

INTERVIEW II

DATE: August 6, 1985

INTERVIEWEE: R. VERNON WHITESIDE

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mr. Whiteside's residence, Marble Falls, Texas

Tape 1 of 1

G: Last time you were talking about the student activity fund, that blanket tax sort of thing, and the allocations of that fund and how it affected or impacted on student politics.

W: Well, I knew nothing about the allocations, how they divided it up. It was what they called a blanket tax. I think it was a dollar or two dollars. It cost you fifteen dollars a quarter to register then for a full course, and a dollar of that went to blanket tax, and that was to allow you to go to any play that they might have or the football games and basketball games, dances and everything else. But the allocation of the money went strictly to athletics, practically all of it to football. Our deal was to break that up to where they'd give some of it to--of course, Lyndon wanted a bunch to [go to] the debating team, which they never got--plays, different things. I don't think they ever got it down to where anybody got any but the athletic department.

G: Let me ask you some more about the White Stars.

W: All right.

G: Was the official name White Stars or was it Alpha and Omega?

W: It was Alpha Omega. We called them the Black Stars and after it got out that there was such a thing, a year and a half after I was out of

Whiteside -- II -- 2

school, why, then they began to call them the White Stars because they called others the Black Stars. It was no part of our name at all, never was. It was just something they pinned on us, the White Stars versus the Black Stars.

G: Some people have suggested that you were called the White Stars because no outsiders knew the actual name of the group.

W: They didn't. And the group that was in [it] knew such a little bit about the Greek alphabet that the Alpha Omega were the the only [letters we knew]. First and last is what we came up with to start with.

G: Who suggested the name, do you know?

W: I think Horace [Richards] did.

G: One of the things you mentioned was that you would elect your candidates for Gaillardian, is that right?

W: That's right.

G: Let me ask you to explain that a little more, tell how you did that.

W: Well, all we did, we just--they had their slate of candidates and we had our slate of candidates and they were voted on. I forget who voted on it, I guess the whole student body voted on them. We had everybody fighting that terrible organization, the Black Stars. So they had to scratch somebody and that left our candidates. It didn't mean that--I think they got a couple in there the first year, but we got two or three in there, too, in the beauty pages. They were, I guess, classes' beautiful girls. You know, you go down to the cotton-picking variety, they weren't to be classed as Miss America or nothing. They were all just old big-legged girls from the country.

Whiteside -- II -- 3

- G: Do you recall the incident in which Ruth Lewis was talked out of running or forced to withdraw her name, blackmail, as it were?
- W: I remember something about it, but it doesn't come to me. But Ruth Lewis is about as homely a girl as there was in the school at that time. She hung around with Ella SoRelle and she was a local girl, a San Marcos girl. They tried to make a big to-do about something; I don't remember what it was. It didn't bother me because the girl I was going with, man, I had her all set up to head the list and everybody thought so, too, and I [then] found out that you couldn't be a freshman and participate. You had to be at least a sophomore, and she was a transfer from Trinity College [Southwestern Bible Institute?] at Waxahachie at the time. So I kind of lost interest in it after that. I was busy courting.
- G: There is another episode that's been described, and that is the one of Helen Hofheinz, you having dates with Helen Hofheinz that LBJ suggested--
- W: I thought a great deal of Helen. She was a pretty girl. She was a local girl there, San Marcos. She happened to be going with Frank Arnold, had been in high school and what have you. I had several dates with her and was very impressed with her. She was a pretty girl, had beautiful big old brown eyes, and I thought a great deal of Helen. There wasn't any big love affair. There wasn't any marrying off in those days or proposals much because it was in the middle of the Depression and people just weren't getting married, they were trying to eat.

Whiteside -- II -- 4

G: But the episode as described in Bob Caro's biography [The Path to Power] is that LBJ talked you into taking her out to get her away from Frank Arnold.

W: LBJ didn't talk me into doing nothing. I talked him into thinking he did so I could borrow his car. That's the way I got to borrow his Model A Ford to have a way to take her someplace. I would have told him anything to get the car, so I just let him think he was talking me into something. He really didn't.

G: Did LBJ date her as well?

W: No, no, he never did.

