

INTERVIEWEE: DR. JAMES A. TURMAN

INTERVIEWER: DAVID G. McCOMB

March 10, 1969

M: Let me identify this tape first of all. This is an interview with Dr. James A. Turman, spelled T-U-R-M-A-N. The interview is in his office in Washington, D. C. at the HEW Building, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW. The date is March 10, 1969. The time is 2:50 in the afternoon, and my name is David McComb.

Dr. Turman, let me know something about your background first of all. Where were you born and when?

T: David, I was born in Fannin County on a farm, between Gober, which I always called home, and Leonard, Texas.

M: That's East Texas?

T: It's east, slightly. It's considered sometimes in the East Texas belt, and yet it's really not. It's sort of North Central Texas, about midway between Wichita Falls--about where the Panhandle begins--and Texarkana. It is North of Dallas, which is considered generally on the line of what we call East Texas, but it's just slightly West of the pine tree belt, which is another identification of East Texas.

I grew up there as a son of a tenant farmer and lived around in several communities, and during my first years of public schooling, going to about 12 different schools in all. My early childhood was during the depression years; I was born in 1927. We moved to East Texas and lived there three or four years, around the Gladewater area. Then the war came along and my dad wanted to help out in the effort, but not being physically able decided to move back to the farm when I was a sophomore in high school, and went to Gober for

about the third time I'd lived there. We had a crop failure, went to Bonham for one winter, then went to most of my junior year in high school in Bonham, which is Sam Rayburn's home town, and then back to Gober where I finished school in 1945. But Gober is very near Flag Springs, where Mr. Sam lived and called home when he was growing up, also a son of a tenant farmer.

I left the farm and hitch-hiked over to East Texas State to inquire about college at Commerce which is about 20 miles away. I started to school there in the fall of '45 and worked full time, took the heaviest load I could take, and working my way through, too. I managed to get enough education courses required to get an administrator's certificate and started as teaching principal of eight grades in Wolfe City in 1947. Then I continued my work as East Texas State on Saturday and summer and got my Bachelor's degree in Business Administration in '48 and my Master's degree, in Educational Administration and minored in business and math, in 1949.

Then I went to Paris, Texas, as principal of a junior high school, J. G. Wooten School. We had an 8-4 system with six eight grade schools and one high school at that time. I was there one year as principal, did a summer's work at Texas University on my doctorate to see what it was all about.

Then I was about to be drafted for the Army during the Korean conflict and I joined the Navy instead and requested active duty to fulfill my obligation. Getting out of the Navy in two years, I went to the University of Texas full time on my doctorate in Educational Administration under Dr. Henry J. Otto, and completed my Ed.D. in 1957, going to Texas Woman's University as Assistant to the President for

a couple of years, and then resigning to make the bid for the speakership of the Texas House of Representatives--

M: When was this?

T: That was in 1960. Now I've got to back up a little. My interest in politics of course grew from growing up in the shadow of Sam Rayburn--

M: When you were a child, Sam Rayburn's presence was well known?

T: Extremely well known in Fannin County, his home county, of course. It was a household word in our family. When I was living in Commerce, my first year, one semester one of my roommates was a member of the House of Representatives from Fannin County, John Connelly. He was working on his Master's degree. I was a freshman in college. His name was Connelly, though, not the one who later became Governor.

Of course, John used to tell me about his political campaigns and all about the history of Mr. Rayburn's politics. But I never thought much about even getting into politics myself. But then at the time I always had a yearning to be of public service and I felt like I've often heard President Johnson say, that there are some fields of endeavor in public service that are very closely akin. Those are teaching and preaching and politics. When I hear people say politics with a tone of voice that doesn't ring quite like it should, I can't understand how they could think that politics is a dirty word of any kind. It's a way of some people's seeming to be able to express their desire to be of extremely good public service--of service to their fellow human beings.

When I was a kid at Gladewater I remember at a church one Sunday an all-day singing and dinner-on-the-ground sort of thing that was

commonly held in East Texas communities, that there was a young man running for Congress, Lindley Beckworth and a young man by the name of Mathews, running for the State legislature. So I talked with them at this meeting. They were there campaigning, which was a fashion of East Texans in those days--probably still is. So again, I had an interest because I'd heard so much about Sam Rayburn as I was growing up.

M: Do you remember what Mathews' first name was?

T: I believe it was Wayne. I ran into his younger brother later in Denton, and I think it was Wayne Mathews. I'm not quite sure now.

Then, oh, I'd been class president or something of that sort in schools, but I'd never really had any time to participate in campus politics or that sort of thing at East Texas State. But when I was at the University of Texas, it must have been--in fact it was the spring I guess, the spring of 1954, because I ran for office in '54. I had a class with a man by the name of Gilbert Spring, from Apple Springs. Well, that sounded about like Gober to me, and if this fellow could be a member of the Texas House I thought maybe I might be able to pull the same thing off.

They had a special session of the legislature at that time and Gilbert invited me to join him one afternoon at the House. So he got me floor privileges and I sat by his desk during part of a session and it looked like it was so interesting and so much fun, and here was something--if I could do this I felt it would give me a great deal of satisfaction to be serving my home district as a member of the legislature. So I talked to my Graduate Adviser, Dr. Otto--for I was there with the one purpose in mind, to get my doctorate at the University of Texas--and felt if you were going to get a doctorate,

you needed to get it from one greatly recognized institution in the state.

Dr. Otto, after listening to my interest in politics said that if I felt that I could be elected he thought it was worth the effort and he would not stand in the way. As a matter of fact, he encouraged it because he had a cousin who had run for County Superintendent of Schools, or some such office, in Michigan. He said he got involved in that race when he was a youngster and he enjoyed it so much he had an abiding interest in politics too, not as an office holder but as a supportive type --and if I thought I could win I should go ahead and run. We have biennial sessions--and of course we looked at it as dropping out of school one semester every other year--looking at about a two or three year program on my doctorate. I asked him how his cousin came out and he said, "He got the hell beat out of him, but it was fun anyway and enjoyable. So why not? If people didn't try for office they never would get elected."

