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Interview with
Ed Idar, Jr.
February 20, 1969

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Interviewer: Robert Cuellar

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Oral History Collection

Ed Idar, Jr.

Interviewer: Mr. Robert Cuellar

Place of Interview: Austin, Texas

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Mr. Cuellar: This is Robert Cuellar from North Texas State University speaking with Mr. Ed Idar, Jr., Attorney from Austin, Texas. The date is February 20, 1969. Mr. Idar, would you tell us your position in connection with the American GI Forum and the Political Association of Spanish-speaking Organizations (PASO)?

Mr. Idar: Robert, if I may, let me first give a little personal background about myself. I am a native of Laredo, Texas, having been born there on December 28, 1920. I am a veteran of World War II, having served in England, in India, and in China. After the war with the help of the GI Bill, I got a Bachelor of Journalism degree at The University of Texas at Austin in August of 1949. And then I went to law school from 1953-56 and got a law degree in June of 1956. Thereafter I practiced law in Laredo, McAllen and San Angelo, Texas. In June of 1968 I went full time with the Office of Inspection of OEO in Washington. I respond to Washington but am stationed in Austin. My job covers five states in the Southwest---Texas, New Mexico, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana.

As far as the GI Forum is concerned, I became active in the GI Forum in June of 1950 when I was a resident of Austin. A year later at the convention which was held here in Austin in July of 1951, I was elected the second state chairman of the organization, succeeding Dr. Hector P. Garcia of Corpus Christi, the founder of the GI Forum. I served as state chairman until July of 1953 when I was succeeded by Chris Aldrete of Del Rio. I then became executive secretary, and I held the position until I graduated from law school in June of 1956. I was out of office, you might say, in the GI Forum until on or about November of 1958 when I came back on as executive secretary, and I held that position until December 31 of 1966 at which time I resigned. I continue to be a member of the organization, but I do not hold a position at present.

With respect to PASO, I was active in the organization when it originated through what we called the Viva Kennedy Clubs in 1960. After the 1960 campaign in which the Viva Kennedy Clubs were very influential in the election of John Kennedy to the Presidency of the United States, we agreed here in Texas to continue active under the name of PASO. I was active in PASO through 1962 when we held a convention in San Antonio in February of that year at which time we got involved in endorsements for state offices and carried through with the campaign. As soon as the campaign was over that summer, I resigned as executive secretary of PASO and moved to San Angelo to start practicing law there.

Cuellar: What is the American GI Forum? Would you define that?

Idar: The American GI Forum is what we always have called a Veterans'

Family Organization. The GI Forum was founded by Dr. Hector P. Garcia in Corpus Christi in 1948 after the Second World War. It was founded basically as a veterans' organization, but it has not been a traditional-type veterans' organization in the sense of the American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, and the other veterans' organizations. The GI Forum from its very inception made an effort to involve not just the veteran but his family as well--that is, the wives and the sisters and other female relatives of the veterans as well as the younger people. In other words, in the GI Forum we have had what we call the GI Forum groups which are made up of adult men. We have the women's auxiliary groups which are made up of adult women. And then we have the junior forums which have been made up of youngsters, male and female, from the age of fourteen to twenty-one. The three groups are basically co-equal in the sense that the adult Forums, the auxiliaries, and the junior forums all participate equally in the organization. They all have voting power in our conventions in the election of officers, and the adoption of resolutions and the adoption of constitutional amendments, or in passing on any other item of business.

Our idea was that we were not going to be interested in pressing purely for benefits for the veteran as such. In fact, the GI Forum never did go on record for things such as veterans' bonuses. Rather, we were interested in handling the problems of the Mexican-American people. For that reason we felt that we needed the participation of the women, and we wanted the young

people as well in order to develop leadership for the future. So the GI Forum is what we always term a veterans' family organization composed basically of Mexican-American membership including men, women, and young people. It has never precluded membership from Anglo-American, Negro-American, or any other group. However, it always has been basically interested in the Mexican-American, and for that reason we have never developed any large membership from the other groups. There are not too many people from those other groups who are interested in coming into an organization that is interested purely and solely in the Mexican-American as the GI Forum always has been. Am I getting too detailed?

Cuellar: No, I think it's all right. What conditions present among the Mexican-American people of Texas contributed to the beginning of the American GI Forum?

Idar: Well, as I recall, when the GI Forum started out in Corpus Christi, for example, they used to have the problem of segregation at the United States Naval Base right there in Corpus Christi. They also had problems involving segregation in county and school facilities. I believe they had a county hospital where Mexican-Americans were segregated in separate wards.

They had, of course, educational problems in those years right after the Second World War. The problem of segregation of Mexican-American children in Texas schools was very widespread. In fact, if you were to draw a line from Laredo around a radius of roughly fifty miles from Laredo, anywhere outside that line that you might go you would generally find segregation of Mexican-American children.