G: This has been described as the reason for Frank Arnold's dislike of LBJ, or one version is that since he had tried to date Helen Hofheinz, well--

W: I don't think that that had much to do with it, really. There wasn't any hatred in that school up there much; there was just likes and dislikes. There was just a group of boys that were--the athletic bunch were pretty close together. Like some of the others we kind of looked down on. If they played tennis or if they belonged to some society there, I forget what it was, why, there was a group that belonged to that that you wouldn't let in the ball game if they bought a ticket. That type of fellow, you just didn't run with them, you just didn't have anything to do with them. You just passed them by, you didn't like or dislike them. It was just a case of not wanting to fool with them.

Whiteside -- II -- 5

G: There is a story that was told years ago that LBJ was kidnapped by the Black Stars during one of the student elections. Do you have any recollection of that?

W: Never heard of it. That's the first I've ever heard of it.

G: How long did you participate in the White Stars?

W: I was there the rest of that year and that summer and then that was about all of it except to come back once a year or something like that to a barbecue or beer drink at Huaco Springs or something like that. I wasn't too active.

G: While you were still in school, did the group have weekly or monthly activities, meetings, or anything like that?

W: We had meetings. They were really just where we'd take somebody in, and we didn't want to take too many in because word would get out too fast. And [we would] plan our campaigns for the offices that were available, especially those that had a salary attached to them, like the College Star and the head of the yearbook and some of the others that were available at the time. Those were hard times. Thirty dollars a month then looked pretty good, because that would get you through school if you sent your laundry home and let your folks do it, which most of them did.

G: Do you recall an episode in which Edward Puls and Harvey Kyle and his sister were maneuvered out of the--

W: You mean Henry Kyle.

G: Excuse me, Henry Kyle--were maneuvered out of the editorship of the Star and the managing editor[ship] of the Pedagog, one of these, by a

Whiteside -- II -- 6

device that required that you not be a San Marcos resident in order to receive this paying job?

W: I remember something about a hassle over that. It was brought up at the student council and was voted that way. I think there were as many Black Stars voted to not let a local have it as there was otherwise. And I think Henry Kyle had a very bloated opinion of himself as to what he was--nobody paid any attention much to him. He was just a local sissy there. And Edward Puls was about in the same class.

G: Was LBJ behind this maneuver, do you recall? Was he the one that planned it?

W: No, I don't really think he was. I think Horace was the one that instigated this. Horace was a pretty good instigator.

(Laughter)

G: Did the White Stars have social activities as well as political ones?

W: No social activities other than I remember they had a beer bust up at Huaco Springs one year. Then each year after that, why, for years we met once a year just for a reunion, like we do at the present time.

G: Let me ask you to describe the initiation process.

W: Oh, that's a big secret. I swore I wouldn't tell that.

G: Is that right?

W: Yes. Next you'll want to know about the Masonic Lodge. I know one thing, that Horace always claimed to be number one because he furnished the Bible that they swore them in on. But we found out later on we'd been sworn in on a dictionary that looked a lot like a cheap Bible.

Whiteside -- II -- 7

G: And what was your claim to number one?

W: That I met Horace after that dance; the next morning, why, I met him in the library and I said, "Horace, we've got to get us a little organization started here. We're getting pushed out." He said, "I think that's a good idea." So he went to work on it immediately and went to writing the bylaws and what have you.

G: So he's the one who wrote the bylaws?

W: He wrote the bylaws and all of it, yes. But I suggested it to him and so that made me number one. It was my idea and I just put him to work. You know, the labor doesn't come in, it's the management that's the top dog.

G: And the first member that you all took in was Wilton Woods, is that right?

W: That's right. I think Wilton was the first one we brought in.

G: Do you think that LBJ after a while actually called the shots in the organization?

W: I don't think LBJ ever had anything to do with the White Stars really.

G: Really?

W: Now I don't remember him ever being at a meeting, and I sure don't remember ever when they swore him in. I wasn't there when they swore him in, I don't believe.

G: Is that right? Well, he was a member though, wasn't he? He's on your list.

W: Yes, he was a member. He was number seven.

G: The meetings were held at the Hofheinz Hotel, is that correct?

