

INTERVIEW II

DATE: April 22, 1981

INTERVIEWEE: MARGARET MAYER WARD

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mrs. Ward's office, Washington, D.C.

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W: As I remember 1956, I've got to think back to 1952 and the fact that [Allan] Shivers had turned the party over to Eisenhower in 1952. The issue was whether the Democratic Party was going to support the nominee in 1956 or not. And I suppose Johnson and [Sam] Rayburn, it was a challenge to them. They had to rescue the party from the Shivers turncoats, from the Democrats for Eisenhower.

G: Was it fair to say that Johnson and Rayburn were losing prestige in Washington because of what [had happened in 1952]?

W: Well, I wasn't in Washington and I didn't see it from that perspective, so I don't know. They had their own problems with the Democratic Party with Paul Butler. But by that time, I don't think the Democratic Advisory Committee, or whatever Butler called it--well, it was prominent; it was noisy in Texas. The people who were aligned with Butler, they were raucous. They were vocal. I suppose that perhaps in their eyes, Johnson and Rayburn were losing prestige up here. And in Johnson's and Rayburn's eyes, I'm sure that they had to take the party back, not just to take it back from the

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Democrats for Eisenhower, but to take it back from the Paul Butler crowd. So there was the big challenge at the state convention and of course, Johnson did win it.

Now, my feeling is--and this perhaps is the only pertinent thing I have to offer you on the year--that Johnson's fight was not so much with Shivers as it was with the Paul Butler crowd. I say that because after the conventions, including the national convention--it would have been in the fall around September, early October--Dewey Bradford had a party [in Austin]. He had one of the first houses in Rollingwood. It had just been built; it was on a cliff overlooking the river. There were very few places out there at that time. He had a big western party and, as Dewey would, the place was decorated beautifully. He had a Boot Hill with some gravestones over in one part of the yard, and he had a big, I suppose, buckboard-type carriage. Shivers and Johnson were both there, as were a lot of prominent people in town, and at one point they got up in the buckboard to talk. It was the one place they could go and talk where somebody wouldn't interrupt them. It was an amiable conversation; it was not two adversaries at all. And I've often thought that there was more compatibility in their fight than there was animosity.

G: Shivers that year had endorsed interposition and had used that in his campaign to get the convention delegates.

W: Yes, that's right. You're right.

G: Johnson, meanwhile, had not signed the Southern Manifesto.

W: Well, you're right. I had forgotten. It was an issue.

G: Was Shivers unpopular at this time? He was an outgoing governor.

W: No, I don't think he was. Not as I recall.

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G: Well, how did Johnson win these [conventions]? I gather what he did was he won in the convention fights, is that right, the county conventions and precinct conventions?

W: Well, yes.

G: How did he do that?

W: Hard work. Of course, I guess the example of the hardest work ever done for convention control was in 1952 when Shivers won the conventions. The other side learned a lesson; they got out and worked, too. Precincts were organized, there were meetings before the precinct meetings at night, floor leaders would have people over at their houses, and everybody would know the signals and how the meeting was going to be conducted. There was a larger coterie of people well-informed about convention procedure at that time than I've ever seen since.

G: There's an indication that early on Johnson was reluctant to challenge Shivers, and he was more or less drafted by Sam Rayburn to running for favorite son.

W: I think the reason was that they had to wrest control from the Paul Butler liberals.

G: But did you see any reluctance on Johnson's part early on?

W: Johnson was always reluctant to get involved in state conventions. That was my observation, at any rate. Rayburn would; Johnson didn't like to. Just as many congressmen felt that it was dangerous.

It was deadly to get involved in intramural Democratic Party politics. There's never been any great demand by Texas congressmen to go to national conventions. Other states, you know, their seats, "Oh, we've got to have seats for our congressmen!" Well, not Texas congressmen. Oh, yes, some like Ralph Yarborough, but not the old Texas congressional delegation. It was just something--it was trouble you didn't need. And

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Johnson was not a strong party man. You know that. You can see that in his conduct of the party when he was president. The party had never done anything for him as an intramural structure. Individuals had, but not the party structure. So he did stay out of convention fights, probably until 1956. Then, of course, he got into it in 1960, because he damn sure wanted the delegation in 1950 [1960?]. And whipped them good.

