

INTERVIEW I

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INTERVIEWEE: CLARENCE REDFORD

INTERVIEWER: David McComb

PLACE: Mr. Redford's Office at Uncle Ben's Incorporated,
13000 Westheimer Road, Houston, Texas

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M: Well, to start off with, I'd like to know something about your background. Where were you born, when, and where did you get your education?

F: Well, I was born in Center Point, Texas, in 1908, October. My father died when I was about a year old. My mother moved to Johnson City I guess when I was about three years old and got the post office there, which was a small fourth-class post office probably paying some fifty dollars a month or something. She had three boys, and we lived there in Johnson City until the boys all left home to go to college. She remained living there until she died in 1958, I guess it was.

M: Emmette is your older brother?

R: Emmette is the older brother, and Cecil's the middle brother, and I'm the youngest of the three.

M: Did you go through elementary school there?

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R: I went through all school there, which was a one school building. All eleven grades were in the same building, and in each room there was two classes, at least two classes, because there wasn't but about five or six classrooms for the whole eleven grades. So your association was always with different classes as well as your own. Then I finished high school in Johnson City in 1925.

My first year in college was at Southwest Texas State Teachers College in San Marcos in 1925 and 1926. The following year I went to the University of Texas, spent a year and then taught school two years at Spicewood, Texas, which is in Burnet County. Then I went back to Texas and was there until I received a B.B.A. degree and then later a law degree.

M: When was that?

R: The law degree was conferred in 1935. In the meantime I had worked for the state auditor and state agencies and worked my way through law school working for the state and stayed with them until after the war.

M: Coming out in the mid-1930s was a tough time to be looking for a job.

R: 1931. I started to work for the state auditor. They were giving exams then. There was a state auditor by the name of Moore Lynn, who was the first state auditor in the state of Texas.

M: Is that L-I-N-D?

R: L-Y-N-N. The state auditor's office was created under Governor Ross Sterling. It was the first state auditor, and it was completely nonpolitical. They gave examinations and qualified people for jobs, and I got a job down there after taking an examination on a preacher's reference. You see, there wasn't any politics. In fact, I didn't even know a

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politician in those days. So that's the way I got involved. And after working a year or so for them, I got Moore Lynn to let me start taking courses in law school.

M: We might pursue that a little bit. Then when the war came, what did you do then?

R: I went in the Navy in 1943, stayed until 1946, early 1946, because I--

M: Were you overseas?

R: Yes, I was in the Pacific, there most of the time. I spent most of my Navy career, about eighteen months, at sea. After I came back, there was some conversation about me practicing law. My wife said she would be willing to even go back teaching school if I wanted to practice law. And I said, well, I had to settle down and get my frame of mind back. So I went back to the Texas Employment Commission, where I had been, as head of the tax department, and I stayed there until 1951 as head of the tax department.

Incidentally, the fellow that was indicted the other day succeeded me in that position.

In 1951, I came to Uncle Ben's as comptroller, and I guess about 1955 I was made a vice president. I've been vice president of service and finance since then.

M: You've been in Houston all that time?

R: Yes.

M: Well, now, let me ask you this then, when did you first meet Lyndon Johnson?

R: That goes back to when we were children. My memory hardly goes that far. As far as I know, he lived in Johnson City all of his life. He did, I remember, at intervals live up on the farm up on the Pedernales River where he now has a place, but he spent most of his life in Johnson City. I remember one period of time when he lived up there, and he came in, and we all went to the Interscholastic League meet, district meet, in San Marcos together. He apparently had won declamation or something up in Gillespie County, and

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some of us went down there together to compete in the Texas Interscholastic League District meet, which at that time was always held in San Marcos.

M: How'd that meet come out?

R: Well. . . .

M: Did ya'll win?

R: I really don't know. I competed. Lyndon was a debater, a pretty good debater, even in high school. I tried debating, but I didn't do too well, so I confined myself to declaiming and some minor athletic activities. But we did pretty well from the country out there. I went to the state meet, represented that district in declamation one time. I think Lyndon went to the state meet one time. I know one of my brothers, I think Emmette and his partner, won the district and went to the state meet in debating.