Whiteside -- II -- 8

W: Well, we held several up there, rented a room, and then there was another old hotel, just a little old kind of a two-story house deal, up towards where Sub [Sidney] Pyland lived on the right-hand side. I can't remember the name of that place, and we rented a room up there a time or two. That's the only place I remember them ever meeting.

G: One of the things that occurs to me is here is this group of students that does not have a lot of money and yet can afford to rent a hotel room to have these meetings.

W: Two dollars.

G: Is that right?

W: That's right.

G: This didn't seem like an extravagant expense to you all?

W: Well, two dollars was a pretty good lick.

G: Why didn't you just meet in somebody's room?

W: Well, every boarding house in town had a bunch of gossips in it, including ours, and we were trying to keep the organization a secret, which we did for a couple of years before they got to inquiring into how the same bunch ran every meeting, how they were a sophomore today and next week they'd be in the junior meeting. I don't think we got to vote too many outsiders in the senior class. They kind of got smart by then, been taking them smart pills.

G: LBJ was listed in the College Star as one of the students that was active in a movement to upgrade Evans Field. Do you recall that, do you have any recollection of that?

W: Never heard of it.

Whiteside -- II -- 9

G: Tell me about the Harris Blair organization.

W: That's the organization I was trying to think of a while ago. We considered they had lace on their drawers if they belonged to Harris Blair.

G: Is that right?

W: That's what the athletic group thought, and I was more or less in the athletic group because I was out for football and track. I don't know what Harris Blair was.

G: Wasn't it a debating--?

W: I kind of thought it was kind of a preacher group that wanted to be--I thought they should have taken Bible under Froggy Sewall [?] instead of belonging to Harris Blair. But I had it kind of down as an organization that was more religious than it was pertaining to college.

G: Okay. Last time you mentioned that LBJ devoted a lot of his time there to the newspaper, the College Star, his activities there. Let me ask you to go into detail on this and tell--?

W: [I don't remember much] other than he was always trying to get an article published or trying to get an article that would be published and could get it under his name. We were talking about the fight between he and Babe [Mylton] Kennedy. That all stemmed from a very small item, due to the fact that Babe Kennedy was very jealous of his job as the head of the Star and Lyndon was trying to root him out. And that's what it was all about. It wasn't about any four stamps or anything else. It was just a case of--

Whiteside -- II -- 10

G: Well, let me ask you to describe this episode in detail, what happened.

W: You mean the fight?

G: Yes.

W: I wouldn't call it a fight. I think it was more of a push that put Lyndon on the bed. I got to thinking about it.

G: Tell me the whole story from start to finish.

W: Well, the only thing I know, I was sitting there studying, writing a theme or something. I know I had a pencil in my hand. Babe Kennedy comes busting in the door. It was downstairs in the Miller house, and it was an extra large room, had two big beds in it. It had doors that came apart, two doors, sliding doors. These sliding doors open up and in walks Babe and says, "What's this lie you're telling on me?" Lyndon had a retort of some kind, and they stood there and argued a little bit. It seemed like Lyndon was standing with his back to the bed, and I think Babe must have pushed him, and when he did, caught him under the knees and he fell over on the bed and went to kicking, kicking at Babe, and Babe was drawing back like he was going to hit him. I don't think there was a lick ever passed. Might have been a push or something, but that's all that ever. . . . And I got up and I said, "Now, y'all knock this stuff off. I'm busy. Let's cut this stuff out. That isn't getting nowhere. Get out of here, Babe." He said, "Well, he can't say that about me!" I said, "Well, settle it somewhere else. Y'all knock this stuff off." And that was all there was to it. There wasn't any blood and guts stuff.

Whiteside -- II -- 11

- G: Kennedy's version was that he would knock LBJ down and LBJ would get up and knock him down. This isn't the way you remember it?
- W: There wasn't a lick passed that was hard enough to knock Junior down, much less either one of those big tall guys. They were both six two and a half.
- G: You did make reference to this incident in a letter you wrote in 1937.
- W: I don't remember that letter at all. (Laughter)
- G: The question that arises here is if they weren't fighting, why did you step in and separate them, as Kennedy remembers and as you've stated [in the letter]?
- W: [It was] a pushing match; they weren't hitting each other. Man, I'm talking about fighting as fighting, but this pushing and arguing is something different.
- G: There's another version of this that LBJ refused to fight, that all he did was lay on the bed and kick.
- W: He was pushed, I guess, or somehow or other he fell on the bed and he went kicking at Babe with his hand up over his head like a sissy would throw a ball, to get in a good lick, I guess, but he never did. There wasn't one lick passed in that deal. It was what we used to call a five-yard fight, five yards between them. You know, to have a pillow fight at fifty yards.
- G: So there was really nothing for you to have to break up, is that right?
- W: No, I just got between them and said, "Y'all knock this off." Because