Well during the Easter holidays I went back home. My wife and I had already talked about it. She didn't think it was such a terribly good idea but being a very wonderful, supportive wife, she felt whatever I felt best would be all right.

I went first to see Mr. Sam. I'm not sure--I guess it was during the Easter recess here because--it might have been a little after that, but anyway he was at his home in Bonham. I had never met him before, actually, so I told him what I wanted to do, what I had in mind. There were already two fellows that had announced for the office, so I made the third candidate for the Democratic primary. There was no Republican opposition.

Before I got too far into the conversation Mr. Sam stopped me, and I was afraid he was going to tell me that he was already committed, because it was a little late to get into the race. Usually they announced right after the first of January. The primary was in July and August at that time. Mr. Sam told me that any man with the name of Turman had his and his family's support. This pleased me very much, and I was so taken aback I asked him--I wanted to ask why, but he voluntarily said there was a fellow by the name of Charlie Turman, who was a classmate of his at Mayo College. That was the old Mayo Normal College which is now East Texas State University and that he thought so much of him that I had to be of the same kind --made out of the same cloth or something of that sort, he said. And in the Rayburn family, Dick Rayburn and all of them did support me, of course not publicly in the Bonham daily paper.

But the word was gotten around because Dwight Dorough's * father-- Mr. Deets Dorough, the County Democratic Chairman for all the years that Mr. Rayburn was in office, I guess, let me know pretty quickly when I went by to file that he had already heard of me and offered his support. So this is how I knew I did have all of Mr. Sam's close friends behind me. This was very comforting because I didn't have any money to make a race on. I think I must have spent about \$750 to get elected to the legislature and I must have had about \$200-\$250 of that as contributions. And thinking about the running for office in Dallas or Houston somewhere like that, it's rather ridiculous I guess.

But this was really my first contact with Mr. Rayburn and I kept this contact up, of course, subsequently. I was elected in the first

*In Dr. Dwight Dorough's book, Mr. Sam, he indicates James A. Turman was the "last of the Rayburn boys."

primary without a runoff, about 4 votes to the other opponents three put together. Then I got a second term--took office, of course in January of '55--had a second term unopposed and by then I had finished my doctorate and gone to Denton. A young man filed against me on my third term and--and I had meant to get out but it had worked out rather well that I could stay in the legislature, for we had a special session or two during the first year I was at Texas Woman's University. Anyway I ran for a third term and won by a majority of about 3 to 1.

By this time I'd given a little thought to the Speaker's race and again looking at Mr. Rayburn's history I sort of followed in his footsteps, and I was elected Speaker of the Texas House on January 10, 1961, exactly 50 years to the date that Sam Rayburn was elected speaker of the Texas House. He died during my speakership term.

M: Did he say anything to you about that?

T: Yes, yes, and there were a lot of things we talked about. For example, when Mr. Rayburn was elected Speaker they instituted the method of selecting the speakers by the secret ballot, the same as we still do in the legislature. There were approximately 135 House members at that time. I've forgotten the history, but it's in the records, and there were three more votes for speaker than there were number of members of the House. So they had the chief clerk call the roll and each was handed a ballot and he wrote the name, or marked the name, of the candidate for speaker. Mr. Rayburn lost one vote in that round, and his opponent lost two--and I used to tease him about being out-stuffed at the ballot box!

But Mr. Rayburn's career, being like mine on the farm--he went to

East Texas, the school Mayo College, started teaching, he went to the University of Texas, he went into Law School, went into the Legislature, became Speaker, ran in the special election for Congress. So mine was parallel there 50 years later and a lot of people expected and urged me to run for Congress at that time. I felt that I didn't know anything about national political problems and that I did have some ground by this time in the State House and the State's problems, so I thought, "well, I could run for Congress at large," and I would do that from the springboard of Speaker. So my state senator, Ray Roberts, ran for Congress and was elected. During the next weeks, the Lt. Gov. was appointed by Governor Daniel--Ben Ramsey was appointed to the Railroad Commission after being elected six consecutive terms as Lt. Governor. There was a redistricting, all of the State Senators had to run for re-election and therefore they couldn't choose one of their own to make the bid as sometimes they had been known to do and support him, as all would be in their own races. It would be for a time--that hardly comes along--a rather open race.

So I decided to run for Lt. Governor and I wanted to serve there two terms and then run for the United States Senate. Again, I was picking up and looking at the career pattern of one Lyndon Baines Johnson, who had such an outstanding and distinguished record of public service. I feel, not to belittle Mr. Johnson, but he had one very strong man and a powerful man in the Congress backing him, working with him, supporting him in his role as he grew to the stature that he did. That of course was Sam Rayburn.

Then I met--I think this gets in enough, David, of my background there unless there are specific questions.

I want to start talking about when I met LBJ and how this came about.

M: Right. Now, in this point in time, did you remain as Speaker of the House?

T: No. My term of office ended when the next legislature convened in January of '63.

M: So you were Speaker from '61 to '63?

T: Yes. It was a very close race, although it didn't indicate it by the vote. It was 83 to 66. The race before mine was when Waggoner Carr won the Speakership over Joe Burkett, Jr., of Kerrville, by 79 to 71, in Waggoner's bid for a second term. But mine was a coalition-type campaign. There were two conservative Democrats--in the race for Speaker, and one liberal Democrat. And there were a group of us who felt that the majority of us would not be represented by either of these candidates. So in a special session some of us got together and decided we should have a compromise middle-of-the-road type candidate and here I came from an area that had no big industry and no labor and none of the real organized efforts you see in the metropolitan areas. So I became the compromise candidate for speaker.

The people who generally put up the money for such races were just about all against me and were for a young man by the name of Wade Spillman in McAllen, who ultimately became my opponent. The other conservative withdrew--Ben Glusing of Kingsville. Then the group that I'm talking about--oil and gas industry, the insurance industry, loan sharks and others who usually finance campaigns--the people who really invest in the Speakership, practically all of them were against me and they had their favorite

candidates picked out. Sometimes you would have six people running for a particular representative seat.

