

NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION
NUMBER
558

Interview with
BROOKS HOLT
OCTOBER 13, 1980

Place of Interview: Denton, Texas

Interviewer: Autry Acrey

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Approved: *Brooks Holt*
(Signature)

Date: Oct. 13, 1980

Oral History Collection

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Mr. Acrey: This is Autry Acrey interviewing Mr. Brooks Holt for the North Texas State University Oral History Collection. The interview is taking place on Monday, October 13, 1980, in the Denton Municipal Building. I'm interviewing Mr. Holt in order to obtain his recollections concerning the National Youth Administration (NYA).

Thank you, Mr. Holt, for agreeing to this interview concerning your background and your work with the NYA. Would you tell us, first, something about your background--where you were born and how many people there were in your family.

Mr. Holt: I was born in San Antonio on November 22, 1912. Later, of course, along came a brother who is four years younger than I and a sister who died in 1937 in child-birth. My father was a Baptist minister in Texas for fifty years. My mother was the daughter of a Baptist minister. We lived all over Texas during my growing-up years. Just to kind of give you an example, we lived in Cleburn; we lived in Jacksonville; I lived in Corpus Christi; I lived in

Kerrville; I lived in Robstown; I lived in Edinburg; I lived in McAllen for four years; and I lived in Santa Rosa, which is a small place but a very interesting place. My folks then lived in Cotulla. When my father died-- he was seventy-some-odd years old--he had a church that was at New Braunfels. He was the one who started a campaign to build a brand new church from a little white frame building.

Acrey: So you have seen just about all of Texas.

Holt: Well, yes, I have. Particularly back in those days, you know, a preacher stayed about a couple of years and went from one place to another. It was tough on the kids, you know, because we would lose our friends and would have to make new ones. I remember sobbing at night sometimes, thinking about my friends. I wanted to see them.

My sister was a talented pianist and composer. She graduated from Mary Hardin-Baylor College. She taught piano at San Marcos Military Academy prior to her marriage. She composed two beautiful songs that were songs at our wedding. It was very beautiful music. She was quite a composer. She got an Étude . . . is that what it is? It's a musical organization. She got an Étude. I think that's what it is. She got some type of scholarship for that, and she went to Mary Hardin-Baylor College.

Acrey: Could you tell me something about your education? Where

were you educated? What colleges and universities did you attend?

Holt: I attended, as I told you, what is now Pan American University. It was Edinburg Junior College at the time. It is a very pretty place. I don't know if you have been there or not. In 1932, I went to San Marcos, where I enrolled at Southwest Texas State University. At that time there were about, oh, I would say, 550 students.

This was in the deep Depression, of course, 1930, 1932, or in there. There was one person--one guy--that had a car. Nobody else that I knew had a car. It was a Model-T. It was his mother's. He got to bring it to school. Everybody thought that was great. But walking was the deal at that time. It was a real close-knit school. Nobody had any money to amount to anything. Particularly, I didn't have any. But I didn't have to ask my dad for a penny.

I got a job at this military school, which was about half-a-mile or less from the campus of Southwest Texas State. I took care of seventy-five little boys night and day. I didn't go to the library at the university very often because I didn't have time to do it, but I got by some way and graduated. But anyway, this was a most interesting job for me. I recall that the little boys . . . some of them were very lonely. They were from

broken homes--most of them. Some of them were there because they were from the ranching country. Their folks would send them. We even had the son of the president of Mexico.

Acrey: Really.

Holt: Calles, I believe, is the way you pronounce it. We had people who were from all over the country. All of the people had to have some money because it took quite a bit of money to keep these kids there.

I got for that--and I was grateful for it--I got my board, room, laundry, cleaning and pressing, hair-cuts, and a pass to the picture show. A pass to the picture show was worth a dime at that time. That's how much it cost. Hamburgers were six for a quarter.

Acrey: Six for a quarter!

Holt: Six hamburgers for twenty-five cents. So I didn't have any money, but I didn't need a whole lot of money. My dad, once in awhile, would send me a five-dollar bill, and that was making me rich. Of course, like I have always said, when you have bad problems financially . . . when we got so much . . . so many people have a lot of affluence, and that's the worse thing in the world. When everybody's in the same boat, it doesn't bother you. Well, in fact, it didn't bother me.

But that was the way I got started out at Southwest

Texas State University. I worked there for four years at the academy and finished my bachelor of arts degree.

