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Interview with  
Judge John Miller  
January 5, 1972

Place of Interview: Sinton, Texas

Interviewer: Dr. A. Ray Stephens

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Oral History Collection

Judge John Miller

Interviewer: Dr. A. Ray Stephens

Place of Interview: Sinton, Texas

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Dr. Stephens: This is an interview with Judge John Miller, Sinton, Texas, January 5, 1972. Judge Miller is the judge of the 36th Judicial District of Texas.

Judge Miller: I was born north of Gregory some ten miles at what was then known as the Pocket Farm, which was part of the Rincon division, a part of the Coleman-Fulton Pasture Company Ranch. My father came to Texas with cattle that Mr. Joseph F. Green had bought for the Taft Ranch. And before they were brought to San Patricio County they were taken to the Catarina Ranch in LaSalle/Dimmit counties where they attempted to have them acclimated and get through the tick fever that was prevalent in this area at that time. And he came to San Patricio County about 1899 or 1900. And sometime shortly afterwards married my mother who was from South Carolina. And they resided on the Rincon Ranch north of Gregory where the cattle that had been brought from Canada and the northern states

to the Catarina Ranch in LaSalle and Dimmit counties to get them acclimated, and then after they were there some two years they were brought to San Patricio County and possibly in the west edge of Aransas County, to upgrade the longhorns. I was born on the . . . the Pocket Farm on February 16, 1905, and later my father moved to the old Coleman-Fulton ranchhouse or headquarters that was known as the Rincon which is some four or five miles from the Pocket Farm and about eight miles north of Gregory. Some years after I was born--three or four years old--my father severed his connection with the Coleman-Fulton Pasture Company or Taft Ranch and moved to Bee County where he bought land. We lived there and I really grew up in Bee County and went to high school in Beeville. And after I went through high school and graduated, I went to Texas A & M College and graduated there in 1927. Afterwards I went to work for the Department of Agriculture and worked in Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California, and in Mexico for a year or two. And during the time I was working for the Department of Agriculture, I became interested in the study of law. And went to a night school or two and after some private study in a law office or two I took the Bar examination in 1934 and passed it and

was admitted to the Texas Bar. And in 1936, I came to Sinton and started to practicing law and have lived here continuously since that time except for some four and a half or five years during World War II. And during that time I was in the army. After I left the army early in 1946, I came back to Sinton and ran for district attorney, and was elected and took that office January 1, 1947. And I held that office continuously until May 1, 1957 when I was appointed district judge by Governor Price Daniel. And I have been district judge of the 36th Judicial District since that time. The 36th Judicial District includes in its territory Aransas, Bee, Live Oak, McMullen, and San Patricio counties, an area that runs from the coast about 130-40 miles northwestward.

Stephens: Judge Miller, would you say something about the law abiding nature of the people in your district with particular interest on Aransas County?

Miller: Well, I think Aransas County is a law abiding county. Most of the law violators that come into my court, which handles felony cases--that is cases which are punishable by imprisonment in a penitentiary--are drifters. They come to Rockport for various reasons. Perhaps they stop there because that's the shoreline

and there's no way of moving eastward. And most of the offenses we have there have been those that involved theft, burglary, different sorts of fraud, forgery, hot check writing, and offenses of that nature.

Stephens: Do you have many crimes against persons?

Miller: Well, occasionally.

Stephens: Are these still the drifters, not the permanent residents?

Miller: Well, those really are the ones I think that involve local people.

Stephens: Yes. And what is the general nature of that? Is it qualified drunkenness?

Miller: Assault with intent to murder and occasionally a killing or a murder case.

Stephens: Are most of them involved with the taverns?

Miller: A good many of them occur in or in the vicinity of beer taverns, beer joints.

Stephens: Yes. And this then catagorizes the particular segment of the population there, that is those that frequent the taverns.

Miller: Yes.

Stephens: And you can classify persons, I suppose, by the working class as opposed to the middle?

Miller: Yes. Yes.

Stephens: We were talking about the offenses by category and the persons involved.

Miller: Yes.

Stephens: I notice that we have a particular category of persons who fall in the second place as part time work. Now, do these people come from outside the county? Are they permanent residents there, and then what is the general nature of their lawlessness?

