

## INTERVIEW I

DATE: April 29, 1987

INTERVIEWEE: DARRELL K. ROYAL

INTERVIEWER: Ted Gittinger

PLACE: LBJ Library, Austin, Texas

### Tape 1 of 1, Side 1

G: All right, Coach Royal, tell me about the Mack Hannah recruiting incident.

R: Well, I remember one of the visits I had with President Johnson. I was talking about recruiting and my concern about the inability to recruit blacks and said that The University of Texas had a racist image, which goes way back to [the] Heman Sweatt days, when all blacks were denied admission to the university, as they were in all other institutions throughout the Southwest. But they chose to make a test case out of The University of Texas, and Thurgood Marshall, incidentally, was the lawyer that handled that case. So I think starting way back then The University of Texas wrongly received a racist image above the other schools. We were no more racist nor were we less racist than all the other institutions, but, obviously, they chose a big state university as a test case to let the first black in.

And that carried on down through the years and still exists in some blacks' minds today, and I was having a hard time convincing black student-athletes that we wanted them on the campus. And he said, "Well, let me call Mack Hannah, and let's just meet out here

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at the Ranch.” I remember very well sitting out on the porch and going over the recruitment of Joe Washington, who was a top prospect at that time, and, of course, Mack Hannah was from Port Arthur also, where Joe Washington played--Port Arthur High School--and so we thought maybe we could be some help and a go-between. But, as it turned out, I remember President Johnson invited the Washington family to come out to the Ranch and have lunch with him, and they even turned that down, which was unbelievable to me. But anyway, Mack did try to help us in that one recruiting case at the request of--President Johnson requested it of Mack Hannah, that he do that, though we were unsuccessful. We didn’t get their attention at all.

(Laughter)

G: Oklahoma got him?

R: Yes.

G: That’s funny. Did LBJ express a lot of concern about this lack of black athletes at UT?

R: Yes. Actually, one weekend we made a big push and had as many of the top black prospects as we could get at one time, and President Johnson took a helicopter from the Ranch and landed on top of the Library here, and we had a little party, a little cookies and tea and milk and a little set-to in the suite here. He had a little nice, buffet-catered-type deal for those kids, and he talked to them about coming to The University of Texas. The little meeting took place, of course, right here on the campus, and I thought, “Well, gosh, having an ex-President of the United States show this kind of interest, this will make a heck of an impression!” You know, we didn’t get a one of those prospects.

G: Do you have any direct knowledge of why, what they were thinking?

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R: Not really. I just know it was hard at first.

G: Who was the first black athlete that you were able to recruit?

R: The first one to play was Julius Whittier, and through my contact and friendship with President Johnson, he wound up with one of the LBJ Public Affairs Scholarships, or whatever it's called. But Julius was a highly qualified student. He went on to law school, and he's a bright, bright young man, but he was on that--what do you call that? There's a scholarship or fellowship or--I don't know if it's called--it's financial aid, anyway, to study public affairs. But he was our first black football player to play, to actually play.

G: LBJ played a role in getting him the [inaudible]?

R: Later on he did, yes. But Julius qualified on his own, because he was an outstanding student. But we were able to get them to look at him a little bit special and consider his potential and capabilities, and, after they studied it, he was just really the kind that they wanted in that school. So he qualified. He earned it. He wasn't in there on a just strictly friendship basis.

G: Right. Who was the first star? Was it--?

R: Roosevelt Leaks.

G: Roosevelt Leaks?

R: Roosevelt Leaks from Brenham, Texas, was the first superstar that we had. And it paved the way and opened it up for Earl Campbell, and Earl was such a great person with both blacks and whites. He had no hang-ups at all as far as race is concerned, and he was just tremendous in continuing the work that Julius Whittier and Roosevelt Leaks started. Earl Campbell capped it off. And now, I don't think that's even discussed.

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G: Right.

R: I don't think it's even heard in recruiting. I don't know--I haven't recruited in ten years--but I think that's a thing of the past.

G: Right. Was LBJ a football fan?

R: You know, that was a strange study. I don't think he had been a football fan or all that interested, but after he left the presidency and came back to the Ranch, he got involved in watching the football team here at The University of Texas, and I don't think he missed another game. He traveled out of town. He went to, of course, all the games here. I remember we played Navy one year right after he got out of school [?], and he was at--it was an opening ball game, and the Longhorn band played a tribute to him. The halftime show was a tribute to President Johnson, which was fitting. But that pleased him a lot. He wrote me a letter thanking me for the tribute, and I didn't have anything to do with it, you know. (Laughter) That was one of those brownie points I got that--Vince DiNino, director of the Longhorn band, decided to do that, or maybe the administration told them to, but it probably was Vince DiNino's idea. We incidentally played a football game that night, but I had nothing to do with the halftime ceremonies.

