

INTERVIEW II

DATE: February 14, 1979
INTERVIEWEE: H. A. (TONY) ZIEGLER
INTERVIEWER: MICHAEL L. GILLETTE
PLACE: Mr. Ziegler's residence, Fort Worth, Texas

Tape 1 of 1

G: I don't want to repeat the material that we covered in the earlier interview. You talked about how you were hired and felt that C. N. Avery had had some influence, mentioning your name.

Z: Yes, that's right. Yes.

G: Did you begin working with the school aid program?

Z: I began under the old FERA [Federal Emergency Relief Administration], they called it, under the school aid program. In other words, I worked at it two years before NYA started, you see.

G: I see. You were already functioning?

Z: Yes, yes.

G: How did NYA change things?

Z: NYA, they put it in the high schools and in the colleges, too, you see. In other words, there was an expanded deal under NYA.

G: I understand that they had a program called freshmen training centers, a program designed to help prepare students for college. People who couldn't afford to go away to college for one year, they would take curriculum for their freshman year at home.

Z: I don't remember so much about that now.

Ziegler -- II -- 2

G: You don't recall?

Z: No. Now, they had these work training centers like out at Ranger and Inks Dam where the boys received work experience. That's what they called it, work experience. They made room and board and a few dollars a week spending money, the way it worked out.

G: Was the school aid program under the general supervision of Jesse Kellam?

Z: Yes. Well, it was all under LBJ, but under Jesse. See, Jesse had worked for the state school superintendent, with the superintendents of schools all over the state, and Jesse knew them all. That's where he fitted in there with the colleges and that. Back at that time, too, he refereed football games on the side. I used to run into him out at Brownwood. There were two colleges at Brownwood then, [one at] Stephenville and out at Abilene; there are three colleges at Abilene. In that conference was where he did a lot of refereeing.

G: What sort of programs did they develop for students? The idea was to keep them in school, is that correct? Give them jobs that would enable them to stay in school?

Z: Yes.

G: What sort of jobs did they have?

Z: These jobs had to be in addition to any other job they had. In other words, they couldn't let NYA pay for somebody doing some job, then if the school had been paying for him, lay the one the school had been paying for off. It was to create new jobs. That's the big

Ziegler -- II -- 3

point to get over there. Then I used to go around, and the other boys, too, we went around and checked very close on these schools to be sure-- and we didn't find any irregularities--these boys and girls were not working out in private industry someplace and being paid by the school. In other words, the school superintendent, if he might be interested in an insurance company, that the kids wouldn't be out working for that insurance company instead of the schools. See what I mean?

G: I gather the universities and colleges would have some discretion in terms of how many students they had and how many hours they worked.

Z: Oh, yes. Yes. I believe there at the last, I think it was fifteen students for every hundred employees.

G: The ratio, is that right?

Z: Yes. Then they decided, you see, what they'd pay them per hour, in other words, how many hours they would work them. These jobs paid fifteen dollars a month. A lot of times they'd split them and let two kids work, each work for seven and a half. In other words, just that little amount of money made a difference whether they stayed in school or not back then. Things were that tight, you see. People don't realize that now, but it did back then.

G: Did any of the state colleges not participate in this program?

Z: No. I remember when I had it, when NYA took it over, we had seventy-six colleges and junior colleges participating in the state of Texas. Then it went way up there after that, new schools starting and that, new colleges.

G: How did you publicize the program and let students know that this program existed?

Ziegler -- II -- 4

- Z: Roy Baccus then handled the publicity. They'd get out a release from LBJ or from Jesse Kellam. For instance, like down at Stephenville, why, the leading newspaper down there would be sent this information asking them to run it where there were students. The same way they sent it to all the main newspapers over the state and then especially to those where they had a college. Like Ranger had a junior college that participated in the end. Cisco had a junior college that participated way back then. Weatherford had a junior college that participated.
- G: Did the black colleges participate also?
- Z: Yes. I visited them. I visited every college that had the program to see it operate.
- G: I understand that Prairie View had a successful program.
- Z: It had a very successful program.
- G: Why was that?
- Z: I believe Mr. [W. R.] Banks was the president of it. When I called down there they'd ask me to stay for dinner or for lunch, and they had a special dining room then just to serve the white folks in. They seemed to--back in that day--get the cream of the colored crop of boys that really wanted to study and learn. So they evidently didn't have any problems like they have now with the colored boys. They just went in there and went to work and did their job.
- G: Did they have a resident program there, a training program, as well as a school aid program?
- Z: No, I don't believe they ever did; I don't believe they ever did.
- G: What were the elements of a successful program? What did you look for in evaluating one of these school aid programs?