There also were all kinds of problems. I recall years ago when we used to have board meetings in Dr. Garcia's office in Corpus Christi, you'd go out to the area where he had his office which was a Mexican-American barrio. There were few city facilities. Street paving was the exception rather than the rule. Street lighting, drainage problems, sewage problems, all kinds of other local problems were involved in Corpus Christi and in the surrounding area. In those years we had the problem of discrimination or refusal of service in the public places. The signs reading "No Dogs or Mexicans Allowed" were the rule rather than the exception. In Corpus Christi itself there were numerous public facilities in those years that discriminated against Mexican-Americans.

We had a problem of a tremendous amount of apathy when it came to the Mexican-American voter. Too many of the people would not buy their poll taxes. Too many of the people would not send their children to school. We had the problem of the illegal Mexican alien coming into the country--the wetback--that became quite a problem in those years competing with our own domestic migratory agricultural workers. And we had the problem involving the denial of the opportunity to serve on juries in many, many counties of Texas. And there was a host of other social problems.

I think that the GI Forum started when Dr. Garcia got hold of a few veterans to try to tackle some of their local problems. They selected the name American because they wanted to emphasize that we were Americans. They used the GI in order to give it the veteran identification. They used the word "Forum" in order to

denote that this was going to be a group that was to get together, talk and discuss problems, and arrive at a proposed solution and then take whatever action was indicated. That's where the name originated as I hear it from a number of the fellows that started out with Hector years ago.

Cuellar: Would you continue with the contributions of the organization to alleviate many of these problems for which it was started?

Idar: Well, of course, a lot of the local problems--take for example the problem of the discrimination or segregation at the naval base in Corpus Christi--were solved rather quickly. It didn't take much action to contact people in Washington in those years, to contact Senator Lyndon B. Johnson who was of considerable help in handling that kind of a situation. Those were, I would say, problems that were not too crucial in the sense that they did not require a lot of time and effort.

I consider the more significant problems or the bigger contributions by the GI Forum to be in the field of education. I can recall that in the early years of the GI Forum we used to have what we called the "back-to-school" drives. Around July and August of every year as the school term or the school year started to roll around we would get our local chapters interested in holding rallies, in using leaflets, in going house to house, in bringing speakers to talk to different groups encouraging the people to put their children in school and keep them there. This was particularly crucial with respect to the migratory agricultural workers. In those years it used to be the custom that a family would leave

South Texas around May or June during the summer and would stay out through the rest of the year, returning to their home communities in November or December. They would take the children with them during their entire migratory trek, and, of course, the children would not be able to go to school during those months. We tried to do what we could through our "back-to-school" drives to encourage the people to put the children in school and keep them there. In fact, I recall that in some cases school officials were embarrassed by these "back-to-school" drives because some of them were so successful that the districts did not have adequate classroom and other facilities to take care of the children that were coming into school. I remember that in Taylor, Texas, for example, not too far from Austin, they had to build additional facilities in order to provide for the children.

Another problem that I consider a major social problem and that the GI Forum had a lot to do with handling was the so-called "wetback" problem. For years we would pass resolutions, we would write letters to Washington to Senator Johnson, to other people, trying to get action on the wetback problem, trying to see that the U. S. Immigration and Naturalization Service and the U. S. Border Patrol were given adequate manpower and vehicles and other facilities in order to seal the border, in order to enforce the immigration laws. During those years I recall distinctly reading the newspapers in the Rio Grande Valley, the McAllen Evening Monitor, the Harlingen Morning Star, and the Rio Grande Herald, and the Brownsville Herald. All those valley newspapers down there many a time ran stories

castigating the U. S. Border Patrol, calling the immigration officers Gestapo agents because they were seeking to enforce the immigration laws.

The whole thing culminated during the Eisenhower administration. In 1953 the GI Forum and the American Federation of Labor, that is, the Texas State Federation of Labor (that was before the merger of the AFL and the CIO), got together and agreed to conduct a study on this problem. The AFL financed most of the project's expense. The GI Forum paid for my own personal expenses in a field survey that was made by myself and by Andrew C. McLellan of Rio Grande City. We started out in El Paso. Spending about two months in the field, we gradually worked our way down all along the border to Brownsville. We had photographic equipment with us. We went to the farms where the wetbacks were working all along the border. We talked to the wetbacks and we interrogated them as to how much they were getting paid, what were their hours, their working conditions, the kind of housing that they had. We took pictures of them and their living conditions, or the conditions under which they lived there. We took pictures of their housing. I can recall, for example, housing in Eagle Pass where some of these people were living was nothing but holes in the ground or caves. They would build some kind of roof over them consisting of nothing but brush, pieces of wood, lumber, tin or cardboard. And down in the Rio Grande Valley I remember going to the so-called wetback camps. In those years the Rio Grande River was practically dry, and these people could just wade across the river. In some places they didn't