G: Well, did you have to make any special arrangements for LBJ's attending these games, or was that in someone else's hands?

R: Well, we saw to it that he wasn't in the end zone. (Laughter) We saw to it that he had a place to park, because we wanted him to come, and it's just the respect that you show the president of the United States. It takes a lot of doing, as you well know, for the entourage, the Secret Service--

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G: Right.

R: --and everybody. But yes, we were delighted to do that, from the Athletic Department's standpoint, to make sure that good seats were available and parking, and make it as convenient and easy for him as we possibly could to attend those contests.

G: Right. I guess the Secret Service had special problems handling an entourage and getting through the crowd?

R: Oh, sure they did. It was always interesting to me when I traveled with the President to see the Secret Service operate. They did it as unobtrusively as it could be done, but still, they had to be there. But they did it so smoothly. They tried as best they could to just melt into the background, and they did a damn good job of it.

G: Did you know Mike Howard?

R: Oh, yes. Yes. I've been on a number of trips with Mike.

G: Did the President ever betray any annoyance with the Secret Service, that you saw?

R: No. He was just an impulsive person, and he gave them a fit because he would wander off the beaten path. If he saw a face that looked like they were friendly, or maybe he just wanted to go over and talk to them, he'd get off the trail that they had agreed to take, and he'd just go over there and start talking to a total stranger. But that was the nature of President Johnson.

I remember one time we were on vacation in Acapulco with President and Mrs. Johnson, and we had gone to a nightclub where Dionne Warwick was singing, and we'd gone in to see the show, and President Johnson--when we left, he got to visiting with the friends and neighbors that were standing around. And that Secret Service was getting

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nervous as could be, because the crowd began to gather, as you could well imagine. It was just like a magnet. They just started coming--piling out of that show and coming from everywhere, and they told me later that they were really relieved once he got in the limo and we pulled away. But they said, "You know, President Johnson is going to do what he is going to do. But our job is for his safety, and that's not the safest place you can have him, where you've got people that we can't see and can't watch all those people." And it was just a mob that got around him, and the President was enjoying it. He was visiting with them and shaking hands, and they took several pictures. But I'm told that--and knowing President Johnson, knowing his personality--that that was not an isolated case. He did that quite often.

G: Yes, he liked to press the flesh.

R: Oh, yes; he was great at it, too.

G: You were down in Acapulco. Did you play golf with him down there?

R: We played every day just about, which amazed me. But he would go play nine holes. We did on occasion play eighteen, but most of the time we played nine holes.

G: Did you ride or walk?

R: Oh, we rode. That was really some operation. We would pull up in the limo, and they had our carts--they would pull the carts right to the limo, and we'd put our shoes on in the limo and step right on to the golf cart and go right to the first tee and start hitting. There was no waiting time.

(Laughter)

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I remember one time we were playing, and I lost my sand wedge--I didn't lose it; I just left it behind on the green--and I jumped in the cart and headed back, and one of the Secret Service stopped me and said, "Where are you going?" And I said, "I left my sand wedge back there a couple of holes." And they said, "Hold it." [They] said, "You just go on playing. We'll get it." And with their communications, they had my sand wedge to me before I could play the next hole, and I wasn't used to--I've had a caddy before, but I never have had the Secret Service going to get my sand iron for me. That was kind of unusual, I thought.

G: What kind of a golfer was LBJ?

R: You know, he had a lot of strength. He could hit the ball a surprisingly long distance. It indicated to me that as a young person he must have played a lot of baseball, because he did have a powerful swing. Now he could not play golf, but he would go out and play golf and enjoy it. He seemed to really enjoy the golf that we played, and he'd just keep striking them. He'd hit four or five off the tee sometime, and--

G: You mean mulligans?

R: Yes, well, you know, who counts *his* score? (Laughter) You know, we didn't keep score anyway. We just played golf, and I remember--I guess you just want me to go on to different situations of this kind.

G: Sure.

R: We were again in Acapulco on vacation, and he invited the former President of Mexico, [Gustavo] Díaz Ordaz, to a game of golf, and we played, and they had some little bet of five pesos or ten pesos or something. It wasn't anything to--like a quarter or a dime or--

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probably a quarter. I've forgotten what it was. But they had a bet, and President Johnson won it on the last hole, and Díaz Ordaz signed a peso and paid his bet. It was a paper peso, whatever it was.

And it was about a year later that President Johnson had had that heart attack in Virginia, and he had come back to San Antonio and was in the hospital there, when he had them fly him back. Well, after he had been there a while, we got a call from Mrs. Johnson inviting Edith, my wife, and myself to come over one Sunday afternoon, and said the President wanted to visit with us. He wasn't supposed to be having company, but he did. And we go in there, and he's in a reclining chair and had a projector sitting by him, and I wondered what the projector was. After we visited a while, he said, "You know, they took some motion pictures of our golf game last year, and I thought we'd just look at the golf game today."