Whiteside -- II -- 12

I ain't no great hero in a fight either, and I wasn't going to get between two guys that were both an inch taller than I was.

G: How did LBJ become editor of the College Star, do you recall?

W: I don't know. Horace was in on all that deal. I had nothing to do [with it]. I was so busy courting a little girl up there that I didn't fool with all that stuff much.

G: Anything else on his activities relating to the paper, the student paper?

W: No, not that I know of. I don't think I even read the College Star, much less had anything to do with it. I don't even know where their offices were.

G: Have you ever heard the story of him stopping an unfavorable editorial about himself?

W: I knew nothing about that College Star.

G: I noticed that the "Cat's Claw" of the Pedagog had a lot of barbs about LBJ in there. Do you recall those and the significance?

W: Yes, I got a copy of it in here.

G: Let me ask you the significance of those, why--?

W: Well, you've heard--there's one page in there that's got me on it, it's got Horace, it's got Wilton, it's got Lyndon, it's got Bill Deason, Archie Wild [?]. Well, that was our group, all right, and it's got a picture of a colored girl in the middle of it. Well, there's an old favorite saying back in that time that said, "Wait a minute, there's a nigger in the woodpile someplace." That's what that was meant to be. They did not know--I think [John] Dezelle was the

Whiteside -- II -- 13

instigator of that thing, because he was one of the local boys there that was in with Ella SoRelle, was the editor of the college yearbook that year. That's where most of them came from, through Dezelle.

You know, this has been a long time ago you're talking to me about.

G: Yes. Several political events happened during 1928. Last time you discussed LBJ going to the [Democratic National] Convention in Houston. Do you recall Governor [Dan] Moody coming down to speak at Riverside also in 1928?

W: No.

G: Or Senator Wirtz coming to speak, Alvin Wirtz?

W: No. I wasn't in school in 1928 down there.

G: Were you? September?

W: I was at New York University.

G: In the fall of 1928?

W: Yes.

G: Okay. One more incident that you may have just heard about. Reportedly LBJ went to Oklahoma City with his father to hear Al Smith speak. Did you ever hear of that?

W: No. I was there in the year 1929-30, and the rest of the time I was there in the summertime. I started in 1926 in January, but I had pneumonia in March, and from then on I was only there in the summertime.

G: In the summer. Okay.

W: But Lyndon was back two or three summers.

Whiteside -- II -- 14

- G: Now, he was there that summer of 1928, I guess.
- W: I went in the summer of 1928, I know, so I would be eligible for track in 1930, in the spring of 1930.
- G: Anything on Miss [Mary] Brogdon? Do you remember her, the dean of women?
- W: I remember her so well, because she got her check first out of the auditor's office. It was my job to deliver all the checks and I saw that she got hers first. As a result, any time that I needed an excuse, I'd ask her and she'd give me permission to go see my girl friend on week nights.
- G: Was LBJ a favorite of hers?
- W: I have no idea.
- G: There was an organization called the Press Club, do you remember that?
- W: Yes, I remember something about that, but I had nothing to do with any of those things.
- G: Okay. I have a note here that LBJ went to Huntsville for the Texas Press Association convention, I gather, as part of this Press Club. Do you remember that, when he went to Huntsville?
- W: No.
- G: He worked in Welly Hopkins' campaign for state senator. Do you have any recollection of that? That was the first--
- W: No, other than that he told me that he was making speeches for Welly Hopkins, that he was a cinch to get elected, and he thought he could use the situation to his advantage later on, and he liked Welly and he was over there helping him.

Whiteside -- II -- 15

G: Anything else that we haven't talked about about the San Marcos period, LBJ and San Marcos, that you remember?

