INTERVIEW I

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INTERVIEWEE: HARFIELD WEEDIN

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: The Chateau Marmont Hotel, Hollywood, California

Tape 1 of 1

G: You were discussing your ad agency. Was it PR or advertising?

W: No, it was an advertising agency. My partner, Lee Segall, was the man who originated the "Dr. I.Q." program. That was the one where "I have a lady in the balcony, Doctor." I doubt if you'll remember it, but it was a very big program in its day. He was the manager of a dairy in Houston, Texas, and at that time. In addition to being an air personality on KTRH, I was also a salesman trying to get sales experience. So I called on Lee. He sponsored--on KTRH--a program called "Vox Pop," which also became nationally known. He came up one day with this idea on "Dr. I.Q." and I was the only one that thought it would work at the station. So I volunteered to help him and then to syndicate it, because I had "Vox Pop's" questions syndicated. He said, "Well, I don't know whether I want to do that," but to go along with me [he said] all right. So it turned out that I wrote it and co-produced it with him, and as director of Dr. I.Q. Productions in my spare time, sold it to the Grant Agency, which had the Mars account, and they bought the time on NBC.

Well, we continued to write it. Lee started writing it with me. So the two of us wrote it although I did most of the writing on it.

We finally decided that we would like to form an advertising agency and live off of the money we got from "Dr. I.Q.," which was a whale of a lot more money than I was getting from KTRH. So we did, in 1939, form this advertising agency, Segall and Weedin, Incorporated. He was the president--he was about five years older than I or more--and I was vice president and general manager.

So we started building. We didn't take any money out of it; we kept piling our money back in. And at the time this happened, when the man from Austin came down, it was a full-fledged advertising agency primarily specializing in radio. And about all I did was radio. But we had other people who did newspaper and billboards and all that. We were the biggest radio advertising agency in the state, by far more than anybody else, with the best staff. We had the best announcing staff of all the radio stations in the state. There were three of us who did it.

G: Did you do your own production work?

W: Oh, yes. We did our own production, we did our own writing. It was a complete package. But we did it for our clients, we didn't do it for anybody else. The way we got clients was our ability to do radio. So we had a lot of things going. This was 1939 when this started, and about 1941 a man by the name of Buck Hood--as I recall, he was with the Austin American-Statesman--came down and outlined what I have in my little piece of paper that will be appended to this.

G: How did Buck Hood or the Johnson campaign become aware of you, do you know?

W: I don't know. Somebody must have told Buck Hood about me, or maybe Buck Hood knew.

G: Had you had any dealings with Roy Hofheinz or other people close to--?

W: Oh, yes. Yes. Roy was a very good friend of mine. As a matter of fact, in 1941 when he applied for the first time for a radio station in Houston--there were only three at that time--he asked me to go to Washington as his witness to testify for the need for a fourth station. And I did go to Washington for Roy. I was the only one he called.

G: Is that right?

W: Yes. He didn't get the station until 1946 because of the war, but nevertheless, he did get it. And I was a good friend of his, and he is the one maybe who said to do it, I don't know.

G: Well, how was the job described to you when Buck Hood came? Did he hire the firm? Did he hire you in particular?

W: He primarily hired me. He wanted me to put on a show, said, "I was told that if anybody in Texas can put on a show that will compete with W. Lee O'Daniel, you can do it." I said, "Well, I think he's right. I'd be happy to try. It's going to cost you money." And he knew that. I insisted, as I mentioned in my little writings, that I'd be paid in advance, which I was.

G: Yes. How much were you paid, do you recall?

W: I've been trying to think. I think it was only one thousand dollars a week, and that was for everything. I had to pay the talent out of that and everything else. I'm pretty sure--but we did have another

thing. We insisted that they give our agency the newspaper advertising to place. Now, I don't remember how much we made out of that. I don't think we actually did a heck of a lot of it. I know we did the Wichita Falls campaign, which was the first one.

G: You would do the media buys, in other words, you'd get the commission on all of that, is that right?

W: Yes, right. But I think that's all that troop cost. I have not been able to justify that in my own mind, I don't see how we possibly could have, unless they furnished the bus, which I don't remember. But you know, we had nine people. Of course, people didn't pay much money in those days. Thirty-five dollars a week was a pretty doggone good pay.

G: Did the Johnson campaign seem to have a wealth of funds to spend in this campaign?

W: I never questioned it. It was always there, and it seemed like that anything we wanted we could get. We did have the airplanes that were available to us to fly around, which was nice. I wish they had flown the troop on the airplanes, it would have been a lot easier, but they didn't have that many. As I recall, there were three.

G: Yes. Did you ever get any indication of where the money was coming from?

W: The only indication I had was that Brown and Root were solidly behind it. And where the rest of the money came from, I had no idea. I wasn't interested. It didn't concern me.

(Interruption)

G: You've mentioned the Brown and Root support. How was this evidenced?

W: You're asking something that was so doggone long ago that I don't know. I know that one of the planes belonged to Brown and Root. I frequently heard conversation that they were very liberal with the money that they provided for Lyndon. But I really did not get into that too much. I didn't question it. It wasn't my business. It was rather a customary way of doing business in Texas politics to take money wherever you could get it. You needed all you could find. There wasn't that much. So no one certainly would blame Lyndon for taking money from anybody. It didn't make any difference.

G: Let me ask you about his speaking style.

W: It was pretty bad.

G: How would you describe it?

W: As a stump orator. In other words, this was his conception of the way a politician appealed to crowds. He sort of ignored the microphone. He knew he was supposed to stand in front of it, but he was there to please that crowd. He would use the gestures that the old-fashioned politicians would use, everything else. He was always very derogatory in his own remarks about his voice. He said he was terrible, and he was. He needed a lot of coaching, but apparently the coaching never worked. When he became president I thought that he conducted himself a lot better, but had a tendency to be too almost sotto voce and confidential in his conversations. But he was so much better than he was in the early days.

G: Did he ever seek advice from you during that 1941 campaign?