So he was in a sand trap on that last hole, and this was in the film, and I remembered that he had taken his club and raked up from behind the ball kind of in the sand trap and putted on up there. And I just kind of mumbled--I said, "You know, Mr. President, you're not supposed to ground your club in the sand trap." He said, "What do you mean, 'ground it'?" I said, "You're not supposed to touch it. You're supposed to keep the club suspended." He said, "Well, nobody told *me*! Why didn't somebody tell me what the rule was?" I said, "Well, in the first place, I wanted you to beat the Mexican." (Laughter) I said, "I'm not going to be the one to--you know, you haven't played much golf, and neither had President [Díaz] Ordaz, and I'm sure nobody thought anything about it." And he said, "Well, if I'm going to play golf, I need to know the rules." So the next



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time we were playing golf in Fredericksburg at Lady Bird Johnson Park, he had the Secret Service bring along the rule book, and we were reading the rules as we went along. That lasted about two or three holes.

(Laughter)

That was after he [recuperated]. As a matter of fact, I think it was his first day to leave the Ranch that we played golf. I know it was, because we just played a few holes. We didn't even play nine holes. But it was the first time since his heart attack that he had left after he got back to the Ranch--left the Ranch.

G: Was he visibly weaker?

R: Yes, he was, because he had had no sunshine, and he was pale, and he was a little bit weaker. I could see the difference. He tired pretty quickly, but they watched it real close, and that was what they recommended, you know, that he play a few holes of golf and get out and get some air.

G: You said that you figured he had played some baseball from the way he swung. Did he have a flat kind of baseball swing?

R: No, but he had a lot of power in his wrists and forearms. I remember one time--I think this was the time in Acapulco that we were playing with Bob Hope. We ran across him down there, and he made a golf game with the President the next day, and we were playing. I hit a ball, and I'm not a big hitter, but I hit it much longer than the average player, and I hit it out there real good. I caught the ball flush. And, you know, President Johnson was right beside me. You know, I'd played some golf, and he did it with no technique at all, just the

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strength in his forearms and wrists and hands. Of course, he had big hands. He was a strong man.

G: Did he have a natural slice, or did he pull the ball?

R: Oh, he had a natural hit-it-every-direction.

(Laughter)

He did not play good golf. But he had a good touch in putting without ever having played that much golf. I bet he didn't probably play fifty rounds of golf in his life. I know a hundred would kill it dead, because he just hadn't played golf--a hundred rounds of golf.

G: Golf is an awfully frustrating game sometimes. Did he get mad, or--?

R: No! No, heavens, no! It didn't bother him a bit. He just--he did it for the fellowship and enjoyment of playing, I think.

G: Had to have a bet most of the time?

R: Oh, yes. We'd--a little, you know, dime or quarter bets.

G: Right. Did he have a favorite golf partner? Were you his favorite golf partner, do you think?

R: I don't know if he played golf with anyone else or not. I know he'd call me about playing. We played in Acapulco, and then he'd call me about playing golf, and I was always reluctant to call him to play golf. I was sitting in my office one summer, and I got to thinking about my golf outings with President Johnson, and thought, "Well, you know, the ex-President of the United States is no different than I am. [If] I call a guy to play golf about five or six times, and he never calls me to play golf, I quit calling him, because I

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think, well, maybe he doesn't want to play. So I said, "Well, I would imagine that probably I ought to call. At least all he'd have to do is say, 'No.'"

So I called him and said, "Mr. President, I was just sitting here in my office and wondering"--it was during the summer--"and wondering if you might have an afternoon to play some golf." He said, "Where do you want to play?" I said, "It doesn't matter," and he said, "I'll come wherever you say." He said, "You want to play Austin Country Club? Wherever. You pick the place," he said, "I'll be there." Well, I knew the Secret Service and all that and how much confusion it causes, and I said, "Well, I always enjoyed playing the Lady Bird Park at Fredericksburg." He said, "I do, too." He said, "Let's just play there." And so he was delighted that I called him to play golf, and he told a number of people that came back to me how nice he thought it was that I would call him to play golf, and it was a good lesson to me that an ex-President is no different than anyone else. They like to be thought of, they like to know that you're thinking about them, that you enjoy their company, that you like to play golf with them, and I've always been thankful for that call.

G: Yes.

R: But I was always reluctant. I was just a little shy about approaching him, of asking him to do something with me. I always waited for him to ask me.

G: Well, that's perfectly natural.

R: Sure. Sure. I think that's a natural reaction.

G: Let me get back to football a little bit now. He--I've heard he would come down to the locker room at halftime.