W: No, I wasn't there much, about a year and a half, and that was about. . . .

G: I wanted to ask you to [discuss]--last time you discussed this off tape--that letter that you wrote to LBJ while he was working for [Richard] Kleberg.

W: Yes.

G: Would you recall that event so that I can have--?

W: What, this letter?

G: No. You refer to it in this letter, the letter that you wrote to him asking about a postmaster's position?

W: Well, this is a good deal after that.

G: I know. You're right. It's just that you refer to the earlier letter in this letter.

W: Well, the earlier letter, I was at San Marcos and the postmastership was coming open in Lockhart, and that was my old hometown. I wrote him and said that the postmaster's job was coming open over there and I was qualified for it and that I'd appreciate anything he could do for me and I'd certainly make it worth his while if he would help me, meaning many things, especially not of monetary value, because of which I had none. I was a poor schoolteacher in Tilden, Texas. So I thought nothing more about it other than just a friendly letter written in longhand on three or four sheets of paper out of a nickel tablet. It wasn't written to impress anybody; it was just written as

Whiteside -- II -- 16

a friendly letter thinking maybe he could be of some influence to help me get the postmaster's job, because that was a very lucrative job at the time.

The next thing I know, I'm living with Horace and we're sitting on the front porch in San Marcos, and I look up and Bill Deason is mopping his forehead and walking up the street and calls me out there and hands me this letter. He said, "Lyndon said for me to bring you this letter and for you to destroy it, because he didn't want to have to put it in the file where it might be found and they'll get you for trying to bribe him." I said, "Bribe him? Hell, I can't even pay Horace for my room and board now! What are you talking about bribing somebody? I wasn't trying to bribe nobody." He said, "Well, you said in there that you'd make it worth his while." And I said, "There's lots of ways to make it worth his while besides passing money, which I have none of." He said, "Okay. I just did what he told me to; I delivered the letter." I said, "Well, thank you, Bill," and he went on back and that was the end of that conversation.

G: Who got the postmaster's job?

W: I have no idea. I think a fellow named Mohle that had about fifty kinsmen in that area and he was an assistant editor of the Lockhart Post-Register.

G: Did you ever talk to LBJ about that letter later on and explain to him?

W: Never.

Whiteside -- II -- 17

G: Another incident that I want to ask you about is your announcement that he was going to run for president.

W: I was a commissioner of the port of Houston and had a very favorable press due to the fact that I had been a deciding vote in leaving the reporters inside the meetings, since I thought that it was a public facility and that they should be able to report what went on in these meetings. Five commissioners ran the port of Houston and at the time that I went on, it had been three to two in favor of putting the reporters out during the meeting, making every meeting a closed meeting, since there was no sunshine [open meetings?] law at the time. So when I went on, Mr. [Warren?] Bellows was chairman of the board and came time for the meeting, he said, "All right, you reporters can retire now, we're fixing to start the meeting." I asked him if it wasn't a democratic body that I belonged to, that everybody had a voice, and he said, "What did you have in mind?" I said, "If I'm not out of order, I move that the reporters remain in except on matters of personnel." And two of the commissioners seconded the motion so that he said, "There's no use voting on that. You gentlemen just take a deep seat and a long breath and enjoy yourself." The next week he resigned off the port commission.

As a result of that, Julian Fisher [?], who represented the Houston Chronicle, thought that that was a great thing to do and he appreciated it, so did the Houston Press, Houston Post; they always had members of their papers there. So as a result, Dr. [J. G.] Flowers called me in Pasadena at my office and asked me if I were

Whiteside -- II -- 18

coming to homecoming. I said, "Well, that's a month or so off. I don't know." He said, "Well, we'd like for you to come and to sit on the dais as one of the members of the alumni association." I, being a C student, didn't know what the alumni association was. But I said, "Well, I'll certainly be glad to if I can get to make it. I'm fixing to go to South America to represent the port of Houston on a trip. Let me check my book and see if I'm going to be back on that date." I asked him where he was calling from; he said he was calling from San Marcos. I said, "Well, I thought maybe you were calling from Houston. I'd like to have you out to dinner." He said, no, he was in San Marcos. So I looked and I said, "Yes, I'll be back by then and I'll be glad to be there." "Well," he said, "it's going to be a Lyndon Johnson Day. This will be his first appearance since his heart attack. There'll be only two speakers; there'll be the Senator"--I believe he called him--"and you will answer for the alumni association." I said, "Well, I'll be glad to do so."