Acrey: What was your major?

Holt: My major was English and journalism. I was editor of the College Star--now it's the University Star--for about a year-and-a-half. This was three or four years after Lyndon Johnson was editor. I think I told you that several years ago, the editors of the Star were honored at Homecoming, and Lyndon Johnson was one of them. My wife and I went down, and they unveiled a bronze plaque--they put it on the main building--of all the editors of the College Star. This was the only time my name has been on a bronze plaque. However, I do have my name on the senior citizens' building in the Denton City Park and also in the two city recreation centers.

Acrey: Did you ever have any contact with Lyndon Johnson while you were there at San Marcos?

Holt: Yes.

Acrey: Did you know him?

Holt: Yes. I had quite a bit on contact with him. We were together at our annual fraternity get-together, starting in 1936. These reunions are still held in Austin each June.

Acrey: What did you do between the time that you finished college and started working with the NYA?

Holt: I was director of Camp ABC, owned by the Academy, on the Blanco River near Wimberly, Texas. After the camp closed, I became dean of boys at the Academy and taught English and economics. I stayed there until 1939.

My wife and I were married in 1937. By that time I was assistant coach of the football team there at San Marcos Academy. We met after she had been hired by the Academy. She had graduated from Texas Woman's University (then C.I.A.). She was only eighteen years old when she graduated. She had moved along fast in the lower grades. They used to do this, you see.

She came down, and, sure enough, in four weeks we were engaged. I had a date with her every night. But the interesting part about it is that I didn't have a car, and she didn't have a car, and I didn't have any buddy who had a car. Every date we had was a walking date until we got married. If there was any courting to do, it was under a tree or something. You know, it was just walking and holding hands and things like that.

Acrey: What is your wife's name?

Holt: Her name is "Donnie." This is her nick-name, and everybody calls her "Donnie." Her full name was Alice Margaret Donoho. Her father was an English professor at TWU for forty years. This year "Donnie" was the chairman of the homecoming for Texas Woman's University. It was their

seventy-fifth anniversary. She was the chairman of that this year. Everybody in Denton knows her because she is involved in community affairs. This is where she was born. That's how I came to Denton.

Acrey: Explain to me how you made the transition from working there at San Marcos to working with the NYA in East Texas.

Holt: Well, in 1939 we decided that we would leave our teaching jobs at San Marcos Academy--the wife and I. The reason was that we were required to live in the dormitory, and we wanted to have a family and a home. So we decided that we would go to Denton because that is where she lived. I took a gamble, and she took a gamble, and we came to Denton.

I got a job with the Southwestern Life Insurance Company. I sold (chuckle) a policy to both university presidents and several other people here. I did pretty good with it, but I got to the point, like a lot of other people do when they sell insurance, that I felt like that anytime I invited somebody to the house or something . . . I felt like they felt like I was doing it so I could sell them something. This bugged me. I didn't particularly like it, anyway. I made acceptable money but was not happy.

I got a message from Lyndon Johnson, State Director of the NYA, asking me to join the staff of the NYA, and

I accepted. It paid more money. Under today's money market, it would be nothing, but then it was a pretty good salary. I first went to San Antonio and worked in Personnel. Then they moved me down to Corpus Christi as the personnel director of the southern part of Texas.

After six months I was transferred to Marshall, which had probably the largest shops in the entire NYA setup. I became the district director there. We had training shops in Lufkin, Tyler, Kilgore, Longview, Texarkana, plus other smaller units. Marshall had the big shops.

Acrey: Marshall was your headquarters?

Holt: Yes. We had a large office and a resident center that were built in a park there. There was a swimming pool, barracks, dining room, and small hospital.

Acrey: How many were on the staff?

Holt: Oh, I would say we had probably twenty-two on the office staff and six in the resident areas. Then we had another twelve instructors in the various and sundry shops. We even had a foundry. You do know what a foundry is, don't you?

Acrey: Yes.

Holt: We had a pattern shop that made patterns for the foundry; we had an automobile mechanic shop; we had a welding shop, acetylene and electric; we had a machine shop; we had a sheet metal shop. I believe that's all.

Anyway, these NYA trainees came from the very poorest families. The program was for youths who were financially deprived. Really, it was a junior WPA-type thing. They had to be a certain age; they couldn't be over twenty-one. They had to need it. You know, they needed some help. We found that out in East Texas that there were so many of them out in those piney woods that needed work and didn't have anything that we filled up pretty quickly in all of our shops.