And while this group was supporting a well-financed campaign and would entertain and dine and wine the candidates as they would come to Austin, I was out on the road constantly; [I put] about 96,000 miles on my car in 10 months time and then plane rides when I could get somebody to offer me a ride. I was in the home or business, and sometimes both, of every candidate. There must have been about 450 at that time for the 150 House seats. So we won some of the races and then got a lot of our pledges into the runoffs and some of them won.

Then there was terrific pressure after the numbers had narrowed to the hundred and fifty who were to take their seats as House members of that legislature in 1961, the 57th Legislature. An extreme amount of pressure was put on some of the members. In about a week's time I had lost about six or eight pledges. They just changed sides. At that time I decided something had to be done. There were about a dozen uncommitted members, so I called Mr. Rayburn and told him what was happening. So he asked me to send him a list of the uncommitted as I thought they might be, and who their Congressmen were. Now, I must say that was some help to me in buttoning up this race and keeping some others hitched that signed pledge cards for me. That's assuming you understand our little pledge card system.

I was invited to a big barbecue on the LBJ Ranch and Mr. Sam introduced me to Lyndon Johnson at that time. This was before I was Speaker, about the term before. I met Harry Truman down there, for the first time.

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We had a big joke about that. I told Mr. Truman it was very helpful to me that our names were similar because he was very popular in my area of the State, because of LBJ and particularly because of Mr. Rayburn. They made comments all the time about "Truman is running again" (after his presidency).

While I was Speaker, the then-Vice President [LBJ] invited Chancellor Konrad Adenauer to come down to the Ranch and come to Austin and address the House and Senate in joint sessions. Being Speaker, I would preside over all joint House-Senate sessions. I was scared to death. I didn't know what to do, how you'd introduce a man that I have admired so and stood in such awe of--Lyndon Johnson. I asked a friend of ours, Jake Jacobsen, to write a few notes down for me to use as introduction of LBJ who was to introduce the Chancellor. And he did. He handed me about a page and a half of an introduction which spoke of LBJ's father serving in those hallowed halls. It must have touched Mr. Johnson because from then on I think he recognized my name, and who I was, and by name, and as an individual.

M: Had you been involved in the 1960 campaign other than your own work?

T: No, no, only in my Speakership race then. LBJ signed a little colored picture and sent it to me of that visit, a color shot of the House and Senate in joint session and then--what's his speech writer's name?

M: There are several. Harry McPherson?

T: No, no, he's a businessman--Horace Bubsy. About a week after this first joint session that Lyndon Johnson and Lady Bird had the Chancellor down for, I got a call from Jesse Kellam who asked me to get two or three couples and come with my wife and me to the studio. We went down, and I had no idea that it was about. Then they put this videotape on of the whole

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Adenauer visitation. Then the President told me that they appreciated the way it was handled so much they had a film made and presented to me at the same time. I saw it on videotape and I have the 16mm film of the whole session. Later, we had Mohammed Ayub Khan and other distinguished visitors.

But I'm an educator. I'm not a politician. As I've said, I have been teaching since I was 19, and I feel that this is a great way to serve humanity. So after I made the race for Lt. Gov. and led the primary by 87,000 votes over Preston Smith (later Governor), he defeated me something like 46,000 votes in the Democratic runoff. This terminated my political career. I'm still paying off the debt I incurred of that race. It's extremely expensive to make a race in a state as big as Texas, with as much radio and television coverage one must have. And I have no idea how much--our race was covered mostly by services that were given--telephone credit cards, gasoline credit cards, and airplanes, and so on. We estimated that our race probably cost a quarter of a million dollars for Lt. Gov., and that much or more was spent in the last 30 days in behalf of Preston Smith. We estimated he spent 600 to 800 thousand dollars. Well, I'm not going to say more about that race.

That didn't dampen my spirits particularly, except I've been making payments on this thing ever since that date, and I'm still not out of the hole and don't expect to be financially for another ten years (retired the debt in 1970).

M: This comes out of your own personal fortune?

T: Yes.

M: Not out of a party war chest, or anything?

- T: That's true. My wife and I put every cent we get each month into this deficit over and above our basic living expenses. Then some friends have helped by loaning me money and allowing me to pay it off as I'm able to. Without this I simply would have had to declare bankruptcy or something. I just couldn't have been able to stand the pressure.
- M: In that Lt. Gov.'s race, did you receive any help from Washington?
- T: No, no I didn't. Labor (in Texas) supported me over Preston Smith in that race, primarily because of my stands on education and welfare matters--trying to raise old age pensions, and I always tried to handle school legislation, not really because--I guess if I checked it, I probably had an anti-labor voting record. But all Smith said was that he was the most conservative man in the race, and they thought maybe I might be inclined to listen to some of their legislative programs more than he. But they had their own war chest which was gotten from their locals in the State, and had set aside \$10,000 for the benefit of my campaign, which not a penny did I receive personally nor did I have a say as to where it went. This was for employing people to work for those that would work in headquarters for their candidates.
- M: Did you have any connection with John Connally, the man who became Governor of Texas in this period?
- T: Before John Connally ever announced for Governor, I had met him on a few occasions. Once, when he was Secretary of Navy, he came to the dedication of the Sam Rayburn Hospital in Bonham. I had been to Washington once or twice and when I was a freshman member at the Jefferson-Jackson Day Dinner in honor of Mr. Sam, Governor Shivers

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brought a group up on a chartered plane, and they brought me along. I had dinner with a few people and John Connally, but no intimate connection at all. Governor Connally tried to keep his campaign separate from any others, and I tried to keep my Lieutenant Governor campaign separate from others. But in the runoff it developed that there was a so-called conservative and liberal slate, and I got on that liberal slate and that's the slate that went down. I think Don Yarborough ran a very close race to Governor Connally in that first campaign. I did not link my campaign with Don Yarborough's or anyone else. I preferred not to. After my defeat, I campaigned with and for John Connally in the general election for Governor--introducing him to some audiences and endorsing him. For a time, I thought he would appoint me Secretary of State.