Ziegler -- II -- 5

Z: Well, for instance, now the school saw, too, that they had to make a passing grade to be on the program. They couldn't just flunk out. But I know we had a big one at Inks Dam. You've heard about it, I'm sure. We had a big one out at Ranger, and then we had smaller shops at Stephenville and had some here in Fort Worth and various places.

So when the war came along and they started hiring them, they had what they called an apprentice training program as such, by name only. But they had special boys trained, General Dynamics had several that would go down to these resident centers in other states like Louisiana and Mississippi and would interview these boys--and they were getting some aircraft training--and sign them up for a job to come to work here. See, they would go to work here at General Dynamics at sixteen. They could work there until they were called up for the service. But some of them, by that time, would have worked in a valuable defense spot where some of them didn't even have to go. That was the exception. Their own classification board thought they were doing more good there. Because here's an old boy, he didn't know anything; they took him off to school and now he's making airplanes. It would be all right.

G: I hear the NYA trained some very competent welders.

Z: Yes, they did, electric welding and acetylene welding both.

G: Did you have any programs that were unsuccessful, that you were unhappy with?

Ziegler -- II -- 6

- Z: At first I didn't think too much of our--we got a lot of surplus equipment from the old CAA, the Civil Aeronautics Administration, which is FAA now. These boys, they'd learn, you know, how to build these transmitters and they'd learn the Morse Code, the key and all that. The electronics industries started expanding with these airplanes, and a lot of that training, so they said, helped those boys get along in it, so I guess it was all right, too. Yes, they'd get that old equipment and rebuild it.
- G: They set up a junior placement service in Fort Worth that was designed to help channel youths into employment. Do you remember that?
- Z: Yes.
- G: What can you tell me about that?
- Z: Well, that was just a place that after they were trained they were sent in here to be interviewed by the General Dynamics people. Of course, labor was so hard to find then they took about everybody that would half try.
- G: Do you recall how that program got started, the junior placement program?
- Z: No, I believe Jesse Kellam worked that out, or one of the boys that worked under Jesse, with the U.S. Employment Service people together with the personnel people of the various companies, where the employment service was cooperating in there.
- G: Did LBJ have pretty good contacts with the college presidents?
- Z: Yes, he had good contact with them.

Ziegler -- II -- 7

G: Can you recall any in particular that he was close to?

Z: Of course he was very close to Dr. [Cecil] Evans down at San Marcos. He worked for him. Through him he got to know a lot of them that way. Now on that scale, I think that Jesse Kellam was a tremendous help to him because of Jesse's being a little older than Lyndon and having contacts with the state schools.

G: Did Dr. Evans have much input in terms of giving advice at this stage?

Z: I think he did with LBJ.

G: Can you recall any examples of any programs he may have suggested?

Z: No.

G: Did you see them together much during this period?

Z: Not too much. Now Bill Deason would have seen them a lot more. Maybe you can get something out of Bill on this. You get him right down there because Bill was in school there, too.

G: He [Johnson] set up an advisory committee [for the] NYA. Senator [Alvin] Wirtz was the chairman of it. I think we mentioned that last time. Do you want to talk about any of these other people on it, or what role that committee played?

(Interruption)

Z: Of course I know Bob Anderson. I know all those men, have met them through LBJ, but I know Bob Anderson better than any of the others. Bob was in my territory and served on my local committee, too. Then Bob Anderson served as assistant state chairman here, too. No, that was a savings bonds [committee]. After NYA went out, savings bonds coming along, he served on that committee as assistant chairman to

Ziegler -- II -- 8

Nathan Adams, and then as state chairman. He was state chairman when he was appointed secretary of the treasury. He used to work for the [W. T.] Waggoner estates.

G: How about Miller Ainsworth?

Z: Well, they were all big wheels, all those boys there, everybody. You couldn't pick a better committee than that.

G: Did LBJ pick the committee himself?

Z: I think so. I think he did. He had Wirtz on there [who] was always so close to Lyndon, and I'm sure he probably helped him on that.

G: How did he get all these distinguished people to agree to serve on the committee?

Z: Almost all through contacts, I think. He could do it fast.

G: You don't recall specifically how he arranged that?

Z: No. You take Mr. Starker Warns [Lutcher Stark?], at that time he was one of the wealthiest men in Texas. Of course, I knew Beauford Jester. He was a fraternity brother of mine. I had known Beauford ever since the late twenties. But all those boys on there were key people.

G: From going through the files I get the impression that he was constantly seeking more money from Washington, a larger appropriation from the national office, and also seeking to expedite Washington approval of projects. Do you remember that?

Z: Yes. Yes.

G: How did he go about this?