R: He never did come at halftime. He came after the game.

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G: After the game.

R: He came after the game some. You know, another thing I tried [to do] to make it more enjoyable for him--before the football season started, I would take a couple of guys--two or three players, two or three of the key players out to the Ranch. I said, "Mr. President, I would just like for you to meet some of these young men." He said, "Well, fine. We'll have them out here, and we'll have lunch and just visit." So I had a number of those players out there, and he got to see them firsthand and visit with them, and then they're not just a number running around out there in headgear with those big pads on that you can't see at all from the stadium. There's an individual in those pads. And I think that sharpened his interest some, that he knew some of the participants, and, of course, he knew me as a coach, and I think it made it a lot more enjoyable for him.

G: Yes.

R: He wanted Bertleson to carry the ball all the time after he met Jim Bertleson. And I wanted Jim to carry it, too. He was a good football player.

G: Well, he went with you to Jim Bertleson Day back in his hometown, didn't he?

R: Yes. Yes, we were again in Acapulco. Just the two of us were left there. It was in a changeover. He'd have a group of guests come down to stay a week, and then they'd leave, and then another group would come in. Well, he asked Edith and me to stay for the two weeks, and this was the day of transition of the two different groups coming in, and Mrs. Johnson and Edith had gone down to the Yucatan, looking at the pyramids and whatnot on the day off, and just the President and I were there. We were sitting in a reclining chair outside, and the sun was going down, and he said, "You know, I got an invitation from Jim

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Bertleson--they're having Jim Bertleson Day--to go up to Wisconsin and honor Jim Bertleson." He said, "Now I hate to go by myself. I know you don't want to be fooling around with an old, retired man, but if you'd go up there with me, we'd just go up and honor that young man." And, of course, I said, "Well, you know, Mr. President, I'd be delighted to go anywhere that you'd want to go."

He said, "Well, let me ask you something else." He said, "Are you a can-do man, or are you not a can-do man? Can you get us transportation, or have I got to handle that, too?" (Laughter) I said, "Well, I'm sure that can be arranged, Mr. President." So we went up there, and he said--before we went into the banquet, he said, "Now, I'm not going to stay." He said, "We need to get on back to Texas. As soon as this is over, let's go right straight to the plane and get on back to Texas." And I said, "Sure, sure. Yes, sir."

You know, he stayed and visited with those farmers in Hudson, Wisconsin--he must have stayed an hour-and-a-half. Stood around and talked to those people. There's another one of those cases of just impulsive reaction. It's a natural reaction. He was friendly. Those farmers and all had received him well, and he was having a good time. He spoke there that night, and finally we got back to the airplane, and he had a big pillow and a blanket, and he said, "Well, I'm going to sleep going home." He said, "You guys can do what you want to." (Laughter) So he slept the rest of the way from Wisconsin back home.

G: Well, it sounds like he was among people he understood.

R: Oh, yes. Yes. He really had a good time visiting with those folks in Hudson, Wisconsin. It was plain; he had a big, radiant smile. He was in his own element with those folks.

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G: Let me get back to his visits to the team after the game. What would he be prone to say-- let's say, if the team had won, which they were doing a good deal of in those days, what kind of speech would he make?

R: I don't ever recall him speaking to the squad. He may have, and it seems like I would remember that. I was so darned excited--it was after a bowl game. I remember we had played Notre Dame, and we had just won a national championship, and the President came down in the locker room. I took him--I do remember taking him and walking around the locker room, introducing him to different players. I'm sure that I whistled everybody up and got them silent for a minute and said we were glad to have President Johnson, and I'm sure they put a little, quick applause, but I don't recall asking him to talk. I don't think I would probably put him in that position, although he wouldn't have been at a loss for something to say, I'm sure of that.

G: That year of the national championship I think he attended the gathering at Municipal Auditorium, didn't he, when they presented the trophy?

R: Mrs. Johnson was there and presented the Associated Press trophy to the squad.

G: Right. I have a note to that effect. Now, I may be talking out of school, but you said on the phone that you didn't know anything about politics, and he didn't know anything about football, so you all avoided those subjects. Is that true?

R: We didn't have any choice but to avoid those subjects because we--well, we just visited. It was an unusual relationship that we had. We talked about grandkids. We talked about his childhood, my childhood. We just visited, and conversation seemed to flow. It never did

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have to be manufactured. He would like to ride around the Ranch. He always drove. And we'd do that.

G: What kind of driver was he?

R: Oh, he never concentrated on driving. He was always talking and looking some--but we were just easing through there. We were driving slow, and it was inside the Ranch when I rode with him, but he was constantly visiting and talking. There were very few moments of total silence.

G: Right. Did you ever go hunting with him?

R: No, I never did. No, I was never invited to, but I wasn't much for hunting anyway.

