

INTERVIEW I

INTERVIEWEE: ANTONIO J. TAYLOR

INTERVIEWER: DAVID McCOMB

DATE: November 23, 1969

PLACE: Mr. Taylor's office in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Tape 1 of 1

M: Let me identify the tape first of all. This is an interview with Mr. Anthony J. Taylor. I think you are known as Tony Taylor, is that right?

T: Correction, Antonio, not Anthony.

M: Antonio. A-N-T-O-N-I-O.

T: Antonio, so baptized.

M: Good. I am in his office in Santa Fe. The date is November 23 [1969]. It is ten minutes after ten in the morning.

T: Isn't that a very historical day, November 23?

M: It is a rather historical day, considering what we're talking about. First of all, I need to know something about you and your background and how you grew up. So I will start off by asking you when were you born and where?

T: And why, eh? I was born in Karnack, Texas, August 29, 1904. I was one of three children of Thomas Jefferson Taylor and Minnie Lee Pattillo Taylor. The eldest was our brother, Thomas Taylor, Jr., who died ten years ago. I was three years younger, and Claudia

Taylor -- I -- 2

Taylor, now Mrs. Lyndon Johnson, was about eight years younger than I. That means that she was born about 1912.

My brother and I were both born in a frame house in the village of Karnack. Before Lady Bird was born he acquired what is known as the Brick House, really a very historic old manor house, that had been built before the Civil War. So Lady Bird was the only one of the three Taylor children to be born in that building.

M: Two story?

T: A two story house, the so-called Brick House, the Taylor-Andrews House that appears in an historical volume called Early Homes of Texas.

M: And Karnack is near the Louisiana border?

T: Yes, about fifteen miles.

M: And your father did what?

T: My father was a country merchant, landowner, cotton farmer, engaged in a type of operation that is practically extinct now, known as "advancing." He advanced the land and the equipment to farm it and the seeds and the sustenance of the tenants, and the reckoning came in the fall. It's a system known as "advancing" in the South, and doubtless elsewhere, too.

M: Then would he take part of the crop, then, as his share of the--

T: Not necessarily. It was on a cash basis and the tenant could pay in cash if he wished, sell his crop elsewhere if he wished. The common practice was, of course, that he would turn his crop over to the landlord and the landlord would return what was due the tenant.

Taylor -- I -- 3

M: Well, according to the books I read about this, your father was a pretty busy man most of the time and paid a lot of attention to his business.

T: Yes, he was a very busy man. My father traveled a little. He had very few interests or hobbies outside the little world--and all our worlds were little in those days I guess, thanks to bad roads and many other things that didn't exist at that time. Yes, my father was bound around by a limited world and a man of limited interests as a consequence.

M: Was he one of the most prominent men in Karnack?

T: That's damning him with faint praise, I might say! I wouldn't want the Karnack neighbors to take any umbrage. There was good yeoman stock there but Karnack was really not any, shall we say, place of great plantations and manor houses and the sort of thing you might expect in the Mississippi River Valley. Yes, my father was, certainly in terms of economic situation, the largest landowner in the county and a respected man of his community.

M: Then, did you go to school in Karnack?

T: Very little. We were doomed to scatter like frightened quail before the hunter. The two boys, my brother and I--our mother was in bad health for a number of years, and we went to live in Alabama with relatives.

Just about the time I became of school age, seven years, we returned to Texas, and I knew Texas--had known it only as a baby, which means I did not know it at all until I was seven years old

Taylor -- I -- 4

and returned. So we began school at a little country schoolhouse, a little one-room schoolhouse, some one-half mile from the Brick House where we all resided at that time, the so-called Taylor-Andrews House.

I might go back to the name of that house again. I think it's rather important. Andrews was a major in military forces and he was the original builder. The house was begun in 1844, put together with square nails, bricks burned on the premises, walls eighteen inches thick of solid brick, erected by slaves, of course.

M: Do you remember when your sister was born?

T: Oh, yes.

M: Were you there for that occasion?

T: Oh yes, I remember--not quite. At this small school my brother and I attended, there were two other brothers. Their name was Haley. They lived about two miles away down the road a piece and across the creek, and we dearly loved to spend the night with them. We were always begging to go and spend the night with Bob and Homer Haley. Usually permission wasn't granted. This time it was granted promptly. Something was about to happen. So when we came back the next day we had a sister.

M: Were you delighted to have a sister or were you much concerned at that age?

T: I thought it was a good idea.

M: There is a story that is widely told about your sister's nickname, Lady Bird. That she was named by a Negro mammy, who said something

Taylor -- I -- 5

to the effect, "Isn't she as pretty as a Lady Bird." Is that the correct story?

T: That's the correct story and there's some difference . . . the timing is . . . we're not all in agreement on the timing, but I think Alice Tittle, the name of this colored woman, when she first saw her, maybe a day or two after her birth, made that remark. There are some who say it came about much later. I don't think so.

M: But it was very early then.

T: It was very early in life and people began to call her Lady Bird. The poor gal tried to shake it but in vain.

M: She wasn't particularly happy with the nickname.

T: I don't think so.

M: Did you spend much time with your young sister? Or did you all scatter, as you have suggested?

T: Yes, unfortunately, we were not together very much. I was eight when Lady Bird was born. I was there. About three or four years later my brother and I went to private school in New York State, in the Catskill Mountains. Lady Bird would have been about four years of age at that time. And I did quite a little baby-sitting.

M: Oh, you did?