Ziegler -- II -- 9

Z: From when he first began I think he used every [opportunity]. See, here is something here that a lot of people don't realize. When Lyndon was the secretary up there, he was president of an organization of workers that worked for congressmen and senators.

G: Little Congress.

Z: Little Congress and the Senate. So, he had a very close working relationship with his counterpart in each congressman's office, plus he knew that congressman, too. I'm sure that's the way he got it done. I've been out with him on a couple of deals where he knew the congressman real well, you know, called him by first name and all that. I'm sure he was putting pressure on them all the time. Then, you see, Lyndon was enough of a politician, if you was helping him, why he would go into your city and give an NYA speech and just praise the hell out of you. You were just tops, which didn't hurt. See what I mean?

G: Sure.

Z: And I'm sure he did that.

G: Do you think that the experience in Washington also helped him in terms of what he learned about operations in Washington or how to get things accomplished?

Z: Oh, yes. I don't think there's any question about that. I think he learned two ways. He studied, and even way back then Sam Rayburn and a lot of these old boys were advising him on the side. Now I run into that several times. I remember I went with LBJ down to Brownwood one time, Abilene one time. Then those newspaper owners,

Ziegler -- II -- 10

after maybe my next trip out there, would say, "You know, old LBJ sure is itching to run for Congress. He wants our support when he gets ready to run." You see, I didn't know that. But I mean they would tell me that. He was working that, too, along with NYA.

G: Was this before [James] Buchanan died or after?

Z: It was before Buchanan died.

G: Well, he wasn't planning to run against Buchanan, was he?

Z: No. But he was waiting for the time to come.

G: But he ever talked to you about it?

Z: No.

G: Let's look at some more of these projects and see if you remember anything about any of them?

Z: Okay.

G: We've got the Houston library projects, mending books, the chapel in Denton.

Z: Yes. I was up there for the dedication of it. Mrs. Roosevelt was [there].

G: Was LBJ there for that?

Z: I don't believe he was.

G: This was after he left.

Z: C. P. Little, see, that was in his set-up. He was working Dallas then.

G: How about the roadside parks? You talked about those briefly last time. I was wondering whose idea they were? Do you recall?

Z: No. I know that LBJ had a meeting with the state highway department people.

Ziegler -- II -- 11

G: Gibb Gilchrist?

Z: Right. And then they came out with these roadside parks. The highway would give an easement on some land right next to the highway, and then they'd fence it off and then they'd put some barbecue grill in there and concrete tables and benches of rock. Then they would put a little bronze plaque in there saying who donated it and when and all of that. But I just got a hunch that that was LBJ's [idea].

Now what I've heard, I think other states did it but Texas kind of took the lead in that--parks. Out of Wichita Falls towards Vernon on the old road, there's about a three or three and a half mile concrete walk with some hand-bridges over a couple of little streams. That was all put in by the state highway department furnishing materials and the NYA boys doing the labor on it, even the welding of the bridges. It's still being used, still being used. It was very crowded along there. The reason the highway was so anxious to get it put in, they figured that it would save some lives to have people walking on a sidewalk instead of out in the road.

G: They eliminated some traffic hazards, too, didn't they?

Z: Yes, yes.

G: Do you remember the Glen Rose Camp for unemployed women, sort of a training camp?

Z: No, I don't remember too much about it.

G: How about school gymnasiums? Did they work on any school gyms or projects like that?

Ziegler -- II -- 12

- Z: Yes, I think they did, but I don't remember any specific examples of ones that I had.
- G: Inks Dam?
- Z: Yes, they worked down there on a lot of different things.
- G: They had a fish hatchery, didn't they?
- Z: Yes.
- G: Do you recall anything about that?
- Z: No. Calvin [Hazlewood] ought to be able to help you out in West Texas. Calvin right before this was the first I guess you'd call him student-secretary, alumni-secretary that Texas Tech ever had. Did you know that? There ought to be some stuff there that will tie in with LBJ, too. You ask him this afternoon about that. He was the first one they had. That was back in the twenties, late twenties.
- G: There was evidently a problem in Fort Worth with one of the district people named Ferree, C. R. Ferree. Was that his name?
- Z: I came down and replaced him.
- G: What happened on that? Do you recall? Was it just mismanagement?
- Z: Mismanagement, I guess.
- G: I also get some indication that there was a problem with WPA cooperating in some cases, of letting you look at their rolls to determine which families certified by the WPA had youth who would qualify for the NYA. Do you remember that? How did you get around that?
- Z: Well, just work with them and argue with them. That was about the only thing you can do. I remember Sherman Birdwell--you remember Sherman. I had been up to Wichita Falls about two weeks and I had

Ziegler -- II -- 13

some projects, but I was trying to get them started. I believe the assignment slip was called 402 and that told you the youths were to report for work. They had been putting me off and putting me off and putting me off. So I just kept arguing and talking, talking and talking, so finally they said, "Well, Tony, we're going to do it tonight. We're going to start at eight o'clock tonight, Sunday night, and we'll work till midnight." This was in addition to their extra work, you see.