G: Yes. Let's see. Did you come to the Library dedication, when they--?

R: Yes. Yes, I did.

G: What are your recollections of that?

R: Well, I was always in awe and just had to pinch myself to realize that I was in this type of company, but I remember it was a beautiful setting. Of course, they had the ceremonies right in front of the library here, and I was seated on the bank, grass bank, on the far side, and it was really very impressive, and I thought how lucky The University of Texas was to have him choose to have his library here on our campus, and here's a man that is President of the United States that I knew personally. I was very proud of that, and I'm sure that a lot of Texans had a great deal of pride that day when the LBJ Library was dedicated.

G: Right. I came across an article in 1971, August of 1971, by Ed Livermore noting that you and LBJ were at the Headliners Club together, and Livermore said that you and he were "real cronies," he said. I presume that's his term. He said that LBJ would take a helicopter

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to the Library and a limousine from there to the stadium for the games. Was that the physical arrangement that he usually--?

R: I really don't know how he arrived. We made everything available at the stadium from an Athletic Department standpoint, but the other things, I don't--you know, I never did ask and never thought of it.

G: Wasn't that the year, 1971, when they did the major face lifting on Memorial Stadium?

R: I don't know.

G: I remember that there were some delays, and LBJ was impatient because things weren't getting finished when he wanted them to be finished, and I thought you might remember something of that.

R: I don't remember that. I remember we got a--he probably was one of the reasons that we got an outstanding swimming facility--

G: Oh, really?

R: --on our campus. At the fountain--as you leave here and go up the campus, there's a fountain up there, and it was a hot day, and a bunch of the students kind of got out of control, jumping in there and swimming, and they thought that the President was going to be all upset about that, and he said, "Well, where do you have for them to swim? Where can they go?" He kind of took the side of the students. He said, "Well, I think you ought to get something built so those kids can go swimming." (Laughter) So we wound up--I know that was some of the impetus that--Frank Erwin then was on the Board of Regents, and he got that swim center in and a bunch of other facilities, but that was a little sidelight to giving it encouragement to go ahead and get a swim facility built for our students.



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G: Well, there was a swimming pool in Gregory Gym, wasn't there?

R: It wasn't much. It wasn't near the size--it wasn't the size enough to handle--and we still don't have enough for all the students to go swimming, but that wasn't very large. We had--well, they said, "Yes, we do have this here." And he said, "Well, how big is it?" And he started quizzing them. He said, "Well, don't you think we need something bigger than that?"

G: He could be hard to resist in a situation like that.

R: Oh, yes. He asked the right questions. He knew how to press a point.

G: He is famous for what they call the Johnson Treatment. Did he ever put the treatment on you when he wanted something?

R: Well, no. He never had to. I never had anything, you know--I didn't have anything that I could do for President Johnson. I was amused at times--I would go through a receiving line and felt that I needed to, and President Johnson would stop sometimes and just make a big to-do of me being there, and he would announce in a pretty loud voice to different people and the folks standing around. Other times, he would reach out and take my hand and literally pull me by and never even look at me. And I never was offended by that because I understood that he had other things on his mind, he had other people that he needed to see about, and I was actually complimented by it because I felt that he knew that I did understand and that he didn't have time to spend with me, and "Move on."

G: Yes.

R: He'd see somebody behind me or something that he needed to spend some time with. So I was treated from like I was a big-time celebrity to where I was just--he would hardly even

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catch eye contact. Just take my hand and pull me right on past, and that was fine. I enjoyed both--(Laughter)--I enjoyed being treated both ways.

G: Let's see. Here--I think this is the note I have from March of 1972. You brought football recruits to meet with LBJ at the Library on March 23. Was that when--?

R: Yes. That would be it.

G: That was when they met in the suite. On June 2 you and LBJ went to the Kerrville Folk Festival, which was his first public appearance since his heart attack [inaudible].

R: Well, we played golf, see. We played golf that afternoon at Lady Bird Park, and then we went back to lunch, and he rested, and we drove over to Kerrville. And when we walked in, they couldn't have had a better person on the stage: Kenneth Threadgill, that just died recently, was on stage, and, of course, he was a big Jimmy Rogers fan and sang it very well. But right after we were seated, Kenneth Threadgill started singing the song, "All around the water tank, waiting for a train," and Mrs. Johnson said, "I know that song. I used to hear that at"--I think it was her grandfather's grocery store in East Texas. She said it was on a jukebox there, and she used to hear that--or a Victrola or something. But anyway, she said she used to hear that song over and over, so she identified with the song, she knew the song, and it just made everything really nice and pleasant.

G: Did he have a good time at that festival?

