

INTERVIEW IV

DATE: June 10, 1982
INTERVIEWEES: VIRGINIA and WILTON WOODS
INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE
PLACE: The Woods' residence, Seguin, Texas

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G: Mr. Woods, let me ask you first of all about LBJ's association with Maury Maverick during this period when he was secretary to a congressman and Maverick was a political figure in San Antonio.

W: Well, Maury Maverick, as you know and everyone knows, was a so-called liberal at the time and he would have been now if he was living. He was just born that way. There's a real fine book about Maury Maverick that we've read and we know the author.

G: Dick Henderson.

W: Yes. How'd you know that?

G: Just a lucky guess.

(Laughter)

W: But when we were living in San Antonio, I was working for the oil and gas division of the Railroad Commission and had very little to do with politics at that time. I don't know very much about Maury Maverick except he was a friend of Dan Quill's and Malcolm Bardwell's, and of course the Maverick family for generations had been real important in Bexar County. Maury's grandfather and my grandfather

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were in the same outfit in the Civil War. But at that time I'd little more than just met Maury Maverick. He was, what, mayor?

VW: Yes.

G: That was later, I think. After he was congressman.

W: He was what a lot of people would call a controversial character in that he couldn't let well enough alone, was always wanting to stir things, and in trouble, right? In trouble with his constituents. He didn't stay in office very long it seemed to me. How'd he impress you?

VW: Well, I don't think he really wanted to know about Maury Maverick. He wanted to know the relationship between Lyndon and Maury, and I don't know that. I do know we worked in some of Maury's campaigns. I don't know whether that was because Lyndon was his friend, but when I went to San Antonio, I know we immediately became involved in the city organization which was sponsoring him.

W: Lyndon and Dan Quill and Malcolm Bardwell became close friends right away. I don't think Lyndon knew either one of them before he went to work for Kleberg. He might have met them, but he fell right in with them. And I'm sure they helped each other; well, unquestionably Dan Quill helped LBJ a lot.

G: How did he help him? Do you remember?

W: Well, in getting votes. At that time, San Antonio was pretty well machine-controlled, and Maury Maverick, of course, was head of the--

VW: Outside group.

W: What?

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VW: He was head of the group that was trying to break the machine control.

G: Did LBJ have anything to do with Dan Quill receiving that appointment as postmaster?

W: I don't believe he did. I think that was pretty well set before Lyndon met him. I could be mistaken, but I don't much think he had anything to do with it.

G: What did LBJ think of Maury Maverick? What was his attitude toward Maverick back then when he was a secretary to a congressman and Maury Maverick was a--?

W: He liked him.

G: Did he? Did he agree with him politically?

W: Well, I would say offhand that probably Lyndon was more an astute politician than Maury Maverick. He was more careful in what he said publicly and didn't step on as many toes as Maury did. He just, you know, went helter-skelter.

VW: But they seemed to have the same fundamental belief in setting up work so that the people who needed it would have it and the type of work that would have lasting benefits to the community like the river project and the restoration of La Villita, the dams to save the river, that sort of thing.

G: Do you recall LBJ's work in Maury Maverick's campaign, I guess first for tax collector and then for Congress?

W: No.

G: Let me ask you about LBJ and the Klebergs. Do you have any insights to his relationship with the Kleberg family?

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W: Well, not immediately, but later on this stands out in your memory and a lot of other people that knew them at the time. Mrs. [Richard] Kleberg didn't like Lyndon. Why, I don't think anybody knows till this day, but she just didn't like the way he parted his hair. (Laughter) Of course, you know, in Washington, Mr. Kleberg stayed at that expensive hotel, the Mayflower. Even at that time, rooms rented for what? Twenty-five dollars a day, I believe.

Richard Kleberg definitely was a playboy congressman. He didn't like details; they annoyed him. So he turned all the office work over to LBJ. He didn't even sign the letters, didn't want to read them. It bothered him for Lyndon to even show them to him. Lyndon, of course, just took over and ran it like it should be run. Only the very most important things would he even mention to Kleberg, because he was over at the Mayflower. He was over there. I don't know what he was doing or whether they had golf in those days or not, but he definitely was not in his office on the Hill.

G: Why do you think Mrs. Kleberg didn't like LBJ? How was this manifest?