Miller: In Aransas County generally the shrimpers, that is the captains and those who work on the shrimp trawlers, are local people. And the offenses in which they become involved are generally connected with alcohol.

Stephens: Oh. This is after they get back from long trips.

Miller: After they get back and get paid, why, they go to the beer joints and start living it up. And they lose some of their inhibitions and . . . well, anyway, they get in a good many scraps, fights, and sometimes some serious consequences--knives, guns, and things like that.

Stephens: But as far as the permanent residents are concerned, other than the shrimpers, then most of them you don't see in court.

Miller: That's right. That's true.

Stephens: And if they do get involved in litigations, that's the sort of thing that can be handled outside or it's a civil case.

Miller: Civil cases.

Stephens: Do you handle both civil and criminal cases?

Miller: Yes, sir. My court is a court of general jurisdiction. I handle all cases except some of these minor offenses which are handled in Justice of Peace Courts or County Courts.

Stephens: Oh. And what about the civil cases that you've heard. Can you catagorize them in any particular way?

Miller: Well, at one time we had a good many cases that involved titles of land. But lately we have not had many of those, and they're not contested. They're cases in which there's some defect in title and they are brought to clear a title and there is no contest usually, more or less a formality.

Stephens: I see.

Miller: Some damage suits for personal injuries--car wreck cases. We don't have many workmens' compensation cases. I don't think we have many, that is these people that are hurt in the course of employment--sore backs and that sort of thing.

Stephens: What is the ratio between civil and criminal cases in your court?



Miller: That go to trial by jury?

Stephens: Yes.

Miller: I don't know, about . . . I think that I try more criminal jury cases in Aransas County than I do civil cases.

Stephens: I see. Would it be about the same ratio in Judge Joe Wade's court?

Miller: No, he generally handles civil cases in the . . . after the Legislature created his district, it gave him jurisdiction of the odd numbered civil cases.

Stephens: The odd numbered civil?

Miller: Civil cases, generally.

Stephens: Oh, I see.

Miller: And those are the cases he has. He has authority, though, to pick up a different docket and try civil cases that are even numbered cases or try criminal cases. And, of course, I like for him to do that.

Stephens: Yes.

Miller: He's very cooperative, very helpful, and a great Judge. We've gotten along fine.

Stephens: What is the number of his district?

Miller: One hundred and fifty-sixth.

Stephens: One hundred and fifty-sixth.

Miller: Before that was created, we had an overlapping district in San Patricio County only. We had the 36th and the

135th. The 135th District was comprised of Victoria County, Jackson County, Goliad County, Refugio County, Cahoun County, and San Patricio County.

Stephens: Yes.

Miller: And there was so much work at that time that the judge who had the 135th District wanted to cut off a couple of his counties and I think he did. I think he cut off two. And the Legislature created this new district, and the 156th took in the same counties that I have.

Stephens: You mentioned something about the Justice Courts, and you've been associated with the county--Aransas County--since 1957 in an official capacity . . .

Miller: '47, '47.

Stephens: '47? Oh, I'm sorry.

Miller: I went down there as district attorney in 1947.

Stephens: '47. Oh, that's even better then. What has been the nature of the Justice Courts since you were there?

Miller: I think that the justices of the peace in Aransas County are far above the average. We have Judge Miller--no relation of mine--Judge Lawrence Miller.

Stephens: Lawrence Miller.

Miller: Do you know him? Lawrence Miller. And we get telephone calls mixed up, and people come up here and want to pay a speeding fine. And I think he's a very fine

justice of the peace. And then there's another one, a Mr. Rogers, Judge Rogers, who is a lawyer and out at Fulton. And as far as I know he's still justice of the peace out there, and he's a very high type man, a very capable man, and he handles high court in his spare time. I think he's still justice of the peace out there.

Stephens: Yes. But since '47, you think you've had a good quality of justices of the peace.

Miller: Well, we've had one person . . . one fellow came in there and was justice of the peace--a crippled man--and when we appointed an auditor--county auditor--to audit all books in the county including those of the justices of the peace. And this justice of the peace immediately disappeared and left no forwarding address.

Stephens: Oh.

