

## INTERVIEW II

DATE: March 12, 1987

INTERVIEWEE: GEORGE SANDLIN

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mr. Sandlin's office, Austin, Texas

### Tape 1 of 1, Side 1

G: I want to ask you, Mr. Sandlin, to begin today by talking a little bit more about Allan Shivers, the man. How would you describe his political philosophy?

S: Well, he was conservative. He believed in paying as you go. He was thoroughly in support of the Texas position, that is, we don't go into debt in Texas. You've got to pay for it as you go. But he was also a conservative to the extent that he didn't feel that the government should pay for everything, that there [were] certain things that a person should do for himself. That is not to say that he didn't feel that you need to provide for those who could not provide for themselves. He was in thorough accord with that. You'd have to classify him as a conservative, not an extreme. He was not an extreme, but more to the right from the middle.

G: What about the people around him? Did he tend to surround himself with people of like mind or people more conservative than he or less conservative?

S: Both.

G: Both?

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- S: Yes. He had some people supporting him who were extreme conservatives.
- G: Really?
- S: Oh yes, yes. (Laughter) Sometimes they gave him a lot of trouble. Well, to give you an example, in the state convention in Amarillo in 1952, some of his strong supporters were upset with him because he wouldn't agree to placing [Dwight] Eisenhower on both the Democratic and Republican ticket and not putting [Adlai] Stevenson on the Democratic ticket in the general election. And he just [could not] agree to that. It finally came to the point to where he took the platform, took the stage, and asked the delegates not to pass that. The resolution was made to do that, and he spoke against it very strongly. And he prevailed. In other words, we did give the Democratic ticket--put Stevenson on the Democratic ticket.
- G: And then he received criticism from--
- S: Oh, those who were extreme right conservatives were upset with him about it. They didn't stay upset with him for long. You know, they'd get over it, but at that point, they just didn't want people even to have a choice.
- G: Were these business leaders?
- S: Oh yes, yes. You bet.
- G: Aside from, say, something like organized labor, was there any powerful interest group in Texas that was a perennial opponent of Allan Shivers?
- S: Well, what we called the extreme liberal Democrats, of which there were a number of them. They were not the union people. They were liberal-minded Democrats.
- G: How about any other groups, interest groups in the state?

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S: Oh, I don't know that there was any great organized opposition to him other than a general run of people. That is not to say that labor was in itself opposed to Shivers. There were a lot of friends that belonged to unions that were supporters of Allan's. Had a lot of them that I could call and talk to anytime, and so could he, of course.

I'll never forget, after the Governor was--we built the Veterans of Foreign Wars Building over at Eleventh and San Jacinto, VFW Building. The VFW had bought that property, that corner over there some years before, and they'd tried to build a building, and they never could get it off ground, and they came to me and asked me to look at it, which I did, and we had to redraw it. The architecture was more of a monument than it was a viable office building project. So we revised it. We got the architect and just sat down and said, "Hey, we got to make this thing pay for itself."

Then I made them the loan, the mortgage on it to build it. I also insured it and also had a twenty-year management agreement to manage the building for them. And I leased the top floor to Governor Shivers and the Western Pipeline Company that he and a couple of partners were involved with in the thing. Later, the AFL-CIO [American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations] needed office space and came to me and wanted to know what kind of deal we could make. I leased them the second floor.

(Laughter) [Had the] AFL-CIO on the second floor, the entire floor, and had the governor on the top floor, the entire floor. It was a mixed bag. So what I'm saying is that we got along, even though we had different--

G: What were Allan Shivers' strength as a politician?

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S: Well, he was a man of principle, and everybody knew it. He never--never any question about where he stood. He was open and honest with everybody, and everybody knew that. No one distrusted him.

G: Was he good in dealing with people?

S: Oh yes, yes. Yes, he was one of the best in dealing with people. There was just something about the man that attracted people to him, and he had many, many admirers. I never heard him say a bad thing about anybody, even those who opposed him. In other words, he never berated anybody. He would consider that they were ill-advised, but he never berated a person just because they were opposed to him.

G: How would you contrast him to Lyndon Johnson, let's say, if you were characterizing the two men?

S: Oh, I think Lyndon was more outgoing. Allan was a little more reserved than Lyndon. Lyndon was a fellow that would rush across the room to greet you. Allan was more reserved; he didn't rush across the room, he would walk across the room. That may not be the best way to describe a difference except that--I guess you'd have to say that the Lyndon Johnson that I knew was more outgoing, less reserved than Allan was.

G: Was he more polished than LBJ do you think?

S: Oh, yes. Was he.

G: How so?

S: Well, Shivers, Allan was very careful in what he said and how he said it, and what he did, and how he did it. Lyndon was just off the cuff, you know. And I'm not being critical of

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either one of them. I don't mean to be critical of either one of them, except there was a difference in the way they acted toward other people.

G: But would you say he was more sophisticated than Johnson in terms of his style and less Hill Country or less--

S: Yes. Yes.

G: What were Shivers' weaknesses?

S: Oh, that would be hard to say. You know, how can you see a man with his weaknesses when he had so many strengths and successes?

G: Well, but you knew him well--

S: He was a--

G: --and you knew him well enough to know that there were some things that he did better than other things.

S: It hurt him when someone criticized a friend. I'll give an example. I got up one morning and then read a paper, and somebody had jumped all over me. And he called me. "Well," he said, "you know, it's another example of somebody that supports me is going to get the tar brush put on them." In other words, he disliked his friends being criticized more than he did when they criticized him. That's what I'm saying, I guess. He was the person who valued friendship highly. [He] valued it highly.

G: There were, while he was governor, some problems in some of the state agencies and programs--you talked last time about the Veterans' Land Board and the problems that they had and the insurance, a couple of the insurance companies--I believe there were also some

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banking irregularities. Does this mean that Shivers should have been more actively involved in monitoring some of the boards and agencies?