T: Oh, yes. I would get a nickel an afternoon, which was pretty good pay in those days, you know. The job wasn't too onerous. The neighbors were nice and there were no high-speed roads, or hardly any automobiles, or very little that could happen. So the job

Taylor -- I -- 6

didn't entail very much work, so we didn't strike for any pay increase.

(Pause in recording)

M: Let me ask you a little bit about life in Karnack. What did children do to entertain themselves? What did you do, and what did Mrs. Johnson do for entertainment?

T: I suppose people were entertained as well then as now by the standards and by the knowledge that they had. You might say they didn't know what they were missing, but they were just as happy with a baseball game on a sandy lot. We lived in a very heavily populated Negro area. The Negroes entertained themselves largely by what they called "dinners." A dinner consisted of freezing some cans of ice cream, and a baseball game, and a lot of soda pop, and barbecuing of meats. Those were dinners. Everything was for sale, and we thought it was fun to go. The social activities . . . I can remember Christmas eve in the country school house in Karnack, and everybody went and Santa Claus gave out presents. There were such nice things as a peck of peanuts and maybe a whole ham on the tree and so on and so forth, what people had. The first present that I gave a girl was a twenty five cent box of chocolates, I still remember it. When I lost her, my twenty five cents went down the drain!

M: Do you remember what Mrs. Johnson was like as a child? Was she as shy, for example, like the books indicate?

T: My early years with her were from her infancy until about four years of age. I myself was little more than an infant. I was from eight

Taylor -- I -- 7

until twelve. Then I went off to boarding school. In this period, of course, I've already admitted to baby-sitting.

When Lady Bird began to go to school and maybe to tea parties, and form her own circle of friends outside of the house--(Tape interrupted by phone call)

T: To answer your question better, certainly a great influence in Lady Bird's life was a girl somewhat older, Dorris Odam now Mrs. Powell. You could hardly call her a playmate, but she was the nearest thing to a playmate.

M: Was she a neighbor?

T: Yes, that existed in that part of the world. Lady Bird, in turn, went to live in Alabama, after the death of her mother. It's a little confusing. I came to New Mexico to school--we went to New York State to school, my brother and I when I was eleven or twelve. I can't remember. At age fourteen I came to New Mexico to school, went to the Los Alamos Ranch Boys' School, later to become the atomic laboratory. My brother in the meantime went to a series of schools, between the Babson Institute in Boston, Marion Military Institute in Alabama, the University of Arizona; he had a lot of alma maters.

Lady Bird, in the meantime, in her first years in school, was in Alabama. These would have been the years roughly--I didn't prepare myself with a calendar, but her age would have been six, seven, eight, nine, something in there. I think she spent several years of those years in Alabama, where she began her schooling.

Taylor -- I -- 8

M: These were your mother's relatives?

T: Yes, mostly--Mother and Father's relatives, both. So there was a gap there. We were not together. Our mother had died when Lady Bird was six, shall we say. Again, as my father had done once before when our mother was ill--this time we no longer had a mother, but the boys were able to scratch for themselves. But again he sent his child back to Alabama. She was with relatives for several years. We didn't see nearly as much of each other as we would have liked, and we have since all regretted it. No one's fault, it was circumstance.

M: So you really didn't see much of her when she was growing up?

T: Comparatively little.

M: Did you get together on holidays? Say Christmas, did the family reunite?

T: When we could. Sometimes home from school, and yet I cannot brush over the lack of companionship that--especially on my part. Our elder brother, Tommy, was sort of in the middle, geographically speaking--I was way out in New Mexico. It was a long ways out here then. My brother was a little closer, a little closer contact. I did not know the man she was to marry, and I did not know that they were marrying, and I didn't attend their wedding. They were on a honeymoon to Mexico, and thereby, I missed a good chance to do a gracious thing because even as far back as that I had established a small trading firm and we had come to know Mexico and have contacts there. As I see it now, it certainly would have been nicer if I



Taylor -- I -- 9

could have arranged to serenade them at their hotel, you know, or something like that. I muffed it! Didn't do it.

M: So you didn't really meet Lyndon Johnson until somewhat later?

T: That's right, after their marriage. Lyndon came visiting, the Brick House. I can't remember how long they had been married, maybe only a year or two. That was before any of the children were born.

He was a slender, young man who remembered the country stores and the tastes and the interests that go with them. I can remember he would like to eat cheese and crackers and maybe a can of sardines at his father-in-law's country store.

M: Were you impressed with Lyndon Johnson? Did you like him?

T: Yes, I liked him. He was a good companion. He was always preoccupied, I think though. I mean his mind was even then traveling further than his immediate surroundings. I remember, my feelings were once hurt when after one visit we were all together at the Brick House, the Taylor-Andrews house. We took him to Marshall and put him on a train, known as in those days as the Sunshine Special. That was the wonder of everyone around. It ran all the way from San Antonio to Dallas to St. Louis where it connected with New York and Washington and so on. We had a fine day together, we shot some quail. These were holidays. We had a few cups of cheer and everyone was feeling fine and sentimental but when he swung on board the train he never turned around to look--went up the steps and into vestibule--and my feelings were hurt.

Taylor -- I -- 10

M: He just went off--

T: I think his mind was on his new job, new horizons. I believe at that time he was secretary to--

M: Kleberg?

T: Kleberg, I think.

M: That must have been shortly after they were married then.

T: That's right. I haven't thought out any chronology here and consulted calendars. I'm talking off the cuff.

M: He liked to hunt, even in those days then.