Miller: And I think his records were in something of a mess. But generally, outside of that one incident, I don't know of anything that you could call official corruption in J.P. courts or any other of the offices or officers in Aransas County.

Stephens: I understand according to law, the district judge or judges appoint the county auditor.

Miller: That's correct.

Stephens: This is your only official connection with the county government, is that correct?

Miller: That's right. I never go in commissioner's court meetings. I rarely, if ever, make any requests or suggestions. I take whatever there is and try to get along without getting involved in local politics. I try to stay out of county elections. Generally, I'm friendly and like to pat everyone on the back and encourage everyone. And I think right here in this county in one of the commissioners precincts--the one over at Mathis--and the three people that are in it, I understand all three of them say that I'm backing their opponents (chuckle).

Stephens: Well, as far as the county auditor of Aransas County is concerned, now you appoint them and if they don't want it . . .

Miller: Judge Wade and I appoint the county auditor. We always have agreed unanimously. We have a Miss Gussie Dean . . . she is the county auditor and the bookkeeper, and I think she's doing a pretty good job. She's a hard worker. Do you know her?

Stephens: Yes, yes.

Miller: And I think people . . . I don't know. I think they should like her.

Stephens: Yes. Well now, what I was getting at . . . if one doesn't perform satisfactorily then you hire another.

Miller: We try to replace him or her.

Stephens: Oh.

Miller: She's . . . well, we have a lady out at McMullen County that does the county auditing out there. And we're made it a practice generally to try to get certified public accountants. But I don't know if they . . . that policy that we started with didn't work so well. We've found that sometimes people who are competent accountants--not necessarily certified public accountants--make the best county auditors.

Stephens: I see. You also appoint members of the grand jury.

Miller: No.

Stephens: Well, you appoint the commissioners who select. . .

Miller: Yes, the commissioners who select the grand jurors.

Stephens: And then you have a choice of their selection?

Miller: That's right. Absolutely at the discretion of the district judge that handles criminal cases, which is me.

Stephens: Right. And you can pick the type persons that you want or reject those on the list that the commissioners hand to you?

Miller: No, no. I don't. I don't know. There's some question about . . . you mean shuffling the names of the twenty

members of the panel that the grand jury commissioners selected?

Stephens: Well, now do they select the members of the panel . . .

Miller: Yes.

Stephens: . . . or do they select a certain percentage more than they need?

Miller: Some interest in how grand jurors are selected: the district judge under the statutes selects three to five citizens of the county involved as grand jury commissioners. And my practice is to select five from different parts of the county. I instruct those five members of the commission to each select four high type, qualified citizens of their county for service as grand jurors, to write the names of the four that each of them select on slips of paper, and put the slips in a box or hat. Then they are instructed to shake the box or stir up the names and draw the names from the receptacle, whatever it may be, and list them one by one as they are drawn. And when the term of court opens and we qualify the grand jury panel, those people have all been summoned to appear at ten o'clock in the morning of the first day of the new term of court. The members of the panel are sworn to answer questions concerning their qualifications. And I

think those qualifications are that they are resident citizens of the county concerned, and asked whether or not they have any legal excuses--that is they are over sixty-five or not well or can't read and write English, which sometimes we encounter here in this area. And after the excuses are heard and made, if any of them, I . . . have the clerk call the list. The first twelve names remaining on the list after the absentees and excuses have been taken from the list. The first twelve are seated as grand jurors.

Stephens: Oh, I see.

Miller: I don't shuffle them. Some judges, I understand, take the list and . . . see someone they don't think would make a very good grand juror and he may be number three on the list, they put him down to number twenty and so on. But I don't like that and I don't do it.

Stephens: I understand that you've had politics as a hobby for some time.

Miller: Well, I don't know (chuckle).

Stephens: (Chuckle) And I would like to have for our Oral History Program your opinion of various Texas politicians. If we might begin with the governors that you've known and give something of an appraisal of their administrations.