W: Well, I got all my information straight from LBJ. He sensed right away that she didn't like him and--you know, what else?

G: How did she behave toward him? Did she slight him in some way or was she simply--?

(Interruption)

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G: Anything else on Mrs. Kleberg and LBJ?

W: No.

G: Do you know if she had anything to do with him leaving the Kleberg staff?

W: Oh, I don't think she did because she was down there and he was in Washington largely. There was too much physical separation for him to worry much about it. He was too busy.

G: Was there any appreciable difference between LBJ and Congressman Kleberg politically? Did the two men have different ideas about issues or programs?

W: Yes. LBJ then, as throughout his life, loved to help people that needed help. That delighted him no end. Well, Kleberg didn't want to see them, didn't want them to bother him and he cared less. He was a believer that everybody ought to take care of himself and if he didn't that was his hard luck. Right?

G: Would you classify LBJ as a liberal or a conservative or a moderate when he first went to Washington? How did you view his political philosophy?

W: Well, he was a liberal and a moderate. He was a close friend of Governor [James V.] Allred, who definitely was a moderate.

G: Did he know Allred when he worked for Kleberg, though?

W: Oh, I doubt it.

VW: I think basically all of these that came out of Mr. [H. M.] Greene's class were liberal.

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W: Yes, she has Prof Greene's picture.

G: You didn't notice any switch politically in LBJ after he went to Washington then, did you ever?

W: No. The first time I had a long visit with him, I think he and Bill Deason and I went for a ride one Sunday morning in that little one-seated car he had and he told us mostly about the Little Congress. Of course, that's another story. You know, he was delighted in the way that came out and the way he had handled it. He didn't mind bragging a little bit and laughing a little.

G: What did he say about it? Did he tell how he got to be the speaker of the Little Congress?

W: Yes.

G: Tell me what he said.

W: Well, he took them by surprise, his opposition, and he did that by just visiting the other secretaries and lining them up to vote for him. Before he left their office he'd get them to promise to vote for him, and most of them kept their promise. And the opposition, it was an old organization where, like ten thousand others, the president is promoted from vice president. There wasn't any difference there except that LBJ in his enthusiasm and legwork, he just got the votes. He talked about the astonishment of the old-timers, and I think there was maybe a newspaper article or two about him taking over, "Texan takes over."

G: Did he have anything to do with getting the publicity, the newspaper publicity?

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W: Oh, he probably did.

G: Did he indicate whether or not he got people to come to that meeting who normally were not members of the Little Congress, like--?

W: They were members, but hadn't attended, you know. That's typical of any older organization. There's a lot of members that don't attend. He got them out, a lot of them, enough to be elected.

G: What else did he talk about that day?

W: Well, at that time, Herbert Hoover was running for re-election, right? That was early in the campaign, and at that time, he thought that Mr. Hoover would be re-elected, and he based that almost 100 per cent on, well, that usually happens that the incumbent gets a second term and we can just look for that.

G: Who did he favor for president?

W: Well, he was a Democrat; he wouldn't be for [Hoover].

G: Was he for Roosevelt at this point? Was he enthusiastic about Roosevelt?

W: I don't think he'd even met him or heard of him or anything. James Allred, the governor, arranged for LBJ to meet FDR in Galveston or in Houston or somewhere, and they rode back on the train and Lyndon got off the train at College Station or Bryan and drove back to Austin. There've been various reports that he rode all the way to Fort Worth and some of them even that he rode all the way to Washington. He didn't, got off at [Bryan].

G: How do you know he came to Austin?

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W: From Bryan?

G: Yes.

W: Well, that's where he quit FDR. I don't know why.

G: I thought he went to Fort Worth. That was my impression.

W: I don't think so. I was in Austin at the time, still on leave of absence to work in the campaign. I'm pretty sure I'm correct about that, because FDR, a lot of people till this day attribute to him something that he didn't have. He wasn't personally friendly; he kept his distance. LBJ was pretty good at breaking that down, but he never did become too close to him, in my opinion. Now, he did on this trip. I don't know whether FDR brought up the question or LBJ about his committee appointments, but President Roosevelt, of course, was first, last and always a navy man, and I think he did promise Lyndon he'd help him get on the Naval Affairs Committee, which he did. Which, according to the newspapers at the time, was a plum or unusual appointment for a tenderfoot to be put on a committee like that.

