

INTERVIEW I

DATE: May 28, 1987

INTERVIEWEE: KATHY TEAGUE and WEEZE (POLLEI) SHUMATE

INTERVIEWER: Ted Gittinger

PLACE: Ms. Pollei's residence, Austin, Texas

Tape 1 of 1

G: I've seen it [the plane piloted by Harold Teague and Charles Williams] described as a plush, white Convair. Is that accurate? Is that what it was?

P: It was silver colored.

G: Silver colored. Okay. A Convair 240, is that right?

P: Was it 240, K.T.?

T: How do I know?

G: Okay.

P: You do know.

T: I forgot.

P: It seems when we got in the drawer that night, counted up the gallons of gasoline that he could carry and how far he could travel, like to Tennessee because it was soaked in, in Oklahoma City. She has some pilot knowledge that--

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G: There was some question about the actual ownership of the plane. Do you know, did the LBJ Company own it? Did the Brazos and Tenth Street Corporation own it, or the Ranch, or who?

P: Go ahead and say.

T: It's right here.

P: K.T., quit being coy. They won't know a hundred years from now whose voices.

Let me see that.

G: Let me ask, when did Mr. Teague go to work for LBJ? When did he begin his employment?

T: 1959, I guess.

G: In 1959? And his co-pilot, Charles Williams, did he go to work at the same time, do you know?

T: Nope, he'd just been put on the payroll.

G: Just brand new then. I see. What had his background been? What was his professional experience?

T: Whose?

G: Mr. Teague's.

T: He flew for Herman Heap here.

G: Herman Heap? I see.

T: And Continental Gas Pipeline in Houston, quite a few. And Heap Oil Company--not Heap Oil Company, Plymouth Oil Company.

G: How did he come to work for LBJ?

Teague -- I -- 3

T: I suppose they heard about him. I don't know. We got a call and they asked him if he would like to fly and he said, no, he was perfectly happy where he was. Then they called him again one evening, he went over to Don Thomas' house, then he come back and said, "Well, I'm going to fly for him." So that's what he did.

G: Okay.

P: Now, this article in the paper says it was a white Convair.

T: That thing was silver.

P: Well, silver or white, it was the same thing.

T: Yeah, depends on which angle you took the picture of.

G: Right. Okay. Apparently, it was planned to fly back to Washington [on] Monday. Is that right?

T: That's true.

G: Was this a kind of a routine flight?

T: Yes, they were.

G: Or was there some special reason?

T: No, they were--the Johnsons had to get back to Washington. That was on Sunday [2/19/1961], and the girls and I went to Sunday school and church and Teague went on out to the airport to make sure everything was going to be--the plane was secured and everything. And we got home from church and Teague wasn't home yet. The stereo was on so we knew where to find him, so we went on out to the airport. From there, then, we went over to--what was the place, Weeze, we were having lunch?

P: Chicken Shack.

Teague -- I -- 4

T: Chicken Shack.

P: That's where Earl [inaudible].

T: And then they paged us there and then we ended up back at Weeze's house.

G: Who had called you, LBJ had called?

T: No, Weeze.

P: Earl, Earl.

T: Earl called. There was an air show on television.

P: Yeah, there was an antique air show coming out of Philadelphia and Teague had expressed wishes to see that, and we had an antenna that was about twenty feet tall and we could get it on our television. So they came over and that was the occasion.

G: I see, okay.

T: Sure was, and then we got on home to get him ready to go, you know. And as a matter of fact--

G: What time of day would that have been?

T: We got home about three maybe, or four, maybe something like that.

P: Yeah, probably about four. It was still daylight.

T: He said, "I found out that I don't have any clean sheets for the bed." I said, "Don't worry." So we went out and bought some, washed them, got them ready for him. Because they get [inaudible] on the bed.

P: So we bid him farewell. We waved till he got out of sight.

T: And around seven, seven fifteen, my two daughters and another girlfriend of my daughters and myself were at our home, and I started shaking all over. I looked at the

Teague -- I -- 5

time and it was about seven fifteen. I went back down the hall, opened Teague's closet, took his old bathrobe out, which I had never done in my life, put it on, went in and called McCloud [?] at the weather bureau here at the airport. He said, "Oh, Kathy, he's fine. No problem at all, he's probably in there now." Come to find out that's when he was killed.

G: Had the weather deteriorated? What was the weather like?

T: Well, they said the weather would be okay until midnight, so he could get in okay, and that's why he went on. Because if it was bad weather, he couldn't get in. But in the morning, like if you spent the night there, if the weather was--he could get out, you see.

G: Right, right.