R: He seemed to have an excellent time. He enjoyed Kenneth Threadgill. He was amazed that--he enjoyed anything that created excitement. If there was some focal point, some person that had a crowd captured, whether it was speaking, entertaining, or playing football,

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I think he enjoyed watching the reaction that they got from an audience that was around. I think he enjoyed anything that there was some excitement and electricity about.

G: Now, you shared a lot of meals with LBJ, I'm sure. Did he stick to his diet? I know he was on a diet.

R: I don't--(Laughter)--I think that was a constant problem. Now you're getting into an area that I'm not totally familiar about. I do remember him saying, "Now, I've told those people that I like sweets, and I'm going to have some sweets." He talked about it. He'd talk about the diet more than he actually stayed on it, I think.

G: Of course, he had quit smoking back in 1955 when he had had his first heart attack, but I've heard a lot of reports that he started up again the last year of his life. Did you see him smoke that year?

R: Occasionally. It wasn't as much as it was.

G: Was it cigarettes or tiparillos or--?

R: You know, I've forgotten. Cigarettes or any kind of smoke bothers me, and I always try to stay--I try to move away from it as much as I can because, you know, it makes me sick. I will get dizzy and nauseated when I--so--but I don't remember, you know.

G: Okay.

R: I just know that anybody smoking, I tried to get away from them or get away from the draft of the wind, get on the other side of them.

G: Upwind?

R: Right.

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G: That last fall, now, I have one note that he went to the OU [University of Oklahoma] game and that he went to the Cotton Bowl, but I haven't been able to determine if those were the only games he went to. Do you recall?

R: No, those weren't the only games he went to. I don't think he missed a game. No, he went to games--I know he traveled; I think he went to all the games.

G: His foreman, Dale Malechek, was a big football fan, I think. Did you get to know him pretty well?

R: Yes. An Aggie. Yes. Oh, yes, I know Dale. I knew Dale. I haven't seen him--

G: Well, he's passed on.

R: I know he passed away, but I didn't see him after--you know, after President Johnson died I didn't have occasion to be out there. I've seen Jewell a couple of times, but Dale--I didn't see Dale that much even when I was out at the Ranch because he wasn't around. Jewell was, because Jewell worked as his secretary and was always around, but Dale was taking care of that Ranch, and he was usually at home at night.

G: Right.

R: I didn't see him.

G: We had some correspondence from 1966 about the presentation that you and some other coaches made in the Cabinet Room. Would you tell me the background of that?

R: I was on the Board of Trustees of the American Football Coaches Association, and they wanted to give President Johnson this award, and they knew that I knew him, so they asked me to ask him if he would accept the award. And I did, and we invited him--we had our convention in Washington, D.C., that year, and they were hoping that he would come and

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accept the award at a luncheon, but he was much too busy for that and probably too busy for what he did agree to do. But he said that he would accept it in the Oval Office, and they gave us the number of people that we could bring--that we could invite, which included the Board of Trustees, and then some people that I was able to select, my coaching cronies. And he accepted the award in the Oval Office.

G: Yes. I noticed you got Bud Wilkinson in. Is that right?

R: Well, you know, I needed to get my old coach. I needed to get Bear Bryant because I knew President Johnson would enjoy him, and he would enjoy President Johnson. I needed to get Ara Parseghian, the Catholic, and I needed my good black friend, Jake Gaither, from Florida A&M. Old Jake Gaither stood there, big old tears rolling down his cheeks. I never will forget that. And he still talks about it when I run into him. That was one of the biggest thrills he had ever had, being in the Oval Office meeting the President of the United States. President Johnson was attentive to him. As a matter of fact, he was attentive to everybody that was in there, but he kind of migrated over and was especially attentive to Jake Gaither and to Bear Bryant. The personalities of Bear Bryant and President Johnson were very similar. (Laughter) They were much alike.

G: Could I get you to elaborate on that?

R: Well, I can't describe it, but I know that they're just alike. I know when I was making up that list I was visiting with Edith. I said, "I've got to get Bear on the list, but I am concerned about it." She said, "Well, what are you concerned about?" I said, "I'm not so sure that little old Oval Office is big enough for the both of them at one time!"  
(Laughter)

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And she laughed because she knew what I was talking about. But, of course, Bear enjoyed it. He enjoyed meeting President Johnson very much, and vice versa, too. It was a good meeting, and I was thrilled that he would do that for the football coaches' association. It was a highlight of a lot of our careers.

G: Sure.

Tape 1 of 1, Side 2

G: I have a note here from March of 1967, about noon, that you were out at the Ranch with Colonel Harold Byrd. Do you recall that visit?

R: Yes. I was in Dallas, and I was headed back to Austin, and Colonel Byrd--some way I met him, and I've forgotten the circumstances, but we were together, and he said, "I'm going to Austin. Why don't you ride with me?" Well, I had a plane that was ready to leave, a commercial flight, and I really wanted to come on home, but he kept insisting that I ride down with him. Well, Colonel Byrd's always been a big booster and a backer and was a personal friend of mine, and he seemed to want me to ride with him so much that I said, "Well, okay. I'll stay and ride with him."