M: Did you consider yourself a liberal?

T: No, I usually use a term, a conservative with a heart. While I've never had any money, I've always had to be very careful of my financial affairs, not ever having any money and being brought up rather conservatively because of that. But at the same time by Texas standards, I considered myself a middle of the roader--or a moderate. And I think that's what Lyndon Johnson is. Sometimes he's been called a wild liberal; other times he's been called a conservative and a tool of the special interests, by liberals of Texas--he'd been called that.

But I always felt that he tried with the benefit of all the knowledge he had at hand, that he tried to do what was best for the majority of the people he represented--when he was in Congress, when he was United States Senator, and when he was President. This is the kind of approach that I took and I think he got broad-based support from different groups at different times and that a close look at the record would bear this statement out, that he was a moderate.

But a lot of people do not like this moderate label, the middle-of-the-road-label. They say that a man is indecisive, he doesn't know which way to turn, it shows lack of leadership, and those kinds of comments. But I feel that man, a real leader has to be flexible, and that a man that is tied to one wing, or the other of the party cannot serve in the best interest of the majority. So if that's the weak place to be, the middle of the road, and I'm a weakling and some might call me a liberal.

But because old age pensioners were receiving about \$38 a month when I first went into the legislature, I worked diligently to get the old age pensions raised, co-sponsoring two or three constitutional amendments during those eight years. When I started teaching school my salary was \$1,900 in 1949, post-war. One of my patrons went to Dallas to drive a garbage truck at \$2,400 a year. He was a farmer and went to Dallas. So I sponsored a bill at the time I got to the legislature, to raise the minimum salary, House Bill 8, to raise the teacher's salaries \$400. Then as Speaker, Gov. Price Daniel and I worked together to raise them \$800 more. Then I pursued more rigid standards of teaching and changed the certification laws. Of course, some of this was legislation designed basically by the teachers' organization, Texas State Teachers' Association and the Classroom Teachers' Association, and the Texas Education Agency. So because of this interest of teachers and welfare recipients, I got the term liberal.

M: Now, after the defeat for Lieutenant Governor what happened to you?

T: I then had to think in terms of getting back into my profession as an educator, as a teacher. There were some interesting jobs

opening. There were two teachers' college presidencies open. One was President Johnson's alma mater. So I approached a board member who had been previously on the Board of Texas Woman's University when I was working there, Ed Gossett of Dallas. Ed Gossett was chairman of the selection committee. As a matter of fact, I guess Ed approached me on the subject, for I really hadn't thought about a college presidency at that particular time. I was still somewhat bewildered, I thought that I could have won that Lieutenant Governor's race and I didn't. I was in a state of shock because I ended up with a deficit of \$42,000. Ed approached me on this college presidency.

He's a well-known former conservative member of Congress, but he knew me and my devotion to education. He, Jesse Kellam, and Emil Rassman of Midland, were on the screening committee. They interviewed several candidates for the presidencies of Sam Houston State Teachers' College and Southwest Texas State at San Marcos and agreed to unanimously endorse me for the presidency of Southwest Texas State.

Let me back up a moment. Just prior to this time, I had called Cliff Carter in LBJ's office, and I had asked him if he might know of anything in Washington that would be something to my liking. I thought maybe I might best leave the State for awhile. I was thinking in terms of getting the political image away and returning to the educator image. They both have been reinforcing and helpful but neither has helped the other in a sense. Being an educator doesn't help you to get votes, and being a politician doesn't help you to get an educator image either.

But Cliff set up three appointments here in Washington for me

in early '63. I came first to the Commissioner of Education and called and canceled the other two appointments, because Frank Keppel, the then-Commissioner of Education, asked me to take a job as a Special Assistant to him. I'm sure a call from Cliff Carter, speaking in a sense for Lyndon Johnson, was very valuable to me. Then, of course, I had to prove myself as an educator to Frank Keppel. I meant to stay in Washington only three or four months. It was about three or four months after I came here that the decision was made on these two college presidencies.

During the meantime I was travelling over the country meeting with National Education leaders and I had a telephone conversation every so often with Mr. Johnson because I wanted him to understand and be pleased with this selection and I wanted him to feel that I would be supportive of him. I feel that a man is sort of jealous of who represents him in his home area, as I myself am always very interested in who's becoming President of any institution that I've attended--especially East Texas State. So Mr. Johnson, I'm certain, was pleased with this decision of this committee. Then one time he called me after he had gotten in from California. It was 3 o'clock a.m.. I was snowed in at Colgate University, and we had a conversation about this. He said he figured he could wake me up if John Connally could wake him up. He had gotten in and Connally had called him to tell him that we didn't have the votes on this board and so he called me to tell me that we had some problems which he had not recognized. But this political image had hurt me, and I did not want to hurt the President.

Just prior to this conversation, one day he was over at the

Bethesda Naval Hospital having some dental work done. I had never been out there before, and he sent a White House car over here and I went out. After he got out of the dentist's office, we went out to his house where the Vice President lived, and we talked about his alma mater. This is my only real intimate contact with LBJ the man. We got into a long conversation. I'd say we sat in the car for a long time before we ever got out after we got to his house, talking about--he was in the middle of talking about his plans.

I was not sure, but I thought that he was ready to get out of public office at this time, and if so, he told me that he would like to return to teaching, and if so, that that might be at San Marcos, and that he and Lady Bird had plans for their foundation. I don't recall the details of it now but they had a foundation or had plans for a foundation. He'd given thought as to where his memoirs might be housed, and I was led to believe at that time they'd be at San Marcos. We were talking in terms of Sam Rayburn's memorial and his--and that was a terrible mistake, placing that incidentally in Bonham, Texas, though that's where he lived. It should have been at East Texas State a few miles away where many students would have it more accessible. I thought the University of Texas would be a better place for LBJ's.