G: But he had been in on these fights in 1940 and 1944, also.

W: Now, 1940 is before my time, so I'm not aware of 1940. In 1944 he was, because I suppose the challenge was too great, the Texas Regular challenge. There are times when you do have to step in and protect your own turf. Well, like I say, I don't think he was involved in 1948 at all. He would always have emissaries and--of course, I take that back. He was involved in the September convention. But when I said he was not involved at all, I meant leading up to the presidential nomination. Nor was he in 1952 that I know of.

G: Well, now, in 1956 when Johnson did beat Shivers in the conventions, and I gather it was something like twelve hundred votes to two hundred and twenty-one votes, which is--

W: Is that the state convention?

G: No. This was the results of the county conventions, which I guess determined who went to [the state convention].

W: Well, that would have been the delegate count in the state [convention].

G: Did he use labor's organization to do this?

W: Some, yes. Because I remember Stu Long was one of the floor leaders in the convention, and he would have been aligned with labor. Yes, I'm sure he did.

G: But how else would he have been able to match Shivers within state politics?

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- W: Well, by hard work in the precincts. Starting in the precincts.
- G: Did he use the organization that he had used to run for the Senate in 1948?
- W: Oh, of course.
- G: In 1954?
- W: Yes.
- G: Really?
- W: Absolutely. The same people.
- G: Well, let's talk about the first convention.
- W: Was it in Dallas?
- G: One was in Dallas, the other one was in Fort Worth. I guess the first one was Dallas.
- W: The first one was in Dallas, and I was not there. I covered the Republican convention in Corpus Christi. So I'm--
- G: Okay. Well, there were two main questions: leaving the State Democratic Executive Committee, which was a pro-Shivers committee, of course, intact, which Johnson evidently did, and the appointment of national Democratic committeeman and committeewoman. Here, evidently, there was some sort of arrangement with the liberal faction.
- W: Isn't this the one where he wanted to name B. A. Bentsen?
- G: Yes.
- W: And he had to withdraw her name. Who was named? Mrs. [Hilda] Weinert?
- G: Well, I think he started out originally with Mrs. Weinert and then ended up with B. A.
- W: Oh, was B. A. named?

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G: Well, the liberals put up Frankie Randolph and Kathleen Voigt, too, I think. I'm not sure. But I think they ended up with Frankie Randolph.

W: That's right.

G: What do you remember about that fight?

W: Hell, you see, I wasn't there. I think he was just whipped. I thought that he had withdrawn B. A.'s name, but I guess you're right. I guess she was just beat. And, you know, he had coalesced with the Frankie Randolph crowd to win that convention from Shivers.

G: And now he was having to fight with them.

W: Yes, as was always the case.

G: Well, now there, did he turn around and make a deal with the Shivers people to keep Price Daniel from getting beaten by Yarborough? You know, there was a governor's race.

H: You mean in the September convention?

G: Yes.

W: I wish I'd been able to find my files on this. Now wait a minute. Is this the one where they pitched out some of the conservative delegates and they took the organ with them?

G: I think so.

W: Arch Rowan and Neville Penrose, who were the Fort Worth organizers, I mean, they'd rented the hall and rented the organ and all that. They refused to seat their delegations and when they did, they just walked out and took the organ and the whatever local posse they had that was supposed to keep order. Took them with them. And they would have been Shivers people. Which doesn't mean that all of the Shivers people walked out; they

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didn't. Because their interest still lay more with Price Daniel than they did with Ralph Yarborough. Isn't that the one where Price was roundly booed? Which would have been by the Yarborough people.

G: Did Johnson fear that he was losing control of that convention to the Yarborough people?

W: I don't know. I don't think so. I think Jake Pickle particularly, and other key people from around the state, had things so well organized they knew they weren't going to lose control of the convention.