M: It sounds like there was a lot of interest in the schools in that sort of activity.

R: Well, the little county, Blanco County, was I guess not unusual. There was only really two towns in the county, and there was blood and thunder every time they got together, because interscholastic school competition was the lifeblood of both towns. They became quite anxious and almost came to blows at times, the parents, over whether the decisions were honest or not. I remember one time we had an Interscholastic League meet, the literary part of the meet, the debating and the declaiming and all that, in Johnson City, and everybody from Blanco comes. I think we in Johnson City won practically everything that year, and certain of the citizens from Blanco, including their lawyer and banker and all of these people, actually walked out and said it was dishonest decisions being given by the judges. The judges, I think, at that time were usually imported from the University of Texas or somewhere.

M: Did you get involved in athletics, too? Did the competition extend that way?

R: Yes. Oh, yes. We played baseball. We didn't play football. Neither school had a football team, we were too small. But basketball and baseball, track, yes. We competed vigorously, the two schools, on that basis, and other surrounding towns, but the big competition was between Blanco and Johnson City.

M: I see. Well now, you were a childhood companion of Lyndon Johnson. What did you do to entertain yourselves?

R: We usually found there was a--the block that our home was on was a country size city block, if you can call it that. It was a big block, and there was a house on each corner. All the area in the middle, except for a little barn or two in the middle that got in our way sometimes, provided a baseball ground for us, and playground. This block, which was just between where Lyndon lived and where we lived, actually it was the block on which we lived, was right in the center of the little town. It was somewhat a gathering place for all the kids around, across the street and a block or two away, where we got together to play baseball. So we played baseball all seasons of the year, I guess.

M: Is this with a hardball, or was it softball?

R: No, it was hardball. Softballs hadn't been created at that time, I don't suppose; we were playing hardball. And we played basket-ball almost year around at school. All year was basketball at school, except for when we stopped playing basketball and went in for the athletic competition for the Interscholastic League competition.

M: Did Lyndon Johnson participate in all of this baseball?

R: Lyndon was a pretty good baseball player, as I remember. Even after we got out of high school, we had a town team. We used to come back there from college in the summer,

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and we would play ball on the team that represented the town. The businessmen, or young businessmen, of the town were on it, and Lyndon and I played. I was a catcher, and Lyndon played first base, [he was a] pretty good first baseman.

M: He could hit pretty well.

R: I don't remember much about his hitting. But I remember he was tall and lanky and had good reach, and he was a good competitor. I expect he had as much fun out of it as anybody, true to his nature, I guess, in any kind of competition.

M: Do you remember if you played basketball together?

R: Oh, yes. We played basketball together in high school. He was one year ahead of me in high school, and I was rather small. He was taller than any of us in school. I guess even though we were about the same age, he was probably a head taller than I was when we were in high school. He may be even yet a head taller, but it was more noticeable then, I guess, among children. So he was a pretty good basketball player. Yes, we played basketball.

M: You played guard then?

R: I guess Lyndon was a center. He should have been; he was one of the tallest boys. The center was a very important person back in those days, because the ball was put into play at center after every score back in those days. It wasn't like it is today, where somebody scores and then the ball is thrown in and put into play immediately. After each score, the ball went into play between the centers.

M: There would be another jump ball?

R: They'd pitch it between the centers. So the center was quite an important position, because the team with the best center--

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M: Yes.

R: --was the one that was going to maybe get the ball more often at the center. So there was vicious play for the ball at center after every score.

M: Yes.

R: In fact, there were all manner of formations created. Colleges used to play this way, when I was in college, to where there was all manner of formations around the center position to get the tip-off.

[This is] kind of beside the point, but there was some pretty rough play around center to get the ball. You were trained to go through at high speed with a knee up to protect yourself, and so the center position was rather important. I think Lyndon played center; I think I played a forward. Back in those days, in the country we used to call them running forwards and standing forwards.

M: What's the difference?