But the then-Vice President--I had thought surely I detected tears in his eyes, so much so that I would not look him in the face. We were sitting side by side in the back of this big, black limousine. I realized what a human being he really is--the feeling he had for people, the feeling that he had that we all have, to be loved, to be appreciated. He told me that he had all the money he ever wanted. He had more than he could ever use. He had a wonderful loving wife and

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daughters and that he had reached the height here in politics as Vice President, that it was very satisfying to him. It was as if he were saying to me he was ready to get out and maybe then go into something that he had dearly loved, his first profession, teaching--which he has referred to all the time. I think that's why he's done so much for education. History will record him, I'm certain, as the greatest education president we've ever had.

We discussed this matter. I don't think that this should be-- this is part of the conversation that maybe should not be revealed for sometime--but without saying directly that he was ready to quit politics and become a teacher, become involved in education, that he would perhaps want to be president of his alma mater. Without his saying this, I thought I got the message, and that should I be elected president of that college, and he ever wanted that position that I would move at a moment's notice, that this would be one contribution that I could make, that I could tell my grandkids about, that I could make for this great man. That was at the height of the conversation.

Then later I got the call when I was at Colgate, and others we had talked about. Then along about this time the Vice President became President and he had too many things to worry about besides me. I'm sure it never entered his mind, because of things working out as they did. I don't know. The nine man board split on the decision 4 to 4 and Newton Gresham--as I recall he was chairman, from Houston--and I had a conversation with him. I decided with Ed Gossett and Newton Gresham and Jesse Kellam--I talked to Jesse about this--that I should not make a fight for this. John Connally indicated

he wanted to and wanted to try to change some board member's decisions on me, but I thought for the best of education, even maybe for my own career, that I shouldn't make a fight of this at all.

So as it turned out, then Jim McCrocklin--who nobody thought of as a particularly strong candidate at that time--became president and Arleigh Templeton went to the Sam Houston State College post. I guess things usually turn out for the better, for the problems they are having at college campuses these days. In my present job, I haven't the worries that the college presidents have with the students and faculty and various militant groups uprising and so on.

And then to bring us up to date of my present position. The President's great interest in education caused him to look at the Office of Education pretty closely. There were some things going on in the area of civil rights at the time I came here and the big Chicago fiasco, cutting off several million dollars in funds without following our guidelines. The cut-off of Federal Funds caused Mayor Daley--according to newspaper reports, caused Mayor Daley to call the White House and the President got fairly upset about this. It was shortly after that the job of Assistant Secretary for Education was created and some said that Frank Keppel was kicked upstairs. I'm not sure about all of this. I never talked to the President about it.

But at any rate, I was by this time, very happy in a GS-14 post in Dallas, Texas, the regional office, in the area of higher education working with colleges and universities in a five-state region.

M: How did you happen to get that position?

T: That came open as a result of the new Higher Education Facilities Act.

It was necessary, we thought, to place one representative of that act into each of the nine regional HEW offices and so, desirous to get back to Texas, I took that job.

M: You accepted the appointment under Keppel?

T: Yes, I accepted the appointment as Special Assistant to Frank Keppel and did a national study for him on educational concerns in all areas, a private study for him, helped set up his special programs on equal employment opportunity reviews of our contractors. Then, after this it was apparent there would be a GS-14 position open and I couldn't get a rating any higher because the salaries were so poor in Texas. Even though the administrative posts, state politics, speaker's post, that didn't count in the rating. I asked for the job specifically in Dallas and felt I'd earned my wings around here to be deserving of it.

I did get it, and I moved to Dallas in December of '64. My wife started teaching again to help pay off these political debts. And she doesn't mind teaching, actually she enjoys it. Our little boy was about 6 years old by this time and in school, so we bought a house. I used my GI bill after all these years, bought a home in Richardson, Texas. She taught in Richardson and I commuted each day into the Dallas office.

Then about ten months later, I was out in New Mexico at New Mexico State University. One night at the motel I got a call from Cliff Carter asking me had Bill Moyers gotten in touch with me. And I said, "No."

He said, "We want a resumé as soon as you can get it here," I asked him what it was about, and he was very vague and just said

"I'd just like to have one."

I said, "Now Cliff, don't try to do me anymore big favors. I'm happy. I've got a new house we helped design. My wife's teaching. I was offered a 15 in Washington to stay but a 14 in Dallas is roughly equivalent. I'm back here and our son is near his grandparents in Gober and Commerce. So don't do me any big favors." I said, "I'll be back in the weekend," this was about Thursday night "and I'll send you a resumé." He told me to ask my wife, Ira Nell, to send it, but she had none--only one or two at the office. So Monday I placed a resumé in the mail to Cliff.

I have an idea why this was done and why I was offered this job here. But you know, who is to say? One could infer that there were some decisions being made here, and there was no one in a position in the entire Office of Education at any level where they might reflect the thinking of another Texan on some problems. I came back and was sworn into the office of Associate Commissioner for Field Services in December of '65. So I was in Dallas one year and back here in December of '65 and I've been in this position ever since. But the reason it was challenging to me is that the President had a task force looking into reorganizing the Office of Education--

M: This was the '65 task force?

T: '64. The recommendations came out in late--pardon me, '65, yes. The recommendations came out about, I'm guessing about June. I don't have these dates now exactly in mind, but about June, about Summer of '65--it was in two phases. One was to reorganize the headquarters, secondly to place an emphasis on Field Service and to try to decentralize the services closer to the users of federal funds.

After being in the Dallas office a year, I could see how this was such a much better way of doing it. I knew the presidents of many of the colleges. I'd been on their Appropriations Committee in the House, and I'd been Speaker and so forth. They accepted me, and I in a way was an ombudsman for them on federal funds. I could see the great possibility for interpreting and implementing the legislation from regional offices, better than we were doing it, or able to do it, at the Washington level.