So I was real pleased about it, and the next day we had a port meeting and I told Julian Fisher about it. I said, "Well, they're finally going to honor the low IQ of the college by letting me speak at the homecoming on Lyndon Johnson Day." So he wrote a little squib up in the paper about it. I went on, went to South America, got back several days ahead of the Lyndon Johnson Day. I asked Boody [Alfred Johnson] and his wife and my wife, we were going to go up the morning of the homecoming day and spend the day in San Marcos. But on Friday morning about nine-thirty, Julian Fisher called me at the office and

Whiteside -- II -- 19

said, "Well, have you decided what you're going to speak on? Are you still going to speak tomorrow?" I said, "Well, I've heard nothing to the contrary. They haven't caught on to the fact that they're honoring the low IQ boys, so I suppose I am." He said, "Well, have you decided what you're going to speak on?" I said, "Well, certainly." He said, "What are you going to speak on?" I said, "I'm going to announce Lyndon for president of the United States." He said, "The hell you are!" and I said, "Yes, I am." He said, "Boy, that would be great." I said, "Well, I've got to go to Rotary Club."

So I hung up, went to the post office and started over toward the Rotary Club, which was about two blocks away, with a couple of other guys. When I got over there it was about, oh, ten minutes till twelve. We started at twelve-fifteen. The preacher came out and said, "They want you on the telephone. Lyndon Johnson's office is trying to get in touch with you, your wife said." She had called over there. I said, "Oh, my goodness!" The superintendent of schools, his office was right across the street, he said, "Go over there and use my telephone. It'll be private." I went over there and a Mr. George Reedy came on the telephone and said, "This is George Reedy, and I'm calling from Lyndon Johnson's office. What in the world have you put on the wire?"

Tape 1 of 1, Side 2

W: And I said, "On what wire?" He said, "All of them, Associated Press and all the rest of them." I said, "Well, I don't know anything about what's on the wire. What's on the wire?" He said, "Who gave you

Whiteside -- II -- 20

permission to announce Lyndon Johnson's candidacy for the presidency?" I said, "I'm just advocating his being the next president of the United States. I didn't know that I had to have permission." He said, "Well, all news clears through my office." I said, "I thought I was an American citizen, I had the same right to say something as you do. Who gave you permission to call me and tell me this, that I don't have permission to make a statement?" And he said, "Well, this switch-board's lit up like a Christmas tree. We're getting calls from all over the United States. It hit the AP wire and we want you to take it back, that you don't have permission to--" I said, "I'll be glad to take it back if that's the way you feel about it, but it ain't none of your business." So we had a few words further, uncomplimentary to both, and I hung up.

So I decided not to go to Rotary, I'd better go back to the office. I went back to the office, my wife said, "That fellow Reedy was talking to me and he sounded awfully excited." I said, "Well, let him be excited." Turned on the radio and it was already on the radio. So I said, "I'll tell you what, let's call Boody and Liz and get them and let's go on and get out of town. We can drive to San Marcos and spend the night up there." So I contacted Boody and he said, "That suits me fine. I'm ready." So we went by and picked them up, and riding to San Marcos I'd tune in some station, you know, and music would come on. About five minutes, well, here would come on an announcement that Vernon Whiteside was going to announce Lyndon Johnson's candidacy for the presidency.

Whiteside -- II -- 21

So we cut the radio off after a while and went on in and registered at a motel in San Marcos. Hadn't got in the room good until there was a knock on the door and the manager of the motel was bringing us ice and ice water and asking me if I was Vernon Whiteside. I'd signed the register as R. V. Whiteside. I said yes and he said, "What about this?" and he held up a San Antonio Evening News and it's front page stuff about where I was going to announce Lyndon for the presidency.