R: Well, a standing forward didn't go down the court. He remained back up under his goal, and he remained ready to receive the ball if somebody wanted to throw it to him. This, I'm sure, was country basketball. But we used to always talk about a running forward or a standing forward. The same on guard. There was a guard who never did come clear down court, and you had a standing guard and a running guard. That's the way we used to rig it out there.

M: Yes.

R: But the game is much faster now in basketball. Back in those days it was a different kind of game, even in college, I think, from what it is today. But we didn't have any rule books, and we didn't have any coaches. The teacher of the school would attempt to help

us, but he probably didn't know much more than we did. We didn't have many formations.

M: Did you have trouble getting equipment?

R: No, we didn't. We played on an outdoor court.

M: Oh.

R: It was rocky, and whenever you fell, you usually got up with a bloody knee. These outdoor courts were quite common and maybe still are around the country, but everybody played on an outdoor court.

M: Did you just have a hard dirt court?

R: Hard dirt, and the one in Johnson City had rocks all over it. We had to mark it off before every game with ashes. We used ashes to set the boundaries, you know. So this was something you had to do before every game, is outline the court--

M: Did the players do this?

R: --and the goals. Oh, yes. So it made an interesting game.

M: Did you have a regulation hoop and backboard?

R: Oh, yes.

M: You didn't have to improvise that?

R: No, these were regulation heights and regulation goals, regulation backboards. But there wasn't any gymnasiums in the country like there is today. Johnson City today--I haven't been in it, but I know they have a gymnasium. They play indoors. All country schools played basketball outdoors.

M: I suppose the people who came to see you would stand around. . . .

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R: Stand around the side, yes. These were big events back in those days in the little towns. It was the main interest in the town, the school competition. Because there wasn't any other organized activity around town except through the schools. So anybody who was interested in organized competition, it always had to be the competition the schools were involved in.

M: Did you have cheerleaders and cheers and all that?

R: Oh, gosh, no. They didn't. We didn't worry about who was going to be cheerleader. No, everybody hollered all during the game. But you string a bunch of people out around a basketball court, and there is no way to be a cheerleader. I don't suppose we ever had a cheerleader that I remember in any school out there.

M: Where did you get your referees?

R: I guess we had two referees. Maybe we'd have one from each school, something like that. Because we didn't import, which was a good idea. You should always import referees that are presumably, you know, fair and not going to let his feelings influence his decisions one way or the other. But I don't think [for] these Friday afternoon games we'd have between schools--and that's when it usually was held, Friday afternoon after school--we [would] import referees. Somebody, I'm sure, from each school did it.

M: In the summer time did you go swimming? Was there a place to swim?

R: Yes. There was two or three places to swim out there. We used to swim, and Lyndon went with us a lot. I'm sure. He had a cousin, I mean a family, that lived close to one place. It was on their place that we used to go swimming. The river, the Pedernales River, runs about a mile from Johnson City, and we used to go down there a lot. Every swimming hole--we called them swimming holes--

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M: Right.

R: And this swimming hole had a name for it, but I've forgotten what it was, but it was on his aunt's and uncle's property. We used to go down there and swim, and I guess that was the main place we went swimming. It was about a mile from the little town.

M: Was it over your head? Was it that deep?

R: I guess not much of it. Most of it, I guess, was up about head high. It wasn't too deep there. The Pedernales River doesn't have many deep holes in it. It's not a deep river.

M: Did you use swimming suits?

R: No. I didn't even own one, I don't suppose, until I went to college. No, no swimming suits that I know of we ever had.

M: Did you. . . .

R: It was just the girls were supposed to stay away when we were swimming.

M: I see. Did you do a lot of horseback riding?

R: Well, no. This uncle and aunt of Lyndon's had a ranch out of town, and they had this place close to town. His cousins rode horses all the time. They were raised somewhat on the ranch. Lyndon, as far as I know, was pretty much like we were. We didn't own a horse. We rode some; we rode somebody else's horse around.

M: I see.