W: No, the only thing that he ever said to me, and I always thought that was a nice compliment, one time he said, "God, if I just had your voice, think what I could do." And he did like the way I handled myself. I guess I did it much better then than I do now. I haven't been an announcer or air personality since I got out of Armed Forces Radio in World War II. I had no desire to do it, because I don't think I'm that good. If I thought I were that good, then I would join my friends Ken Carpenter and all the rest of them who've done extremely well.

G: Well, let me get you to elaborate more on his style in 1941.

W: Well, obviously he didn't use his voice correctly, because he almost invariably got hoarse before the end of a campaign. His hand didn't wear out, but his voice did. He was convincing, he really was as I recall. He certainly was not a snake oil salesman by any manner of means. He said what he thought and gave a very good presentation during the campaign, probably a little above the head of what W. Lee O'Daniel was doing, in fact, much ahead.

G: He seems to have been very stiff though in the--

W: Oh, yes, very stiff, very uncomfortable speaking in front of people. When you could speak individually with him, it was another matter. He was a completely overwhelming man in person.

G: Did he ever give speeches in which there was no live audience, that were just designed for radio consumption?

W: No, never. In the three weeks that I was with him, we were speaking every night to as big a crowd as we could whomp up. And there were

usually pretty doggone big crowds. He was completely unknown, as you know, outside of his own congressional district. No one had ever heard of him. Even during the National Youth Administration.

Incidentally, I'd met him once and I don't recall I ever told him later. I interviewed him one time on some station where I was working when he was the director of the National Youth Administration. And [I] debated against his debate team, very badly. I was a bad debater--on the Reagan High School team. I was not properly prepared, but he made sure that his people [were]. I think his debate team was L. E. Jones and Gene Latimer, as I recall. So I am of that era, and of John Connally's era, too. John Connally's wife and I were good friends. When I moved to Austin in the last half year of high school, I was active in the Austin recreation department, and Ida Nell and I, Ida Nell Brill, was my leading lady and I was her leading man, and we both won individual honors--first place--in a statewide competition as actors and actresses. So, small world. Of course, I knew John well during the campaign and later.

G: Anything else on LBJ or speaking during that campaign?

W: No. We've pretty well covered it, that he was not that good a speaker. It's too bad, because if he'd been a good speaker, I think he could have gone much faster to what he eventually did.

G: Did he do anything for his voice when he really started getting hoarse?

W: Not to my knowledge. He'd have somebody come in and spray it or something like that, but I mean nothing so far as trying to save it other than when he was talking to people. He would then not give out

with the voice, he'd drop down to a very low voice and just sort of talk over it. But it's too bad, really, that he didn't have a better voice. Because he certainly had everything else. He had a tremendously commanding presence, and as everyone says, the one-on-one thing, he was fantastic.

G: Let me ask you to describe that one-on-one thing.

W: Well, it was just very intense. He had the ability to focus on you during the time that he was talking to you. There wasn't any doubt that he was talking to you and that you were important to him.

G: Did he tend to dominate these one-on-one sessions? Was he a good listener as well as--?

W: Oh, he was a good listener. His domination was strictly through his presence. He never let up on that at all. And he always, as you no doubt know, could walk into a room and the minute he walked in he'd take over the room. Much more so than he came over on television later as a president. I think that everything I've ever read about Lyndon has indicated that, too.

He was an extremely handsome man. As a matter of fact, he gave me one picture that's a typical Hollywood pose. I had it on my office when I had an office, and it was made like a Bruno of Chicago, which used to be the ultimate Hollywood pose, and he was standing with his wristwatch showing and his hand, complete with cigarette, almost up to his chin and a very stagey-looking smile. And a very handsome picture, I'm sure he loved it. This was when he was about thirty-four, thirty-five.

G: Let me ask you about the White House in that campaign. He announced from the steps of the White House in 1941.

W: I don't know much about that. I read in Mr. [Robert] Caro's book that the picture that I thought was taken on the steps of the White House was apparently taken in Corpus Christi. But I thought it had been taken on the steps of the White House. It was sort of presented that way. But I don't know whether Mr. Caro is right or not. I presume so. He said that Governor [James] Allred was airbrushed out of the middle of that, as he was standing in the middle, but the picture on stage showed only Lyndon was shaking hands with the President and the President was smiling. That's what we used all throughout the [campaign], a huge backdrop. At this certain point in my narration--whoever is listening to this thing, I hope they read the part in the attached memoirs where I tell about the campaign and the presentations--but at a certain point in the script that we wrote, the thing was unleashed and rolled down. It was a huge backdrop.

G: But did you get an indication of what President Roosevelt was doing to help Lyndon Johnson in that election?

W: Well, I just took everything for granted. I didn't ask questions at that time. I just presumed that President Roosevelt was solidly behind the campaign. He did not want W. Lee O'Daniel, because W. Lee O'Daniel was a reactionary, and to my mind he was a crook. I don't know that he ever stole any money, but if it ever became available I think he would. That's just my impression of him. He was a completely dishonest man. He would present one side. He considered

all of the fans of his and staunch supporters as suckers. He was a businessman primarily, and he was much more aligned with the big money--I'm sure he got as much big money or more than Lyndon got, because he had more people to call on. He'd been courting them for quite some time.

G: Did LBJ ever talk about his relationship with FDR during that campaign?

W: Not much to me. I didn't have a tremendous amount of contact with him, because he was always busy meeting with the local politicians in another room. I had this--I guess it was a suite in each hotel. I know it was a room where we had booze, and the local politicians would come in when they weren't in talking to Lyndon and the shakers in the other suite. I know he had a suite. So as I say, I had very little contact with him during the campaign. We talked always before the rally and usually a word after the rally, but not very much. In other words, it was never sitting down over a cup of coffee the way we are right now and saying, "Well, Lyndon, how's it going?" or anything along that line. I didn't get a chance to question him.

G: What was his mood like during the campaign? Was he running scared? Was he optimistic?

W: Well, that's a hard question, too, because I don't really remember. Being a politician, he never for one moment admitted that there was any doubt he was going to win, even in the early days when he knew he wasn't. It just began to [snow]ball; all of a sudden he realized that he really was getting a statewide name and had a good chance. Somewhere

along the line I got that idea, and from then on he was extremely enthusiastic. We really thought when we went to bed after that rally in Houston that we had won, no doubt about it.