T: Yes, he did. Those days he didn't have game on his--he acquired his present property in 1953, the so-called LBJ Ranch. What is now certainly one of the best stocked game farms in America didn't exist then. A neighbor, Mr. Wesley West, was the man who had the deer, and Lyndon from the very beginning began to cultivate people and know people. I began my remarks with something to that effect. He knew a great many people, not only people who are prominent or wealthy people, but people in all walks of life all over the state. How in the world can he retire and not see those people? I guess that's going to be the hardest thing to do, is to get a little privacy and not have the front door open forever all the time. This is a delicate thing to say--it would seem to me to present a challenge. We were on the matter of hunting, and I digressed.

M: He liked to hunt, then.

T: He liked to hunt, and he's a much better shot now than he was then. Both my brother and I got our deer before he did, and he was quite

Taylor -- I -- 11

chagrined I'd think, hunting over at Wesley West's place. We ended up with our deer, though.

M: Let me pick up the thread of your story. Now you'd been off at school. That raises a question. Why did your father send you off to school, the various children? Did he not have time to take care of you at home?

T: Well, my mother inspired that. Karnack was a tiny hamlet on the edge of the Great Swamp, Caddo Lake was just sort of a bowery at that time on West Madison Street and people went up there and camped and drank themselves to death. There was illegal fishing, that was before the days of conservation. Barrel loads of beautiful croppie and bass were shipped out to restaurants from there. With all due regards to our neighbors, and they were nice folks, they were what you might describe in England as good yeoman stock. They really were not the people my mother had known in her youth in Alabama, and she wanted us to find wider horizons. That's why we were sent first to New York to school and why I was sent out west to school, and so on. My father accepted the status quo, and I don't think he wanted us out from underfoot; in fact, when we came home in the summertime, we worked like the devil. We made pretty good hands. But the pattern was established by--

M: By your mother.

T: That's right.

M: A minor point perhaps, but one of the books I read said that you were sent off to school after her death, but this is not true?

Taylor -- I -- 12

T: Not true.

M: You were going off to school before your mother died.

T: That's right.

M: And then you came out to New Mexico to go to school and I guess you liked it? Did you stay out here in New Mexico then?

T: I was only a little boy. I finished prep school here. As soon as I was a grown man I came back to live.

M: You went back to Texas, then, or back here?

T: After finishing high school, preparatory school, here I went back to Texas. Later when I had finished my schooling and became a man I came back here to live. I've been here uninterruptedly since 1928 I guess it would be.

M: And were you then in the export-import business operation, or what did you do?

T: I established this business in '27. I came here as a resident in '23. This business was established in 1927, forty-two years now.

M: I see. Then you would see Mrs. Johnson and Lyndon Johnson periodically when you'd go to visit, or what?

T: We visited in Texas, in Texas again at the old homestead. That was still home there. My father continued to live there until the time of his death in 1960. I began to visit the Johnsons I think in the late forties or early fifties in Austin. They owned property there. I remember it was duplex property on a nice, grassy hillside, with some big liveoak trees. My first visit to their Ranch was in 1953, I think. They had just acquired it. In the meantime they also

Taylor -- I -- 13

visited me. Now if I can get my dates correct, Lady Bird came several times alone, and the first time that I can remember the President coming was after his successful race for the Senate.

M: That must have been in 1948, is that about right?

T: I believe so, late forties. We were quite thrilled that the new Senator-elect elected to come out to our small house in a small town while he could have been a guest in many a mansion in his home state, but I think he had a strong urge at that moment to get away.

M: That was a tough campaign.

T: Yes, it was a tough campaign. So he came here and he told me, this might be of a little historical interest, the first thing I'm going to say, of very little historical interest but it touches on politics, "Tony, I don't want to go to any gatherings, meetings or any publicity." Well, we arrived at the airport, such as it was in those days, and there was our new congressman-elect, Governor Miles. Johnny Miles kept looking at me, and kept looking at Lyndon and I stood there stoney-faced and never did introduce him. I don't think Governor Miles, as we now call him, ever forgave me. I had orders not to introduce him about, and I'm sorry I followed the order that time. There's no harm in saying, "Governor Miles, meet Senator-elect Johnson."

M: But apparently the new senator wanted to rest, is that right?

T: That was his only purpose in coming here.

M: Do you recall, did he look pretty worn out?

Taylor -- I -- 14

T: He's a pretty husky man, you know. It took a lot of wearing to wear him out. I guess his spirits were tired, but physically he was in very good shape after that race. I know as soon as he discovered that one of the Murchisons was living out in Santa Fe, he brightened up a little bit and thought maybe this wasn't such a broad place in the road after all!

M: Did you ever have occasion to campaign for him at all? Did you ever go on any campaign trips, or anything like that.

T: Well, I'm a Spanish speaking person and I'm married to a Spanish-American. In Texas, you call them Texas-Mexicans I believe, many different names, Latin Americans. Spanish-American is a term that is generally appreciated here, these people like. So we have both Spanish speaking people. During the '64 Mrs. Taylor and I did travel from the Sea of Cortez to the Mexique Bay--do you follow me? California to Texas Coast--speaking in Spanish to--well the audience wasn't restricted, but I was trying to find areas where there was a high percentage of Spanish-Americans. I'm certainly not a gifted orator, I know now and I knew then, and I followed it to a certain extent, that the use of language is a delicate thing. There are a good many people who are very, very proud, as they should be, being American citizens and all that that means--among other things, speaking the English language. So you want to be a little careful in addressing someone that he didn't reply: "You think I don't know English, huh?" They've got a point. I tried to follow that and if we did it with the skill we hoped to use then our use of the Spanish

Taylor -- I -- 15

language was quite well. Because here was a gimmick, I mean, we speak the language, it's our language. There's no accent and to hear such sounds coming from the throats of a member of the family I think did create some rapprochement, some liaison there.