R: So I didn't do a lot of riding. I'm not sure, Lyndon, I guess, did when he went up on the Pedernales around Stonewall for visits or for tenures of residence up there. But as far as I remember, they didn't have a horse on their place in Johnson City, at what's known as his Boyhood Home now. As far as I remember, his house, what's known as his Boyhood Home now, was the single house on a whole block. It was over on the fringe of the little

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town. They had a little barn out there, and they kept a cow and a calf. I don't know, maybe another animal or two, maybe a horse. But that was another thing that we used to do, is go up there and ride Lyndon's calf on this big lot, you know.

M: Yes.

R: We didn't last long; the calf would throw us off.

M: Did you ever play any card games, poker or anything like that for entertainment?

R: Well, we didn't. It was a sin to own cards for some of us back in those days. We didn't have any cards in my home. I think Lyndon's home--as far as I know, his mother wasn't quite as prejudiced against playing cards as my mother was. They may have had cards, quite possibly did, but there wasn't much card playing until we got out of high school. When we came back from college in the summer around there, there'd be card games.

M: Yes.

R: Poker.

M: Yes.

R: Now the sheriff was watching out for this kind of thing, because everybody in town was against gambling. So what the boys did around town, they'd go out of town and take a blanket and drive down the highway, out to the edge of town, and then [they would] put their blanket on the ground back in just the edge of the woods, to where they couldn't be seen from the road, but they could see the road if anybody was coming. So then they would play poker on this blanket, and if they saw the sheriff coming, they'd break up the game, see, and they'd just be sitting around talking when the sheriff arrived.

M: You would just pick up the blanket?

R: Pick up or put away everything.

M: Yes.

R: One of the better stories, and I'm not sure I saw this or heard it or not, but there is a story years ago that Lyndon was involved in one of those games one time. He got behind, so he jumped up and hollered, "There's the sheriff!" Everybody grabbed the money, you know, and mixed it all up, and then the sheriff didn't show up. So they had to reallocate the resources again. I don't remember whether this was true or not for sure. It could have happened; Lyndon was somebody who was always trying to figure out a new way to get a job done. (Laughter)

M: Were local churches pretty strong and active?

R: There was three churches. Back in those days, we all went to all the churches. Each church usually had church just once a month. Maybe the Methodists, we'll say, had church twice a month. There was church somewhere every Sunday. Everybody had their own Sunday School of the three churches, and then they would go to the other church, whatever church was having a church service that day. Everybody in town went over there for church.

M: I see. Then they'd have alternate Sundays?

R: I assume that went on until after I went home. [In] little old towns no more people go to church today than then, but they try to have separate church services out there now. And there's even more than the three churches.

M: Yes.

R: So they, I'm afraid, just have a handful at each place, when we used to have maybe two-three hundred people at church on every Sunday, because everybody went to the same church for church service.

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M: Were there local dances, or was that frowned on?

R: Oh, yes, every Saturday, little local dances somewhere. Again, the Redford boys didn't dance back in those days. As far as I can remember, Lyndon's family didn't feel quite the same as my mother. I think he went to the dances, to my recollection.

M: Do you remember much about Lyndon's mother? She's supposed to have been an unusual woman.

R: She was a most unusual woman. I think there's no question about that. She, as far as I know, dedicated her life to raising her children. She was an accomplished woman, educated, very well poised. Everybody liked her. She, no doubt, instilled in Lyndon all the ambition he finally showed.

M: Yes.

R: She helped him. I'm sure she helped him in a lot of things, even when he was editor of the college paper in San Marcos. I'm quite sure she helped him write editorials for the college paper. Now maybe not all of them, but this is just an example of the support she gave him in whatever he was trying to do. I'm sure she did that for all her children.

M: What did she look like, do you remember?

R: Oh, it's been so long. She was a very nice looking woman, fair complexion, dark hair, as I remember.

M: Was she slender?

R: But a very attractive woman. What?

M: Was she slender or heavy?