Now I wasn't told that we were going to the Ranch or that he was going to go into the Ranch. And he wanted to go see President Johnson. President Johnson was there, and I heard him say that I was on board the airplane when he was talking to the security, trying to get permission to land. Well, I didn't--you know, I didn't even know we were going by there, and I'm in the airplane and nothing I can do, and I think the President might have been a little irritated by it. For some reason, he didn't want to see Colonel Byrd at that time. He had other things that he had to be doing. And I tried to hide in the back of that

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airplane, but they already knew I was--I stayed--I wasn't going to get off the plane. I was just going to sit there until he got in and saw the President or whatever he was going to do. And some of the people from the Ranch came in there and said, "Come on. You need to go say 'Hi' to the President." And I said, "I really don't need to." I said, "Let Colonel Byrd go on, I'd just take up time." They said, "No. Come on." Said, "He is expecting you and wants you to come on." So I remember that he had had something cut off his hand, one of those sun deals--sun--little [skin] cancer things, and I remember he put his hand out and shook hands with me left-handed--

G: Left-handed.

R: --and this was one of those pull-by deals. (Laughter) I felt about two inches high, because I didn't think we were supposed to be there in the first place. And I didn't know that this was going to be a side trip.

G: Do you think Colonel Byrd kind of used your name to open doors?

R: I felt that way, but I'm not so sure. Colonel Byrd had influence of his own. But I would have never wanted my name used for permission to land at the Ranch without an invitation or without it being set or without having called beforehand. And I know my name was thrown in there, and I didn't know it was going to be. I didn't even know we were going by.

G: Right. Okay.

R: But it turned out okay. The President knew that I wasn't involved in the deal. If there was any conflict between him and Colonel Byrd, that was their problem.

(Laughter)

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G: Do you remember a UT [The University of Texas] Distinguished Alumnus Awards gathering where LBJ was up on the podium, and they had music, and he reportedly played the tambourine?

R: I don't recall that.

G: Okay. It was in Gregory Gym, or at least it was reported that way.

R: I probably wasn't there.

G: When was the last time you saw him?

R: You know, I don't recall. I know where I was when I heard about his death. I was on a recruiting trip in Houston, and I was scheduled to go out and visit with a prospect, and I was driving down the highway and heard it on the radio. I just really had a real sick feeling, and I went--I made my visit because I was scheduled to go talk to this prospect, and then I went back to the hotel and had a call from Woody Woodward. Woody called me and said the family wanted me to stand by the casket when it was in state here at the Library, and of course I did. I just left. I canceled the rest of my recruiting trip and came on back home. I just didn't--I wasn't up to recruiting right then.

But when the last time I saw him [was], I don't recall, but I know it hadn't been too long. I knew I would miss that man, but I didn't realize how much I would miss him because it was such fun times. He was fun to be around. He had a great sense of humor. He liked to stir things up and then just back off and watch--watch everybody in confusion.

G: Was he a prankster?

R: Pretty much. Yes, he was a little devilish.

G: Can you give me any--



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R: I don't recall anything except he'd just make little comments, and he would wink, you know. But he knew that what he said would get a reaction. Then he'd just lean back and watch all the confusion, watch all the commotion. And he was just playing with people's minds. You knew it. That's the way he was when he was on vacation and having a good time.

G: How would he spend vacations, other than playing golf, of course? What did he like to do?

R: Well, when I was down--when I was with him, we'd go out, and--we were right on the water, and we would walk down to the water, and we would spend quite a bit of time in there just kind of wading around in the water and then go back and get in those reclining chairs and visit and talk and watch the sun go down, go for walks. It seemed like there was always something doing, always somebody visiting, always going to see somebody.

I know that we went over to Merle Oberon's. She was there one night, came for dinner. And we had eaten, and she was sitting in the chair by the President, and the President had leaned back, and he was holding her hand. And he went sound asleep, and he still had hold of her hand, and she was there with her--she's got her hand and he's gone to sleep! (Laughter) And she didn't know whether--you could just see it. She didn't know whether to turn loose of it or what to do. But he didn't stay asleep very long, just a short time, but after it was over, he woke up and came back to, and he got back in the conversation as quickly as he could, and when we moved from that spot, he eased over by me and said, "Did I snore?" (Laughter) I said, "No, Mr. President, you didn't snore. You just catnapped; you were just off less than a minute." But the first thing he said was, "Did I snore?"

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G: He could catnap, then?

R: Oh, yes. He would do that.

G: He liked the water, didn't he?