We fed them on-the-job. Trainees were given room and board. They got thirty dollars a month in cash. They were taken care of when they were sick. They were helped by some of our people who were checking with the big industries to help them to get to those jobs after they had finished their training time. Our personnel people worked diligently to place trainees in jobs. We ran those shops like a private industry. They were run exactly like a regular money-making shop. Trainees punched a clock, and they wore coveralls on which was attached an identification badge. Tight security was practiced. The badge had their name and number on it, and they had to check through the gate to go into these places. It was a pleasant surprise to me to see these trainees, after they finished our course, which was usually a couple of years or so, go to good jobs in wartime plants at a very

fine rate of pay. Most of our people were hired at Hughes Shipyard in Houston and Consolidated Aircraft in Fort Worth.

I recall one fellow in particular, Joe Appling. He came from a destitute family, and he had a lard can with him all the time--when he first came there. This was before we started to feed them in our mess hall. We noticed at each lunchtime he was eating something with his fingers from that lard can. I wondered what he had in there to eat, you know, when he ate lunch. I found out he had cold turnip greens in that thing--cold turnip greens. He was a quiet sort of fellow. The supervisor said that he was top-flight. This young man finished his welding course with a high grade. He got a job down at the shipyards--the Hughes Shipyards in Houston. They were building ships at the time. Eventually, I learned . . . he was gone about three years. He wrote me thanking me for what we had done for him. He was a welding foreman there at that big shipyard--telling the others how to do it.

Acrey: You said there were a lot of participants. About how many participants did you have there?

Holt: At one time in our shops, we had about two hundred youths. Now this is not the actual figures and may not be completely right. That's a guess.

Acrey: I see. Did the students stay there the entire time, or did you have some staying for a short period then leaving and others staying for long periods? Was the attrition rate very high?

Holt: More stayed for the prescribed course than left before finishing. Several were drafted early in the service, and many more were drafted later. Several others made no effort to learn, so they were released.

This was a good job to most of them. Getting food was a problem, and they were also with people their own age and so forth. It was giving them a chance to make something out of themselves, to learn something, and all of these type of things. It was just too good for them to run away from. We just didn't have hardly any to leave, unless, say, they were drafted. Quite a few of them were drafted.

Acrey: You said a moment ago that at first there were no women. Were women working there, or young ladies working there, when you arrived, or was this something that started later?

Holt: It started later.

Acrey: When did this start?

Holt: I don't remember exactly the time. It must have been in late 1942.

Acrey: What did they do? Did they work in the foundry and pattern shops like the young men?

Holt: No, they worked mostly in the sheet metal shop and machine shop. Most of them were white girls. As you know, East Texas at that time was very discriminatory about blacks and whites. That's probably gone away for good, I hope. But these girls did real well. Later, they put on a shift of just black girls. They did well, and many were hired.

Acrey: All by themselves?

Holt: All by themselves.

Acrey: I see. So it was not a completely integrated facility?

Holt: No, it was not completely integrated. It depended on the shift. The shift was there. It was not integrated at that time.

Acrey: Were the students housed in this camp, or did they come in from home?

Holt: They came from their homes originally, but later on they were housed on the project. They were housed in the dormitories that we had. We had a place for them to eat. They stayed there and got their thirty bucks and got their room and board.

Acrey: Are you saying the blacks were housed there, also?

Holt: No, they weren't.

Acrey: The blacks were not housed at the project?

Holt: They were eventually, yes, but they were in a separate barracks.

Acrey: What was your pay . . . if this is not too personal?
How much did you make as director of the district in Texas?

Holt: In the East Texas district?

Acrey: Yes.

Holt: My salary at that time was \$350 a month. It was a good job--an excellent job. The reason it was is that they furnished the station wagon that I drove. That amount looked good since we were furnished an apartment, plus free meals, utilities, etc. We had a little boy by that time, and we lived in an apartment on the complex.

Acrey: So you were getting almost \$350 free? You didn't have to pay for food and lodging, so that was a great benefit.

Holt: That's right. It was a good job.

Acrey: Did your wife work there, too?

Holt: No, she didn't work. She took care of the baby, and then we had a second child while we were there--two boys by that time.

Acrey: How long did you stay with the NYA?

