. Didn't they try to get him to change his mind?

P: I don't remember. I think they did; I think they tried to, or something like that, and he was about to, or something. I don't remember what it was.

G: He was a Parr man.

P: Yes.

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G: Was he one of the ones that left them after this, or did he stay with them?

P: Really, Clarence was never in a position to where he could do a lot for them or a lot against them. Clarence was a--have you met Clarence?

G: I've met him, yes, sir.

P: Well, you know he's a hale, hearty, good-natured type old boy and he just liked to be in on the know in lots of instances. I think Clarence regrets lots of things that have happened; it certainly didn't help him to a great extent, and I expect if he had it all to do over again, he wouldn't have done some of the things that he did.

G: I'm not asking you to talk out of school, and please don't hesitate not to answer if it troubles you, but can you give me an example of some things that he might have done or that he wouldn't have done if he'd thought about it.

P: Well, I would certainly feel that if this were the same circumstances, the same things happened again, that he would have been a little bit more particular about what he--the fact, say, that Tom Donald was supposed to be secretary of this thing, and that they were able to get hold of lots of things that Clarence might have been legally liable for by letting it happen the way it did, and if he'd had his way, he'd say, "Well, wait a minute, boys, I just don't want any part of it, because I'm the one that's going to be--" And he was the one that was under the gun, because he certified all this stuff, you see?

G: Yes, indeed. Well, he got out of the testimony fairly well unscathed. I guess he just stonewalled them. Why didn't he go on vacation?

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Everybody else seems to have. I wonder why Luis Salas didn't go to Mexico.

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

G: All right, sir. Shall we shut it down for the moment, unless we think of something?

P: Well, I really--man, you've taxed my mind.

G: That's my job. I'm supposed to.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I

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