G: Well, now, didn't LBJ have some liberal delegations unseated, too? Woodrow Bean and the El Paso [delegation]?

W: Probably. Yes. Yes.

G: Do you recall any of the details of that?

W: No. No. I don't. Damn. I remember working all night on that thing over at the [Fort Worth] *Star-Telegram* office and I know I wrote reams, because the fights were just multiple all over the place.

You had fights over delegations, then you had fights over naming the nominees for the executive committee. And it was as a result of that convention that I think they put in a rule that a district's nomination had to be accepted, I believe, because the nominations committee was just slashing people out, naming their own people.

It was a Johnson convention. He controlled it. And it might have been pretty raucous and there might have been a lot of bones broken, figuratively speaking, but he controlled that convention.

G: Now, the liberals wanted to challenge the nomination of Price Daniel and either have a recount or refuse to certify. Do you remember that?

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W: No. Had the election been that close?

G: Yes. It was very close.

W: I don't remember that that was ever a real threat. No, I don't. Of course, if that was a main purpose, once they'd lost that, then their next aim would have been to control the executive committee. Who became chairman of the executive committee, do you know?

G: No. George Sandlin had been, I guess.

W: Yes. Yes. I don't remember who took it over. It would have been somebody who was compatible to both Daniel and Johnson. It may be that that's when Jake [Pickle] was--was Jake executive secretary or was Jake Jacobsen?

G: I don't know.

W: I'll look for these damn files and I cannot find them. I know I've got a file box someplace, but I could not find them.

G: Anything else on Johnson's activities during that second convention?

W: I'm trying to think if he was even there. Was he?

G: As far as I know.

W: Yes, he would have been at that one. It was the San Antonio one he stayed away from. Rayburn was there, but not Johnson. The San Antonio [convention] was the aftermath of this. It was the succeeding one and still very bitter because of this one, as a result of this one. Yes, I think he was there. Was Frank Ikard the chairman of this convention?

G: I don't know.

W: I believe he was, and, of course, Ikard was a smooth, peacemaking sort of guy and handled it as nicely as it could have been handled. If it wasn't he, it was--I think it was Frank.

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G: Did you learn anything about Price Daniel's relationship with Johnson from this convention?

W: No. Not that I can tell you of my own knowledge. I would guess that Johnson had little respect for Daniel at that point. Because it was Johnson's people who ran the show, it wasn't Daniel's. Jake Pickle was working for Daniel at the time, but you know he was a Johnson man. He learned under Johnson. He sure didn't learn under Daniel. Buzz [Horace Busby] might have a different perception of this, because I think he was working for Daniel at the time, or had been with Daniel.

G: Could it be that Johnson saw in Daniel less of a rival for control of the party than--?

W: Oh, I don't think he considered him a rival for control of the party. I think he got along with Daniel.

G: Did he see Yarborough as a rival?

W: Yes, although he would never have let any difference with Yarborough be displayed openly. He saw him as a rival because his people were troublemakers. They were always troublemakers for Johnson. The Frankie Randolphs and Minnie Fisher Cunninghams, these were just irritations that Johnson figured he didn't need. He was probably maybe right. I don't know. Now, the Woodrow Beans, there were certain people that Johnson could talk to. It meant extra effort on his part. It was a bother.

G: The liberals felt betrayed by Johnson at this point.

W: Yes. I'm sure they did, and maybe with reason.

G: He felt that they were going too far and were trying to do the same thing in essence that Shivers was trying to [do], split the party.

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W: Yes. Now in the delegation that went to Chicago, you had some of them. Of course you did, because you had Frankie Randolph as the new national committeewoman. Who was the committeeman?

G: It was Byron Skelton, wasn't it?

W: Was it Skelton? I thought it was. Johnson could always get along with Skelton, maybe he'd even been Johnson's nominee. I don't know. I don't think Johnson's choice for national committeeman was defeated. I think it was just B.A.

G: Johnson did not seem to have much rapport with Frankie Randolph.

W: Oh, Lord, no. No.

G: Why not?