Holt: About three years.

Acrey: What were your duties as director?

Holt: Well, I guess like all directors of anything, you oversee it, pick good personnel to help you, try to find the best people you can have so that you don't have the problems that quite often most managers have. I directed the staff,

followed federal policies, handled budget allocations, inspected shops, and conferred with people in each shop in the district. I also signed correspondence and trained personnel. I even did PR work with news releases and speeches before service clubs in Marshall. I hired the best personnel for the available jobs in the office, in the shops, and on the project. I had a very pleasant stay there myself--I really did.

We had quite a few girls who had to do a lot of typing and so forth because we were contacting so many people and putting so many people on the job and sending so many people to places like the shipyards, like I told you. Consolidated Aircraft took a lot of them . . . at Fort Worth, you know. It's now something else. With personnel, finance, and so forth, there were about twenty secretaries, I guess.

Acrey: Twenty?

Holt: Yes. There was just a volume of paperwork necessary for that thing. Of course, we had to keep up with all the expenses and all the things that happened at the shop. We had to deal with supervisors and all this kind of stuff.

Acrey: Did you make trips to other NYA projects?

Holt: Oh, yes. Quite often I would drive a station wagon full of trainees down to Inks Dam Project on the Colorado River. They had a big shop down there that was different

from ours. The kids wanted to go down, and we took them there, and then we went to other places with these kids. Sometimes we would take them to their job. We would tell the man there what kind of people they were. It helped a lot, and it gave us a chance to run around a little, see (chuckle).

Acrey: What about inspection trips? Did you have to make those to see if the other camps were doing what they were supposed to do?

Holt: Well, now they are not . . . you call it a camp. It's not. Maybe I called it a camp, but it's a project. All of these are. Anyway, I visited regularly to determine any needs, whether training quality was maintained, and discussed any budget problems. I was on the road quite a bit. I'd have to go over to Tyler; I'd have to go to Kilgore; I'd have to go to all of those larger places like Lufkin, Texarkana, to check to see what was going on. I just dealt with the managers there. That's all I did. I'd go through the shops and see what was happening. Most of them were doing a good job for us. Of course, there are always a few problems.

Acrey: What were some of the problems you encountered?

Holt: Well, sometimes they didn't get their paperwork properly done, and we couldn't tell where they were. As far as finances is concerned, that had to be really right. There

couldn't be anything where people could steal the government's money. So whenever anybody went to a place to inspect it, to see if it was running right, well, we'd look into all of these aspects, naturally.

Acrey: Did you find a case of fraud or cases of fraud where people were trying to embezzle money?

Holt: No, not but one time, and that was at the Lufkin project. Somebody down in the Lufkin shop had stolen a lot of welding rods and a protective helmet. I say somebody. I don't want to name him because he's doing all right now. But that was it (chuckle).

Acrey: Were you ever audited or visited by supervisors?

Holt: Oh, yes---every four months.

Acrey: Who was the NYA director for the state of Texas?

Holt: Lyndon Johnson was the first one, and then Jesse Kellam was the second director that I was under.

Acrey: Did you have a budget that you had to work under?

Holt: Yes, we worked under a budget.

Acrey: How much was allotted for your area?

Holt: I wish I could tell you. But, I declare, I haven't thought about that in a long time. I do know it was peanuts compared to today.

Acrey: Was it in the hundreds of thousands of dollars?

Holt: No, no, not at that time. It would be closer to fifty or sixty thousand.

Acrey: Fifty or sixty thousand?

Holt: I really don't remember, but I do remember a dollar was worth a dollar then.

Acrey: I know what you mean. Was there very much participation in the Marshall project from the community?

Holt: Not just a whole lot. We didn't get very good press coverage for a while. I finally went up to talk to the editor about it to explain what was going on. I took him down through the shops and barracks. He hadn't seen them. Then they began publishing some pretty complimentary stories. One came out in the . . . a brochure in the Houston Chronicle, showing all sections of our facility in Marshall, Texas, which I was real proud of. Then later this same man, after I had come to Denton, moved to Denton and bought the Denton Record-Chronicle--Mr. Cross. We became good friends. He was a nice fellow. But the paper at one time wanted the program to be phased out.

Acrey: Why?