R: He really--he always did. I know we innertubed in the Pedernales River one time, those little old perch biting at us and those girls screaming and hollering. They didn't know if it was--they, of course, thought all those little nibbles were snakes. But the little old perch would come up, and they'll nibble at your legs.

G: Everybody who's swum in the streams in Texas knows that sensation.

R: Sure. Sure. I was in the water with him there in those innertubes, and then in [inaudible]--

G: Did he ever actually swim, or did he just like to get in the water?

R: Never did see him. We'd just get in there, we'd just get up to about our chests and just kind of wade around, just kind of splash around. I don't like to swim. I don't swim. I can't swim. I can dog-paddle. So I don't like the water other than just to get in it, but I sure like my head well above it. (Laughter) I don't like to go under water, and I never did see him go under water.

G: Did you know him to exercise in any other way, other than playing golf?

R: No. Slow walk.

G: Yes. He did like to walk, didn't he?

R: Slow walk.

G: What was his physical condition after that second heart attack? Now, I've heard that he was in considerable discomfort the last six months or so.

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R: Of course, I'm into an area that I'm not too familiar with. I do remember vividly we were walking, and it was kind of hilly, a sidewalk. It was up and down the hill in Acapulco, and he stopped and took his little box out and put a couple of pills in his mouth, which--you know, that scared me. I mean I--he just said, "Need to sit down here just a minute."

G: Nitro pills, I suppose?

R: Yes. Yes. So we sat down there, and I was kind of hoping we didn't continue walking, but after we sat for a little bit, and then he got up and started walking again.

G: But he never complained about--

R: No. He just briefly said, "We need to stop here. I'm a little dizzy." And he took a couple of those pills.

G: Was he short of breath?

R: He seemed always to be short of breath to me. When we'd play golf and, you know, he'd bend over to tee his ball and then raise back up--he was a little overweight, and I don't think he got much exercise really.

G: You mentioned that he had a sweet tooth. Did that present--did Mrs. Johnson fuss at him when he would sneak things?

R: Not in front of us. Mrs. Johnson never was anything but just as sweet and nice as she could be. I never heard any fussing at all, or any, you know, "You shouldn't have this," or "You shouldn't do that," or--I don't--I didn't recall any of that. I'm sure she was concerned about it, because she knew that he wasn't supposed to be on that diet. It was kind of like when he had that conference here at the Library, it was the--

G: The civil rights conference?

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R: The civil rights conference. The weather was horrible, the streets iced, the highways iced, and the doctor told him he could not come to it, and he said, "Well, just get your gear ready. We're going." Well, I'm sure she didn't want him to come to that, and he probably shouldn't have come, but that was President Johnson's way. My guess from my viewpoint was that he kind of wanted to adhere to diets and doctors' instructions up to a point. But when it started interfering with him really living and doing what he really wanted to do, he just went ahead and did what he wanted to do. They didn't want him to come back from Virginia when he came. He said, "I'm going back to Texas. Get that stuff ready. Get all your machines. Get whatever nurse or doctor you want along, but I'm going home."

G: Did he tell you that?

R: Yes, that's what he told me. Over in San Antonio, he was telling me about his trip back.

G: Oh, you went to see him when he got back?

R: Yes, that's when I went back and we looked at that film, of the golf game.

G: That's right. Okay.

R: That was in San Antonio. He wasn't having visitors at that time, but Mrs. Johnson called us and said that he wanted us to come over.

G: Yes.

R: And we went over one Sunday afternoon and visited with him. It was then that he told me about his trip, how he left Virginia, that they told him he couldn't go, and he said, "By God, *I am* going!"

(Laughter)

I got a big kick out of him. He was entertaining, and he was a study, and he really was a--

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G: Did you ever observe any temper?

R: No, no, I never was around him when he was--when he seemed to be upset. It was always a festive, fun situation that I was around him.

G: Right. I don't know that we've established when you first met him. Do you remember that?

R: My first contact was when he was senator, and it was after the 1959 game with Syracuse, and we had two players that had a little run-in, one of ours and one of theirs, and one of theirs happened to be black. Then it developed into kind of a race deal, which it wasn't. It was just two football players--kind of like game roosters. They'll blow up at each other, and--but it got into the newspaper, and it was a pretty big story, mainly from the talk that Syracuse was doing, and then-Senator Johnson wrote me a letter and asked me to please explain the circumstances of that game because he needed to know, you know, obviously. And he was entitled to know. He was the [U.S.] senator from Texas. And I wrote him back and gave him our side of the deal, and I don't--I think that it was just a situation where it was acceptable to be blown into a racial deal, but our players never felt any race issue about playing against the black players from Syracuse. I know that for a fact, because I visited with them before, after the incident, and years since it passed. I mean, they just never thought anything about it.

G: Right. Let me pause here.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I

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