Miller: Well, I've known some of them casually through the years starting, I guess, with Governor Dan Moody, who I think was really one of the fine governors, great governors, and a very good influence in Austin. And as long as he was alive and active, we had someone there that did something about official corruption in high places. He became inactive about 1957 or '58. I think Governor Moody's interest in public affairs in Austin brought about the prosecution of those that were involved in what is known as the land scandal. He and a young district attorney there named Les Proctor caused some to be prosecuted and some members of the Legislature to leave Austin or not stand for re-election, or some people in politics left Austin. But I don't know of anyone that has taken his place. Other governors that I knew . . . that is among others is Jimmy Allred. I think he was a personable, very likeable man. And as far as I know a fine governor. He was succeeded by W. Lee O'Daniel. I didn't know Mr. O'Daniel, Governor O'Daniel other than having heard him speak. . . on the street corner down here and the couthouse lawn and things like that. I don't know that he made a bad governor. And then after World War II, we had Governor Buford Jester. And I



really didn't know him. And after Governor Jester we had Governor Shivers. Governor Shivers was a very strong governor, I think you might say. And he is still in politics. I don't think he's much influence in politics anymore. He was Governor in the early 50's. And he was succeeded by Price Daniel. And Price Daniel was followed by John Connally. Everyone knows Governor Connally.

Stephens: What is your appraisal of John Connally as governor?

Miller: Well, I think he was a very able governor. His first political office and I suppose he made some mistakes in some of the people he liked and appointed and who weren't great in any way. But he had a great deal of . . . he was a great personality, you know. Have you met him?

Stephens: No.

Miller: A lot of charm, magnetism, a good speaker, warm smile and very likeable and a very keen mind. He grasped things quickly and has a tremendous memory. He'd meet you today and just for a moment, very likely he'd remember you three years from now when he would see you somewhere and tell you where he saw you.

Stephens: What would you categorize him as--a liberal, conservative, moderate, what?

Miller: Well, I think he's getting over on the conservative side.

Stephens: But as governor, what would he be on the spectrum?

Miller: Well, I think he would be conservative.

Stephens: Is this your particular political philosophy, too?

Miller: No, I don't know that I have any, you know. Of course, I run as a Democrat and I vote the Democratic ticket. I wasn't very happy with it last presidential election. That's when we get interested in whether we're Republicans or Democrats. And I did vote for Humphrey and really felt glad that Nixon got elected. I don't know whether that made me a conservative . . . I think we have too much of a give-a-way program by the government, you know . . . it seems like a good many of the people in the federal government think that they can solve all problems by grants and aids and just a give-a-way program. We have a lot of people on relief in this county. I suppose it's hard for the people that are on relief to get jobs. Most of them are Latin. They're not really employable other than in farm labor. I don't think they want to do that. And they give them these so-called commodities and they're dissatisfied with commodities. They want food stamps now. I understand food stamps are negotiable. You can go down to the grocery store and

buy anything you want, trade them, and wind up with a case of beer instead of a sack of flour. I don't really know. That's the general impression I have of food stamps.

Stephens: South Texas politics has always been a fascinating thing in state political studies, and you've been concerned with South Texas politics for a number of years . . .

Miller: Well, I've lived here, you know. It's been . . .

Stephens: . . . well, you've known many of the prominent politicians. What would be your general summary of South Texas politics?

Miller: Well, I don't know that it's . . .

Stephens: Does it differ from other parts of the state?

Miller: Well, I don't know . . . about politics in other parts of the state. You know, I think . . . there's a difference from county to county. Refugio County, and this county, and this county and Aransas County, this county and Bee County, but those . . . those differences are not really very great out in the west of the district. Live Oak County and McMullen County, a great many of the people out there are land owners and they're getting to be large land owners . . . they go Republican quite often. Last election, 1970, we . . .

turned out the guard from Lloyd Bentsen for the senate. And I think all the counties in this district went Democratic. Bentsen got about 5,000 vote lead in these five counties that I had. And I took an interest in him. I think in 1942 I was stationed down on the border-- one of those little cavalry posts--and we had about . . . oh, I don't know, a 100 recruits that we sent in and among those 100 was Lloyd Bentsen. I was the commanding officer of this little detachment for I guess some kind of a basic training program. And Lloyd Bentsen had become twenty-one years of age and was a senior in law school in Austin and he resigned the day he was twenty-one and came into the . . . joined the army, and was sent down there. And I did some work with those recruits or selectees or whatever they were and got acquainted with Bentsen, and remember that I promoted him to corporal, I guess his first promotion. And he was there three or four months. In June, he wanted to go to Austin to take the Bar examination and he asked for the leave--a furlough--to go up there, a weeks furlough, and the commanding officer wouldn't give it to him so I gave him--I had the authority to give three-day passes--so I gave him two three-day passes back to back, which enabled him to go up there