S: No. No. The Land Commission was elected with the field. And he had no responsibility for other departments except--

G: But he was a member of that board, wasn't he?

S: Well, each of them had a representative that attended the board, and it wasn't the board.

That wasn't the problems. The problems were--I don't want to say something here that isn't a matter of record, but I think if you look at the record, you could see what the problem was.

It was not something that the members of the land board had anything to do with. In other words, the three members, the attorney general's representative, the governor's representative, and the land commission representative formed the board. There was a policy--they were policymaking. And it wasn't the policy that was the problem; it was the working within the land commissioner's bailiwick.

G: Johnson was quoted at one point as saying that he thought that Shivers had lost the compassion for the common man that he had earlier in his political career had. Did you discern any shift in terms of his sympathies, Shiver's sympathies?

S: No. He hadn't lost any compassion for the common man. In fact, that was his main concern. Allan was not a politician; Allan was a statesman. You know the difference: a politician thinks about his next election; a statesman thinks about the election in the next generation. Allan was more concerned with the welfare of the state as a whole than he was of the next election. Allan never really gave that much concern about his next election

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because he didn't know if he was going to run the next time or not. He never made his mind up until right up before the elections.

G: Do you think that having a sizable wealth hurt him politically, or was it an asset to him? Did it make him independent whereas someone who didn't have this would have been less likely to be independent?

S: No, I don't think he gave that any concern about any decisions he made in that--

G: But how did you view Shivers' personal wealth? Did you see it as an asset or liability or--

S: Oh, I never saw him flaunt it. I mean--

G: I know, but I mean in terms of shaping his attitudes and--

S: I never thought of it.

G: Really?

S: I didn't give it any concern, either. (Laughter) I don't think he did, and I know I didn't. I didn't see that it made any difference in his thinking.

G: But you cited the example, I think last time, of Ralph Yarborough deciding to run against Shivers because he was offered financial support for that race, which he might not have gotten if he'd run for attorney general. And it just seems that Shivers might not have required or had that same kind of financial dependence almost.

S: Well, Allan--all of his races were financed by contributions.

G: Is that right?

S: Oh, yes. The contributions to Allan Shivers' election races were the easiest in the world to raise. We ran the campaign for Eisenhower in 1956, for example, the Democrats for Eisenhower. And Weldon Hart and I were the co-directors of that campaign. My particular

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job was organization and budgeting. Of course, I didn't have the sole budget, but responsibility, all of us did that. But I'm talking about having money available to pay for it.

G: What did Hart do?

S: Oh, Hart was the analyst [and] writer. He and Allan Shivers thought alike. I mean, they could almost quote each other (laughter) and the other not being present. They just worked together perfectly.

But that campaign was financed by people who went out and got the money and brought it in. We paid for everything up front in cash. And there was never debt incurred in that campaign. And the same thing happened with all of Allan's elections. The money came in.

There was good organization, of course, that good finance chairman who went out and saw to it. But you never had to curtail expense because you didn't have the money. The money was available to meet the budget. We didn't run ridiculous campaigns. We didn't spend money needlessly. Of course, back in those days, a campaign didn't cost what it costs today. Today, radio, television is a highly expensive thing. Back in those days, you could put on a television show and cover the whole state for twenty, twenty-five thousand dollars.

But you know there's no way you can do that anymore. But here again, if you wanted to do that, you could put the word out, and then in three days, you had the money for Allan Shivers' campaign. People just responded to the call.

G: You're an expert on real estate. I'm going to ask you to--

S: Excuse me just a second, I got to--

(Interruption)



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G: You're an expert on real estate. Let me ask you to analyze the controversies surrounding that land deal with Lloyd Bentsen, Sr., that Governor Shivers had--I guess he bought the land and then sold it at a large profit. Can you explain--

S: I don't remember. Now, what was it now? What am I--

G: Okay. Was Allan Shivers a good businessman do you think?

S: Oh, yes. Yes. And here again, I did not do business with Allan Shivers. At one time, I got approval of a piece of property down in Mission, Texas, for the FHA [Federal Housing Administration] to make a loan in a little subdivision that he had. But he had a manager down there who handled all of it.

But I never did do and never became involved in any business transactions with Allan. We kept that separate.

G: Let's shift back to Lyndon Johnson as a businessman. Do you have any insights on Lyndon Johnson as a businessman? He owned--or his wife owned--a radio and television station here in town and some real estate.

S: I have none at all. I spent some money back some years ago. Back in those days, I hired some engineers in Washington to see whether or not we could put another station, another TV station here. The UHF [Ultra High Frequency] was not at that time--many stations around the country, they weren't making television sets that could take or receive UHF. They could receive VHF [Very High Frequency], which is what KTBC TV was. Well, you couldn't--the rules were set up in such ways that they had to be certain distances apart between stations. And the closest you could put a VHF station here was about sixty miles from Austin. And UHF you could put, but no TVs that were out there could receive it. You

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had to have an adapter. Well at that time, I was not sensible enough to realize that adapters were the way to go, and I dropped the thing. But someone, other people who knew more about it than I did, came in later and put in a UHF station. If you can remember, the KTBC originally had all three networks. They were NBC, CBS, and ABC, all in on them. But then when the UHF station came in--I think the first one was NBC, I believe. And then that's when KTBC settled on CBS as their main [network].

But I was never involved with Lyndon in any way, so I don't know what kind of a businessman he was except that he obviously had a lot of foresight in setting up a TV station.

G: Did he have a reputation as a good businessman or a bad businessman among the Austin business community?