M: Apparently, Lyndon Johnson always had very good relationship with the Latin Americans.

T: Always did have, it must have come from his heart because he couldn't have followed through uninterruptedly for so many years, from the days that he taught school in Cotulla, people who worked on his Ranch-- they say "think mink"--well, he thought Mexico for a long time, went there on his honeymoon.

M: Now you have to go to church.

T: I'd sort of like to and let see. We can come back after if you'd like.

(Tape turned off)

M: Now she's going again. Now when you were on that 1964 campaign trip, was that part of the "Viva Johnson" activity, or how was that arranged?

T: I think that we were a splinter group within the splinter group. We did it all by ourselves. We were not labeled as such as "Viva Johnson."

M: You just worked out your own itinerary?

T: No, we had some what is called an advance man who set up dates and appointments, reservations for us. Occasionally we ran into other

Taylor -- I -- 16

groups. Particularly at the wind-up in South Texas there were, well, let's see such people as the senator from Texas running for re-election.

M: Yarborough?

T: Senator Yarborough. Once we were on the platform with Senator Yarborough. Also to our discomfort on the platform with Hoss Cartwright. He stole the show!

M: Did you happen to meet Hector Garcia?

T: Dr. Garcia--

M: From Corpus.

T: Corpus Christi. No, I didn't. I know he's very active and quite an influence among Latin American people. Our paths just didn't happen to cross. It was not intentional.

M: Did the President express his appreciation for what you'd done on this campaign?

T: Well, I'm not sure that he was wholly pleased with what we did. We did our best; we were not politicians. He asked me to go specifically. I didn't do it all on my own. I don't think that we were particularly effective, but it takes a whole lot of doing to elect a President, you know? And we did our best.

M: Did you ever travel with Mrs. Johnson on any of her campaign trips?

T: Not really. Mrs. Johnson came to El Paso with Mrs. Sargent Shriver and Mrs. Robert Kennedy, Ethel, the three ladies. This was during the Kennedy campaign, 1960, this would have been, wouldn't it? They came to El Paso, making a swing all through the state of Texas. I believe this was specifically an effort and a contribution of Johnson



Taylor -- I -- 17

to the campaign. I know that they traveled in his plane. There was quite a successful turnout in El Paso. They did not cross the river at the suggestion of, well, maybe the State Department. It'd be hard to know whether there were a few rotten apples in the barrel somewhere, you know, and did not cross the forest.

That was my only time I was actually present during campaign activities of Mrs. Johnson.

M: Then your other contact has been primarily social, visits?

T: Right.

M: Did you have occasion to visit them in Washington?

T: Yes. Mrs. Johnson was very hospitable and very generous and she had many friends and relatives for short visits to the White House, Mrs. Taylor and I included.

Mrs. Johnson had planned to have us at Christmas time, the last Christmas there, in '68. I was ill one year ago and I went to Washington a little ahead of time for some examinations, so my Christmas was spent in the Mayo Clinic in Rochester rather than the White House.

M: Had you visited them earlier in Washington when Mr. Johnson was a senator or a congressman?

T: I can answer your question with a picture, I think. This picture was taken on a flight from Austin to Washington about January 16, 1965 just before the inaugural. He was to be inaugurated as an elected President after serving a year and a few months of the Kennedy period. It was taken on the flight. You can see the President and

Taylor -- I -- 18

Mrs. Johnson with Mrs. Taylor and myself and a niece, Miss Susan Taylor.

M: This is on Air Force One?

T: That's Air Force One.

M: And it looks like you are giving him a present here?

T: Many people have brought presents to me to give to the President and I sort of demurred. I tried to dodge it. In the first place, as you perhaps know, they and, I think other Presidents, too, are a little sensitive about the gifts, especially gifts of any considerable value. I thought that one was so clever. It was a wood carving done by a local man in Santa Fe of a Democratic donkey. I made an exception and gave it to him and he seemed to like it, as the picture shows.

M: That raises a point. What kind of present do you give to the Johnsons? At Christmas time?

T: That's what I wonder. I don't know!

M: I would think that that would be a problem.

T: I just gave you a chili wreath, and I once had a very especially large one made for the White House. This was about two or three Christmases ago. Maybe it was hung on one of the doors. I didn't see it. I hope it got hung somewhere.

M: Did you have any contact with the President or Mrs. Johnson shortly after the assassination of President Kennedy?

T: We visited them at the Elms, but it was in the spring, I think. I was not present immediately after the assassination of President Kennedy. We did visit them later at the Elms, and of course we sent

Taylor -- I -- 19

out words of encouragement to him at the time of the take over. He very graciously replied that he sure needed all our thoughts and prayers.

M: Have you ever visited them then at the Ranch, socially?

T: Oh yes, many times. One very unusual meeting there perhaps was the late President Adolfo Lopez-Mateos visited before Mr. Johnson was President. It was rather unusual. If I'm not mistaken, he was a senator when Lopez Mateos--he had been elected Vice President. Am I getting my dates straight? I'm not sure.

M: I'm not sure either.