and take it. So he went up there and passed it. And so after that he wanted to go to the air force to take the officer training--pilot training--or something. And I was on some board--officer's candidate board or something--and the board passed him for this particular assignment that he wanted. And soon thereafter . . . I believe the next spring--I'd left then. I was to Rio Grande City at that time. I left there and went up to Laredo. And he came into Brownsville--there was an International Airport there, a pretty good one--flying a B-24. He was going to take it down the coast of Brazil and then from Brazil across the Atlantic and back up . . . I don't know, England or somewhere. And I missed him. He did come up to Fort Ringgold where I had been, and where he thought I was, and called me up at Laredo. And then I didn't see him until after World War II when he was in politics in Hidalgo County, county judge, and then in Congress. Except for a Christmas card or two I lost track of him until probably last January and he called me. And well, you know, old friend, old acquaintance. I really got myself committed. And I was not for Mr. Yarborough. I thought he was ineffective as far as we were concerned. And I started trying to help

Mr. Bentsen with some enthusiasm, and we got him over down here.

Stephens: Now, you're close friends with Bentsen now . . .

Miller: Well . . .

Stephens: . . . and he contacts you occasionally?

Miller: Oh, yes. He calls . . .

Stephens: On area politics?

Miller: Calls and yes, wants me to see him up . . . I don't get around . . . well, there's always some . . . he's wanting me to send him a list of key men the last communication I had from him. I haven't done that. I don't know who the key men are.

Stephens: Are they district key men or county?

Miller: Well, no, from the district.

Stephens: So you're kind of his contact . . .

Miller: Well, I think so, perhaps, one of them.

Stephens: Good, good. Then what about with Secretary Connally? Are you his man in the district, too?

Miller: Well, I don't know. Of course, he's interested in me now because his brother, Wayne, is running for lieutenant governor.

Stephens: Oh (chuckle).

Miller: And since Governor Connally has been in Washington he's called me one time and that is all. And he says,

"Well, what are they talking about down there? What are they saying about me?" You know, "What do they think? What do you think?" You know, he'd put these questions to you and . . .

Stephens: Just done that once?

Miller: Just done that once. But now that Wayne has thrown his hat in the ring for lieutenant governor, I suppose I'll hear from him again.

Stephens: (Chuckle) The secretary is supporting his brother then?

Miller: I'm positive that he is.

Stephens: Well, I mean actively though.

Miller: Well, I think so. I hear that. He hasn't called me. He hasn't asked me, you know. But I've heard from people that have seen him and been with him, you know, he's very interested in his baby brother. He's got to be lieutenant governor.

Stephens: That's natural.

Miller: Natural. I think . . . you know . . . just take the candidates appearing on the scene--that is candidates for lieutenant governor--and put them all out there and you look at them, I think Connally makes a good impression. I think he's got a good chance to get elected because he is Wayne Connally. He's John Connally's brother, who is the Secretary . . . you know when Wayne ran for the senate . . . in which he is now a

member of the Texas Senate. His platform seemed to me to be, "I'm the brother of the governor," and "I can talk to the governor. I can get more from the governor." You know, that was . . . well, we thought that. We believed that down here.

Stephens: But you're not in Connally's district, though--senatorial district--Wayne Connally?

Miller: Well . . .

Stephens: Aren't you in the district from Corpus Christi?

Miller: That's right, but Wayne Connally had part of my district.

Stephens: Oh, part of your district, I see, your judicial district. Right.

Miller: And still does.

Stephens: I see.

Miller: He had Bee County and Live Oak County . . .

Stephens: McMullen?

Miller: . . . and McMullen County. Those were his counties.

Stephens: Right.

Miller: And, of course, I did have some contact with him, see him. Last time I saw him I saw him in Austin. I said, "Well, are you running for lieutenant governor?" And he said, "I'm not sure yet. Keep your eyes open and your powder dry, though. You'll be a'hearing from me."