S: I would say that he had a good reputation. He obviously did well. You know I don't [know] anything about his holdings or anything about on what he bought and sold, but I mean just what you read in the paper. Obviously, his estate did very well.

G: Okay. Allan Shivers was governor during a lot of the important times in what became a civil rights movement, the Brown decision in 1954, first attempts at school desegregation under court orders. Let me ask you to talk this side a little bit and what his views were and what he was hoping to achieve.

S: Well, I don't remember the year, but it was sometime between 1952 and 1956--it was while I was chairman of the Executive Committee--we put on the ballot approval or disapproval of mixed marriages.

G: That was 1956.

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S: 1956?

G: Tell me the background of that. That referendum?

S: The referendum, right. Well, there was a lot of talk in Texas whether or not school should be segregated or whether the kids should be bussed and whatever. It was a controversial subject, but nobody had an answer. Everybody said they had an answer, but they were all different answers. The question was--some people said, "Oh you know, it'll go away." Well, we knew it wasn't going to go away. I think that the question was put on referendum, the questions that were put there to bring people's attention to it so that a decision could be made by a majority of the people and not by just a few. Understand what I'm saying?

G: Yes.

S: But Allan never tried to ram anything, either way, down anybody's throat. In fact, if you recall, when they had some disruption up at Mansfield, Texas, and everyone up there was concerned; call out the National Guard. Well, Allan sent one [Texas] Ranger up there to take care of the situation. And someone asked him later why he only sent one Ranger. He said, "One riot, one Ranger!" (Laughter) And that's all it took.

G: But in that case, the federal court order was not enforced. The black was not permitted to register. The mob, in effect, had its objective accomplished. Why did he do this rather than, say, use the Rangers to escort the blacks into the school? They had a court order to go to school there.

S: You know it would be difficult for me to say what he had in his mind because I never discussed the point with him that much, except that we all felt like--when I say "we," I'm talking about the members of the Executive Committee--felt like that there were too few

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people in Texas expressing opinion and trying to make decisions. And that the decisions should be made by the majority of the people. Therefore, the question was put on referendum to bring it to everybody's attention so they could have some thought about it, rather than trying to close their eyes and say it isn't there. It was there, and it had to be faced.

G: Did you see this referendum also as a way to underscore, say, a difference between Lyndon Johnson and Allan Shivers on civil rights?

S: Oh no, no.

G: Because let's see, mixed marriages was only one of the three--

S: That's just one of them. I don't even remember what all of it was on.

G: Well, one had to do with integration of schools.

S: Yes, schools.

G: Well, let me ask you one more thing about the Mansfield crisis. Did Governor Shivers talk with President Eisenhower and the attorney general during that time do you know?

S: I don't know.

G: Because it seems to me from just studying the press conferences that there were some degrees of coordination and communication.

S: That could have been, and I don't really remember all of that now because I was not the one making the decisions on those. I don't really know. I'm not privy to any conversation--

G: Are there any other events concerning civil rights that you recall during that time? There was a crisis in Texarkana as well in the following year, I believe.

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S: Oh yes, yes. There were two or three different situations, but none of which--I can't recall any conversations in which any decisions that I was any part of.

G: Did Shivers have support within the black community?

S: Oh yes.

G: Tell me who the principal of lieutenants among blacks were?

S: He had them in all over the state.

G: Did he?

S: Yes. Yes. There was always people that came in and volunteered--and black people that worked in his campaigns. Both blacks and Hispanics--I mean, there was never really a problem between Shivers and the blacks or the Hispanics. He had support. He had his admirers. He had his detractors.

I'm trying to think of the man, a Hispanic, in Houston who owned the Mexican restaurants down there. I can't think of his name to save my soul, but I had a number of conversations with him. He came to Austin on a number of occasions in which he was an advocate of teaching kids, young kids, how to live in this country and how to adapt to the American way rather than continuing the Mexican way. And he spent a lot of money, a lot of his own money on television shows, kid shows. His theory was that if the youngster, if the Mexican could come to school and go to school talking English that he had a better chance than he would if he was taught in Spanish all the way through. And frankly, I agreed with him. (Laughter) I still feel that that's the way now--you know, there's a drive on now by some people who want to pass a law that English is the language of this country.

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Well so what? What good is a law? It is the language of this country. Here in Texas, for example, we have to do it in two languages.

I think it would be much better for the Mexican people, kids, to learn English young and go to school talking, speaking, and reading the English language. I just think they have a better chance in society. I think they have a better opportunity in our society.

In [inaudible] that I don't like the Mexican culture; I do. My wife, my first wife and my children--my girls, my three girls--spent every summer for about four years in Mexico City, going to school and learning Spanish. My daughters would talk Spanish and rattle it off like the natives. And when my wife died, I hired a Mexican woman who had a baby--I hired her in May; her baby was born March 10th. My wife died in February and my first two grandkids were born March 19th and March 26th. And I was in the house alone, big house, and I needed somebody there to take care of it, and I hired this Mexican woman. At first, when I interviewed her, and she had this baby, I said, oh my Lord, I can't have a person here with a two-month-old baby. The more I thought about it, the more it made sense because I had a separate place for them to live in the house, but separate from my quarters. And who else would hire her away from me with a two-month-old baby? So I hired her.

She could not talk English at all. I couldn't talk [Spanish]--I can talk some Spanish, but there was a lot of picture drawing going on and hand waving between us to get understood. But as this little baby grew up--my grandchildren called me Daddy George--she called me Daddy George because she was one of the family, so to speak. My two grandkids, when they were over there--and I kept them a lot, the little Spanish baby looked on me the same as my grandkids did. Every morning I'd get up and go get the paper

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and come to the living room and sit down, and they would come up from their room up to the kitchen. This little baby would come and sit in [my] lap while I read the paper. And we would talk English. I never talked Spanish to her. I made her talk English. And I'd say, "English, no Spanish." And she'd say, "English, no Spanish." When this youngster was three years old, she was the interpreter between me and her mother. She could talk to her mother in Spanish and talk to me in English. She could interpret it at the age of three.