VW: It seems like Fenner Roth also has commented that Lyndon did not go all the way to Fort Worth and there was a reason why he had gotten off the train before he got there, but I don't remember the details.

G: Well, we can iron that out later.

What else did you talk about that day you were riding around in the car? Do you remember the occasion? Was this in Austin?

W: San Marcos.

G: San Marcos, okay.

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W: It was Sunday morning, and none of us were pressed for time. At that period of LBJ's life probably, I don't know how long that lasted, but he delighted in telling about his accomplishments and especially to his old friends. We were delighted to listen.

G: Did he seem to like Washington?

W: Yes, very much. When he actually decided he was going to make politics a career, that's been kicked around and argued back and forth for many years now. I never heard him say that early in the period that he even dreamed of being congressman. It's something that's hard for a person your age to recognize. At that time Washington was way off like Moscow now or Rome. You just didn't pick up the phone and call Washington or you didn't jump on a plane and go there. Of course, in a few years you did. I made lots of trips--I think there were nine altogether--at his request. He'd call and say, "Wilton, can you be up here in the morning?" He'd tell me when the plane was going to leave.

G: But this was later, right? This was when he was president or senator?

VW: No. When he was congressman and senator.

G: Speaking of his future, during this period that he worked for Kleberg, he seems to have considered other career alternatives. One was possibly going to work for GE with a man named Horatio Adams. Do you know anything about that?

W: No.

G: Another one was going to work for the Attorney General, I believe it was [William] McCraw, with I believe Welly Hopkins working something

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out. Do you remember that? He would go to work in Austin and work on a law degree at the same time. That doesn't ring a bell?

W: No. About that time there were quite long periods when I wouldn't see him because we lived in San Antonio and I had a bookkeeping job.

G: Did he ever talk about going to law school up there?

W: I think he talked about going to law school over a period of two or three years or more.

G: Why didn't he finish? Why did he drop out? Do you know?

W: I don't think he had the patience. He wanted to be up and at 'em and accomplishing things.

G: I understood he also wanted to be president, or considered being president of Texas A&I.

W: I don't know about that. Jesse Kellam said that he quizzed LBJ about his future ambitions and future plans and that LBJ told him that he was going in public service, which Jesse interpreted correctly as politics. Now, this lady at El Paso has real good memory and she's ready to talk to you. She's afraid of these things. She said that LBJ, she thinks, mentioned one time that he might be governor some day, but never mentioned going to Washington or being the president. I think that's correct, too.

G: Now, did you ever go up to Washington while he was working for Kleberg?

W: I don't believe so.

G: Did you ever see him in Corpus [Christi] during this period that he worked for [Kleberg]? He did live in Corpus. . . .

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W: I don't believe so.

G: I understand he was in ill health a lot of this period.

W: Yes, he was. The night of his--well, like he was operated on last night and tomorrow's election day. [During his] first election he had that appendicitis operation, and then he had kidney stones or some chronic ailment that right away he went to Mayo Brothers [to be treated for] and became personal friends with one or more of the doctors up there that treated him most of his life, I believe. But he was a little on the frail side, always thin. Well, the pictures show, you know.

G: Do you recall his having pneumonia when he was secretary to Kleberg?

W: Pneumonia? I don't remember.

G: Do you recall hearing about his engagement and marriage to Mrs. Johnson?

W: Just when it was over.

G: Really? You didn't know anything about her in advance.

W: No.

G: You hadn't met her?

W: No.

G: Okay. Why did he leave Kleberg's office?

W: What was his next job?

G: The NYA job.

W: Oh. Well, the New Deal was unfolding and he was up there, you know, associating with a lot of people, what is that Williams--?

G: Aubrey Williams?

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W: Yes. A lot of those people had a lot to do with it, and he just acquired enthusiasm for what they were doing and the first thing you know he was involved. Of course, the story about him being appointed to NYA director, that's been a matter of record or published. I don't know anything different from that. FDR had promised somebody that he'd name another person, and I believe Sam Rayburn turned that around and got the job for LBJ.

G: Is that the way LBJ told the story? I mean, did he accredit Rayburn with the appointment?