T: So that's why he went. Matter of fact, they called from her house to verify if there was room for he and the co-pilot to spend the night there before they went up.

G: Your husband called from her house?

T: Yeah, from her house.

P: Yeah, Harold called from my house and he talked to Homer Thornberry--he didn't--that's another thing I have with Mr. [J. Evetts] Haley [author of *A Texan Looks at Lyndon*].

G: What is that?

T: Love that Thornberry. He's real fine--

P: Homer Thornberry answered the phone at the Ranch, and early that afternoon, when we found out about the weather, Harold told Judge Thornberry that the weather was supposed to sock in about midnight and if they had room for the pilot, for him, and the co-pilot, that they would come to spend the night. They'd come on up early before the weather socked in.

Teague -- I -- 6

- T: They often did that, though, in bad weather, see.
- P: Because they could take off but they couldn't land in the mess, so it was Judge Homer Thornberry that Harold talked to.
- G: Did they talk to LBJ at any time that you know of?
- P: No, no way.
- T: I can hear Homer, turn around and said--and he would have asked Lady Bird--"Is there room for them to spend the night, so that we can take off early in the morning?"
- G: So there wasn't any conversation between LBJ and Mr. Teague?
- T: None whatsoever. We didn't talk to him all day long. No way.
- G: Okay. Had he originally planned to spend the night here and fly out in the morning?
- T: Until we got the weather report.
- P: When he found out about the weather then he decided to go on.
- G: I see.
- T: As I say, he often did that.
- G: But you're quite sure it was his decision to go out there.
- T: Well, definitely it was. Matter of fact, I'm the one who called McCloud and asked about the weather to begin with, and then Teague called and--no, it was Teague's idea, no one else's.
- G: Okay.
- T: 'Cause keep in mind, the captain of an airplane, they are the boss. Not the owner, not even Johnson. If the pilot says, "No, we don't go," you don't go. And if he says, "Yes, we go," we go.

Teague -- I -- 7

I kept the books that everybody sent me, Haley's book. I kept them for my daughters. Finally, one day my oldest daughter Andrea was at St. Mary's College in San Antonio. She had come home very upset. "What is this about my dad that's in a book?" I said, "Okay, girls, I think it's time to tell you, and I want you to read the book. I have been through it. I have put [by] paragraphs 'false' or 'true.'" And it made them feel better, because they said, "Mr. Johnson didn't order Daddy." I said, "Honey, we know that. This man is not being truthful. If he was, he would have come to me."

G: He never talked to you?

T: Never. And this I don't like, because it hurt a lot of people and Teague's people thought that I was doing a great cover-up.

G: Did they accuse you of that?

T: Oh, yes. They said, "Kathy, we knew that you weren't that kind, but you never know and if somebody might of--will harm your kids or something and we believed the book." And I said, "No, you do not believe the book. You believe what I'm telling you, because I am a very truthful person." I never could lie, if I did, I'd get caught at it so I never did.

No, it was Teague's decision, and the thing that happened was a tragic thing for many people. We've all grieved a lot over it, but it was his job, and he was doing what he loved to do.

G: Did he talk to you a lot about flying for LBJ and how he liked it or--?

T: Oh, he loved it.

G: Did he?

Teague -- I -- 8

T: Oh yeah. He and Lyndon were very good friends. Really. And Lyndon really respected Teague, and Teague did him.

G: Can you think of an instance where Lyndon wanted to do something that your husband thought was unsafe?

T: No. Never did. He always left it up to Teague, because Teague was a very safe pilot, a very good pilot. And why this thing happened we don't know, but we're not gonna question.

G: As far as you know, what was the condition of the plane?

T: A-1 shape. Kept that way all the time; very good shape.

G: Would you say, as an experienced flyer, was it easy or difficult to get in and out of the Ranch on that strip?

T: No, he had no problem at all, none whatsoever. He could land the thing on a dime anyway; he was that good. Any pilots that knew him here in town would tell you that. And he knew enough about the maintenance of an aircraft. They would call him oftentimes from the airport saying, "Teague, we've got a problem out here. Look, I'm going to put the phone over here and let you hear this engine." He could probably tell them what was wrong with it by the telephone. He was that good. He started flying as a young kid, fifteen, sixteen years old, and went to many flying schools and really learned how to take care of one as well as to fly one.

G: Had he been a military pilot as well?

T: He was in the navy.

G: He flew in the navy?

Teague -- I -- 9

T: No, not to my knowledge. Not when I was married to him he didn't. What he did before I don't know. (Laughter) I don't think I ever asked him.

G: Okay. By one account, he was in contact with James Davis at the Ranch on the radio.

T: Yes.