M: In this reorganization, was there a de-emphasis of relationships with the States?

T: No, no, I wouldn't say there was a de-emphasis. We are accused of de-emphasizing the relationship and working closer to the local school districts and colleges and universities, but that never has been our philosophy. The guidelines on most all of our legislation called for us--the federal officers--dealing directly with the chief state school officers. There are some exceptions. The school assistance for federally affected areas is strictly a federal-local relationship, but even in Title III of the new Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which called for local school districts presenting directly to the Commissioner of Education their plans for innovation, in writing our guidelines we wrote them such that the local schools should channel applications through the chief state school officer of each state.

Now I recall at one time we had, I guess the first year probably, one dozen out of the twenty some odd, 22,000 school districts that were eligible, probably had plans approved which did not go through their chief state school officer. But our philosophy has always been

to strengthen the state departments of education, which really is the seat of power in education. We talk about local autonomy and local power, but the local school districts are merely extensions of the state's Department of Education. The authority is vested in the state Department, and by the state legislatures, and while we talk about how wonderful it is as local control, it really is in the state Department of Education and in the state legislature. And I'm a state's righter, or a local righter as far as that goes. This doesn't sound like somebody presumed to be a liberal talking, but our whole system is based on doing something at the lowest level to the clientele that can be. Local school districts and local cities, towns, something they cannot do for themselves, the states have to take it over. That's the way it should be. And there are certain things the states cannot do for themselves, and the national government has to. There are many areas--growing more and more, as our nation grows smaller and smaller.

M: Is it up to your regional offices to enforce integration guidelines?

T: No, we have nobody representing the Title VI compliance section of the Civil Rights Act in the regions until just recently, about the last year. After the heat was placed on school districts like Chicago and so on, the Commissioner took another look at it, the Secretary did, and finally the compliance part, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, was placed under the Secretary and it's being run by an assistant in the Secretary's office. Now, they have decentralized by placing a few people in three or four of the regional offices, particularly in Dallas, Atlanta and Charlottesville. In Title IV, the technical assistance aspects of the law, we still have

that part under the Office of Education and we now have a few program officers in three or four of the regions.

M: I was wondering, in a touchy area like that, if the local school board had objection would they not be tempted to by-pass the state offices, and, say, go to their Congressmen and then--

T: Oh yes, I'm sure they would not only be tempted to do, they would do it. They have done it; they will continue to do it. I would, to, if I were a superintendent out there and had pressures brought on me that I couldn't get people to help me solve. I'd go to any source available to me, again, in trying to do what would be fair and equitable within the framework of good educational opportunity, equal educational opportunities, and then obeying the law of the land and again, looking at what I'm able to do with a given community. There are all kinds and shades of problems in this area.

What one school district could do, for instance, like in Bonham, the County seat of Fannin County, they just closed up the Negro high school and Negro elementary school and all of the kids went to the same school. But that may be different--you asked me if I were an East Texan. You couldn't do that in some of the "deep East Texas" towns and cities.

M: Okay.

T: But I told the Assistant Secretary in a meeting the other day that what I think we need is more program officers in Title IV and more money in Title IV to give technical assistance to school districts and have these people, these program officers based in our regional offices and have the kinds of people that can identify with superintendents--that is hiring superintendents themselves--to come in and

work for us in working with their former colleagues, because I have seen the Title VI program so completely mismanaged by the employment of lawyers, investigative officers, investigative types, summer employees, young law students. Some of them haven't the faintest idea of the problems that an administrator has in an area like deep East Texas, or Mississippi. Young men from law schools at Harvard and places of this kind just simply cannot identify in meetings with school administrators and school board members in the Deep South. Where we have employed in Title IV--because the employment of all regional people comes under me. That's one of the things, I thought I had to have that authority in order to set up a good regional staff of the kinds of people I felt could do the job that I thought I was supposed to be responsible for. The Commissioner asked me if we had Title IV people in regions now and I told him "yes." He indicated an interest in pursuing this further. But he won't be aboard until May 1. He is, you know, Jim Allen, Chief State School Officer of New York, who, incidentally, I understand, was offered the Commissionership under President Kennedy and again under President Johnson and has just now accepted. (Note: Allen came in under Nixon and was fired by Nixon.)

M: Well, now, what's your relationship with the Justice Department?

T: My office does not have any relationship. The legal problems are basically handled by a group of lawyers working under the Secretary.

M: This doesn't fall under your--

T: This doesn't fall under my category at all.

M: While we're on this same subject of this office, there has been some public comment, Congressional comment actually, that the regional offices have been stacked in favor of the South. Is there any

truth in that?

T: No, no, I wouldn't say that at all. The criticism that we hear so often and which occupies some of our thinking, is based on the executive directors of two or three big education associations who are against any kind of regionalized operation. Now they have their own reasons. Some are strictly philosophical, some are based on their saying that this could lead to our bypassing the state Departments of Education. One of the principal opponents of decentralization or regionalization of the Office of Education Programs is Edgar Fuller who works for the Council of the Chief State School Officers. The other is Forrest Conner. By the way, Dr. Fuller retires next month. The other one is Forrest Conner who is Executive Director, or Secretary, of the American Association of School Administrators. They asked others to join them to get some support from the National School Boards Association and some support from the National PTA, and from their own state Boards of Education. This criticism is dissolving now as they see the kinds of people we have placed in these regional offices.

No, I've never really heard the criticism of the Southerners taking over the regional offices. Each is generally selected from within the region that he now is serving, except that the man who is Regional Assistant Commissioner of Education in Boston is Dr. Walker Agnew, who is from San Marcos, Texas, and did his practice teaching with LBJ. While I personally suffered a slight criticism at the beginning of his tenure there, he's been there a little over 2 years now and I now have more compliments from his work in that region than I do of any other regional assistant commissioner, I guess. As

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it happens, you asked me this when we have just employed, as of two weeks ago Monday, we employed Dr. Charles J. Martin, who is a Mississippian who was Superintendent of Schools in Chattanooga, to go to head our Chicago office. But this man has a broad base of educational background.