W: I don't know that I ever heard him tell it, but it fits. It sounds like something that would happen.

G: Now shall we move on to the 1937 campaign?

W: Okay.

G: Do you recall how you first learned that he was going to run for Congress.

W: Yes. Bill Deason lived in San Antonio.

VW: Lived with us. Bill Deason was rooming at our house.

W: Yes. And at that time, he was closer to Lyndon than we were, I suppose.

VW: Area director of NYA.

W: Yes. Anyway, Willard had this new Chevrolet and we had borrowed that to get married in. We married out in Marfa in West Texas; her preacher was out there that had married her mother and her grandmother and she wanted to continue it.

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G: But you're from the Seguin area, aren't you?

W: Yes. So we borrowed this car and went out there.

Of course, the longer he lived at our house--we had a great big old house and he had a bedroom there--the longer he was there, the better we got acquainted. Of course, I had known him in San Marcos, too. He, one Sunday afternoon, said he'd just had a phone call from LBJ.

VW: One Sunday morning. In fact, it seems like Saturday afternoon. You went to Austin Saturday afternoon, you came home Saturday afternoon, then Sunday morning you went to Johnson City.

W: I remember pretty clearly he said, "I want you to go with me today," or "LBJ wants you to come with me to Johnson City." I said, "What's the occasion?" He said, "He's going to decide whether to run for Congress or not." So we got ready and went up there.

The little old house--I have a picture of it here all painted up, but it wasn't painted then. His parents never were affluent, in fact, far from it. But they got him down there at this little old house. There's a picture in the LBJ Library of them standing on the front porch, his uncles and aunts. Of course, we were there I guess most of the afternoon. Virginia was assigned to go with the Johnson girls, and they rode through Johnson City and looked at the boys and bored her to death.

VW: They met on the porch, all of the men. I do not recall any women staying on that porch at all, but just the men.

G: Who was there, now?

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W: Well, all the uncles and aunts, from George, Tom--

G: Uncle George was there?

W: I'm sure he was.

G: Uncle Tom was there, and his father?

W: Yes.

G: All right. And what about non-family members? You were there, and Bill Deason was there.

W: That's all.

G: Really?

W: But his aunts were there, Lucy and--

VW: I think there were two others there, Wilton.

W: You mean non-family?

VW: Non-family.

W: Who were they?

VW: I just remembered them as being lawyers, but I don't remember.

G: Was Senator [Alvin] Wirtz there?

VW: I don't know.

G: Was L. E. Jones or anyone like that?

VW: No.

W: I don't remember Senator Wirtz, and I knew him at that time. But primarily it was family members, and they had met to help. They met at his request, LBJ's, to help him decide whether to run or not. Of course, he knew at the time he was going to run. It was just a matter of selling them, and they weren't hard to sell, and to feel their pocketbook and see how much money they could contribute. Somewhere I

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had a list of what they contributed, but it will range from nine to twelve hundred dollars each, which was their entire savings. Times were hard in those days, and they went all out.

Now, I have told this story before, and it's correct. The only unhappy person there concealed her unhappiness, that was his mother. The reason she was apprehensive about him making that race, you may have had this recorded somewhere, anyway, she was apprehensive because her daddy, when she was eight or nine years old, had run for Congress and was defeated. She said to herself, "How could anybody vote against a fine person like my daddy?" And it hurt her. She was that old, maybe she was more than nine or ten years old. But anyway, he was kind of a recluse-type person, an attorney that practiced law out of his house and he just took cases that came to him and didn't work at getting more business than what--

VW: You and Bill, also.

W: Yes. Bill said he could contribute his [car]; we could use his car in the campaign. I think he made a pretty good contribution himself.

G: How about you? Did you make a contribution?

W: Well, my contribution was I was going to apply to my boss for a leave of absence and work in the campaign, which I did, at no cost to the campaign. My sister was living in Austin at the time, and I stayed at her house.

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G: At that front porch meeting, was there a discussion about whether to announce? Now Mrs. [James P.] Buchanan hadn't decided whether or not she was going to run.