G: Had you heard that?

T: Yes. They told me that--I never did get to talk to James, which I often wanted to do, but circumstances were not right because James was quite upset, too. And I understand that he called James and said, "James, turn the runway lights on" and James told him they were on and James says, "Well, I can't hear you." And he said, "That's because I'm too high" and so that's the last James heard of him.

G: Did you get an explanation as to what they thought happened?

T: None whatsoever.

G: But did the FAA [Federal Aviation Administration] do an investigation?

T: Yes, they did.

G: But you were never shown the results?

T: I was never notified of anything and [I] tried to find out. You know, because when he left here the last time they heard from him he was at the Capital City intersection which [is where?] San Antonio takes over. So I even went down and talked to [inaudible] there and nothing. They couldn't tell me anything.

G: They couldn't or they wouldn't?

T: Well, either one. I'm not sure.

G: Why do you think that's so?

Teague -- I -- 10

T: I don't know. I've thought about that myself.

G: That's--

T: Well, both engines were recovered and nothing was wrong with them. That I did find out.

G: Do you have any theories of your own as to what happened?

T: No, I really don't.

G: All right.

LBJ was famous later for his spur-of-the-moment comings and goings. Was that the case then? Was he one to say, "Come on, let's go" and away he went?

T: Oh yes. (Laughter) Oh yes.

G: Did that create problems for you and your husband?

T: No, none whatsoever because his job came first. Because I lived eighteen years with it, so I was used to it.

G: Where was the co-pilot's wife. Was she here?

T: No, they lived in Houston, and I met her when her husband was buried. Lyndon, Bird, and I went down. Teague was buried one day and he was buried the next and we went down to his funeral.

G: What can you say about the stories that LBJ, to use a crude phrase, paid you off to hush you up?

T: No, no way. There's no one who could ever do that to me. And I don't have anything to hide. And nobody could ever bribe me in anyway or no one could ever get me to lie. No way.

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G: Okay, fair enough.

T: He was a very nice man and he was very good to my girls and very good to me. He was always writing letters to me and when he would go overseas he'd bring back gifts for the girls, which they really treasured and they still have them.

G: Did you see anything of him after this was all over with?

T: Oh, yes.

G: You were in touch with him? How?

T: Well, when he'd come down, he and Bird, they'd call and we'd go up to the Ranch or the lake house, or we'd go to the horse races or we'd go to San Marcos for him to get his [honorary] doctor's degree. Things like that. Oh yes. And we even went up to Washington to see them, the girls and I.

G: When was this, about?

T: In 1962 perhaps.

G: When he was vice president.

T: When he was vice president, yes.

G: How did you go up?

T: I drove. I put my girls on quite a trip. We went to Florida and went all the way up the East Coast on to Washington.

G: You said before, off tape, that he tried to get you to take a job. Would you tell us about that?

T: Oh, yes. Well, we were sitting up at the penthouse one night and he was trying to get me to come to Washington and he said, "You could have a job anytime you want it, Bird's

Teague -- I -- 12

secretary or anything." And I tell him, "No thank you." He looked at me like he thought I was crazy. I says, "No, I've got two daughters to raise and I'm going to do it right here." I got criticized terribly about it, everybody thought I was crazy. But I still don't regret it; I'd rather stay here with my daughters.

G: How old were they at this time?

T: Gilda was eleven and Andrea was sixteen. Both very impressionable and--

Yes, darling?

P: February 20, 1961. You've got telegrams here from Buford Ellington, Governor of Tennessee, and Allen Watkins.

T: Allen Watkins is the one we all knew, [with the] antique plane.

P: The antique plane.

T: And he'd come down here and take it back, the speedwing.

P: Who's C. C. Brewer?

T: Greensboro, North Carolina. Friend of Teague's since childhood. The ironic thing is I've heard from so many people that I can't remember half of them. That's terrible.

P: Why is that?

T: They were in our lives with Teague and I, and I'll try to place them and I think, oh my gosh I can't remember.

G: I think you kind of subconsciously suppress things.

T: Me too. I think I have too.

P: I know she has.

G: In what ways did LBJ express his concern and so on over this tragedy?

Teague -- I -- 13

T: He sit and cried with great big crocodile tears.

G: Why did he cry crocodile?

T: Well, because he was a big man and anybody who is a big man has to have big tears and-
-

P: Do you remember what he was dressed in when he came over that morning?

T: Khakis.

P: Mud all on his boots. They had looked all night long.

T: And he drove that car, that Lincoln up [the] side of the hill.

P: Yeah, he ruined the Lincoln.

G: He drove up to the crash site?