I finally decided--you know, that big old house, me by myself, that expense was ridiculous. I needed to go where I could--and I was traveling a lot--and I needed to go where I could just close the door and not worry about it. Because when I'd leave town, I'd worry about them. I'd have one of my daughters come over and check on them, be sure-- She didn't drive a car, she didn't speak English, and she didn't go to the grocery store. I did all of the grocery buying. And I had a lot of fun buying groceries when I'd buy them. Disposable diapers, you know (Laughter). Here you've got an old gray-haired fellow walking through with a whole stack of disposable diapers. The little old ladies would look at me and smile. (Laughter) But my point is this little Mexican girl today talks English with no accent. And she's making all As in school. She went to school knowing English. And that's what I think; they have a better opportunity, better advantage now.

I got off the subject there, but my first exposure to that philosophy was through this Mexican restaurant owner in Houston.

G: Okay, we're back again.

S: But--

G: So it all came from the Mexican--

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S: It all came from my association with this Mexican restaurant owner in Houston, whose philosophy was that they should learn English early. They had a better opportunity in our culture if they did.

Shivers had a lot of supporters like this man. And he had a lot of black supporters. Shivers had supporters from all walks of life. I mean working class people along through oil people, you know. Today oil people are working people but--

G: Was there during this period a split between the major oil companies and the independent oil producers in terms of who they were for and what they were for? And if so, did Shivers tend to have more support among one group than the other?

S: No, he had support from both.

G: Did he?

S: Yes. He had support from Exxon on down to, or including, the independents. In fact, some of the independents were his strongest supporters. Eddie Chiles, [from] Midland, now Fort Worth. He's the one there with the little sign that says, "I'm mad too, Eddie." (Laughter) And Arch Rowan at Fort Worth. Well, there's any number of them.

G: Sid Richardson. Would that be one?

S: Oh yes, yes. There's a lot of east Texas oil people. But they were all strong supporters.

G: As you look back over the Shivers' governorship, what do you feel was his most significant accomplishment as governor?

S: Well, that would be hard to say. He was, as I said earlier, a strong, fiscal conservative. And the cost of government, he was--he knew exactly what to call for and how the appropriation should be. He had a close relationship with the legislature.



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Allan knew what was going on. He was a very knowledgeable governor. He kept up with it. Being governor was a business to him, that he felt an obligation to just take care of it and not just sit there and let everything run on its own. If you stop and look back at the years he was governor, there was never any great crisis over government expenses. Of course, the cost of government wasn't near what it is now in comparison. We had surpluses, not deficits, back in those days. (Laughter)

G: Let me ask you to go on to the 1956 political campaign and analyze that. You were chairman at the time.

S: Up until the September convention, yes.

G: Let me ask you to just in as much detail as you can, tell what happened from the beginning of that campaign to the end.

S: Now which campaign are you talking about?

G: 1956.

S: Are you talking about the presidential campaign?

G: Well--

S: You see, there were two series of conventions.

G: Yes. No, I'm really more interested in the series of state conventions in the spring and then in the fall again, the delegates that were chosen, first at the precinct, and then county conventions.

S: Well at that time, the Shivercrats, as they were called, were in control of the party. We had strong, Executive Committee, very cohesive committee. We had been through the test, so

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to speak, as to who was spokesman for the party, whether it was the national committeeman Wright Morrow or whether it was Governor Shivers. And we had survived that test.

When we went into that series of conventions, we had control of the majority of the delegates. That was the convention in which Price Daniel took over as governor and his Executive Committee was elected. Some of the members of the new Executive Committee were not as strong conservatives as our committee was. They had some on there that were more to the middle and some a little bit to the left of middle.

Labor had a pretty good representation at that convention, that September convention. I'm trying to think. I think that was held in Fort Worth.

G: Fort Worth.

S: Fort Worth. And labor exerted it--they let the governor, the new governor, know that they were there. If you recall, they wouldn't let him speak for quite some time. I'm trying to think, but it seems like it was almost an hour that they just shouted him down, wouldn't let him speak.

G: There were even some indications, I believe, that they might not certify his nomination. Was that an issue?

S: No, no. That was not an issue. They didn't have a choice on that. But they just let him know that they were there, and that they intended to have a voice in government. I mean the campaign at the precinct and county levels by the Price Daniel supporters was not as strong and not as successful as our campaigns in the previous years under Shivers.

G: Did Shivers pick Price Daniel to succeed him?

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S: (Laughter) Well, Shivers offered him support based on what Price said his position on the Texas issues were. You know, Shivers was not going to run for reelection again. He decided not to, and he looked at the field of candidates. Who could best represent the moderate to conservative faction in Texas, which was in control at that point? Who could best represent them? And when we looked at them and talked about them, we decided Price Daniel was probably the best prospect to win the election and represent the people that we had felt were in control of the party. And we talked to him and felt him out, and he was interested.

We asked him to come to Austin and discuss it. In fact, I picked him up at the airport and took him to the mansion and we--Allan and Weldon and I and Price Daniel--talked about it, and told him that we could rally our people in support of him and thought we could win it if he would take the positions of conservatism that we had. After he announced, he decided that we were a detriment rather than help and tried to keep his distance from us.

G: Any issues in particular or was it just a--

S: Oh he--

G: --distance of association?

S: Well, some of the liberal people that had been his supporters in the past--

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G: Some of his more liberal supporters convinced him that you were has-beens.

S: We were has-beens and that we were a detriment and not a help to him and that he should not associate himself with us. And, of course, they were doing it for selfish reasons. They

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wanted to get in there. Now you probably recall the election, he only won by thirty-three hundred votes. Came awfully close to getting beat.