Stephens: Are you close to any of the other former governors?



Were you ever close to Price Daniel?

Miller: Yes, I think so.

Stephens: Were you his man in South Texas, too?

Miller: Well, I'd say in this county.

Stephens: In the county.

Miller: Yes. I think so. I'd say we were good friends. You know, I was district attorney when he was attorney general and got acquainted with him. I supported him when he ran for United States Senate and was elected in 1952, and in 1956 he ran for governor. And I don't know who his principal opposition was, but anyway I was for him. I thought he was the best man and we. . .

Stephens: Ralph Yarborough was his principal opposition.

Miller: I think Yarborough carried San Patricio County, but anyway if he did, I went down in this county with Price Daniel and Price Daniel eeked out a small majority in the state--probably 3 to 4,000 votes--and won. I think Governor Daniel was not aggressive enough. He sat on his hands and he let those people in the Legislature run over him in one way or another, but I think morally and ethically he's a high type man.

Stephens: Yes. Now, in South Texas, we have some counties that practice boss politics. Has that ever been the case in San Patricio or Aransas?

Miller: No, I don't think so.

Stephens: Nothing like the Duke of Duval over here?

Miller: No, no. I saw George Parr Sunday.

Stephens: You don't have assault on a Sinton man or anything like that do you?

Miller: No, no. I know George Parr and have for, I guess, getting close to fifty years. He used to go to high school, I think, in Corpus Christi, and I used to be in that area. And . . . oh, they used to have these country dances and things. They used to have . . . well, anyway I . . . he was a big kid when I was a little one, but I remember him back in the '20's. And I sort of kept up with him through the years. But Duval County is incredible, you know. It's just unbelievable. And I know them and, personally, I . . . well, I like them. I like George. He's always been nice to me. If I went over there, you know, and wanted . . . oh, wanted some kind of accommodation, well, I'm sure George would see that I got it. He was a nephew that county judge over there--Archer Parr--who is sort of a different type than George. He really doesn't take much interest in Duval County. He's hard to find. And I know a good many other people. I saw George Parr at his sister's home--Mrs. Marie Thompson,

who is Archer Parr's mother, the county judge's mother. My wife and I think a great deal of Mrs. Thompson, and we saw her New Year's Day. She has a really lovely home out in the chapparal, a kind of an oasis. We had a visit with her, and while we were there her brother, George Parr, and his wife came in. Of course, I knew Lyndon Johnson. I first encountered him in 1934, when he was an aide or secretary to Congressman Kleberg-- tall, very slender and a handsome young man, very personable. And he left here and sort of disappeared from South Texas. Meantime, he'd gotten elected to Congress from Austin and gotten involved in Austin politics, and he reappeared down here in 1948 when he ran for the Senate. And . . . well, I was acquainted with his manager for this congressional district, a man named Fenner Roth in Corpus Christi. And Johnson had appointed some of his friends who had gone to the San Marcos teacher's school, state college. And some of them weren't very effective. Anyway, I was for Johnson. I liked him and thought he should be the senator, that Governor Coke Stevenson would be over his head. The water was too deep for him up there in Washington, and San Patricio County went for Johnson. In the primary, Aransas County went for Johnson, I

mean for Stevenson. After the primary, Mr. Roth and I went to Aransas County and we contacted Emory Spencer and Weldon Cabiness, and they agreed to and did write each poll tax payer a card endorsing Lyndon Johnson. And when that was done went down both sides of the street. There was a fellow there, of a controversial sort, that had run for sheriff, Roy Hinton. We went over and made all the usual overtures to Mr. Hinton and in other words, we went up one side of the street and down the other. In the run-off election, Johnson carried the county by . . . well, there weren't many votes there, but anyway by a small majority . . . Bee County was where Governor Coke Stevenson made his announcement and had very strong backing. He was down there as a guest of Mr. Jim Daugherty who used to be a very influential man, a leader in South Texas, and Bee County went for Stevenson. Of course, I knew some of the people involved in the land slide that came out of . . . really came out of Jim Wells County. I know and am a friend of Clarence Martens, who was the executive chairman of the Democratic Party in Jim Wells County in 1948. I knew Homer Dean, who was a young attorney then. I think he was either county attorney or district attorney. And I have met the old man who was