Holt: Well, they said it was too expensive. But what really phased it out was that . . . and it did phase out while I was there. There were a lot of young fellows that had been drafted. The thing got so that it shouldn't be operated because there were too few people for too much equipment. That's the problem I had with the paper. But

after it was over, and after it had an editorial about how it ought to be phased out, which it should have, they had some awfully good things to say about us. I appreciated that very much.

Acrey: Did you have any of the local politicians or city councilmen or people of that sort deciding what projects were to be established at the facility?

Holt: They had nothing to say with that at all. This was done completely through the Austin office. They got their information or whatever from the federal government. It was federal money, naturally. We didn't have anybody that could tell us what we ought to do.

We brought some people in from Gladewater and a few other places that could run foundries and one thing or another, and they gave us what they thought we ought to do and gave us all the information that they could give us. This was very helpful to us.

We ran into little problems from the Texas Employment Commission. They wanted us to run everything through them all the time. We had our own setup. We just went out and hunted them, you know, and got them in. They just couldn't make it--I mean, the Texas Employment Commission--because we went out into the boondocks, so to speak, to get these youngsters.

Acrey: What did you do to get them? What qualifications did

they have to meet? Did the participants have to be of a certain age?

Holt: Yes, they had to be a certain age. Actually, I don't recall exactly the ages, but I think that it was from seventeen to twenty. They had to be old enough and should know enough to take a job and keep it.

Acrey: What about their educational background? Did they have to have graduated from high school or have finished the eighth grade or tenth grade or something of that sort?

Holt: Eighth grade. Eighth grade.

Acrey: Eighth grade.

Holt: We did take a few who had not gone to school hardly at all. Some had to be terminated because they couldn't comprehend, were not trainable.

Acrey: Because they couldn't read or what?

Holt: Well, they just couldn't comprehend anything. Every group has some people who cannot do this. We would like to have had something to help them out, you know, but we didn't.

Acrey: Did you have any participation from the local WPA educational branch to teach the students things of that sort?

Holt: We had some people who probably were on the WPA who did come out and give us some programs about things. But the people who were working as supervisors in our entire organization were people who had done this work on-the-job,

not education-wise but just job-wise. We had some fellows there who had gone through grade school, and that is about it. But they sure knew their business as far as shop, you know, using their hands. I don't think you need to have a college education to weld and all this kind of stuff.

Acrey: I didn't mean it that way. I know that in some WPA facilities, as part of the training process, teaching people to use machinery and so forth, two or three hours in the evening were set aside for courses in math, writing history, and things of that sort. I simply wondered if this happened at your facility there in Marshall.

Holt: No, we didn't have any of that. You know, I told you that the NYA was sort of a junior WPA. During the time that I was in college, a lot of guys were receiving money from NYA, money to go to school. They paid for their books and the whole thing. Then we got into the building trades thing, where they were building on government property and state property like the university and so forth--buildings for them.

We've got an example right in Denton. Texas Women's University has a little chapel in the woods. I was present when Mrs. Roosevelt came to Denton to speak and dedicate that building--the Little Chapel in the Woods. There's also another building . . . maybe another two buildings.

I'm not sure that this is WPA or NYA, but we'll take a guess and say both of them. There was a home economics building that was right at the corner of Bell and 380 (Highway 380) or University Drive. They tore it down to make room for these big towers. That was built by NYA. And those shops . . . all of those rocks . . . you know, the building is all rocks. Have you seen that along 380? That was built, I think, by either the WPA or the NYA or probably combined. You probably haven't seen it.

Acrey: No, I don't think so.

Holt: Okay. It was a tremendous group of buildings there.

Acrey: You said a few minutes ago that a number of black girls were brought in. How was it that the blacks participated? Did they have a separate NYA facility, at first? How were they brought in? Did you have any problems bringing the blacks in?

Holt: Not too much. Like I said, we had them in different dormitories--segregation, you know. I don't recall exactly how they got along in the shops--the blacks and whites. We didn't have that much of a problem because we had briefed them so toughly. If we had anything like that, well, whoever started it was going to be gone for good, you know. We didn't mean "maybe" about that, so it worked out pretty good. They were getting three good

meals a day and thirty dollars a month in the Depression and learning how to get a job; and jobs were going to be plentiful, so they pretty well listened to us. We didn't have that type of stuff. We had . . . I'm sure it was there.

Acrey: But nothing that boiled up into a conflict?