T: He was elected Vice President--he was still senator, he had not--when I say it's unusual I say it this way, that it was unusual for a head of state to visit, not exactly a private citizen, but a senator. This didn't often happen.

M: Were you there at that time?

T: Yes, I was there. There's another illustration of it right behind you, I was acting as interpreter at that point. That would have been in the fall, in the autumn of 1959.

M: And for the tape, this is a picture of Mr. Johnson and--

T: Adolfo Lopez-Mateos,

M: The three of them and this was taken at the Ranch--

T: Taken at the Ranch, that's right.

M: It looks like a Salinas painting in the background.

T: That's a Salinas painting hanging over the fireplace in the small sitting room.

Taylor -- I -- 20

M: Can you give me some general idea of what was going on? Why did he pay this visit to Johnson? Why was Mateos there?

T: I don't know what the political motives there were. I think it was mostly good will. Here was a man prominent in American life, who lived along the border, who had known Mexico and admired it and its peoples, and I think it was mostly a good will visit. I know he brought a very beautiful saddle. It's still in the President's office. Lopez Mateos brought him that saddle at that time. And they in turn gave some very nice presents to the Mexicans as they departed including, I think, a color TV, which was a pretty rare item ten years ago. I remember jokingly saying to them as they were leaving, "just think of how much duty you're going to have to pay on this to take it into Mexico!" They thought that was fun.

To digress a bit--but as I get more away from the President, to the Mexican President, there were two braceros--you're familiar with the term bracero.

M: Yes.

T: Humble, and very hard working, very pleasant people to have around, really. [They were] working down on the Ranch, and they stood around and hoping that they could get to see their President. And to his credit, he said that the morning he left and they were standing out there twisting their hats in their hands and he stopped and he said to them. "Remember, you're a Mexican. While you're here, you want to reflect dignity on your nation, to obey the laws and add to our repute and reputation."

Taylor -- I -- 21

Now, it's very unlikely that in a land like Mexico that those two farm boys would have ever had a chat with their President.

M: When you've been at the Ranch and observed Lyndon Johnson in a more relaxed atmosphere, what does he talk about? You know, the books say that Johnson was almost totally a political man, all he talked about was politics.

T: He doesn't talk politics to me because he knows I'm terribly inept at it. But yes, he does, but he's a good raconteur and the stories he tells run mostly to people and personalities he has known, rather than invented stories. A rather home-spun, cracker barrel sort of philosophy, that vein follows through these stories and they're very good. He thinks they're very good, too, he laughs uproariously!

M: Is he a good mimic? I've heard that he will mimic people's voices.

T: Yes. He mimics quite a few people. One I can remember at the moment is Cantinflas. Cantinflas Mario Gee, name is I shouldn't have put that on the record because his name is not Cantinflas of course, Mario Moreno I remember--would you like for me to contribute something, while we are on the Mexican vein because I'm the one who has been present quite a bit with things that had to do with Mexico?

M: Fine, go ahead.

T: The President sent a plane to Oaxaca, Mexico, to pick up then Senator Douglas. Douglas wanted to retire, didn't want to get in that ring with that heavyweight Percy, I guess, and was resting and writing a book in Oaxaca. Lyndon was trying to persuade him to run. He sent a plane down one morning for him. I remember very well we left

Taylor -- I -- 22

before dawn and just as we got over Vera Cruz at a terrific altitude --all the great peaks of Mexico standing up and the rays of the sun hitting the mountains. I've never seen such a sight in my life. I felt a bit like an astronaut. There was Citlaltepētl in the foreground, Iztaccihautl and Popocatepētl in the background and the Nevada de Toluca in the furthestest background, which must have been more than two hundred and fifty miles from Vera Cruz. We got to Oaxaca and we picked up Senator Douglas.

Our pilots--I'm not being funny--the pilot was named Captain Long and the copilot Captain Short. My sister had warned me not to pick up any "stray Mexicans", as she put it. She knew I was disposed to do those things, "Okay, I won't," and I saw a lot of friends at the airport in Oaxaca, and we had to land in Mexico City on the way back for fuel. I asked no one to come, but there was a couple that was in some kind of trouble and they saw I was a Spanish speaking person on board and they asked me--and I said, "Well, Senator Douglas is in charge, you ask the Senator about that." And the Senator said, "Yes, you may go to Mexico City."

Arriving in Mexico City, who came up in considerable distress no less a person than Cantinflas. I've always known that Johnson liked him. This train of thought all began when you asked if he was a mimic, and he used to mimic Cantinflas in his broken English. It isn't so broken, as a matter of fact, and he's quite a fellow. Cantinflas' wife was very ill. In fact she died three days later. He had his own plane; the plane had had engine trouble and couldn't

Taylor -- I -- 23

fly. "Could they go with us?" So that time I didn't ask Senator Douglas. Despite my sister's warning not to pick up any strays, I said "Come aboard." And they came aboard, Mr. and Mrs. Moreno, Mario Moreno, a doctor--the doctor I believe was from the Scott and White Clinic in Temple--and a lady, and a relative or two. So we had quite a load.

Mr. Johnson was so very careful not to take undue advantage of his position. He always stamped his own mail, personal mail--even some of it might have been related to public business. If it went out through his office it was usually stamped.

I mention that detail because when we arrived at the Ranch with Cantinflas and his dying wife--they had forgotten their papers and as we were taking off from Mexico City he said "Oh, let's go get our papers."

I said, "Your papers won't be necessary. The President would like to have you for lunch and I see that your wife isn't well. I'm sure we can arrange those papers."