G: Who did you report to, more or less, or who ran the campaign?

W: I don't remember.

G: Really?

W: No. We had one day in our first appearance in Wichita Falls to rehearse the rally, our part of the rally. Then we got to Midland and I put our troop through their paces for I think about six hours, and we timed it down to a gnat's eyelash. Everything was timed exactly how long it was going to take, because I wanted to leave exactly three minutes before the appearance of Lyndon and the broadcast. It worked out extremely well, because we worked them up to a pitch. Pretty corny, but it was very effective.

G: Did you regard his speeches as anti-climactic, when he would finally come out after all of this?

W: No, that was what they were here to hear. He said the things that were important. The material that he used, as I recall, was very good. The whole deal is to say, "If you really want to continue and help Roosevelt"--who was tremendously popular in Texas and all over--"that there's only one way to do it, and that's to elect me." So all of the emphasis of the campaign was not on Lyndon Johnson. It was on what a good friend he [FDR] was of Lyndon Johnson and "how much I can do for him for you in Washington." That's the reason that his speeches were on a much higher level than Texas politics normally are.

He was effective. He got his message over. He wasn't a golden-voiced orator by any manner of means.

G: Did he have trouble keeping the crowds there?

W: Well, one way we kept the crowd there was to give away money, drawing for war bonds and things. And no, I don't think he had trouble. I didn't notice them wandering away at all, because we'd built it up properly. I can't emphasize in retrospect how effective this little thirty-minute show that we put on was in taking these people who didn't know Lyndon from anybody and getting them involved in it and wanting to see this man that Franklin D. Roosevelt thought so much of. And the nine minute and fifty second narration that I did with the band playing "Dixie" and "Stars and Stripes Forever" and everything you can drag in in a patriotic fervor. And you've got to remember this was wartime, too. Everything you could drag in at that time was dragged in. It was all glorifying Roosevelt. And finally at the end we mentioned this young man that he wanted to come to Washington and help him.

G: Let me ask you about his dealing with the press. Did you have an opportunity to observe his relations with either the print media or the radio media?

W: Mildly. He was very effective with them. We didn't have any press conference or anything like that. The press would wander around. And when you're talking about the press, you're not talking about the retinue that follows politicians nowadays. You'd have maybe a reporter from a local paper. At that time the radio stations, most of them

were so bad and so few. I told you there were only three in Houston. And we didn't have a news department. At KTRH in 1936, when I went there, there was no news director. We got what news we got from CBS in New York, and whatever we wanted to put on was usually paraphrased out of the newspaper, and we put on very little news of that kind.

There was just no press as we know it today. So it was a one-on-one thing. My friend from the Houston Press, who was my roommate and handling the press, would make sure that whoever was from the press, what few there were, would have plenty to drink. Lyndon would come in and say hello and talk a little bit, but believe me, they were not as knowledgeable or didn't care that much about this. It's another political campaign for them, and they'd print the handouts and that was about it. Not much investigative reporting or anything like that.

G: Do you think he had a better relationship with the reporters than he did the editors and publishers of the paper?

W: No. I don't know. I can't answer that, I don't know. I didn't see any editors or publishers.

G: Did he have any way of finding out what the other side was doing? Did he have any ties into, say, W. Lee O'Daniel's camp or Jerry Mann's camp?

W: No, but knowing Lyndon, I'm sure that he did have. But I can't say. He didn't overlook anything. Now, that's one thing about Lyndon, he was always working. You never saw him really relaxed, not during this campaign or any campaign I guess he ever did. He worked himself to death.

G: Now one of the things he did, he made a speech in Fort Worth in May, advising the President to declare a state of national emergency, and then I guess four days later the President did just that. Did you recall that?

W: No. You must realize that when I went into this campaign, I really had no interest in having Lyndon Johnson elected to the Senate. I went in it because it was a job to do and I could make some money out of it, and I did it. Then as we got into the campaign I became sold on it, I became wrapped up. He must have sold me or somebody sold me or I sold myself on doing whatever I could to get him elected. So then I became a thorough Lyndon Johnson follower. I might even have waived my money if anybody had brought it up, but I doubt it. Nobody else was waiving any money in those days.

(Interruption)

G: Let's go on to the KTBC experience. You mentioned in your memoir that it was LBJ himself who called you and asked you to--

W: Yes. Now you said to be completely honest and factual on this.

G: That's right.

W: LBJ realized, in these days, that that was all the money they had, and it was very important that this radio station be a success. Otherwise they wouldn't have any money, because he never had much money in those early days. He was quite poor. His house that his mother lived [in], he bought for his mother, was a very small house, certainly not pretentious, and that's where he usually stayed when he came to town. When this came in, he was quite active in it. Bird--actually it was

her money and she was the president of the company and everything else. But in the early days, he was just as interested as she and was just as active as she; the two of them did it together. It never occurred to me for one minute that he should be doing anything but that.

G: Now when they bought the station they had a station manager named Escoe.

W: Whom I don't remember at all. I must have met him. It was a terrible station. It was a very run-down station. Well, again, I wrote that up in my little memoirs, as you say. My initial reaction was just so awful I wanted to turn and go back to Dallas.

G: Well now, when you say run-down, what do you mean by run-down?

W: I just mean that the equipment could barely work, that the personnel looked seedy. It was just obviously a station that if it paid salaries, and I'm sure it did, had a great deal of trouble doing it. The man who owned the station, I think his name was Ulrich [?], as I remember, and he owned a lot of stations. He was sort of an engineer, and he'd just file for them and build them. This facility was a daytime station, which meant it signed off at sunset. It shared time with A&M in Bryan, Texas; they'd have to sign off the air for a couple of hours while A&M did something on agriculture from Bryan. So that doesn't lend itself to listeners at all. But Bird told me, and Lyndon did, too, that very shortly, if I would take it, they would go full time and would not be bothered with that. Which they did. They took their thousand watts and they went full time. By the time I got there

actually, we were down to about 590 or 570 on the dial, which makes the thousand watts actually at least five thousand or more. At that end of the dial the signal really goes out. So we had a great signal at full time, and that in itself was enough to gradually make it a good station.