Holt: Right. No. Mrs. Bethune, who was head of a university down in Florida, came to see me, and I took her out. She wanted these black girls to be trained. I'll give you the background of what I told you before. She asked if she could go around and talk to the white girls. Well, I knew that in deep East Texas . . . I didn't think she ought to do that. Right at that time it was a little tough to do anything. She said, "Oh, I'll be all right." She went up, and the first girl she spoke to was very very discourteous to her--very, very discourteous. I can't give you what she said to her.

Acrey: I understand.

Holt: I apologized to her, of course. She was not too upset because she was a real smart woman. She was the head of a college. Isn't there a Bethune College down there?

Acrey: Yes, Bethune-Cookman College.

Holt: Yes, that's it. Her visit there resulted in a complete shift--midnight, by the way--for those girls in there. They did great in the pattern shop; they did great in

the machine shop; they did great in the metal shop.

Those girls worked from twelve o'clock to about eight o'clock at night, of course, too. They built fly traps and all types of metal things for the different Army and Navy installations. We shipped them out there.

Acrey: So they were not trained in what we would call the normal things for a girl?

Holt: That's right. It sounds to me like it was a first-time thing because, like you say, girls didn't do jobs like that. Those girls did. They wore cover-alls just like the boys.

Acrey: Did the white girls do the same type of work?

Holt: Yes, but most of them were boys.

Acrey: Did you have black males there, too?

Holt: Not too many.

Acrey: How many hours a week did the youth work?

Holt: Forty.

Acrey: Forty hours a week for thirty dollars a week.

Holt: No, thirty dollars a month. See, they were getting their board and room and clothes to wear and thirty bucks a month.

Acrey: I don't understand about the shift move after Mrs. Bethune was there. What did you mean by that?

Holt: I told you that we worked on the basis of eight-hour days, and they had left out the twelve to midnight shifts. See, we had two during the day that went to midnight, but then

we hadn't had that before. That's the way these girls had the opportunity to get in on this.

We didn't have any trouble recruiting them, I'll tell you. They came in and made application. It wasn't long before we put them on. We had to get new equipment and other things to take care of them, you see. There wasn't any problem after the approval was given. They got right in there.

Acrey: You said a few minutes ago that they were housed at the site, they worked there, and they were fed there. Did they build these buildings, or were the buildings already there?

Holt: The buildings were there when I came there. It could have been before that time that they were built by the NYA, but I doubt it.

I followed Mr. Ray Roberts, who is representative from this district and has been for years. I followed him there at Marshall as director of the East Texas division--the project director, is what we called it . . . district project director. Then there was a fellow prior to Mr. Roberts. I wish I could . . . his name was . . . his name has really skipped me, I'm afraid. He played football for the University of Texas the first time they played Notre Dame. They beat Notre Dame. It was 7-0, and this guy made the touchdown. It was a

great feeling. I can't help but remember that. I wish I could recall his name because a lot of people would know it.

Acrey: Was the NYA project camp located in the City of Marshall?

Holt: Inside the City of Marshall, inside a city park. Whether those buildings are still there, I don't know. They were very, very substantially-built buildings. They might have kept some of those buildings for some purpose. It was a big operation.

Acrey: When you first got the job as regional director, did you have to send references or be nominated by the people there in Marshall?

Holt: No, no. This was all done from the Austin office--the Austin office of the National Youth Administration.

Acrey: Oh, I see.

Holt: I think Lyndon Johnson and some of my other college buddies helped me get that. I was going to make a statement, but I won't make it.

Acrey: When did you first start working in Marshall?

Holt: That was in the latter part of 1941. In fact, the war was on, and I had really tried to get in and get a commission. They turned me down because they said I had a potential hernia. Well, I finally got into the service and got a commission (chuckle).

I might tell you this. The reason I happened to get

that commission . . . I had to go to Dallas to have an examination, and they gave a test, you know, or two or three tests. Well, I had been working in personnel for NYA, of course, and it was the very same test that I was grading all the time. I knew the answer to everything on it. I wasn't smart (chuckle), but there it was. I missed about six out of the hundred. So instead of going in as an ensign, I went in as a lieutenant junior grade. You're supposed to go in as an ensign to start.

Acrey: So you went into the Navy?

Holt: I went into the Navy.

Acrey: When was this? What year was this?

Holt: I went into the Navy in 1943--the summer of 1943. I came back in 1946. That's the way I got my good commission in the Navy. I was a gunnery officer on a troop carrier finally, but I was on a merchant ship first. We had convoys.