W: That came later. Now, I notice in your literature, I believe it is, I don't remember very much being in the newspapers, but it's been overplayed in whoever reported to you about that incident. It's true, she didn't say she would run or she wouldn't run, but I remember distinctly talking to LBJ on the steps of the Stephen F. Austin Hotel where it went up to the mezzanine where the campaign office was. It was about ten o'clock at night. I was going to go home, and I guess he was going to go up there and look at the mail or something like that. Anyway, we stopped and talked on the steps of the hotel and he said, "We're sweating out whether Mrs. Buchanan is going to run or not." And I said, "What if she runs?" And he said loud and clear, "We'll run her." He didn't qualify that a bit.

G: Yes, but the story has been published elsewhere that it was at that meeting that LBJ's father advised him to go ahead and announce ahead of her, before she announced one way or another.

W: He might have.

G: But you don't recall that discussion?

W: No. But that would, of course, be the logical thing to do, and Sam was a pretty good politician.

G: Did his father have any role in the campaign? Did he advise or help?

W: Not much. I don't remember him having any.

G: What was your role in the campaign?

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W: The morning that LBJ was going to go to work--you know, he never had run for office, he had helped Welly Hopkins a little bit--he was pretty much befuddled about how to get started. Well, the morning he said, "Tomorrow we're going to go out and feel the pulse of the voters," that morning I showed up, Otis McCarty [?] from Henly showed up, and Ben Crider from Johnson City. We were the first three there, and if any others came later, I don't know. But help was not too plentiful.

Right away the question came up about I don't know whether Sam Fore from Floresville had called or LBJ had called Sam, but Sam was known as an astute vote-getter, astute. And he was. He was super. So he came to Austin as fast as he could get away from his paper. He'd had it so many years that he could leave okay. He came up there to teach Lyndon how to get the votes, and boy, did he do a super job!

G: What did he tell him?

W: He told him this. Now I was driving the Chevrolet. Not that Pontiac, but Bill Deason's car. And Sam Fore and Lyndon sat on the back seat. Well, Sam took charge right away. He said, "Lyndon, look, the important thing about this race is FDR. People like him, and he's in hot water over that Court-packing thing. He needs our help and we're going to come out loud and clear for him, for the President." He said, "There's not going to be any halfway stuff. There's not going to be any maybe or qualifications or anything like that. As we go along, you shake hands with every person you possibly can. You have

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a large district and it's a short campaign." Actually it was a short campaign but not too big a district. A lot of these little-bitty old towns had hardly anybody living in them.

So I think one of the first trips we made was to Brenham. Mr. Fore was back there, and he was telling Lyndon how to do it. He'd look up and he'd say, "Wilton, you time it to where we'll get right at the end of that fellow's row that he's plowing just as we drive up." And he said, "Lyndon, you jump that fence and tell that man that you're running for Congress. Give him your card and tell him that you're for Roosevelt, too, and tell him that the President has to have our help and the way we can help him is to send him a congressman that'll help him. Shake hands with him again and tell him goodbye and see you later and count on you to vote, but don't spend too much time with one man. You've got to move along."

Well, I think we made it to Brenham about noon. He said, "Now, Wilton, you let us out on this edge of town. We're going to walk and you go to the other end of town and try to find a place to get three hamburgers." It was lunchtime. And [he] said, "You come on back, but you be sure and listen--" I think we had some signs on the car already. [He said], "You be sure and listen and see what people say and just make out like you're not listening. We want to know exactly what people say where you buy those hamburgers and where you stop to get gasoline or any contact you have with people, we want to know what they say." And he told Lyndon, he said, "Now, Lyndon, here's how it is. We go in this cafe down here, you head straight for the

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kitchen. Don't slow down or anything, you just push people out of the way if they get in your way and you head for the kitchen. You give everybody working back there your card, shake hands with them and tell them that you're running for Congress and that the President needs your help and mine and let's help him by electing me. And then come on back." And he said, "The last person you want to talk to is the man behind the cash register. Now, you don't want to talk to him first, because he's probably already promised [C. N.] Avery or somebody else that he's going to vote for them anyway. He'll just take up a lot of your time and you won't get a vote. The place to get the votes is back there in that kitchen." And Lyndon did. He just went like a streak to the kitchen. All the way along, he was preaching that: shake hands with the ordinary, poor people and tell them that the President is trying to help us and we've got to help him. Let's stick with Roosevelt.

G: Did he give regular courthouse speeches or speeches on the square?