(Interruption)

G: Well, let me ask you about the equipment. Was the equipment obsolete or antiquated?

W: Oh, yes. Very obsolete and barely workable.

G: For instance, what in particular was obsolete?

W: Everything. It was really just put together of bits and pieces that Mr. Ulrich or Ulman or whatever his name was had managed to gather through the years. Apparently he was a pack rat. When he got enough of this stuff put together, he'd file for another radio station. It was a lousy station. And the only thing that Lyndon and Lady Bird got when they bought it was the fact that it was on the air, and from there if you have the right connections at the FCC, you can get yourself another frequency and everything else, which he did. [It's] a lot easier to use that as a springboard than it would be to go in and file for a new station.

G: I see. Well now, it was a thousand-watt station when they bought it or did they have to expand it?

W: Right. No, it was a thousand-watt station then. And the other station in town--where I started incidentally. I started on KNOW when I was a student at the University of Texas in 1933. I became one of

the announcers, for fifteen dollars a week incidentally, and I worked a seven-day week and went to the University of Texas. Then I became program director and chief announcer, and just as a sidelight on that, turned down Walter Cronkite for his first job in radio.

G: Is that right?

W: Yes. He was a very good friend, but there was another very good friend who was there at the time. Both of them were hanging around the radio station all the time. We finally had an opening and both of them wanted it badly. The manager wanted Walter because he felt he could do sports. We didn't have any news to speak of. I wanted the other guy because I thought he had a fine voice and would make a very good what we now call DJ. And I won.

G: Who was the other one?

W: His name was Nelson Olmsted. You may not have heard of him, but he went on to become the NBC storyteller and star in a lot of early Philco Playhouses and lives about a mile from me now. He's a very fine character actor.

Walter and I are still very, very good friends, and he's most grateful to me for not hiring him.

(Laughter)

G: Well now, describe the difference in power wattage. Why did they have a thousand watts and KNOW only have two-fifty?

W: Because they filed for it. When you had a station, it cost more money to operate a thousand-watt station than it did a one-hundred-watt station. Now KNOW was two hundred and fifty watts, and they were

doing well, they were full time. They were making some money. They were cutting the rate, mainly because the other station cut the rates so badly.

G: Yes. Was there an advantage to having more wattage? Did that give you a wider audience?

W: Sure. The bigger the station not only the farther out you get, but the better you cover what you have. In other words, you can do a better job of covering downtown Austin. If you have the proper equipment. With their thousand watts, they probably were not putting out as good a signal as KNOW was with their two hundred and fifty watts because of the bad equipment. We kept that transmitter for some time, all the time I was there. But I was able to hire an engineer from WFAA in Dallas who had worked with me who was a fine engineer; James Jeffers was his name. He came down and just worked his tail off getting that transmitter tuned up and in good condition. He went back to WFAA and he's still there I guess unless he's retired.

G: Let me ask you about the financial condition of the station. I understand that they had on the books a lot of accounts receivable and a lot of accounts payable.

W: Yes.

G: Did you make an effort to collect any of the accounts receivable?

W: Oh, sure. Yes. We weren't too successful, but we sure made the effort.

G: Did you discover that a lot of these were simply not going to be paid?

W: Yes, sure. And I don't recall too much about it. I didn't expect many of them to be paid, and a lot of them were trade-outs. In those days many of the station operators would have a trade-out with a restaurant and give one of his people five dollars a week in food at that restaurant, and that's part of your salary. That's what they had done at that station. We never did it fortunately.

I did find out there was not a heck of a lot of money that I had. Once we moved to the new studios in the Brown Building--we were already moved in by the time I got there, I don't think I had to--again, I'm a little vague on it. We weren't quite all installed, but we had made the physical move by the time I came down, which I think you said was May 17 or something in 1943. I knew it was in May. I had been in constant contact from the time I talked to them until I moved down. But when I went down to begin with, I saw these old studios, and I wasn't about to move into that.

G: Well now, did they have to get a priority in order to build the new studio?

W: No, you don't have to. You just file and say you've moved.

G: But during the war they had, you know--?

W: Well, with getting equipment and things like that, yes, you had a little problem. But as I recall, that's one thing Lyndon was able to do. Any problems we had with the government, he was able to get one of his aides to assist.

G: Well, let me ask you about the affiliation, getting the CBS affiliation. How was that done?

W: Well, first of all, I wanted it. We had always wanted it. There was no chance of getting the NBC station. There were only two networks really of any consequence, NBC and CBS. The NBC station was on WOAI, San Antonio, which was fifty thousand watts, clear channel, and just boomed into Austin. So if you wanted to listen to NBC, you tuned in to WOAI. A lot of people did, because that's where your best radio was. But KTSA was five thousand watts in San Antonio and put a signal into Austin, but not a very good one. You really had to want to listen to it in order to listen. So very few people bothered, it was just too much trouble. I knew this from the time I worked for KNOW, because we'd tried to get it [the CBS affiliation] in those days unsuccessfully. KTSA always was able to circumvent it and make it impossible for us. But I knew how to go about it. I started collecting letters and things from people saying that they did not listen to KTSA because they couldn't get it properly. There was no way that they were going to service downtown Austin. So I gave this material to Bird and to Lyndon and they started to work on it, because Lyndon always wanted a network and so did Lady Bird.

Understand again what I said, in the early days on this thing they were both so intensely interested in it, they worked in close concert. I reported to Bird. I did not report to Lyndon, I reported to her, and she was the one who would write me copious letters. We didn't use the phone much in those days strangely enough. I don't understand why, because later it became so much in use. But I don't recall too many times that I ever called them on the telephone.

G: Was she in Austin much of that time?

W: Quite a lot in the beginning. I remember she and I went out and bought the furniture for the office. I think we went to San Antonio. Should have done it in Austin. With the knowledge I have now, I would never have gone to San Antonio to buy furniture, but I think that's what we did. You might check with her sometime, but that's my memory of it. But we bought very nice furniture, and she didn't stint. She wanted it to be nice, wanted it to look nice, and I did, too, because that was one of the things we had to have was a station that was completely different from this run-down thing that was the laugh of Austin. So we put the best thing we could.