But there were immigration and customs men from San Antonio at the airstrip at Johnson City, looking rather foolish. They had to do their thing, ask a question or two and then they looked at me, "Who are you?"

"Well, I'm the interpreter." So they had no more to do with me. They were urged to stay for lunch, urged to come in the house and rest. They couldn't go on the same plane. It's too large to land at Temple.

Taylor -- I -- 24

M: They were en route to Temple?

T: They were en route to Temple. They transferred there to the President's private plane, which is a Kingair and went on to Temple. And he called Temple--

M: This is Temple, Texas?

T: Temple, Texas, Scott and White Clinic.

He called them and said, "Mrs. Moreno's arriving and I'm sure you'll do everything in your power for her," and I'm sure they did. The Grim Reaper overtook the lady about three days later.

So I think that perhaps any association I may have had with the presidency besides just being a house guest might have been in regards to Latin American things. Mrs. Taylor and I were able to mix with the people. Now, what further thoughts came to your mind?

M: Did you have anything to do with the El Paso problem in the return of part of El Paso to Mexico?

T: As you know, that matter has been in discussion and litigation and quarrels for a hundred years. For a long time we didn't act very gallantly about it. One time we named a mediator and did not accept the findings. It was during the time that Thomas Mann was in Mexico City. You know he was appointed by President Kennedy and I'm sure at the insistence of the Vice President.

I'm glad you asked that question, as they say. Thomas Mann worked on it diligently. Lopez-Mateos was president. He worked on it very diligently and very earnestly, and Frank Ortiz, native Santa Fean, special assistant to Mr. Mann--he's a Santa Fe boy, grew



Taylor -- I -- 25

up in Santa Fe and went to school with my son-in-law. He was a special assistant there. He had a great deal to do with the actual details and the work in drafting this treaty.

There were at least two ceremonies in El Paso attended by then President Diaz-Ordaz. The second final one was eleven months ago. The old Paso del Norte Hotel hadn't seen such doings since it opened as the wonder of the Southwest with its marble lobbies and its gilt in 1911. The great and near great from all over the Southwest came to see this palace in the midst of the mud-huts that was then El Paso. It came into its glory again that day. A luncheon was served in the--

M: Were you there?

T: I was there.

M: What was your role there?

T: I was a very sick man, I was on my way to Mayo Clinic then.

M: You were just present at the ceremony?

T: I was just present. In fact the seating arrangement--do you know the lobby of that hotel?

M: No, you had better describe it.

T: They had cleared out all of the desks and the chairs and the tile lobby where the cowboy boots had been clomping for fifty years or sixty years--they still do--tables were set there. That day the seating arrangement was the President with Mrs. Diaz-Ordaz and other dignitaries at one table, and Mrs. Johnson with President Diaz-Ordaz, Mrs. Taylor and myself and others. I had been nearly paralyzed

Taylor -- I -- 26

from a concussion and a fall that I had had. Everyone went off and left me, and Mama didn't seem to care. She got to her table and sitting right there was the President of Mexico and the First Lady of the United States. I managed to drag into the lobby and sit down at the first table that I could find--very good friends too. If I had to take a second table that was the one I would have chosen, Ray Dwigans, collector of customs there, and some very prominent people from Juarez. That day all the banns were down. There were no customs, no immigration no--everybody was Viva, and Amigoas, and Bienvenido, and welcome all that sort of thing.

Let's go back just a while, year if you would, that was on this occasion the final act of the ceremony was the 13th of December, 1968. A year previous to that time Diaz-Ordaz paid his official state visit to Washington. I was also present. I managed to get in when anything related to Mexico was happening. There was the usual protocol and ceremony and state dinner at the White House. Then the next night the Mexico President offered a reception at his Embassy. The Embassy is a very strange building and it was badly overcrowded. Somebody just simply hadn't counted heads and the crush was so great, I thought it was actually dangerous. I was kidding Hugo Margain, the ambassador later about it. He said, "Oh, gosh, we pulled a boner." He said "You helped pull one, too, what about those couple of wranglers you brought in!"

I'm a little surprised the Secret Service let President and Mrs. Johnson go in such a crowd.

Taylor -- I -- 27

M: They did go in?

T: They did go in. They were ushered through this flying wedge of security men through this enormous throng up to the top floor where they were alone. I got lost on the way--didn't have the excuse of this illness either at that time--because I knew so many people around. Well, the President didn't stay long and when he left, "Where's Tony?" No one could find Tony and the President of Mexico escorted the President of the United States out through the front door and big farewells. "Where's Tony, wait for him a minute." Well, by George, they actually waited about thirty seconds for me, I believe. I thought that was quite an honor! I didn't show up at all.

Later, I got back in the receiving line and the Mexican President was there and he said to me, "Don Antonio, El Abandonado". El Abandonado is the name of a song in Spanish. I can't sing, but I said, "Que hoy es [?] en El Abandonado". They got a good laugh out of that one.

That was the first of two visits made by the Mexican President. No, he made three, because he visited the Ranch first. I should know because again--this is before the second inaugural, I mean the only inaugural, shall we say of President Johnson. Plans were being made for the inaugural. And I probably indelicately, and I think the powers that he didn't approve of it but anyway for better or worse I asked the President of Mexico if his Ballet Folklorica would appear at the inaugural. He seemed very pleased. Now this was in the fall, and I guess right after election, sure because weren't sure there was

Taylor -- I -- 28

going to be an inaugural or who was going to be inaugurated. It had to be after November, of course. He said, "You keep in touch with me."