R: Oh, average size. Lyndon got his size from his father. His father wasn't quite as big as Lyndon, but he was over six feet. I'm sure. As far as I remember, Lyndon's mother was, you know, five-six, or some average size for a woman.

M: Lyndon Johnson, from the people I've talked to and from what I've observed, has a great deal of energy, physical energy. He can work long hours and is very active. Now, was he that way in his youth, too. Do you know?

R: Yes, Lyndon--to answer your first question, yes. I think his whole success was based upon having stronger desire and being willing to put more in it than anybody. He won his first race in Congress that way. He won his race to the Senate that way. He worked harder than anybody. He would always lose thirty, forty pounds during a campaign.

M: (Whistle)

R: He would start into a campaign a big strong husky six feet three or whatever he was, and he'd come out of it just a shadow of what he started. He worked harder than anybody.

M: Was he this way in his youth, too?

R: I think Lyndon got some inspiration even after he finished high school. [That is my] personal opinion. In high school in those days, probably up through his first year in college, after which he left college and then came back, I don't have any recollection of Lyndon being ready to, you know, expend it all on anything.

M: Yes.

R: He liked fun; he liked people; he showed many of the attributes as a youth that were great assets to him later in life. But one of them that I think he didn't show as a youth was the desire to expend himself as much as he did [later], just actually use up his own self in trying to get any particular job done, like he did in a campaign and like he did when he

went to Congress. He worked harder than anybody, so he got to be speaker of the Little House [Congress] or something. Well, he didn't get this by accident. He worked for it. He knew what he wanted, and he went after and worked for it. I'm sure the same thing happened to him when he was in the Senate. How can a young chap that's just arrived in the Senate and been there a year or two become whip of the Senate?

M: Yes.

R: Except that he's chosen because they know they need somebody that'll work hard; it's a working job. And Lyndon wasn't looking for glory then; he was looking for work, I think. Because he knew through hard work he'd get what he wanted. It will come to you if you're willing to work hard enough.

M: So this is a key to his success, then?

R: That, I think, and his general sensitivity to people. I think his sensitivity to people he indicated quite early in life. Lyndon, when he was a boy, never did fight anybody. He annoyed kids, and they'd get mad at him. They might want to fight him, but Lyndon didn't want to fight anybody. He probably had his arm around them before long and making them feel good again. I can well remember when I was a kid, I was mad enough at Lyndon to whip him two or three times. And I used to threaten him. But as far as I know, Lyndon and I never exchanged blows after we got big enough to--you know, weren't just children.

M: Yes.

R: But Lyndon had a real like for people. He had an affection for old people, every old person in Johnson City. He made a point to go see them. When he went to college, he'd

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come back in the summer, and he was just a young chap, and he'd go around visiting all the old women in town.

M: Just talking to them.

R: No, he hugged them and kissed them. He really had an affection for a lot of these people. And they are, most of them--a lot of them are gone, and a lot of them going out there yet. There's a few of the older folks left out there, but in Johnson City I don't know if you'd find many of the older people that would have ever said many unkind things about Lyndon, because he showed them so much attention. I think it was a sort of an affection for people. He showed it to younger people, too, but at the same time, to get what he wanted, he had to take something from younger people. He wasn't interested in taking things from older people.

M: Yes.

R: Up until the time my mother died, and he was in the United States Senate then--well, he was I guess majority. . . .

M: Majority leader?

R: 1958, I guess that's when she died.

M: Yes.

R: He regularly came to see my mother when he came to Johnson City. I think he finally got so busy he didn't come quite as often. But this was an attribute that was quite noteworthy. At times, I think the Redford boys kind of felt like they had been neglectful of Mrs. Johnson. We didn't go see Mrs. Johnson like he went to see Mrs. Redford, but this was the difference in people. We didn't have that turn. As you've observed with my

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brother Emmette and with me, we're not that warm thing that Lyndon has. I'm sure people sometimes wonder if Lyndon is truly sincere--

M: Yes.

R: --in a lot of this warmth he showed toward people. I think it had to be. He had a good bit of sincerity and was maybe altogether sincere, because he truly liked people.