I had to fire practically everybody on the staff because they were just completely incompetent.

G: Did you fire them or did she fire them?

W: I fired them.

G: Did she concur in that decision?

W: Oh, yes. Yes. She knew what--actually, they gave me carte blanche to do whatever I wanted to do, because I explained to them that's part of the deal. I said, "Look, neither one of you knows anything at all about broadcasting, and with your being absentee ownership in Washington, I have to be able to move. So it must be whatever I feel is necessary to be done in this organization. If money is concerned, I'll consult you, but everything else I'm going to do. Otherwise I won't take the job." And I did, and they left me pretty well alone for about six months I guess.

G: The question that often comes up is how active was she in the affairs of the station?

W: She knew everything that went on.

G: Really?

W: Yes. I filed a report--

G: How many of the decisions did she actually make herself?

W: Well, anything to do with money she made. I don't know--I recall I would talk to her when she was in town at length on what I wanted to do and how I was doing it. She mostly just listened and agreed and said okay.

G: What was your impression of her at this point?

W: Loved her. She really was completely delightful, one of the nicest people I've ever known or will ever know. I recognized from the beginning that she was smart; she was not just a satellite of Lyndon. In her own mind she was very strong. Lyndon was tremendously interested in it, too, and he wanted to see the books and everything else whenever he came to town. He wanted to see how we were doing. So I'd go--he was the only man incidentally who ever made me completely nervous.

G: Was that right?

W: Yes. Whenever he would come in I would be so up on things that I wanted to tell him that were going on, I'd done so much homework on everything to report to him that I was a bundle of [nerves]. And I'm not a nervous man, but I was a bundle of nerves going in to talk to him. And he would start to ask a question and I would answer him

before he would finish the question, because I knew what it was. And that used to infuriate him. He said, "Let me ask the question before you answer!" And the thing that made him mad, it was always the question he was going to ask, and I could answer it just from the first couple or three [words]. So as I say, that's how nervous I was. If I could have sat back, which I would do now, and let him ask the questions--we never had any real problems.

G: Was there any particular aspect of the station that interested him more than others?

W: The money. The money. And also he was bound and determined to have a good news image. And at that time, as I say, news was not that important. The only thing that was important was the war. We made sure we had the war news. We did not have a network until we got CBS. I put on a newscast, but it was a wire report. That's one thing that I agreed we had to have, with the war going on, we had to have a wire report. Because we were in it, you know, Pearl Harbor was 1941. So we had that. I read three newscasts a day, or was it four? I don't know. Personnel was just awful. I was able to get one guy, one man, John Hicks from KRLD in Dallas, and he and I really did almost everything.

G: Did you replace the salesmen, get some new salesmen?

W: Yes, sure did.

G: What was Jesse Kellam's role with the station in the early days?

W: Not at all. My only relation with Jesse Kellam, when I went down to Austin before I moved my wife down into a house that we rented, I

spent two weeks at Mrs. Jesse Kellam's home in their guest room. And I never met Jesse until much, much later. I knew him quite well, because I eventually went with CBS, and during that time he and I used to spend a lot of time at conventions and things when I would see him. A wonderful man. So Jesse really was not in the picture at all in radio, had nothing to do with it, it was after the war when he did.

To get back to the CBS thing, where you were asking me how did they get it, I don't really know. I'd like to say that I got it, but I didn't, because either Bird or Lyndon made the deal and I presume right directly with Bill Paley through the then head of affiliate relations, whoever he was, and I've forgotten. I had a little part to do with that, in other words working out the deal. One of the awful things was that when we brought this great network into town, we didn't bring all the programming that went with it. The big key programs, the big blockbusters, were not available, because they were sponsored and the sponsor didn't want Austin because they thought they were covering it with KTSA in San Antonio. So I made a trip to Washington and New York and made presentations to the agencies and told them all this, and in a little bit, just within a couple of months really, we started getting all of the programs.

G: Now, LBJ's office was in the Brown Building as well, is that right, his congressional district office?

W: Practically everything was in the Brown Building right then, either there or the Norwood Building, those were the two main ones.

G: Did the station end up doing congressional work for him?

W: No, not during the time I was there. It may have later.

G: Do you think he recognized that this was an important way to get word out to the Tenth District? Was he cognizant of the political aspects of--?

W: I think he was avoiding that in the beginning. That was Bird's nest egg and he wanted to make sure that it grew properly. I didn't have much help at all from getting business or anything else. I think that he and Bird were very reluctant to try to sell the station to any of their friends or advertise it or anything. If they did, I was not that aware of it. But it was awfully easy for me to sell Paramount, because he was Karl Hoblitzelle up in Dallas, and Bill O'Donnell knew what Lyndon was doing for the theater industry in Washington, and they were very anxious to help him any way they could. So Louis Novy, who was the head of the interstate circuit in Austin, had never bought radio before. He just didn't like it at all. But I found it very easy to sell it. And I think that was because of the friendship I know that Karl Hoblitzelle and Bill O'Donnell had.

G: Well, what was LBJ doing for the film industry in Washington?

W: Whenever they had a problem they'd ask him about it, and I'm sure that he would do whatever he could. He was a very persuasive man. And he always liked that--he always kind of liked show business.

I was saying that for the first six months that there was very little really that we didn't do ourselves, the salesmen and I. But the last four months--I was there only ten months--every once in a while I would get a call from Bird or somebody to go see Joe Blow, and

I would go see Joe Blow and usually I would come up with a contract. So it came a little easier after that. I think what happened is that for the first six months they were really just sort of finding what could happen. And we were in the black--we were losing about a thousand dollars a month, as I recall, when I took over. Then I more than doubled the size of the staff during the ten months I was there. But we were in the black within a couple of months. That was just strictly through hard work and selling on the rate card. I put a new rate card in where we had a decent chance to make a profit, and we really got out and pushed and sold. It came around remarkably fast.

G: Did LBJ acknowledge the fact that you'd turned it around?

W: I'm sure he did. I mean, I don't recall at any one time him saying, "You're doing a heck of a job," although that was what he would do from time to time with everybody. If you were doing a good job, he would make sure that he buttered your ego a little bit.

G: Others have recalled the picnic to celebrate your arrival at the station. Do you remember that?