Acrey: You said a few minutes ago that there were about 160 youths participating there in Marshall. How many of those were white males?

Holt: I said 160?

Acrey: Yes, about 160.

Holt: About 145 or 146 or something like that.

Acrey: How many were white females?

Holt: There were not any until . . . well, just a very few

females. If I remember, there were about fourteen of them.

Acrey: Fourteen? How many black males?

Holt: About twenty-something.

Acrey: And black females?

Holt: Now they had a whole shift. There were about forty of those. This is a long time ago, and I really hate to tell you those figures because I am not positive about them.

Acrey: I understand that. We are really saying from about 140 to 180.

Holt: Right.

Acrey: We are not trying to stick you with a specific number like 163 or anything like that.

Holt: No, you can't do it. It fluctuated, of course. I just would not know. I just can't jam all that stuff in my head.

Acrey: You said a few minutes ago that the newspaperman in Marshall eventually came to Denton and bought the Denton Record-Chronicle. What was his name?

Holt: Cross. His wife is still living. He is not still living. I believe she is the president of the Record-Chronicle.

Acrey: Who were some of the people in the State of Texas working with the NYA other than Lyndon Johnson and Mr. Kellam? Can you remember any of the people who worked with you? Who was your assistant? Who were some of the people in

charge of the foundry?

Holt: I am sorry but I . . . it's going to be tough for me to do this for the reason that I do not remember names very long, unless I have seen them recently.

Acrey: I understand.

Holt: I can picture . . . just as you were talking to me, I can picture the guys--how they looked, what they said, and how they worked and stuff--but I lose their names. I'm sorry,

Acrey: Oh, that's okay.

Holt: Over a period of time, I would not be able to do it.

One thing that I was really proud of . . . I told you about the lead welder at Hughes--the young man with the pail of cold greens. There were also some guys that were taken to Consolidated Aircraft in Fort Worth. There were several of them. One of them became the supervisor in the metal shop, and another one was supervisor in the machine shop. Then several of the fellows received commissions in the armed services after they had gone in the lower categories. I thought that might be an indication of what it did for some of those guys.

To me the National Youth Administration program was the top-flight program of the day. It was helping somebody to make something out of themselves and be a taxpayer instead of a taxeater. It made a life for those fellows

and those little girls. Now the girls, of course, probably married someone who had some training, too. This was a great, great program of the federal government. Some of them . . . the give-away programs just cannot cut it like this did.

Acrey: Speaking of the people who participated, were they organized in any type of way? Did they govern themselves in any type of way?

Holt: The students on the job?

Acrey: Right.

Holt: No, no. They had a pretty free reign. We never had an indication of any organized group such as a union at all. In fact, they were so grateful to be there, it seemed to me, since it was the Depression time and all this kind of thing. There was not any place to go. You know, that was about as good as you could do, really, for guys like them--without a family, no education, young, and so forth. Now we had a few disciplinary problems, sure, you know, like you would at any place. But even when they went off the job, we did not have much of a problem with drinking when they came back or anything like that. I was surprised. I was surprised.

Acrey: I meant in terms of a student council or a student government association, not a union. Did you have . . .

Holt: No, we didn't have anything like that.

Acrey: Besides drinking, can you remember any other disciplinary problems that you had with the young people?

Holt: Yes. Sometimes--and this happens all the time with groups of people--there would be fights, some misunderstandings. We told them we would not have any alcohol on the place. Sometimes we would find some guys or girls that brought it there contrary to our rules. We were flexible enough the first time to just reprimand them. If it happened again, they would lose out completely. There were some that did that. But that is going to happen.

Acrey: Was the facility fenced in or separated from . . .

Holt: No, it was not fenced in at all.

Acrey: So people could just walk on and off?

Holt: Yes.

Acrey: Did the students have to stay there after they finished working, or could they leave and do whatever they wanted until it was time for them to return?

Holt: They could go where they wanted to if they were not getting in trouble. They would have to be back by ten o'clock and no later. We had to do something there, you know. If we had had a bunch of rowdies who were making problems for the police and all this, well, we would have had to have very, very strict restrictions on them, but we did not, and I was grateful that we did not have to.

Acrey: Well, I think that we have covered about everything that

I have my list. Thank you for sharing this time with me.
I will try to get this interview back to you as soon as
possible.