I said, "That's all very well for you to say 'You keep in touch with me' but how am I going to get through your guards and your secretaries?"

He said, "I'll get in touch with you then."

M: Did he do that?

T: December 24 down in the basement of this store--it was Saturday, Christmas Eve. The place was demoralized, I had no help, the secretary wasn't there. The phone rang--I don't usually answer it, I did that time--and I heard, "Bueno, Bueno," the conversation I could see was from Mexico, so I said then "Quien hable"--who's speaking--and he said, "Diaz-Ordaz". It wasn't a secretary saying, "I'll put the President on" or something. The man called me. I thought that was very unusual for the head of state to call a private citizen. The long and the short of it was, to get back to those two aviators, the Ballet Folklorica--if you aren't familiar with it, it is a ballet, and it has to do with folklore and native music and the costuming of Mexico--did perform and they were very well received. I forgot how many acts there were. They perhaps tied with one other act for the number one round of applause at this big entertainment at the Armory.

I'm going on and on talking about myself and we're suppose to talk about the President.

Taylor -- I -- 29

M: Well you must have been at the inauguration, too, then?

T: Yes, I was there.

M: Did you go around with the presidential party at all?

T: I had a seat--this happens to be the Kennedy inaugural, but I was also there. Yes, we had seats there and then we were at the reviewing stands in front of the White House. We did not travel around from ball with the presidential party. We went to one. Those balls are awfully tiresome, I think, especially for somebody like myself who's sleepy about nine o'clock.

M: Well, then, back to your connections with Mexico. You were in both of those ceremonies dealing with El Paso.

T: I was at both, yes.

M: And they went over rather well?

T: The second one, the final act, the new bridge had been opened, what they call the Cordova Street Bridge. The grounds had been landscaped, flags were flying. Mexico when it wants to put on a show--they say that the British court, the British royal family and the Vatican are the world's greatest show people--I think maybe in third place you must put the Mexicans. The President told me--I did not go with him in April when he went; I was sick--it was the greatest reception he had had during his years in public life. There wasn't a hostile move in the crowd; there wasn't a jeer.

Mexico had called in groups of native people. By native people, what shall I say, cowboys from Chihuahua and mariachis from Jalisco and papangeros from Vera Cruz and on and on it went. They were

Taylor -- I -- 30

stationed in groups, not just--they'd be enough of one type altogether dressed in their native costumes to make an impact, you know, and on and on it went. I never saw anything to equal it. They couldn't have found all those people and all those costumes in Juarez. They brought them up there, I'm sure.

M: President Johnson was well pleased with that I suppose?

T: He should have been, of course he was. In fact I thought he even slighted the people in El Paso a little bit. I didn't come on Air Force One that day; I came on Air Force Two. They were running a little late for some reason and El Paso was lined up too, not to the extent that Mexico was. I guess we're a more sophisticated people, not quite so volatile, you know. But they were running late, unlike the Wabash Cannon Ball which never ran late, we hurried on through El Paso, and I was a little embarrassed. There was one ugly sign with some unprintable language on it as we crossed bridge, and it was American hippies that had the sign. I never saw a thing out of the way in all of Juarez and the crowds were just tremendous, tremendous. I never saw such packed humanity. The crowd was bigger in Mexico City because it's a bigger city, but per capita, per inhabitant, I don't think they ever found such a turnout as there was in Juarez when Chamizal territory was returned.

M: Did ugly signs like that bother Mr. and Mrs. Johnson?

T: I don't know. I haven't heard them say. We did read, and I only know what all of us read in the public prints, that he was pretty sensitive to criticism.

Taylor -- I -- 31

M: Do you think that's true?

T: I don't know. I myself have no way of deciding. He never commented to me about it.

M: Was it a surprise to you, incidentally, when President Johnson made the announcement in March?

T: Oh Lord, I'll say it was. That was a well kept secret. In fact I don't know to this day that it was a secret, maybe it was on impulse, spur of the moment. What do you think?

M: I don't know.

T: I do know for a fact that Mrs. Johnson sincerely did not want to continue in public life. That I can say. But whether she has been able to persuade her husband, I don't know. It might have been a factor.

M: That brings up a point, too. From other people I've interviewed, they are very impressed with the way Mrs. Johnson has played her role of First Lady. In fact, I've interviewed over a hundred people, and this question has come up before, and nobody has ever said anything derogatory about Mrs. Johnson.

T: We're very proud of that.

M: Mrs. Johnson. Now about Mr. Johnson they'll be mixed opinions.

T: Oh sure.

M: But about Mrs. Johnson, never!

T: I think that's quite remarkable. All First Ladies or all women in public life, whose husband is in public life have to roll bandages or visit hospitals or plant trees or do something, so it was expected

Taylor -- I -- 32

of Mrs. Johnson. But it also came from her heart. She had a love for that sort of thing, beautification.

M: Where did Mrs. Johnson learn to play this role? Where did she get this experience? How did she know what to do as First Lady?

T: Well my dear sir, we all wore diapers once and the motto of this state of New Mexico is "Crescit est Undo", "It grows as it goes," and those are the things we acquire in a lifetime, don't you think? Our talents develop, and I don't know that there's any special influence. There might have been something hereditary in love for flowers and trees. My mother had it to a marked degree.

M: Did she ever express to you any weariness with this kind of life, this public life? Either while First Lady or even before that?

T: She found it stimulating, I'm sure, but she also was anxious not to continue on for another term. I heard that over and over again.