W: (Laughter) No. I don't remember it at all. I saw it in your itinerary. That's funny. We must have had a picnic, but I don't recall it.

G: Did you change the format? Admittedly the network affiliation had a lot to do with that.

W: Yes, well, that was some later--you see, all formats in those days were the same. You didn't have a country station. You didn't have a rock station or that. You had a regular old-fashioned radio station

that played records. One of the records might be--we didn't play much country. The only country music you'd hear in Texas at that time was on the feed programs, where they wanted to sell feed in large quantities or shortening in large quantities. In other words, if you want to sell a twenty-four pound sack of flour, then you sold it with hillbillies. That's what we called country music in those days. And the Crazy Water Crystals Gang up in Fort Worth, they sold a laxative really, is what they did. That's what the crazy water was for. And they put on the hillbilly music. I put it on when I was at my agency in Houston, Segall and Weedin, Incorporated for Crustene Shortening, because we wanted to sell lots of lard. It wasn't lard, but it was almost lard. That way you'd have fifteen minutes of these awful musicians, and some of them were pretty awful. Some of them were pretty good. You'd put on quarter-hour type programs or half hour, at a station you might put on a half hour of popular music and some stations would put on a half hour of classical music following it.

But so far as the format is concerned, no. The main thing that I did was to get better voices, namely my voice and John Hicks, because, immodestly, nobody in town was that good. They had lousy voices on KNOW. Not very many people knew how to announce in those days. That's 1943. They'd just started the radio house at the University of Texas. When I was at KNOW, I couldn't even broadcast from the campus for three years, finally worked that out. But then I made sure that we played good music, because there were very, very few new records that were in town. So that's one thing I insisted, that I spend a

hundred dollars before I went to Austin, in Dallas at a wholesale record distributor and insisted that we buy new records from time to time. Then with the new news wire, and me delivering the newscasts, and John delivering the noon one and a few others, we were able to give it a new look completely.

G: Yes. Did LBJ have any sort of instructions or requirements with regard to how he himself was covered on the news or his own activities?

W: No. Never one word.

G: Was there a correlation, as well as you could determine, between people that he would help, constituents that he would help as a congressman, and those who would buy time on KTBC? You mentioned the Novy--

W: No. In those days there was nothing that I knew of that was that personal, and there was never anything at all where there would be any relation with Lyndon other than the few people that he or Bird would tell me to see, that might be a good prospect over here. And I treated them as such, as a good prospect. I didn't go in saying, "Hey, man, you've got to buy some time because the Congressman owns this radio station." That would have been horrible. In the first place, he didn't own it. He had told me that he must not use his name. He did tell me that, I know.

G: Can you elaborate on that?

W: No, I don't recall the conversation, but that was just the understanding. And when I went in to see somebody, I went in strictly cold

turkey. I did not make any reference at all to Lyndon Johnson. I never, ever used his name as a way to get business. I went in like I had never seen the guy before and sold him and gave his value. I remember one insurance company in Houston that I was told to go down and see, but I made sure that they got their value. I even sold them an eight o'clock newscast at night delivered by me personally, which meant I had to stay around that late on it, but I realized that we needed an eight o'clock newscast so I might as well do it. And so I was able to get them on that basis. Maybe I could have gotten them just period, said, "Look, give me X number of dollars and I'll buy spots over the station." But I really felt I was selling.

G: So would you say then that there was no evidence, or you didn't see any evidence that LBJ used his position as a congressman in order to sell ads for the station or help you sell ads?

W: I heard rumors later from people that I talked to that he did after I left. He did not do it while I was there. Other than, as I say, to give me a prospect to talk to. Now what he said to those people before I got there, I don't know. Usually I didn't talk to the person. I'm sure that he had mentioned and set up the appointment. But he was not blatant in any way with it. But I must say that I noticed in my broadcasting experience after that, an awful lot of political figures figured that was a good way to invest money, because of the return and also it's a very good way for a person to give funds to a politician. That's perfectly legitimate, and they're still doing it today.

G: Do you know anything about the Eugene Cox case, a congressman I think from Georgia who I think sat on the congressional committee that had oversight over the FCC and who really took the offensive against the commission during this period, during the time that you were--?

W: No.

G: That doesn't ring a bell?

W: No.

G: LBJ obviously did have some allies on the commission.

W: Oh, yes.

G: Do you recall which commissioners he was closest to?

W: No. No.

G: Would Larry Fly or Cliff Durr be among them?

W: No. Lyndon, as you know, is a politician, and he will make as many friends as he can, or did. Just like he assiduously courted CBS. I know that one story as I recall that was told to me by a CBS man was when he was in New York, he called Mr. Paley and said, "Would you please send me over your head accountant? I need to know more about how radio financing goes." And he kept him in his suite for two hours picking his brains and retained everything. Now this is a story I got from CBS. He never told me.

G: Do you recall the name of the accountant?

W: No.

G: He'd be a good one to talk to.

W: No, they just had the head accountant, whoever it was. I assume he was a vice president.

And also, later, after the deal had been worked out, the then-head of public relations whose name I cannot recall, I think they even called it station relations in those days, said that he had been very unhappy with the contract he had been given, because he had talked to another station, similar size, similar market, that had a lot better contract. So it ended up they revised the contract.

G: Well now, did he play a role in getting the FCC to approve some of the changes that the station wanted, like going full time?

W: I don't know. I know it happened. I presumed--knowing Lyndon at that time, I'm quite sure he did.

G: You don't have any firsthand or secondhand--?

W: No. No.

G: Did you yourself play a role in getting the full time status?

W: Well, we had to make the applications, but I don't even recall making them. There had to be a formal thing filled out. But I do not have that definitive a feeling about it. I don't remember. I'm sure that a lot of the work had to be done by Bird, a lot of the work had to be done by me, a lot by the engineer, you know, to get all the facts about, because it just doesn't happen overnight.

G: What did he do to help the station?