T: Oh yes, and looked at both the bodies and he found Teague sitting out under a tree, he said.

P: Yeah.

G: Do you know who found the crash? Who actually found it?

T: I don't know. It was on Emil Hartmann's ranch, but I don't remember who did. Do you?

P: No, not really.

G: It was on the Hartmann place?

T: Yeah, on the Hartmann place.

G: He bought that later didn't he, or part of it?

P: That's the lady I furnished her house for.

G: Yeah, I think we have that story.

P: Yeah, you have that story.

Teague -- I -- 14

T: I have no idea.

P: I don't know, it may have been our--you remember about four o'clock that morning, he called and said that the choppers were going to be going out at daylight.

T: We heard them take off.

P: And I think they were routed right smack over K.T.'s house, searching, and he had called and he told Earl to stand there by the phone. Don't let anybody answer it--

T: Especially me.

P: --but him. Yeah, because by 4:00 a.m.--I mean, we're all feeling the worst and he called and he said, "We have located the plane. Don't say anymore than that. I'm not even going to tell you where but we've located the plane. I'll call you back as soon as we know more." He called back ten [or] fifteen minutes later, maybe longer than that and he said the plane did crash and it's on Hartmann ranch on the top of a mountain. That's all for right now. He, when I say he, LBJ called back and he said both Harold and the co-pilot are dead.

G: Did he talk to you or he was talking to Earl?

P: He talked to me during the night. No, he talked to Earl.

G: Okay.

P: And he told Earl to stay. I don't know that K.T. remembers this, but Earl was standing right there at your kitchen phone and none of us were allowed to touch that phone, period. And when he called and said that they were both gone, he said, "I'll be there just as soon as I can."

G: This was just about what time, now? About four in the morning, you say?

Teague -- I -- 15

T: No, that was when he called and at that time he told us that the choppers were going out.

P: Then they found them around ten or something like that.

T: No, it was like about eight thirty. It was early in the morning because Gilda wanted to go on her school field trip.

P: But she did go with a friend over to her house.

T: She went with a friend over to her house.

P: She heard it on television while she was at the friend's house. She turned around and said, "That was my father and I'd like to go home." Andrea was still there; she had not gone to school yet.

T: I wouldn't let either one of them go to school.

P: Yeah, that's right. We decided during the night.

T: But Andrea kept saying, "You know my daddy. He's okay."

P: We were up all night. Of course, we have this humongous coffee pot. The neighbors came over and K.T.'s and Harold's friends came over, and Warren Woodward was there and Earl and myself.

T: I have to tell you this. When they found out the plane was overdue, Warren Woodward, Weeze and Earl were notified to come tell me and they briefed Weeze all the way over there. Now don't. Now Weeze, go ahead now tell them, Weeze, what they told you to do.

P: Okay. They said, "Do not say anything other than"--now this is the instructions from LBJ--"that the plane is overdue. The plane is overdue. Now repeat after me, the plane is overdue."

Teague -- I -- 16

(Laughter)

Well, we get over to K.T.'s house. I'm knocking on her kitchen door, and the carport was in front.

T: In the kitchen. You come in the carport into the kitchen.

P: Everybody went in the kitchen. We didn't even know where the front door was.

T: That's right. They knocked on the door. I said, "The pot's hot, come on in."

P: Yeah, K.T. looked up and says, "Well, I guess you want me to put the coffee pot on."

We had had one of those thirty-cup perks all that Sunday, watching that antique television show, antique airplanes. So K.T. had this look on her face and she said, "Okay, what's the matter." I was asked about does K.T. have any relatives. Does Kathy have any relatives or Harold in Austin?" "Nope, her sister lives in Amarillo."

T: I don't know where they were. Florida, Tampa, Florida and Greensboro, North Carolina.

P: And I said no. "Well, you're her closest friend, so, you get over there and"--

T: Go ahead and tell them what you did when you opened the door, instead of saying the plane was overdue.

P: No, I did say that.

T: Yeah. "The plane's overdue and they can't find them, K.T.!" Then just broke up and went to pieces. I said "Honey, it's all right. What was his fuel consumption and what was his alternate?" Well, they didn't know. I said, go back and get the aerial maps please. So I scoped it out. But it was a hell of a night.

P: But I did say, "The plane is overdue."

Teague -- I -- 17

T: Yeah, "and they can't find them anywhere, K.T.!" That was funny. We've laughed about that, when she broke down.

P: Then they have--they keep calling, and they tell us about a conversation with James Davis at the Ranch, and James was the good guy that did everything. Hal radioed James and said, "Would you turn the runway lights on, I'm approaching and"--well, now I don't think he said exactly where he was.