M: Where do you suppose he got this driving ambition to work hard that you mentioned earlier? You say you thought he got this after high school.

R: Well, I don't know much about it, you see, all that happened. . . . I'm telling you as far as I know.

M: Yes.

R: When he came back to college, and I guess that was about fall of 1926 when he came back to San Marcos, then he did well. He worked hard, and he tried to accomplish things.

M: Yes.

R: I'm thinking that some of this must have happened during the year that he was working; my memory doesn't go this far back, but I think he went with Ben Crider and some other boys to California, and he engaged in some of the hardest work he'd ever done out there.

M: Yes.

R: The story is that Ben Crider, who didn't finish high school, one of Lyndon's old buddies, talked Lyndon into going back to school and even helped finance him. I've heard this.

M: Yes.

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- R: Ben said, "I can't go to school, but I can help you go." Because he knew Lyndon had great potential. In years following, Ben Crider worked, you know, at jobs and was always one of Lyndon's closest friends. I assume he is today.
- M: You mentioned that you went to Southwest Texas the year after Lyndon left, and then you left and he came back. Is that right?
- R: He finished high school one year ahead of me, in 1924. He went to San Marcos that year, then when I finished in 1925, I went there one year. That year he was not there, but he and I both lived at what was known as the Pirtle House. And I'm going back up in that country--I haven't been in San Marcos in a long time, but I understand the Pirtle House is still there, and maybe they've sort of wrapped ribbons around it now because it was where Lyndon lived.
- M: How do you spell that?
- R: P-I-R-T-L-E, I guess. It was right there on the college campus. It was an old place when I lived there in 1925.
- M: Was this a rooming house?
- R: It was a rooming house and a boarding house. She had a few rooms, and she served meals. This was the Pirtle House. It was one of the more well known houses around there. I ate there for a while, and then I just roomed there after that and worked at the cafeteria for my meals. I was looking for some way to stay, and that was what kept me there, being able to eat at the cafeteria.
- M: Did you hear any stories about Johnson while you were there?
- R: Oh, there used to be a few stories, you know. When people would find out I was from Johnson City, they'd made some comment about Lyndon. I don't remember much about

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them. I only have the impression after, how long, forty-five years or something, that he was not always in attendance at class every day. You know, he found other things as interesting. I don't know this; I heard this around there, you know, that he didn't attend always regularly. Back in those days when you were in college and you didn't come to class, they hunted you up. You couldn't even leave town without permission. Schools were then operated on the basis that they were responsible for each and every out of town student, and they were supposed to keep tabs on them.

M: Yes.

R: So if an out of town student didn't come to class I guess for a day or two, they'd start looking for him. I understand they'd come to the Pirtle House and want to know where Lyndon was. This is rumor. It's been forty-five years, but I seem to have some recollection.

M: Of course that would be a story from the year before.

R: Yes.

M: He went off.

R: Then he left and came back the following year.

M: He may well have been a changed person when he came back.

R: Oh, yes. I think there's no doubt but what he was. Because he became editor of the paper; he worked at the president's office at the college; he was a debater; and he made a good record, scholastic record, as far as I know. So I assume when he came back, there wasn't a busier person on the campus. He was engaged in just about everything he could get his hands on. So I guess something did happen to him the year he was out of college.

M: Do you remember anything about his father, Sam Johnson?

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R: Well, yes. Yes, some. Of course, I remember him pretty well, I guess. In little towns, I remember, there used to be a lot of people you always wondered sometimes how they made a living. You know, it was quite obvious how my mother made a living; she ran the post office. But I don't have a continuity on Mr. Johnson. He was in the legislature.

M: Yes. He was that.

R: He did many fine things for people. One of his favorite pastimes, and you might call it that, was trying to get pensions straightened out for people who had been in the wars or whatever. He was to a lot of these country people someone that knew how to get to the person that could make these decisions and get these things straightened out, or know where the records were and how to search them. Mr. Johnson, I remember, was always engaged in some of that kind of activity, trying to help people.

M: Yes.