W: The main thing he did was to leave me alone for about six months. But Bird still wrote--he knew what was going on. But they were not sure--but once we got into the fact that we were making money and it looked like we were really on our way, then I think that he began to say, "Well, now I feel that I can. . . ." Again I'm presuming, I don't

know this. I think he began to get more confidence in it and also began to get more knowledge of it. When he called the man from CBS and found out about financing, he was a heck of a lot better able to talk to me about what I was doing. That's the point that I'm making here. He took six months to really find out about it, and Bird took six months to really find out about it, and I did not have the carte blanche at the end of about that time that I had had in the early days. Not that we didn't get along perfectly and everything else, but this is just normal. They then began to realize this thing was a hell of a lot--a great money maker, and it was going to be bigger and bigger, which it turned out to be.

G: Yes.

W: And I also had 10 per cent of the profits, too.

G: Did you?

W: Yes.

G: Did you ever consider going back to the station after the war?

W: Yes. Yes, as a matter of fact, I turned down going back after the war because I was in Hollywood at Armed Forces Radio, and I decided what I really wanted to be was talent, that I wanted to be creative and be a writer-producer-director. I did not particularly want to be an air personality, but I felt I was a good writer-producer-director. So I took a job with the ABC radio network in that capacity. But after about, oh, I guess twelve years, something like that--was it that long? From 1946 to--it was about 1954 when I was reviewing myself. I was at a low ebb in my little career, and I decided that maybe I

should go back. So I wrote a long letter to Bird, and she referred it to Jesse Kellam and nothing came of it. But I would have gone back, if the proper capacity could have been worked out.

G: Did LBJ get advice from others who owned stations, like Roy Hofheinz?

W: No. Roy didn't own one at that time. Roy didn't know anything about it.

G: I see.

W: I'm sure he got advice from other people, because that's the nature of Lyndon Johnson. The way he got information, the way he was able to make decisions is to ask a lot of questions, and he asked the right questions and he knew how to retain it. So I could see, as we went along, that he knew more and more about it and that he realized more and more how much money could be made out of it.

G: Do you think he would have been successful in business if he had decided to retire from politics?

W: Oh, definitely. Definitely. Just his personality and his drive and innate intelligence. He was an extremely intelligent man.

G: Did he ever consider a career in business that you know of?

W: Nothing except in the Robert Caro book when he was talking about turning down the opportunity with all the oil and everything else. No, he really, I always felt he wanted to be president. Now this is before anybody--nobody ever told me this. Lyndon never told me. But in the time that I worked for him I was sure he was going to be president, because I could just see that everything that he did was pointing toward it.

G: Really?

W: Yes. And I felt he would make a doggone good one. And I think he did. I just think he got sort of hoisted up on his own petard somewhere along the line with the Pentagon. I was very sorry to see that.

G: You lived in the Dillman Street house for a while.

W: Yes. I sure did.

G: Can you describe that?

W: Oh, that was beautiful. 1901 Dillman. I'll never forget it. I wanted to find out just exactly what was said about that house, because it was an unusual deal for me. If you want to hear the story, I'll tell you, because I didn't put it in my little memoir. One day Lyndon came into the office and he said, "Harfield"--that's what he called me, by my name always, just sort of an elongated name--he said, "Let's get in your car. I want to show you something." So I had a very nice 1941 Buick, as I recall. We got in there and we drove out to Enfield [Road] and drove up in front of this beautiful home, mansion type home, and he said, "Pull around to the back." It was on a block all by itself. And I pulled around into the parking lot in the back, and it was sort of a shell, like a Hollywood house, because instead of this big mansion, in the back it was a four-car garage and a little patio and then another side to it. I found out that it actually was an apartment, a duplex, a very good-sized one and a beautiful duplex, but one side was all over this four-car garage, and on the other side there was a five-room apartment that was rented by a colonel in the air force who was stationed outside of Austin.

So Lyndon and I went up, went through the house, the main part of it, not the part--I never saw the--well, I did see after I moved in--where the colonel lived. The big picture window and everything very modern, where you could set your heat for six o'clock in the morning if you wanted to and it would go on automatically. Well, that was almost unbelievable. And everything was just as plush as could be with the best quality stuff that was all over, fireplace, everything else. I said, "Boy, this is beautiful." He said, "Well, how would you like to live here?" I said, "Oh, you're kidding." The only thing I could find was a five-room house, a frame house, and we rented that for fifty dollars a month. It was the best I could find. It was very, very rare to find even that. I had to have help on it. And when he came out to that house, he said, "Harfield, I don't think my manager should live in this house." I said, "Well, you find me another one, Lyndon, and I'll live in it. I don't want to live in it either. It's the worst house I've ever lived in. I have a house in Houston that I still own that's much better than this. But this is all I can find."

So as I say, this is something like three months later or something, that we go out. He said, "Well, how much can you afford to pay?" I said, "Well, I'm paying fifty dollars a month right now. I think I could pay seventy-five." See, I had a salary of two hundred and sixty-five dollars a month plus the 10 per cent on the profit, which I didn't get, incidentally, until I left. We never declared a profit until I left to go in the service. That's two sixty-five, plus

my "Dr. I.Q." money, because "Dr. I.Q." had not cancelled when I moved to WFAA Dallas. On account of the sugar shortage, Mars dropped out, but Vitamins Plus bought it by the time I got to Dallas. So it was still going on and I was still writing it and I was making much more than two hundred and sixty-five dollars a month out of "Dr. I.Q." And also I was making money for handling the "Interstate Showtime" from Dallas, which is in the little memoir. I flew up there every week. And then from Southwest Conference football. So I was doing very well financially, but I still based everything on my basic salary. I told him I could pay seventy-five dollars a month rent. So he said, "Okay, move in." So I moved in for seventy-five dollars a month. I don't recall exactly, but I think we lived there something like seven months, maybe eight months. It was just beautiful and delightful.

(Interruption)

I'll tell the story, if you want it, of how I heard Lyndon--he never told me, but how I heard he got the house. There was a contractor--

G: Houston contractor.