It was kind of funny. Jake Pickle was running his campaign at the time. And Jake was real worried about it. Jake was the only one that really thought that they were having problems. And, of course, I had a lot of fun with Jake. (Laughter) One morning--we both lived out on the west side of town and [I was] coming in on Twelfth Street, and I stopped at West Avenue at the red light. It was just a few days after the convention, and it was a back-to-the-party movement, and Ralph Yarborough had made the statement, "Dollars for Democrats, but not a nickel for Pickle." Pickle was secretary to the Democratic Executive Committee under Price. And that morning, they had come out in the headline paper about Yarborough jumping on Pickle. I heard this horn honking, and I looked over to the right, and it was Pickle rolling his window down, and I rolled mine down. He stuck his head out and said, "Help," and rolls his window back up and drove off. (Laughter)

G: That's funny.

S: We've laughed about that quite a number of times.

G: Well, go back to the Dallas convention in May and explain the various factions there and what happened. That was when, I believe, they chose the national committeeman, Frankie Randolph and Byron Skelton--

S: Byron Skelton from Temple?

G: Yes. First of all, what happened in the precinct and county conventions in May? Shivers went head on with Johnson and--

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S: Right. Right. The Johnson faction turned up with about eight hundred votes, eight hundred or eight hundred and twenty-five votes. Us old hard-headed Shivercrats, we came up with about six hundred and fifty--now we're talking about the delegates to the state convention--and labor had about eleven hundred.

What you have to admit [was] that neither Johnson nor the Shivercrats had control without labor. Now, us Shivercrats could join with labor and would outvote Johnson. Johnson could join with labor and outvote us. Or we could join with Johnson and outvote labor. So, in effect, us old Shivercrats were the balance of power. Now, Johnson didn't think so. Johnson thought that labor would support him come hell or high water, and I told him they would not. I told him that labor would desert him the minute they found they had control, they would gut him. He didn't believe that. But he found out at the convention that it was true--(laughter)--because they darn near did.

G: Explain what happened.

S: Well, when you go into a convention, you've got the Credentials Committee. Now the Credentials Committee listens to complaints from county conventions who claim that they were not treated fairly, and they should be seated, and the ones that were seated should not be. And you had rump conventions and contests in Dallas County, which were Shivercrats, Smith County, Tyler, which were Shivercrats, and there were numbers of others. Those are the two main ones I can think of at the moment that had a considerable number of our six hundred and fifty votes.

The Credentials Committee unseated the Dallas people and seated the liberal people which were controlled by labor. That cut down the Johnson-Shivercrat majority over labor.

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Then they turned around and did the same thing in Smith County. Okay, that cut it down more. Each of those--and there were two or three other small ones that did the same thing--each of those gave labor that many more votes in the convention. So your balance became thin, very thin right there.

As a chairman of the Executive Committee and opening the convention--the opening was the Executive Committee report. Now there are a number of ways you can do that. You can have the report, which is simply what you did during the year and what your position is now, then hope it would go to the floor and open for nominations for a temporary chairman. That all must be made from the floor. Or you can include in the Executive Committee report the Nominations Committee report, who nominate in the report the temporary chairman and a permanent chairman, which is one way to begin the convention with control.

I had told John Connally there before the convention--I went up on Thursday, went up on Thursday to get it set up. We knew we were going to have problems with the tickets. We always did. So this year we fooled them pretty good. We used the invisible ink on the tickets with my initials on the tickets and then we used the violet ray lamps at the gate. If your tickets didn't glow my initials, we'd say, "No glow, no go."

G: Is that right?

S: Well, someone always--now we give the tickets out the night before the delegations--and someone would always go duplicate those tickets and print up a whole big bunch. And they did. They printed up a whole big bunch. But "no glow, no go". They were turned away at the gate. But anyway, we--

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G: Now excuse me, you had indicated, I think the last time we talked, that your initial inclination was to just go along with the move against Johnson, but Shivers said no. Do you remember that?

S: No. Shivers' feelings were hurt. As far as he was concerned, he could just let Johnson go. I mean, he'd just--because his feelings were hurt, and he wasn't going to give any help at all at the convention.

G: It had been an ugly campaign.

S: It had been an ugly campaign, and there were tar brushes out, you know, and we didn't like it. I was unhappy about it. I had been criticized unjustly and accused of all kind of things that weren't true, as has Shivers. But my concern was I did not want to just give it up and let labor liberals take over control of the party. We had worked too hard. You see, when we took over, when Allan became governor, the first campaign in 1950, we won control of the Executive Committee for the first time in a number of years. The liberals had had control over the party up to that point. And we, just by working like heck all around the state and getting volunteers and help, we took control, and I didn't want to give that up.

I told them I went to Dallas without any help just because the crew that I had hired to go. And I got there Thursday night. The governor called me. And he said, "George you're right." He said, "I'm just mad, and my feelings are hurt. But," he said, "I can't let you go up there by yourself and not have any help. Weldon will be up in the morning and help you." Which made me feel a lot better. So I knew we could hold on to it, to the control of the party, if we could keep labor from taking control of the convention and throwing the Executive Committee out and electing a new one, which was not according to the rules.

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But in a Democratic meeting, the majority can do anything they want to. So my concern was at the May meeting that the Executive Committee not be thrown out and a new one put in, but we wait and do it in September, the so called "Governor's convention," where it's suppose to be done under the rules and under the law.