W: A lot of them.

G: Did Sam Fore also help him with these?

W: Well, he told him what to say and he was moving around listening himself. For feeling the pulse of the electorate you couldn't beat him. Boy, he was good.

G: Where else did you go besides Brenham?

W: Well, we went to Smithville, we went to Lockhart, I think we went to a lot of little towns like Maxwell. We stopped in Elgin and. . . .

VW: Had a rally in Gonzales.

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W: Yes, and San Marcos, too. And Blanco. I went to Blanco with him.

G: Did Sam Fore travel with LBJ very often or was it just this first trip?

W: No, he traveled for three or four days there, indoctrinating him. And he always kept his finger on what was going on. Like I told you before, the very fact that Sam Fore would rather die than get on an airplane, but Lyndon twenty years later sent him a ticket to come to Washington to see him inaugurated. During that time--you see, we sent three pictures to Robert Caro of Sam Fore--Sam Fore was never a man much to get out in front, but Lyndon, I'll bet you, called him two or three times a week for most of his life. That Roy Swift [?]-he's on your list to see--he'll tell you that, and John Connally should, because Sam Fore got John a job with LBJ. Of course, John is so busy being a big shot himself.

G: So what was your role in the campaign?

W: Drive the car. And I had various other jobs. Now Carroll Keach drove the Pontiac. Carroll came not in the beginning, he came when the campaign got a little more refined. We thought of Carroll as being an office worker that took notes. Well, he could drive down the road--I don't know whether he knew shorthand or had his own, but he could make notes where I couldn't and didn't try.

G: Well, now, you used both cars in the campaign, didn't you, the Chevrolet and the Pontiac? Is it correct that you drove the Chevrolet?

W: Yes.

G: And how was that car used?

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W: Well, it was used right at first there when Sam Fore, we went to Brenham, Elgin, Lockhart, Benny Bock at New Braunfels. . . .

G: But when you used both of the cars together, how did you use the Chevrolet then?

W: I don't know that we--I don't remember.

But Benny Bock at New Braunfels has told this story a thousand times that I introduced Lyndon to him in Lockhart on one of these campaigns. He said, "I don't know whether he did me a favor or not." Of course, he wouldn't take a million dollars for it.

G: Would you generally campaign through the day and then come back in the evening to Austin or what?

W: Yes, that's something I wanted to talk to you about just briefly. Sam Fore was, well, he was not middle-aged but heading in that direction, and he believed in getting his sleep and he wanted Lyndon to, too. Lyndon's not the one to sleep when he's running a hot campaign like that. But anyway, Lyndon deceived Sam in this respect. Late in the evening when we'd break up, well, Sam thought that LBJ was going to go home and go to bed like he was, but LBJ had other ideas. Nearly every night he went to the Austin American-Statesman. Buck Hood and Gordon Fulcher, he got well-acquainted with them, and that paid off. Man, they'd give him good publicity. But he would be down there--one of them worked till, say, roughly ten o'clock or eleven o'clock and the other one came on and worked till daylight. Lyndon would visit with both of them, you know, and he'd listen to what they had to say.

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This Buck Hood was up here at this party. Lyndon came late, and old Buck said to me, "Wilton, Lyndon's bound to be settling the Vietnam War [rather] than miss a party like this." (Laughter)

G: Well, did you have strategy meetings in the evening also to plan your--?

W: Later on when Claude Wild came down from--he was the Governor's man.

G: Did you hire Claude Wild, is that how you got him?

W: Somebody hired him. But he was supposed to be a super campaigner, you know. A lot of things LBJ didn't like about him. He didn't like Claude Wild's abruptness and his know-it-all and "you do it this way or else." And Lyndon just didn't like the way he talked to him. We'd be down the road fifty miles from Austin, and he'd say, "Now, old Claude Wild, the damn Dutchman, he wants to do it this way." (Laughter) He used pretty strong language in talking about him sometimes, but mainly that--later on in the statewide campaign it became urgent to have somebody with statewide acquaintance, and he had it with Governor Allred, Allred's races for attorney general and for governor.

G: Well, do you recall the issue on which LBJ and Claude Wild disagreed? Was it an issue of how to spend money or how to allocate time or which towns to visit or what issues to address?