R: He worked for the highway department, as I remember, for a number of years. There wasn't any highway. There was one highway that came through Johnson City, but I guess he was in charge of the maintenance of that highway through a certain area of that country.

M: Were the Johnsons rich people or poor people, or somewhere in between?

R: No, they were not rich people at all. As far as I know, they didn't have much more money than we did. There wasn't any evidence of it. No, they were not rich. To say poor is relative.

M: Yes.

R: In those days, in a little country town, the poorest person sometimes was living the best; it depended upon what they were doing. You didn't need money. Lyndon did some of

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the same things the Redford boys did. We lived in the little town; we didn't live on a farm. I'm sure his parents felt pretty much like my mother did when she said that she couldn't give us land, cattle, or what not, like most people had around there. The only thing she could give us was an education. So she said she was going to give us each two years of college. I don't know how she thought she was going to do it. As it turned out, we helped each other. Being two years apart, we could go to school and work, go to school and work, which all three of us did. My oldest brother went to school two years, and then he taught two years. Then my middle brother went to college two years while the older one was teaching and was receiving help. Then finally I came along. I went to school two years and taught school two years. We sort of helped each other as we went along, while we were working in school as well.

So, poor. . . . We were poor. You know, a little country post office doesn't pay much. We didn't have any money particularly, but we had plenty to eat on. They had plenty to eat on. They lived comfortably as people lived in the country. That didn't mean they had a hundred dollars in the bank, didn't mean they had five hundred dollars in the bank, because people just weren't as concerned in those days. A lot of those people out there in these little towns were just trying to get by, because that's about all we knew how to do. We weren't worrying about accumulating money in the bank like a lot of us are today.

M: Was politics important to a small town like that?

R: Very important. Oh, yes.

M: You talked about it a lot?

R: Talked politics, yes, sure. Those people could tell you what was going to happen in any election as they sat and whittled on the street. Yes, politics. I grew up in this little town, and I had some appreciation of politics as just a little child.

M: Was this mainly state politics?

R: Oh, yes, primarily. National didn't count.

M: And county?

R: Yes, as I recall. Washington was a long way off in those days.

M: Yes.

R: Woodrow Wilson was an idol, you know. He was something you dreamed about.

M: Did local state politicians come by and speak, say the state representative from the county?

R: Yes. I'm sure they did. They had to come out there and campaign.

M: Were those campaigns well attended? Did people turn out?

R: Good, as I remember, pretty good.

M: They enjoyed that sort of thing?

R: Oh, yes. It was kind of like the Chautauqua or the circus. Political campaigns were, again, like high school athletics. They were just one of a few things you could do for diversion.

M: Do you remember any incidents involving Lyndon Johnson in the high school or the school?

R: No. The first time I remember Lyndon evidencing any real skill or interest in politics was, you know, when he was in college. I remember this. Welly Hopkins was running for state senator. I guess it was when Lyndon and I were in college. We were up there

for the summer, and Welly Hopkins came there to make a speech. Lyndon was acting as his manager there. So Lyndon got all the crowd together. What was going to happen was, Welly Hopkins was going to talk from the porch of one of the stores downtown.

M: This is in Johnson City?

R: Yes, so Lyndon rounded up some of us boys, and he was pretty clever even in those days. He said for us to watch him, and when he clapped for us to clap, and we'd get something started, you see. So he was going to be the leader and get some pep into this thing, and he rounded up some of us boys to help him.

M: Did it work out well? Do you remember?

R: Yes, I guess so. Welly Hopkins was elected and was a very outstanding senator, I think. He later went to Washington and did some kind of job up there quite well, very capable man. But it wasn't too long after this, I'm sure, Lyndon began to show more interest in politics. I guess he showed an interest some way in politics when he went down to Cotulla to teach school, because he hadn't been down there long before he must have gotten acquainted with [Richard] Kleberg. Then he went to Houston and taught up here for a while, and then he left and went with Kleberg as his secretary. Kleberg lived in the area. Cotulla was in Kleberg's district, you see. So I judge that's where they first [met].