So the question was how to handle it, how to keep the labor from taking control and doing it because I had been told. I had some good friends in the labor movement that told me that they were going to try to do that. And they told me that there would be a rally on Sunday night at the ballroom of the hotel in which that would be advocated. I told John Connally that it was going to happen. And I said, "Now if labor gets control of that convention, hell, it'll gut everybody, including Lyndon." I said, "What I want to see happen is I want Lyndon Johnson and Mr. Rayburn, when they get here and attend that rally, to get on the platform and tell them no way, they're not going to stand for that." Let them uphold the law. If they'll do that, then I'll open the convention with the committee report nominating a temporary chairman and the permanent chairman.

So that they'll start off in control of the convention. And they did. They rallied on Sunday night. (Laughter) Some of my old hardheaded conservatives were there at the rally, urging them on. (Laughter) They thought it'd be great to see, just to show up what the heck they were going to do. Well, I didn't agree with that. I didn't want to see us lose control of the Executive Committee and control of the party at that point.

But when they got control of the convention, and then they had nominated and elected the committeeman, national committeeman.

G: Byron Skelton?



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S: Byron Skelton from Temple. The nominee for committeewoman was Mrs. Benson, Lloyd Benson's wife. Labor nominated Frankie Randolph from Houston, who is strictly labor, and elected her. Well, that's when the convention was getting out of hand. The only thing that the convention had left to do at that point was a resolutions committee report. Now, a resolution is what, what do they do? They just say nice things about people, that's about all and bad things about others. And they probably at that point, we're going to have a resolution of require if you vote in the primary you've got to support the same candidates in the general. They were always trying to get that voted on. But the only thing to do at that point at that convention was to get out of there, recess that convention, get out, which was what was done.

If that convention had continued, I wouldn't have been a bit surprised to see them take over and redo the delegates. The committee on delegate reported that they were Johnson people going to the national convention, with Johnson as the favorite son and chairman of the delegation. But when labor got control, I could see them just voting that out and electing, putting their own people in there. And that would have been a disaster, in my opinion, for the party, the Democratic Party in Texas.

G: Was there a question of legality about replacing the State Democratic Executive Committee then rather than waiting?

S: Yes. Under the statutes, the Texas Committee is elected at the September convention. But again, you see, the courts had held, in some cases where in a party meeting that the majority rules, and therefore, the courts wouldn't entertain suits to overturn something that had been

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done at a party convention. So there's always some questions of whether or not you can make it stick. But they wanted to do it anyway.

G: Now, let's talk some more about the Fort Worth convention and the governor's convention in September. There were some delegations there that were removed, were they not, from. . .

S: I don't remember. Again, we were--when I say "we," I'm talking about us old Shivercrats--the Governor was not, Governor Daniel was going to take office the first of January, and a new Executive Committee was going to be elected. I simply opened the convention, got it started, and then got out of the way, let the Daniel people run the convention. And I don't recall whether--I know one thing, I remember--you know, there was always a question of who was the sergeant at arms? And at that convention, I believe that was the one in which I appointed the sheriff's posse from Mineral Wells as the sergeant at arms. And they were colorfully uniformed and [there were] plenty of them at the convention. They kept order, but they didn't keep the labor people from shouting Price Daniel down. (Laughter)

I stayed at that convention; I did not go back to the hotel. I stayed at that convention. I stayed there and helped committees get their reports typed in order, because the new people taking over needed some help, you know. At the May convention, I could leave, but the people that I had running the convention, they knew what to do and how to do it because they had run them before. But there were new ones taking over at the September convention. I stayed there in case anybody needed any help, and they did from time to time.

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Jake Jacobsen--that's the fellow's name I was trying to think of the other day--was Price's first assistant when he was a senator, and also he came back when he was governor. There was always a faction of the liberal Democrat Party who always wanted to make a motion to bind you if you voted in the Democratic Party, to bind you to support the candidates in the general election. There's always someone there. And I remember I got to that convention in Fort Worth that that faction was there, trying to get an agreement to let them come to the podium in the beginning of the convention and make the motion. I sat in with them and got an agreement to allow them to come to the podium after the committee, the Executive Committee report was made. And they never caught on that that was always too late when that was done. (Laughter) I did that to them at about three different conventions. (Laughter) Just outmaneuvered them.

G: Now, the Texas Loyalist group, liberal group, accused Governor Shivers and you of sort of orchestrating the hotel accommodations to enhance the conservative factions at the convention by placing some of the liberal groups over in Dallas rather than Fort Worth. The delegations involved were Harris County, Bexar County, Jefferson County, and Travis County.

S: You're talking about the Fort Worth convention?

G: Yes.

S: You know, there was always those kinds of accusations that we maneuvered the hotel reservations. But Fort Worth was not--there was not a great number of accommodations given us, and we had to spread them out. We had people, as I recall, even some over in Dallas. Even had to house them over there.

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G: Well, that's what the charge was, that you housed all the liberal groups over in Dallas so that they wouldn't be as available so that you would have a closer link with the conservative groups.

S: Yes, I remember that one, and I frankly don't remember how the hotel rooms were allocated. It was a matter of fitting the number of delegates into a hotel. There were not--you take Harris County; they had a hell of a lot of votes. Well, how can you [put] those delegates in a small hotel in Fort Worth when you don't have half the number of rooms that you need? You had to go to a bigger hotel to do it. It was not a matter of who they were; it was a matter of how many there were and what the accommodations were. We didn't purposely--there was no advantage or disadvantage of putting somebody over in Dallas, because they were at the convention anyway. Well, that's the only time and place they could do any good was at the convention.

I remember (laughter) somebody criticizing me in the paper about that, as I recall. And I had an answer for it, and I can't remember exactly how it was, but I gave the answer to some newspaper reporter who printed it. I said something about, "Everywhere you have a gathering of thoroughbreds, there's always a jackass or two." And they printed it. (Laughter) It was somebody who had individually criticized me.

G: Was the question of Price Daniels' willingness to support the Stevenson-[Estes] Kefauver ticket an issue during this convention?