M: So it must have had some strain connected with it.

T: I'm sure of that.

M: There's also another point about this. Many people have said that they thought Mrs. Johnson to have a remarkable influence with President Johnson. And yet nobody has ever said anything about observing her in talking to the President about things. Now, how can that be? Is it that she would consult with President Johnson privately? Is this her manner?

T: I don't know that I can answer that very intelligently. I think the President came to respect her and appreciate her over the years; what



Taylor -- I -- 32

influence she might have had with him came as a result of a good life together and long years of cooperation.

M: She was never observed, for example, criticizing him, at least in public--things of that nature.

T: Not to my knowledge, no, not to my knowledge.

M: But he seemed to have great respect for her, is that your observation?

T: Oh yes, I think so. He admired efficient people and she was efficient in running the household and rearing children under the stress of their lives. Having to be away so much, she did a remarkable job there, and he admired that. He admired the fact that she had been so successful in business, that the house was always comfortable, dinner was ready, and all those things that go to satisfy the inner man.

Mr. Johnson is demanding of course, as I'm sure all of his aides would agree on that. They worked long and hard hours, must always be ready to answer the call, like a fireman.

M: Where do you suppose Mrs. Johnson got her business talent? Did she inherit that from her father, do you think?

T: I suppose from her father, but her father was a product of his times and his environment and certainly the things that he knew and learned were not applicable to the business era in which Mrs. Johnson operated. Her father was a country merchant, and a successful one, but as I say, the things in which they dealt and the thoughts they thought were of those times. So I guess there's a certain germ of astuteness that regardless of the times, comes in good stead.

Taylor -- I -- 33

M: I have one last question for you. Has your experience as brother-in-law to a President changed your life in any way? Has it been hard on you, easy on you, how has it influenced your life? You mentioned all these relationships with Mexico, so that's perhaps part of it.

T: I held no public office, didn't seek one, and wasn't offered one. The President is not much of a man for nepotism. Yes, I have been troubled at times by people coming to me and thinking that I might have some way of getting their message to the President or influencing some government bureau, and I just had to tell them that I was only a private citizen.

M: Did you personally take the stand that you would not pass on such messages?

T: Yes, I did. I asked nothing for myself and I couldn't ask it for someone else. I did pick up Mario Moreno on my own initiative once.

M: Yes, but you were--

T: He approved of that one.

M: But you were troubled every now and then by things of that nature?

T: Yes, and in particular in Mexico, in Latin America, where the powers that be do indulge in nepotism and all the relatives receive honors and position and advantages that are alien to our way of thinking. For myself, I felt that I personally had to be really more correct and careful in my life and in my obligations, tax-wise and otherwise, than ever before.

M: Did it make any difference to your business at all?

Taylor -- I -- 34

T: That's hard to know. The girls tell me the store--I'm seldom there --that every once in awhile, "You know it's Lady Bird's brother runs this store. Where is he?" and sometimes they say "This is Lady Bird's store." Maybe indirectly or through no doings of my own some little traffic came in as a result of that. Who knows?

M: But socially your life in Santa Fe, has it made any difference in that respect?

T: I don't know. We've always been respected citizens here. I just don't know how to answer that. This is a peculiar town. It's a town of a very rich, cultural climate, a lot of retired people who would resent any airs being put on through a vicarious relationship, and we were careful to avoid that.

M: Well now this has exhausted the questions I had for you. Is there anything I should ask you about that in my ignorance I didn't? Or anything you wish to make comment on.

T: Well, we began by saying that I felt that I had nothing of any great moment to offer, and I think you've covered [it]. We could go on talking and remembering little incidents and vignettes for the rest of the day but I think we've covered the ground, and given a good sampling of my relationship with the Johnson family.

M: Well, I thank you then for the interview.

T: I might go a little bit further than that. Yes, I will, I'll add one thing. I had two daughters. One lives here. Mrs. Hopkins, she's a housewife and a mother and a small town gal. I have another daughter Diana MacArthur, who lives in Washington who likes the glamour

Taylor -- I -- 35

and the glitter. She's done pretty well in Washington, not on the government payroll. She did get to know a lot of important people through soirees and salons at fashionable gatherings, and I'm sure that she went to some of those that she might not have gone had not her aunt been the First Lady.

If there were advantages, they were indirect ones. She made her own way without any direct assistance from the government. And that I've been very proud of.

M: And her name is MacArthur?

T: MacArthur, Mrs. MacArthur--Donald MacArthur, the scientist. It was Dr. MacArthur and Diana that organized a very effective--you asked me about the campaign--group in the Johnson electoral campaign--Engineers and Scientists for Johnson. As a scientist of some standing he was able to interest a great many people and I think made quite an impact.

M: Is there anything else that comes to mind?

T: No, I enjoyed talking with you and I think we have covered the salient points.

M: Thank you.

T: Thank you for coming.

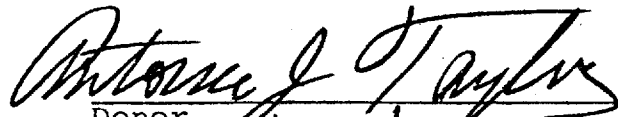
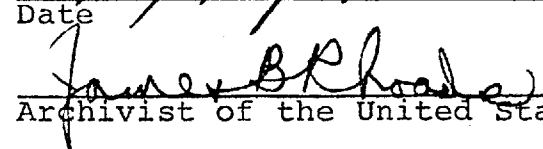
[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview 1]

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