M: Do you remember anything from actual schoolwork in Johnson City, any incidents or episodes involving Lyndon Johnson?

R: Oh, I guess I could think of a lot of them, because Lyndon was always into some kind of fun or meanness or annoying somebody.

M: Did they paddle kids in those days?

R: Oh, yes.

M: For misdemeanors?

R: Oh, yes. I don't remember if Lyndon ever got a paddling or not, probably not after he was just in the lower grades. Maybe all of us got a little paddling back in those days.

Lyndon used to be quite a clown in school. He'd probably remember this story. There used to be an old classmate of his named John Dollahite. John was a cousin of mine. John was sort of a timid fellow, we'll say, and Lyndon was always picking on John. Lyndon would get up and walk down the aisle, and then he'd stumble and almost fall down. Then he'd turn around and look at John and accuse John of tripping him. Of course, the teacher would jump on John. Lyndon was involved.

M: Just for the sake of our typist, how did your relative spell his name, Dollahite?

R: D-O-L-L-A-H-I-T-E.

M: Did you ever. . . .

R: When Lyndon went back to Johnson City not long ago, or some time back, after he was President maybe, they had a reunion of his old classmates. They had it on TV, or they made some picture of them. John was the only one that wasn't there. So Lyndon had to have his comment even then about John, that John was always too bashful and afraid of the girls or something, that's why he didn't come. That seemed like another story [I should mention].

M: Did you ever campaign for Lyndon Johnson?

R: No. I never was one that was very active in politics. I guess I might have gotten involved. When Lyndon was National Youth Administrator I was in law school, and he talked to me about coming up there and working with him. But my condition was that he would let me have a certain amount of time off to finish my law course. I also told him

how much money I wanted. I was giving him the terms, so he didn't hire me. Lyndon didn't go for that.

But a lot of the people who were associated with Lyndon back when he was National Youth Administrator stayed with him for years after that. Some of them were his secretaries, and others of them were involved in business with him. If you go back, and that was in 1935-1936, most of those people that were involved with him and working with the National Youth Administration at that time remained associated with him for a long time. Of course, some of them are practicing law, and some of them are doing one thing or another, but they have maintained an association with him. I don't know of anybody that ever was associated with Lyndon after he was congressman that didn't remain his steadfast supporter. I've got a number of friends in Austin that were secretaries and worked with him, and they're all steadfast.

M: He seemed to have a--

R: I don't know. There's something. There is something. He likes people, and they like him. He's awfully hard on people, I read, I'm told, and I'm sure he is.

M: He seemed to have had the capacity of making lasting friendships.

R: Yes.

M: Did you maintain contact with him after you got into college? I mean, you'd see him every now and then?

R: Just every now and then we would see each other, because we didn't live in the same city. He went to Washington, you see, in, I guess, 1936-1937, as a Congressman.

M: He ran in an election in 1937.

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R: He wasn't around Austin too much. I was in and out of Austin for a while, and then I moved to Houston. I've seen him. I have made opportunities to see him, and when I could to speak to him. His mother and my mother died a week apart, were buried in Johnson City a week apart. He was out there, so he served as a pallbearer for our mother. A week later we went back out there for the funeral of his mother. I don't know that I've seen him since then--that's 1958--I mean, to talk to him. I don't recall it.

M: Well, now, this exhausts the questions I have for you. Is there anything I should ask you about that I haven't?

R: I don't think so.

M: Well, I thank you for your time.

R: Yes. These kinds of things--I had said, I didn't know how this could contribute anything, but you and your people think that any record might help somebody.

M: Yes, that's right.

R: I may confirm some other things you've already heard.

M: Thank you.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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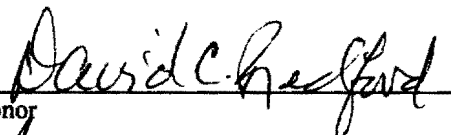
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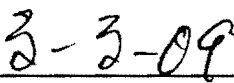
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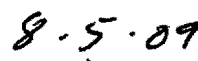
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