S: I don't recall it being--

G: As I recall, he ultimately did agree to support the ticket.

S: Oh yes.

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G: Was this a problem with Governor Shivers? Did Governor Shivers not want him to make that pledge?

S: At that point, it didn't make any difference. He was elected; it was a governor-elect. He had already, during his campaign, had already made himself known as being unaffiliated with the Shivercrats, so we didn't care what he said and did.

During that campaign, I was running Earl Rudder's campaign.

G: Is that right?

S: Yes. If you remember, we had appointed Earl Rudder to the office when Bascom Giles declined to take the office. This was Earl's first campaign. And we won Earl's election with over thirty-three thousand plurality, or thirty-five thousand plurality, where Price Daniel won by thirty-three hundred votes. We told them that they should have stayed with us Shivercrats; we could get more votes than they could. (Laughter)

G: Of course, that may depend on who their respective opponents' popularity rather than--

Now the Credentials Committee at that convention denied seating to the liberal delegations from Harris County and El Paso, and favored the more moderate or more conservative groups there and in other cases as well. Let me ask you to discuss the politics behind that.

S: What? Come again now?

G: Well, you had contested delegations, particularly in Houston and El Paso. Woodrew Bean was, I guess, the leader out there. And instead of seating the liberal delegations, the Credentials Committee recommended seating the conservative groups.

S: As I recall, the liberals were the rump convention. There were always two factions.

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G: But they had been seated in May, I think, the liberal groups had.

S: Yes. Yes. The same thing in Dallas. That liberal group had overturned the conservative group, and the liberal group seated in Dallas in the May convention. But here again, the--

G: I was going to say the Executive Committee--

S: The Credentials Committee are a different group, of course, than they were at the May convention. In both cases, the convention adopted whatever the Credentials Committee report recommended. You had a more conservative group at the September convention than you had at the May convention. You see, we had a little bit of an understanding with the Johnson folks, and that is that the Johnson delegates would go to the May convention and the Shivercrats would go to the September convention. So your convention in September is a little more conservative than it was in May.

G: If Price Daniel had not come out flatly in favor of a Stevenson-Kefauver ticket, would that have hurt him at the convention?

S: I don't--hurt him at the convention with whom? With the delegates?

G: Yes.

S: I don't think so, because he had--the people that were giving him trouble at the convention was the liberal union group. Us old conservatives sat back laughing. We thought it was funny. (Laughter)

G: Observers have always looked at these two conventions, these two state conventions in 1956, the one in Dallas in May, then Fort Worth in May or June or Fort Worth in September, as being the real source of the hostility between the labor-liberal group and Lyndon Johnson.

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S: The hostility between labor-liberals and Lyndon?

G: Yes, Texas labor-liberals.

S: Well, I think that came out at the May convention in Dallas. See, they refuted Lyndon. When they elected Frankie Randolph over Mrs. Benson, that was a slap in the face of Lyndon Johnson, and labor's the one that did it. And if that convention hadn't been recessed they, in my opinion, would have undone the delegates that had already been elected, adopted by the [convention]. See, the committee on delegates came to the convention with a recommended list of delegates to the national convention, and the convention adopted it. Labor, if they had not recessed that convention, labor would've taken control. They would've recalled for reconsiderations, the delegates, and left it all labor delegates, in my opinion. That would have been another slap in the face. And I think the fact that--see, Johnson went to that convention thoroughly convinced that labor was going to support him all the way. And I told him, "Well, they will not. They'll gut you when they get control of you. If they ever see that they've got you, they'll gut you." And John Connally agreed with me. He agreed with me that we had to take the precaution to keep labor from taking control of that convention.

That's the reason we set it up, even to the extent of having the floor microphones controlled until I had taken the votes of the committee report, which also elected the temporary chairman, Joe Kilgore. I can't remember--Cecil Burney, an attorney from Corpus Christi who was a strong Johnson supporter, had one of them, and I can't remember who had the other, had two floor microphones and two main aisles, two center aisles. I can't remember who I put in charge of the other one, but they were wrestling for those mikes

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when I was taking the committee vote. (Laughter) But it was evident--well, in the first place, I had people come telling me what they were going to do. I had friends in labor, still have, who were not totally in agreement with some of the labor policies. And they came and told me what they were planning to do, what they were going to do. And I knew what they were going to do.

G: Was there any kind of tentative agreement, do you think, between the Johnson people and the labor people that LBJ would get to name the national committeeman and committeewoman if labor got to name the new state Executive Committee members?

S: I don't know.

G: They didn't?

S: I was not privy to any agreement that they may have had.

G: What elements do you think determined the composition of the new state Executive Committee that was named then?

S: In 1956?

G: Yes.

S: Well, I think those were at the September convention. They were people that [were] considered to be Price Daniel's people. The incoming governor is the one that, under normal circumstances, has the greatest amount of influence on who is named to the Executive Committee. Now, Price let it get away from him. At his next convention in San Antonio, he let it totally get away from him in 1958.

G: Were you there at that one?



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S: Oh yes, I was there. In fact, I went backstage and had a few words of criticism to him. He was--

G: Was that the one where they just physically lowered the curtain on the--just really stopped at--

S: Well, the thing that happened was I was in the Travis County delegation, and Jim Lindsey was the chairman of the Executive Committee. Jim Lindsey had been the speaker of the house. He was from Texarkana. And Price had told him that he was going to support him for re-election as the chairman of the Executive Committee. Price had given a press release--now, I believe the press conference--said that he was in favor of Jim Lindsey being re-elected as the chairman. This was two or three days before the convention. And then at the convention, Jim Lindsey came down to the Travis County delegation and told me, they said, "George, Price is gutting me. He has told me that he is not going to support me for chairman and he's putting"--I don't remember who it was, somebody else, a liberal loyalist, in his chair, as chairman. If you give your word, damn it, you keep it. So I got up and went backstage to where the governor and Jake Jacobson were. And I just told him, I said, "You're making the biggest mistake of your life if you go back on your word at this point, when you've given a press release that Jim Lindsey is your choice. Now you're going to kick him out and put in a loyalist that has never voted for you." I had a few harsh words.