M: Your regional organization reflects the region itself?

T: Yes, basically, that's true.

M: It's not over-balanced in favor of the north or the South, East or West?

T: That's right. It's based on the individual that's hired to be qualified for the program area that he represents. And we would prefer that he has a good reputation and connections to help implement legislation and really to help the people to understand and be able to apply for and use federal funds. This in turn should help the understanding of the programs that Congressmen vote. I think instead of this fear of federal control, we're finding that the people in the regional offices are helping us understand and destroy this straw man.

We have never talked about a national curriculum of education. We've talked about some standards. Sputnik brought on this urge to do more in modern math and science and foreign languages. There are national emergencies that come up and Congress reacts and then later those may change to other kinds of emphases. But I don't know that anybody is pushing for a national curriculum of education. Some national standards--people are moving about so these days. My own son went to four different schools in two years and I'm glad there was some similarity in the programs.

M: Has the emphasis on black studies had any impact?

T: Not in my area, and not really have we gotten into this kind of thing in the national scene. There may be some small research grants made to see how certain programs might be developed or to cause some institutions who want to do studies in this regard to see what findings they might come up with.

M: Did you have anything to do with the construction and passage of the education legislation that came out under the Johnson Administration?

T: No, only to the extent that as a Bureau Chief--and my office is neither a staff office nor a bureau, but I am a member of the executive group. As we would discuss in weekly meetings things of this nature with our assistant for legislation. The Commissioner held them. The Commissioner was in constant contact with Douglass Cater, the President's education adviser, and others, and he would throw back ideas to us and we'd react. Only in that kind of a group fashion did I particularly get involved in any--

By the way, the President appointed me to the Board of Foreign Scholarships.

M: Yes, you might say something about that.

T: He's been very interested in that. I think it's an indication of the pressures that he probably was under in not appointing Texans to some of the things. Although he, I think, was a man who really wanted to put people into positions that he knew something about and could trust. I think loyalty meant a great deal to him, but I don't think he particularly had any point in this conversation about the Board of Foreign Scholarships, except at the time there were four positions open. These are three year terms, 12 members. This is the Fulbright

Commission. The Fulbright-Hayes Act, this is the policy board for that. Out of the four new members that he appointed when he appointed me, he appointed me--I received my commission as James A. Turman of Virginia, because I'm living in McLean, Virginia. Another was Jack Valenti. I guess Jack got his out of New York. Another was Lloyd Hand of California and the other was Ed Booher who is President of McGraw-Hill in New York. Three of the four--Texans. Appointments such as these, Ed Clark to Australia and the many, many Texans appointed to so many positions in the closing years of LBJ's tenure were a dead give-away he was not going to run for re-election.

T: It's a policy board for the program that has to do with interchange of scholars, lecturers, researchers, and students of foreign countries.

M: When were you appointed?

T: I was appointed--let's see, I guess I'm about starting my last year--about two years ago. I don't remember exactly when.

M: Did the President say anything to you about this appointment?

T: No. Only that Marvin Watson's aid called me and asked me if I would be interested and that he didn't know whether or not I would be appointed because I was a Texan, and if I didn't reside in Virginia, and I said, "As a matter of fact, I do and I would like very much the honor of serving on that Presidential appointed board." And I gave it no more thought. Then the appointment came.

M: Have you had much contact with Lyndon Johnson after your appointment to this office and while he was President?

T: No, none at all concerning the appointment of my job here?

M: I mean after you were appointed.

T: After I became Associate Commissioner--not the Fulbright thing, we're off that.

M: Have you ever gone over to the White House, had conversations with him

about education and things of that nature?

T: I was invited one time by John Gardner to come over to talk with him. He told me the President had mentioned my name to him--this was just after John Gardner was appointed Secretary--and that the President was highly complimentary and he wanted to get acquainted with me.

That was, of course, indirect. But another time Douglass Cater called me over and wanted to meet me, that the President had suggested that we get together. I went over and had lunch with Douglass Cater and the President called us when we were having lunch and invited me to come to his office. We had a chat there and he had a picture made, which is one of those I have around here somewhere--a picture made with him in his office.

I did keep in touch with Jake Jacobsen who was here for, I believe, two years. I'm not sure. And Marvin Watson whom I had known and worked with in political campaigns in Texas, and I knew several of the people over there. I did try to keep them informed--just casual conversations--that everything was going fine and we were not rocking the boat. We were trying to carry out to the best we could the President's intentions in education and that we were so appreciative of all he did and said about education and it was just very comforting to feel that, you know, in a sense you were on the team because this man was so devoted, as a public servant, to the whole field of education.

And he, I'm certain, knew of my activities in regard to decentralization because this bureaucratic structure here could never have been broken without some support from somewhere, and this came directly from the President down through the lines to the Secretary

to the Commissioner and then with me, as the instrument; the Bureau Chiefs worked with me to decentralize certain programs. We looked at all of the programs. Some by the nature of the legislation cannot really be decentralized but a great number of them can be. Some of them can be fully decentralized, and some partially. After several months of this kind of study, then I got together my little staff, and we moved, working with the bureau chiefs, to decentralize to the point where we have approximately one-fourth of our entire staff in the regional offices. We have about 660 staff members in the regional office now out of about 2,800 employees.

M: This would sound like an on-going program, that it's still in progress.

T: Yes, yes. I could get into a long story which would not be relevant here about how these gentlemen, representing some national associations, forced the Commissioner of Education to re-centralize some of the elementary-secondary education programs that we had just gotten out to the field. The Commissioner of Education, that being then Harold Howe, was told that there was enough opposition to decentralization that they had the support to either get 2 million dollars back into our appropriations for recentralization--or if we continued decentralization, they could keep our two million dollars cut, and that's a long story, which I ought to write about I guess some day, about administrative blackmail. I think I can be so bold as to say that.