one of Pancho Villa's old soldiers that had Box 13, the precinct chairman. And I remember about two weeks before the election they had a meeting of the Johnson supporters in the Kohler Hotel in Beeville. And Governor Johnson had his brother, Sam Houston Johnson, his younger brother, down there to tell us about the situation. And he said, "Stevenson controls the machinery of the party. We've got to have poll watchers. If you don't do these things, Stevenson people are going to steal the election." Oh, he had some names and some figures and one thing or another, you know, sort of supporting his thesis. And at that time, though, Homer Dean, this young lawyer from Jim Wells County and Clarence Martens, stood up and I think Dean had Martens stand too, and said, "Mr. Johnson, we're Clarence Martens and Homer Dean from Jim Wells County and we want you to know, and we want Lyndon to know, that in Jim Wells County we control the machinery of politics." And it wasn't but two or three weeks later when they held the returns open in Jim Wells County . . . all the others from 263 counties had come in and been approved and finalized and then they got the final count from Box 13 and they certified the returns from Jim Wells County and took them, or

perhaps an amended return and sent them to the secretary of state, and those returns or the amended return from Box 13 they gave Lyndon Johnson the election, and sent him on the way to the Presidency of the United States (chuckle).

Stephens: So you were involved in it just on the outside.

Miller: Oh, well hardly.

Stephens: An interested observer!

Miller: . . . yes, I hadn't . . . but those things I . . . that much I did have interest in.

Stephens: Can you think of any other interesting political events in which you are acquainted?

Miller: Well, I don't know. Elections are always interesting. You know, you're concerned about the people that are involved.

Stephens: Do you ever go to the state convention?

Miller: No, I've never been to any kind of party convention, precinct or any other.

Stephens: You didn't go to a precinct convention?

Miller: No. Nor state, never have been to one.

Stephens: I see. Do you stay away from a convention for any particular purpose?

Miller: No, I don't know. I just never have thought it was the place for me to be.

Stephens: I see. Well, one last question. Would you mind naming the persons you consider to be the prominent or influential residents of Aransas County since you've been concerned with it since 1947?

Miller: Well, I think Travis Johnson and Dave Picton, Zeph Roquette, and County Judge Fox. I don't remember his first name, county judge when I went down there. Emory Spencer . . .

Stephens: For what particular reason now would you associate them with prominence?

Miller: Well, they've been business and civic leaders and Judge Fox was a political leader down there at the time I went down there. And he stayed county judge until he died and then Emory Spencer was appointed by the commissioner's court, I believe, to take his place, and Emory was there two or three years and then he got out. Since then Judge John Wendell has been there. And I'm sure he is . . . I think he is county government in Aransas County. Do you know him?

Stephens: Yes.

Miller: I think he dominates county government. That's my impression.

Stephens: You mentioned Zeph Roquette and Dave Picton. Why would you name them?

Miller: Well, Dave Picton was . . . had the Picton Lumber Company and he and Travis Johnson had the Picton Lumber Company and the Johnson Fish Company. Picton and Johnson were partners. And they were brothers-in-law and business partners. And Travis Johnson's still alive . . . I think. These old-timers die off so rapidly I'm always afraid to ask, you know, "Where is Travis?" or "Where is Bill?" You know. They were good men and they were interested in the welfare of the community. I imagine Travis Johnson has got a lot of friends and influence right now. Do you know him? Have you met him?

Stephens: No, I've heard the name. I don't know him.

Miller: Yes. Some other people there that were influential were the Jacksons. I think S. F. Jackson--Ford Jackson--Jackson Fish Company . . . Rockport used to be, you know, synonymous with fish and oysters and shrimp and those four people--Roquette, Johnson, Picton and Jackson were all . . . well, they were the fish, shrimp, and oyster business in Rockport and Fulton. I don't know . . . the Roquettes are out of the shrimp business altogether--the fish and oyster and shrimp business. Johnson and Picton have sold their interest. I don't know whether Jackson is the Jackson Seafood



any longer or not. I think there is. One of the boys, there were two sons--Jim and Norvell. Norvell is still alive. Jim's dead, you know. I think the father passed away a good many years ago.