So we was down there working and they were really putting them out. It was about ten o'clock that night, why, old Sherman Birdwell come walking in the office. He'd come up there, got in on a train about nine-thirty. He knew we was in the old Radio Building up there, so he thought he'd walk around--it was a pretty night--and see where we were. He saw a light on up there, so he just came on up. I introduced him to the WPA people there and they showed him what we were doing and all. So Sherman said, "I'll catch the first train out of here in the morning for Amarillo. Hell, I don't see how they could be cooperating any more, working on Sunday night, than they are." He said, "LBJ will be glad to hear it." So I never did see him after that. He left early the next morning on the train. But I was just patient with them long enough till they finally [would] feel sorry and say, "Help him."

G: I guess their position was that they needed to get the breadwinners in the family [working first].

Ziegler -- II -- 14

Z: That was the argument, yes. Yes.

I was noticing in this picture, nearly everybody's got a dark suit on, haven't they?

G: Yes.

How was Lyndon Johnson able to motivate all of you to work those long hours?

Z: Well, I worked down in Austin for several months before I went to Wichita Falls. He was down there working every night, too. It was one thing, the leader was what it was. The boss was going to be there, why, the others ought to show up, too. See what I mean? He wasn't asking you to do anything he wouldn't do.

G: How else was he different from other leaders, let's say, in this connection?

Z: Well, I don't know how you would express it, but Catherine had that feeling--I think I told you--the first time she ever met him and we went down to San Antonio with Lyndon and Lady Bird for dinner. Lyndon and I went to a meeting and then came back. Catherine told me that night, "He'll be president of the United States someday." I said, "How?" She said, "Well, I can just feel it." He just had something that. . . .

G: She was perceptive.

Z: Yes.

G: What were you doing down in San Antonio? Were you meeting with Harry Drought?

Z: Yes.

Ziegler -- II -- 15

G: Do you recall what was discussed in that meeting?

Z: We went down there to see about speeding up the payment of NYA checks.

G: There was a delay on that, wasn't there?

Z: Yes.

G: What was Harry Drought's response?

Z: Well, they were just going to get to it. They had to get a little more help. One of those things, you know.

G: Did that satisfy LBJ?

Z: Well, finally LBJ told him, "If it isn't done right in a couple of days, well, I'll be back again." They knew LBJ would be back again. That's one thing that helped him move things. He wasn't afraid to get in there and argue with them and pressure them.

G: Anything else on the WPA and NYA?

Z: No.

G: Harry Drought?

Did you have any problem with regulations? Did you feel like there were too many regulations?

Z: Well, we thought so for a while, but I guess we didn't have too many. We got them done.

G: Periodically I suppose he would meet with other state directors and go to Washington.

Z: Yes.

G: Do you recall hearing about any of these trips?

Z: No.

Ziegler -- II -- 16

- G: Did he had a good rapport with Jimmie Allred at the time, Governor Allred?
- Z: Yes, Jimmie, his home town, you know, was Wichita Falls. I had Jimmie's district up there. No, Lyndon was a good Democrat all the way and so was Allred. I don't think they ever had any problem at all.
- G: Before we turned on the tape you mentioned that you enjoyed continuing friendship with Lyndon Johnson in the years since he was NYA director. Do you want to mention anything in this connection?
- Z: Maybe I covered this before; I'm sure I did. But I just wanted to mention this. I think I told you about when Lyndon got back from the South Pacific and called me, I met him out at Meacham Field and took him up to Sid Bass' [Richardson's] apartment. Then he asked if he couldn't call Mr. and Mrs. North, and he did. Mr. North was editor of the [Fort Worth] Star Telegram at that time. So they both came down. Lyndon had been with Phil about two days before that in the South Pacific. They had a long visit now. Phil North, he's the one that when Tandy of Tandy Corporation died, Phil took his place. He's heading up Tandy Corporation now. That's an interesting little story.
- G: Did he talk much about his experiences in the South Pacific?
- Z: Not too much, just that he had seen Phil and visited with him down there.
- G: You mentioned earlier, before we turned on the tape, that he sent your daughter and son-in-law a wedding present.

Ziegler -- II -- 17

Z: Yes. It was an old picture of the White House in a gold frame, and both the President and Lady Bird had a little message on there and both had signed it. I'll find out just what's on it and let you all know or have it waiting next time I see you.

G: Good. Is there anything else we haven't covered?

Z: No, I can't think of anything.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview II]

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