W: Lady Bird just said in the past month or less that Claude Wild didn't want women working in the campaign, so she was excluded from those that could work.

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G: But is this what they were disagreeing over when--?

W: No, just Claude Wild's abruptness and--

G: I see, just his manner.

W: --kind of domineering like.

G: Well, what role did Senator Wirtz play in that campaign?

W: Well, there's been a lot of misconception about that. That's one thing that I talked to Caro about. Senator Wirtz was an attorney. He had lived in Seguin. I showed you his house. He moved to Austin, he gave up his senatorial job here and Welly Hopkins was elected to it. But Senator Wirtz was with Powell, Gideon and Wirtz--there were three or four attorneys.

G: Powell, Wirtz, Rauhut and Gideon at the time.

W: He was attorney for the Lower Colorado River Authority, and they got their money, most of it or all of it, from Washington. And Senator Wirtz knew that if he took a big dish out front in LBJ's campaign that people would say, "There goes that guy spending taxpayers' money to get his protege elected." So he bent over backwards to avoid that. He never came to the campaign headquarters in the Austin Hotel. Never. He'd phone over there occasionally to one person, but he stayed out of the limelight. And that's the reason he did. That was a good reason, because at that time--I think maybe I'm repeating myself here--the Hatch Act hadn't passed, but the time was ripe for it. People were ready for it. They didn't. . . .

G: Everett Looney. Did he also have an active role in the campaign?

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W: Everett Looney, I don't know any details about his death, but he was one of the most courteous, most loyal attorneys I ever dealt with in my life. He was really a fine person. I think maybe his--well, turn that thing off for--

VW: Well, Wilton go back--

(Interruption)

G: Senator Wirtz, again.

W: Yes, Senator Wirtz was a lobbyist, you know. And then, as now, it was a lobbyist's duty to raise money and he raised it. Where he got it, I don't know. I didn't ask, of course.

G: How much money did he raise?

W: Oh, not a big lot. You'd be surprised how little it took to run a campaign at that time. It was just unbelievable.

G: Well, that's of course been the subject of some discussion lately and one estimate was seventy-five to a hundred thousand dollars on that campaign.

W: On that first one?

G: Yes, 1937.

W: Ridiculous.

G: Really?

W: Yes. I think Robert Caro has got a big figure on that.

G: How would you estimate the expenditure?

W: Had no paid secretaries, they were all volunteer. Printing posters and campaign literature, it was inexpensive in those days.

G: What about newspaper ads? Weren't there a lot of newspaper ads?

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W: Well, yes, but I don't think they were too expensive. The biggest expense I recall is radio.

VW: If I remember correctly, that was one of the contributions that Mr. Fore made. He told Lyndon how to get free publicity from the papers.

G: Did he?

W: Yes.

G: What did [he] say? What did he tell him?

VW: Well, being a publisher himself, he knew what you could do to get a newspaper to write the story about you.

G: Where you buy an ad, take out an ad and then--?

W: Or take the editor to lunch or something like that.

G: I guess a lot of the country weeklies had a shortage of news and so they had plenty of space to devote.

VW: He'd take out a small ad, promise another ad somewhere down the line, then in between time he would be getting free publicity but they could tell what he did.

W: Later on, I can tell you about some expenses where I paid the bills. You remind me.

G: Okay.

W: Not this election but the next one.

But Senator Wirtz was a real astute campaigner. Of course, he'd been in the [Texas State] Senate and he knew all these senatorial lobbyists and people like Roy Miller at Corpus Christi and on and on. He knew them all personally because he'd associated with them

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when he was a state senator. And how much trouble he had raising the required money, I don't know, but he got it.

G: Did he have any role in the Court-packing bill at all or deciding that LBJ would endorse the Court-packing bill? Do you recall?

W: No.

G: Anything more on Everett Looney's role?

W: Oh, Everett Looney came over to the campaign headquarters at least once a day and wanted to know what was going on. I liked him because he'd tell me what was going on, and I found him a real fine friend in other respects. He was just a real tip-top lawyer and campaigner for political--

G: Were you able to get the support of businessmen in Austin or did they support other candidates?