And Harold Howe thought that, in essence, these men were speaking for their tremendous organizations in numbers. These things were never brought up before the national associations, only the few members that were running the associations. For instance, Texas had never heard of this and at a recent joint session of the Texas

Association of School Administrators and the Texas Association of School Boards this was brought to their attention at the last annual meeting. Then, voting separately, the administrators endorsed the regional idea unanimously and the school board members endorsed it with the exception of one vote, as I recall. When the people understand what this issue is about and that they can receive the benefit of these programs much better as they are placed closer to the people, this fight will be over. So at the present time we're trying to offer services as best we can and we're going to kill our enemies with kindness and service, like I think is the philosophy of Lyndon Johnson!

M: What's the objection of these organizations to fighting decentralization?

T: I think with one of them they said it's a matter of principle. You know, you can't beat anybody's argument on that. He said, in essence, that what we need is what we started out with in the Office of Education 100 years ago, a Commissioner and four clerks. We need the clerks to dole the money out, put it on each state stump, and run. In essence, he says we need fifty regional officers, and those being the Chief State School Officers. I would say that's fine in principle, but we know that Congress is not going to appropriate money in that fashion, without accountability. And it's this matter of accountability that we sometimes get hung up on in this discussion. They are afraid of federal control.

M: Did you have anything to do with the rumored scrap between the Labor Department and the Office of Education over Manpower training?

T: No, I had nothing to do with that at all. And I don't even really know enough about it to intelligently discuss it.

M: Then let me ask this, what did you do to ease the transition to Richard Nixon and his Administration?

T: You know, at this particular point in time, we are not sure what Mr. Nixon's education program will be. I feel that he will have a real sense of urgency about education problems and that he will be extremely interested in carrying on some of the great programs the Johnson Administration passed. To do otherwise would be a tragedy. I think that one evidence of what I'm saying in terms of his support is the appointment of Jim Allen as the Commissioner of Education, who has fought strongly for the same kinds of programs that Lyndon Johnson has put forth on the national scene. You know New York generally is recognized as a leader in many fields, and I think perhaps that's true. In the area of education, Jim Allen's been a strong leader.

I think there won't be much change in the programs--probably some change in financing. The Republicans tend to appear, from recent legislative battles, that they are for what we call bloc grants, or packaging of programs. This runs in, again, to the problem of accountability. Some State Departments of Education are very strong and have great leadership and others are not so strong. Others are not capable of handling a lot of programs that are tossed upon them in terms of insufficient staff and leadership. We need to move into this area very slowly and carefully. So bloc grants of education programs, all leading toward some kind of general federal aid, and in my own opinion this needs to be simplified into some kind of a national formula, perhaps like Texas has in their own state formula. They have a multi-factor formula for supporting education with minimum supports in salaries

and so forth. Perhaps the federal collection of tax dollars is so far in advance of receiving funds than the states have with their patched up tax programs that we may be looking, if we're thinking that the national government is going to have to support more and more of the educational cost burden, we may be looking at some kind of a minimum foundation program on a national level, particularly to get around this fear of federal control, particularly in areas of higher program costs, as teachers' salaries, construction, and the like; and still on top of this we will continue to need various categorical aids and continue to need research and development by the national level.

M: Have you had meetings with Nixon people about the position of your bureau and what the regions are doing and so forth?

T: Only within the last couple of weeks. Two weeks ago I met Mrs. Patricia Hitt for the first time, who is an Assistant Secretary, who has several big responsibilities under her, one of which is field coordination.

M: Is that H-i-t-t?

T: Yes. And she visited with our regional assistant commissioners across the country. All nine were here for a week's conference and she seemed very impressed with the story that we told her about what we're doing, and gave us the go-ahead to continue the good service. As soon as she can have time she'll be glad to hear more about it in detail. She has a person on her staff that actually comes from the Johnson Administration, or he was working within the Department--Dr. John Grupenhoff--a young man who is Director of Field Coordination.

M: Would you mind spelling that?

T: G-R-U-P-E-N-H-O-F-F. Incidentally, they were teasing me in the meeting--as a matter of fact I guess it was Dr. Grupenhoff who was teasing me about being a Texan. And I said, "John, I think that I remember there's some Texas in you!" And he admitted that he has his Ph.D. in government--I believe it's government--from Texas University. So with him at the near side of Mrs. Hitt, and I believe from all I hear, in that the new Assistant Secretary for Education and the Commissioner of Education, Jim Allen, wearing two hats, gives him more flexibility. And he has been a strong supporter of decentralization of federal programs in education and in his own state Department of Education. And he's had all the problems of New York that we could ever have in the nation!

I think we will carry out the policy of decentralization. A real interesting footnote here is that Commissioner Howe, in pulling back, and ordering me to pull back elementary and secondary programs, had the former-Secretary Wilbur Cohen to sign a memorandum stating so. And in one of the 108 or some odd special things--recommendations to the President as Wilbur Cohen left, one was to decentralize the elementary and secondary education program. So that shows the confusion that we're in.

But we believe that the time has come to get the services closer to the people, and that's the challenge of the job I'm in and that I credit Lyndon Johnson to getting started, because he started with this task force, gave it White House impetus and then through his Cabinet member, then the Commissioner and on down, we've started working at this. And it's a very difficult thing to do with the empire builders, the bureaucrats, that we have in the federal government.

M: That sounds like a fine closing statement. I have no more questions for you unless you have something else you wish to say?

T: No, David, I've enjoyed rambling on here. I have no idea that any of this will be of benefit. If it's helpful I'm glad, and I've enjoyed it very much, talking with you about this matter. I gave very little input into Lyndon Johnson as a man or as an educator. I haven't, I'm sure, expressed my extreme warm feelings toward him. I think he's one of the greatest leaders of all times. And in that same breath I want to say that Sam Rayburn was, too, and probably helped him become that great leader that he has exhibited himself to be in the world of government. Thank you very much.

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By James A. Turman

to the

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