G: What was Daniel's reactions?

S: Well, he sat there kind of blank faced, and he just didn't believe anybody would ever come back and talk to a governor that way. And Jake eventually said, "Well George, do you

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realize that you're talking to the governor?" And I said, "I sure as hell do!" (Laughter)

Well, to make a long story short, he--

G: But how did they lose control at that convention?

S: He--well, he hadn't lost control at that point. He did turn around and put Jim in as chairman. I just told him, I said, "You're making the mistake of your life, and you're not going to get the support of the rest of the members on that committee that are old Shivercrats, and there's still some on there. If you do this, you're going to lose total control." So he changed, put Jim back, but he kicked off two or three members of the committee. Oh, I remember [they were] from San Antonio. I can't remember who it was that we had on there as a committeeman, but he put a young fellow named Lefschetz--

G: Bernard Lefschetz?

S: Bernard Lefschetz on in San Antonio's place, which really upset some of the members of the committee.

Well, I wasn't one of Price's favorite people after that convention, not that I was before. (Laughter) I sure wasn't after that convention.

G: How did he lose control of it though?

S: He didn't have the right people running it. They were not strong [and] experienced at what they were doing. They just let it get away from them. It's just like running anything. You've got to have the right people in the right place at the right time. And you've got to let them know what they're supposed to be doing and how to do it. The way I ran a convention--now when John Connally was elected governor, we go to El Paso for the convention, September convention. He's to become governor in January. Go to El Paso.

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John had never run a convention before, and he knew he had to have the right people do it, so he asked me to do it.

What I did is I divided the state into sixteen regions. Actually, two senatorial districts joining would be one region. I'd have one man in charge of that. Then I gave him a little book that would fit in his coat pocket that had every chairman from every county, name, and where he was seated in the convention. And we laid the convention out so that regions were always together. Senatorial regions--districts rather--were together. Well, that man was a floor man. But he had his little book, so he'd know who the county chairmen were and where they were seated so that he could pass the word. Then I would have four people backstage who had four, each one had four of the floor people in charge, so that word can be passed one man to four and four to the counties. We could cover every county in the convention in five minutes, get the word out either to or from backstage. We knew what the hell is going on and who is in charge.

Now, in order to perfect that, you have to have a meeting with these people before the convention. And in El Paso, as we did in every other convention, we had a suite of rooms in which we could bring these people in and brief them, give them the books on how to do it and in John Connally's--

(Interruption)

Anyway, we had this room and we'd bring them in, brief them [on] what the issue was going to be, what we could expect, and it'll work perfectly.

Now, during that time, Eugene Locke had been John's campaign chairman, and Eugene was the attorney in Dallas. He did not want to be chairman of the Executive

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Committee. Well, if your campaign chairman, who's well known throughout the state, declines to be chairman of the Executive Committee, it looks as though, you know, he's really not in support of the governor's position. So we brought Gene in and said, "Now look, you've got to be, to start off that way, you've got to be chairman. And we'll select someone from secretary that we can move into your place. After a reasonable time, you can resign, okay?" So then the question was who would be a good one for the secretary. I told John, I said, "Well, the ideal situation is to have someone from Austin, because you're going to have your office there, and you need someone who lives there, doesn't have to be traveling back and forth and be there." And he said, "Well, who will it be?" I said, "Well, I've got a good one from Austin, and I'll recommend him to you." I said, "The name is Frank Erwin." And he said, "Well, I've heard of him, but I don't believe I know him." I said, "Well, he's a lawyer. He's a good conservative. He's smart, intelligent, and he'll do you a good job." And he said, "Bring him up. Let's talk to him." To make a long story short, we had a room downstairs on the other floor that we could take people, lock the door and nobody knew where we were, and we could talk them into what we wanted them to do.

Well, something happened, and John got tied up, so I took Frank down to the room and told him what I wanted to do, wanted him to be secretary and later on when Eugene Locke resigned, he could step into chairmanship. In my opinion, Frank was in support of these conservative positions that John had taken, which he was. In fact, Frank was chairman of the Austin delegation at the convention. So Frank said, "Okay, I'll do it." I said, "All right. Let's go upstairs and talk to John." [I] took him up to John and said, "Meet your new secretary." They went off in a room by themselves. Well, I went over and talked

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to some of the other folks about what we're going to have to do to keep this convention under control. And they came out in total agreement.

And as you know, Frank Erwin and John Connally became good close friends, and of course, John later appointed him to the Board of Regents. In Frank's place, as chairman of the Austin delegation, we got the Austin delegates to elect Davis, attorney--

G: Will Davis?

S: Will Davis as chairman. And that's when Will started taking an active part.

G: That's an amazing story.

S: Yes. Yes.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview II

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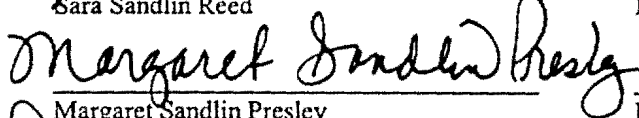
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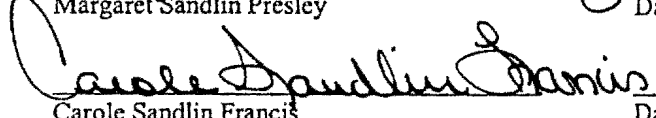
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