W: They'd largely supported other candidates to start, but. . . . Avery was running as handpicked by Tom Miller, who was mayor. And Tom was the type of mayor for Austin he was pretty well running things. He had very few enemies. People liked him, and he got things done. But he was strong for Avery, and for that reason practically the entire legal professional in Austin was for Avery, because they were opposed to the Supreme Court packing. Had that come up at that time?

VW: Yes.

W: They were opposed to that bitterly.

G: The story has been told that LBJ would go by Tom Miller's house late in the evening and attempt to persuade him to support him rather than Avery. Do you recall that?

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W: I took him out to the Tom Millers' house late one Sunday afternoon, and I think I sat in the car--I know I did--while he went in and talked to Tom Miller. The best I think he even hoped for then or accomplished later was to kind of soften up Tom Miller to where he wouldn't fight him so viciously.

G: Did Edgar Perry support you in that 1937 race? E. H. Perry?

W: What'd he do?

G: Well, he was a businessman. He had that big house--

VW: Cotton broker.

G: --and the hotel.

W: I don't remember. Now, those kind of people, they dealt with Everett Looney and maybe Senator Wirtz, if nobody was looking and the Senator could slip them in his office, because he was real careful not to take any visible part in the election, that is, Wirtz. But they generally were supporting Avery, Shelton--a lot of the rock-rib, down-the-line attorneys were for Polk Shelton. And of course there were other candidates, Brownlee, does that name--?

G: Houghton Brownlee? Yes. Well, when LBJ started that race and I guess throughout most of the campaign, he was shown as being considerably behind at the polls. Did this concern him? Did he think he was going to win or did he think he was going to lose?

W: He never did say, as far as I know, and in those days polls weren't as common as they are now. The only one that really, really impressed me is when the day before the election I believe it was--or maybe it was election day--the Austin American had a headline that high, "LBJ

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will carry Travis County." (Laughter) And we all thought, "Well, we've got it made now." But I don't know. It seemed like then the newspaper represented people better than they do now.

G: Did he have the support of Charles Marsh?

W: He sure had it later, but I'm not sure about that stage. I think that big headline came from Gordon Fulcher, Buck Hood or both of them. But that headline coming out just when it did, it was a vote-getter.

G: Did Mrs. Johnson have a part in that campaign?

W: Well, to quote her, her only part was to furnish him with a clean shirt when he needed it.

G: Any other recollections of the campaign? Do you recall being with him on any other occasions or incidents or speeches?

W: My old hometown of Blanco and his, too--well, Blanco County--he really made a rousing talk there. Well, he made a lot of them, but he was that kind of speaker I think most of his life. Sometime he could really control his audience better than other times.

VW: He could control his audience when he was speaking directly to them. If it was on the air, he seemed to be much stiffer. I went to the rally in Gonzales, and it filled up the square. There was an unbelievable number of people there. I don't think he was the only speaker; I think that's the reason there were so many. But he, of course, was not speaking with a microphone, he was just speaking. And he did hold the crowd, always.

G: Did he?

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W: Made a real fine talk at Lockhart. He said a lot of funny things as he went along. He said, "You know, an Independent, really he's a Republican." (Laughter) And at that time there were a lot of people trying to pretend they were Independent, you know. That got a laugh from everybody, from all the Democrats, anyway.

I think it was Bill Deason and I went to see him in the hospital when he had that appendicitis operation. He was operated on during the night and we went up there the next morning and he was awake and fretting because he couldn't get out and work the last day. And had abdominal gas pains that were just killing him. The nurse was offering to do something about it, but he elected to just suffer it out.

G: Well, perhaps this [is] a good point to break. We've covered a lot of ground today.

W: Yes. I've enjoyed it.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview IV]

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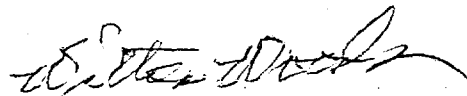
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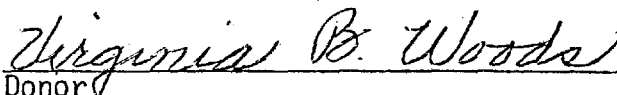
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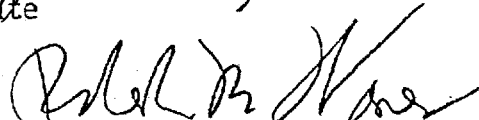
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