So we the next morning got up and went to eat breakfast. It was all over the San Antonio Express front [page]. We went up on the campus, up on the quadrangle, and photographers up there, they lined Bill Deason and his wife, and Boody and his wife, and me and the wife up and made some real nice pictures. The president of the alumni association says, "Oh, boy, you did it! We've been trying for thirty days to stir up a little interest in this deal, since it's going to be Lyndon Johnson Day, and we've had no luck. But after you popped off yesterday, NBC, CBS, ABC and all of them were up here all night trying to string wire." I said, "Is that good or bad?" He said, "Man, that's good. That was what we were after."

So when we went down to the auditorium, the wives, Boody, and Bill Deason went on in and sat down, and I stood back by the door, nobody recognizing me, and that included Dr. Flowers, who had invited me, and I was sure that he didn't know who I was or he wouldn't have made the call. But I later found out that Bill Deason was the one that had recommended me to answer Lyndon. So when Lyndon drove up,

Whiteside -- II -- 22

his car came up and he was in the back seat, and he got out and he walked over and stuck out his hand, says, "Hello, Vernon, how are you doing?" I said, "All right." And then Dr. Flowers realized who I was. I told Lyndon, I said, "Lyndon, I'm sorry if my statement upset you." He said, "It didn't upset me. It upset Reedy, but he gets upset over everything anyway. And I just asked him, I said, 'Who made that statement?' He said, 'Vernon Whiteside.' And I said, 'Oh, don't pay any attention to that. He just put both feet in his mouth that time.'" So Dr. Flowers immediately pushed me to the side and said, "Now, look, no politics. We can't have that on here. If we do, we're liable to get our appropriations cut and everything and we don't want to take a chance on anything like that. Please now, no politics." I said, "Okay, no politics."

So Lyndon spoke and he couldn't get off on his theme anyway. He'd see some old boy out there that he remembered and he'd howdy with him and then with that one. He made not much of a speech; it was just a reminiscing. I think it was about twenty-three minutes that he went on, and he sat down and they introduced me. I got up and told them that it was just like a four-round bout after the main event, that I was supposed to be talking, and they were supposed to be leaving. But I said, "If you want to stay, why, it might be interesting. But you won't disturb me if you start leaving," and a few of them started leaving.

Then I went to talking about things that happened when Lyndon was there. Dr. [Cecil] Evans was in the crowd; he was back behind me, and

Whiteside -- II -- 23

I could hear him say, "That's right. That's the truth. That's right," and laugh, and that encouraged me to the point to where I spoke twenty-eight minutes. But when I finished, the auditorium was still full. Lyndon jumped up and glad-handed me, you know, a big arm-around-the-neck deal, which he was always doing. He liked to grab a fellow around the shoulders. I don't know. And shook hands with me, thanked me. And his sister Josefa was sitting there, whom I really knew better than I did Lyndon, and she jumped up--she had a big sailor hat on, I remember, a big, wide-brimmed straw hat--and she grabbed me around the neck and kissed me and said, "Damn, honey, they broadcast the wrong speech," because they had cut the radio off at the end of Lyndon's talk. So I was just talking to the audience, not over the radio. And she said, "They cut off the wrong speech." And that was that. So Lyndon went down into the President's house and took a nap, and my wife and I went with Dr. Flowers out to the ball game and watched the ball game and then we went on home. But that was the gist of that. I got him timed right anyway.

G: This newspaper article makes it sound like you told the press, the guy from the Chronicle, that LBJ was going to announce his candidacy at this speech.

W: No, I said I was going to announce his candidacy.

G: Really? Because. . . . You didn't say that he was going to announce his candidacy?

W: No.

G: Okay.

Whiteside -- II -- 24

W: He told me that he'd just spent a month and a half convincing Adlai Stevenson that he would not be a candidate and said I'd ruined that in about one minute. Because Adlai had already called him before by the time this hit the--I got clippings from Chicago. I had friends in Chicago that I was in the navy with, some in New York City, and around, and I got clippings out of all those papers where I was announcing Lyndon for the presidency. And the timing must have been pretty good because he finally made it.

G: That's amazing.

End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview II

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In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, R. Vernon Whiteside of Marble Falls, Texas do hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title and interest in the tape recordings and transcripts of the personal interviews conducted on August 1 and 6, 1985 at Marble Falls, Texas and prepared for deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

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R. Vernon Whiteside
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