T: No, he just told us to turn the runway lights on and James says, "They're on."

P: James said, "The lights are on, Mr. Harold." And Harold said, "Well, I can't see them."

T: And James said, "I can't hear you."

P: And James said, "I can't hear you." And that was the end of that communication.

T: That was it.

G: Let's back up and make sure that I understand one thing in the communications between the Ranch and Austin. Were you present when all these calls were made about, "Do you have room for us?" and "We're thinking about flying out and spending the night?"

T: Yes, I was right there.

G: You were there the whole time.

P: Harold and Kathy and Gilda, Earl and myself and Tre and my son, Larry.

G: What I'm trying to establish is whether--and people sometimes remember it different--whether they heard it from somebody or whether they were actually present when it happened.

P: No, I remember it because I thought, "God, Harold, get going if it's going to sock in at midnight." Well, it wasn't even dark yet.

Teague -- I -- 18

G: What was the weather like here when they left?

P: Beautiful. Sunny and nice until you all left to go home about four or five o'clock and then all of a sudden it started raining. It wasn't a thunderstorm, it was just pouring down cats and dogs.

G: Now you say when you all left, you mean you and your husband.

P: Left my house.

T: When we left her house to go to my house to get ready for the flight.

G: Okay. And what was the weather like when Mr. Teague left your house? Was it the same?

T: No, it was fine then, because we were all outside in the yard, waving goodbye to him.

P: He left about seven o'clock, and I had fixed us some supper, and my son Larry was all intrigued over this flying and he just thought Harold Teague was, you know, a king in a flying machine.

T: He took off a little earlier than that. [Inaudible].

G: A little before seven.

T: Oh yeah.

P: Then it wasn't, because Larry was missing his supper and for that kid to miss supper was something else. He was standing--see, we worked maybe a block and a half from the runway. We lived on Bentwood, 1413 Bentwood. Larry had gone over to watch Harold take off. Just stood in the rain. By this time it was raining and just stood in the rain and came in soaking wet and [I] said, "Well, did Harold get off okay?" And he said, "Yeah,

Teague -- I -- 19

he was on and did all of his checklist, and then he got off the plane and went around to Ragsdale East and picked up some more papers or some maps or something."

G: So he should have gotten to the Ranch by seven-thirty at the latest.

P: Oh yeah. So all of that took place in those first conversations of talking with Judge Homer Thornberry. Harold talked to Judge Thornberry and they were checking on the weather, and Harold and Kathy checking on the weather, and then they went on home and--

T: Got his suitcase packed, and--

P: Yeah, and you got all the stuff ready and sometime during the afternoon, probably during the commercial, we went over--I had bought a set of silverware for the plane and took that over there and just set the boxes by the kitchen sink. We've been told that that was the silverware you was talking about?

T: Yeah, I've got a couple of pieces of it from the crash.

P: That Charles Williams, the co-pilot, was in the back and it looked like he was putting up silverware because I remember just leaving it in a big sack in the boxes.

G: Let me ask you about the accommodations on that plane, because we don't know anything about the interior and what it looked like and how it was outfitted.

T: They had a bedroom compartment they could pull down and make the bed for him, and make it very comfortable. It wasn't a great luxurious plane, it was just very comfortable.

P: Didn't it seat something like twenty?

T: I can't remember, but I believe that's true. I can't recall.

G: There were obviously eating arrangements available.

Teague -- I -- 20

T: Oh yes, oh yes, they took food with them, especially cheese.

G: He liked cheese?

P: Always you had to have crackers and rat cheese.

G: Was there a bar?

T: I don't know.

P: I'm sure there was, but I didn't know that much about where the bar was on the airplane.

T: Matter of fact I was never in that plane but a couple of times. *Lodestar* was the one that I was--

P: So actually my son, Larry [inaudible] was the last person to see Harold Teague.

G: Right.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I

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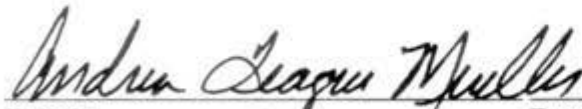
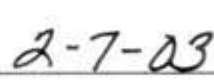
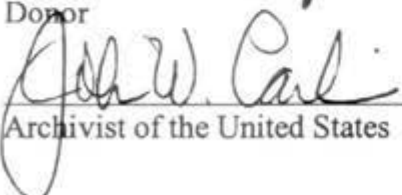
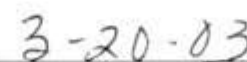
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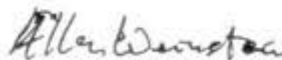
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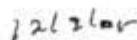
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