W: I'm sure there are good and ample examples of situations and I'm at a loss to drag them out of my memory at this point.

G: Did you ever see them together?

W: Not that I know of. Oh, I'm sure I did. Who is the lawyer from Austin who ran for Congress?

G: Fagan Dickson?

W: No, no. Creekmore Path?

G: Creekmore Fath.

W: Well, Creekmore was a buddy of Frankie Randolph's. Creekmore and Johnson never had anything good to say about one another. Who were some of the other real irritants? I'm sorry, my memory is not what it should be for your purposes.

G: Did Johnson seem to get more support from organized labor beneath the surface than they gave to him publicly?

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W: Well, organized labor at that time would have been Jerry Holleman and Fred Schmidt, I think, and he would certainly have had their support in challenging Shivers. Then I'm also sure that they would have been on Yarborough's side in any fight with Daniel.

So I can't tell you about that particular year. Certainly subsequently Johnson and Holleman got along well. Holleman was not the rabble rouser that Fred Schmidt was. Then that whole labor picture changed, I guess, in subsequent years. Hank Brown took over and Hank was somebody he could get along with. Hank was a good politician himself.

G: Anything else on these convention fights that we've left out?

W: Oh, I'm sure there is. You know, the committees--now I'm talking about the Fort Worth convention--were the all-important bodies, the ones that handled the delegation fights and the ones that handled the nominations. I remember sitting in--I think Pickle was chairman of the nomination's committee. If he wasn't chairman of it, he was running it. And those hearings went on it seems to me forever. They were in a little bitty dressing room down in the basement, as I recall. If there was a window, it must have been way up here, and people were stacked in there just like sardines, sweaty, tired. There would be a fight over just about every nomination that came up, and it wound up the way Pickle wanted it. He might have yielded on one guy. Somehow they might have talked him into one fellow, but. . . . I don't know why Ed Levy comes to mind. I don't know what the circumstances of the challenge were, but it went on interminably. I think maybe the adjournment was held up by the nominations.

G: Is that right?

W: Yes. And they were pretty ruthless in cutting out people who had not been supporters.

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G: You mean supporters of Johnson or the party?

W: Oh, supporters of--actually, it would have been Daniel, not Johnson, at that point. The issue was whether they'd supported Daniel or not. I'm sure that Yarborough had people on the ultimate committee, because there were some that you simply--you couldn't be too blatant. But the balance of the committee was Daniel's.

G: Fascinating.

W: It was so rough that in the next convention, which I'm pretty sure was San Antonio in I guess it was September of 1960, or either 1958, because, of course, the September convention was held every two years. There had been an agreement, and Rayburn had sent a telegram, it seems to me. There was an agreement that they would recognize the nominations of the district delegation, and I think some of the nominations were not recognized. Rayburn was pretty mad about it, and Yarborough walked out. They had a big parade, walked out of the convention hall. Well, at any rate, it was a hangover from the Fort Worth convention.

G: Again with the Daniel people being in control?

W: Yes. Yarborough had a press conference the next morning, citing this Rayburn telegram and the assurances that Rayburn had that the nominees would be recognized. It just went on and on. God, they loved to fight.

G: Anything else that we've left out.

W: I just regret that I'm as uninformed as I am at this point about those conventions because they were marvelous affairs, and I simply cannot think of details.

G: Well, it's hard to reconstruct that.

W: I wish I had my copy, because then I could reconstruct a lot.

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[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview II]

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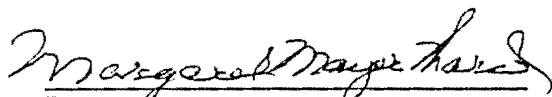
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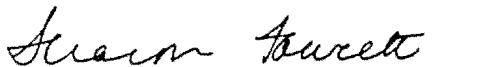
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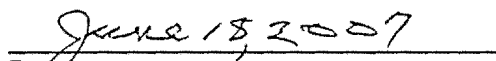
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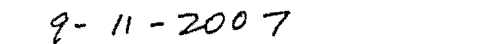
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