W: A Houston contractor. I know his name, but I don't know that I want to say it. So at any rate, this contractor had a girl friend. He also had a house in Houston, where he lived. But he had a lot of business in Austin, and he set this girl friend up in an apartment in Austin and she wanted a house. So he built the house. She was rather neurotic from what all I could find out and she insisted that she didn't want to live there by herself. She loved the idea of it being on a lot all by itself, but it had to be built in such a way that

there was an apartment where somebody could live so they'd be there. So that's the reason for the strange setup on the whole deal. It really was a duplex house that looked like a mansion on a block all by itself. So he moved her into this place, and I didn't know until after we moved in that she had committed suicide in our bathtub. Otherwise I think we might have had a few thoughts about moving in. But that's what happened to it. When she committed suicide, this contractor from Houston didn't want to have anything to do with it, so he lost a hell of a lot of money.

G: Really?

W: Well naturally, he didn't get anything out of it. The state took it over. I don't know how many people were notified to attend the auction, but I know that Lyndon is the one who got it and that Tom Miller, who was the mayor, was madder than hell about it because he wanted it for his son. But we moved in.

And the way he found out, incidentally, that Lyndon had the house, was I was in Lou Novy's office, and he walked in. I'd just been raving to Lou about this beautiful home I was moving into, and Tom Miller said, "What home, Harfield?" I said, "Well, it's a beautiful place out on Dillman." He let out a few curse words, because that's the first he'd heard about it.

But we were extremely happy with it and very happy--not about the lady committing suicide, but that Lyndon was able to get it, because he really bought it for himself eventually, for him and Lady Bird to move into. I'm not sure, because, you know, this is many years ago,

but I think the price was sixteen thousand dollars for it. How accurate--

G: Had Tom Miller had a chance to buy that house, do you know?

W: I think he put in a bid for it.

G: Really?

W: That was my understanding. And as I say, I don't know how many other people knew about the auction or put in a bid.

G: Is that what it [was]? Was it a sealed bid auction, that sort of thing?

W: Yes. Yes.

G: Well, it seems that during this period LBJ and Tom Miller had a lot of friction in their relationship.

W: Yes.

G: Was it a result of this, do you know?

W: I think it was just the natural personality of the two people. They were both very strong people. Tom Miller had not been a fan of Lyndon's in the early days, and Lyndon won him over. At this particular time they were getting along, they were co-existing, but I think the friction had always been there. I don't think this caused it. I know it didn't help it. And I know there's been a lot of talk about 1901 Dillman through the years. After this is over I'd like to discuss it with you and find out whether I'm right or not, because this is many years later I'm remembering this. I've never told anybody else about it.

G: Miller apparently was either considering running against LBJ for re-election or trying to get someone else to, and there was a lot of bad blood between them during this time.

W: Yes.

G: Were you aware of this? LBJ did evidently come down and talk to Miller about it. Were you a part of this?

W: No. I knew there was a little ill feeling, but Lyndon did not discuss it with me, and Tom Miller did not discuss it with me. And there were others--Herman Jones--is he still around?

G: Yes.

W: Would you give him my very best when you go back, because he was a very dear friend.

The others, you know, that--Ed Clark was very helpful to me in my early days in telling me what was going on in town, just advising me. He didn't tell me prospects or anything like that to call on, but anytime I had a problem I'd go up to talk to him.

G: Do you know anything about Miller's problem with OPA over selling hides or LBJ's help there?

W: No. No.

G: Were there accusations that the Johnsons had suddenly acquired all this wealth? They'd bought their house on Dillman, they'd bought the station. Did people wonder where they got all the money?

W: No. No. The people that would ask me about it, I would merely tell them that Lady Bird had inherited money from her father and that's where they got the money. No one knew at that time how little it was

really, including me. When I first took over the station I presumed that she had a heck of a lot of money. But I soon found out, after she put the new studios in and we bought the furniture and things like that, that I'd better make money or we were going to be in deep trouble. So that's one reason I worked so hard.

G: Now you went up there in November of 1943 I guess and spent Thanksgiving with the Johnsons, is that right?

W: Yes, in Washington.

G: Can you describe that visit? You said in your memoir that Sam Rayburn was there.

W: Yes.

G: Can you recall at all what it was like?

W: Just a delightful family outing, and I was very much impressed that Uncle Sam was there, because I had heard about him for years and never met him. A delightful person. I think we had probably about fourteen people at Thanksgiving dinner, and I stayed in the house, I stayed in one of the bedrooms.

G: What were Rayburn and Johnson like togther?

W: Very warm and friendly.

G: Really?

W: Yes. See, you're looking at everything now in retrospect. You're looking after having read and everything else about it. I did not see anything except the fact that these are two wonderful people who liked one another. And I was very much a fan of Lyndon Johnson, was and

still am. And Lady Bird Johnson, I can't say enough in praise of her. She was just wonderful the entire time I worked with them.

G: Let me ask you to describe your effort and that of Herman Jones to get the salaries increased.

W: All right. We were actually in trouble. All of a sudden, I have an inquiry from, I guess it's the wages and labor board or something like that in Dallas, that said that we were paying more money to our people than we should, and a particular case was the case of Ann Durrum, who had taken over as a copywriter. That job had paid--if there had been a copywriter it would have paid about twenty, twenty-five dollars at the most, and we were paying her fifty dollars. And that's what we had to pay to get her into the organization. As I recall, Lyndon or Lady Bird one, who admired them very much, one or the other, agreed to pay her fifty dollars to come over to do it. So that was one. Then John Hicks, the program director, was another one. I paid him fifty dollars a week, which was considerably more than the program director had been paid under that run-down station.

So all of a sudden we're in trouble with Dallas. I contacted Bird, and she told me to contact Herman Jones and tell him about it and ask his help. Herman Jones was an attorney in town at the time. I don't know who he worked for, some law firm. Maybe it was Senator [Alvin] Wirtz', I don't know.

But at any rate, Herman and I went to Dallas. We'd been told who to see, so we went to this particular man, and he said, "You've got a real problem. Let's sit down and see what we can work out." So I

gave all of the reasons why we had to do it and the background of the station and the trouble it had been in and everything else. Now with the new ownership we had to have this type of quality employee in order to give the service to the nation and the war effort that it needed. I was a little politician myself in those days. So either we sold them or Herman Jones sold them or somebody sold them, so we got carte blanche and we proceeded with no fines and no problem. I'm sure that my knowing Lady Bird and Lyndon didn't hurt.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview I]

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