even get their feet wet. These wetback camps would contain men, women, and children. They had dysentery and all kinds of diseases. We took pictures of children with their bloated little bellies and their thin legs and arms, denoting malnutrition and starvation. We interrogated wetbacks and learned that in those years--mind you this was in 1953--they were being paid as little as 15¢ and 20¢ per hour. In some cases we saw men being paid in our presence. They would be apprehended and taken by the Border Patrol to the McAllen Detention Center, and there the officers would notify the farmers where the men were apprehended and the farmers would send over their crew leaders or foremen to pay those men off. And we saw them being paid in our presence, and we saw how much they were paid.

This study was completed and published. Copies were distributed to every member of Congress. The Immigration Service got a good number of them as well as libraries, newspapers, communications media. It was given selective but rather wide-scale distribution. The thing, as I recall, was published around the end of 1953 either in November or December.

The next spring, around April or May, President Eisenhower and his administration initiated what was called a drive to clean up the wetbacks. The Immigration Service was given adequate men and equipment. They started out in California. They gradually worked their way all across the Mexican border down to Brownsville. They instituted a task force of officers that worked all the way along the border, and they cleaned out the wetback once and for all.

The problem still exists in a minor scale but it no longer is in the proportions that it was in those years. And I believe that the study that the GI Forum made of this problem together with the Federation of Labor, the distribution that we made of it, the impact that it had, had a lot to do with bringing about the cleaning up by the Eisenhower administration.

After we licked the wetback problem, of course, we still had the problem of the bracero. The bracero was the Mexican agricultural worker that was brought into this country under Public Law 78 which was originally enacted during the Second World War but which remained on the books until about four years ago when it was finally repealed by Congress. This law was enacted as an emergency war measure in order to provide adequate agricultural labor for this country in view of the fact that many of our own people were off fighting a war. Nevertheless, the agricultural interests found out that they had an inexhaustible supply of cheap labor through this law, and they fought its repeal for years and years and years. Under the bracero program these workers would be brought into the country under contracts of six months at a time. The Mexican government every year would enter into an international agreement with the United States, and they gradually made some provisions or included some provisions in there to improve the lot of these workers to the extent that toward the last few years of the program these workers were required to be transported in buses that had to provide a seat for them. They had certain requirements as to their hours and a number of other things. One weakness in the whole thing,

however, was the fact that the agreement provided that the workers were to be paid not less than 50¢ an hour or the prevailing wage, whichever was higher--the prevailing wage in the area where they were to work. I can recall that in California and some of the Northern states years ago agricultural wages were considerably higher than they were in Texas. In the Rio Grande Valley where 25¢ an hour was the norm naturally 50¢ would be a higher wage. In other areas, however, the wage was a dollar or better an hour. Unfortunately, under this agreement some of the agricultural interests in other parts of the country where the wages had been higher started getting these braceros, and before you knew it the wage, that is, the fifty cent minimum, in effect became the prevailing wage in the higher wage areas.

As I said the GI Forum fought that problem. We would pass resolutions; we would write letters to the Congressmen, our senators and what have you, and eventually the law was repealed.

Another major problem that the GI Forum tackled over the years was that of school segregation. We handled a number of school segregation cases, either through the courts or by appeal to the State Commissioner of Education. I recall that the GI Forum participated in what we considered the basic lawsuit that laid the foundation for our efforts thereafter. This occurred in 1949, when a lawsuit was brought in Judge Ben Rice's U. S. District Court here in Austin. It involved five school districts in the Austin area. Some of those were the Elgin School District, the Colorado-Common School District, the Maxwell-Martindale School District, and one

or two others that I can't readily recall. The lawsuit, known as the Delgado Case, was filed in federal district court, but it never came to trial. L. A. Woods, who in those years was the State Superintendent of Public Instruction (at that time an elective position), along with Price Daniel, who was then Attorney General and who had ambitions to be Governor and did not want particularly to antagonize some of the Mexican-American leadership, got together with Gus Garcia, who was an attorney from San Antonio and an active LULAC leader in those years, and Raul Cortes, who was then national president of the LULACs, and Dr. George I. Sanchez of the University of Texas and other GI Forum and LULAC leaders and worked out an agreement whereby Judge Ben Rice entered an agreed judgement in the case. The judgement, in effect, held that segregation of Mexican-American children in the public schools beyond the first grade was illegal and unconstitutional. It further held that for purposes of language instruction they could be separated during the first year but on the same campus. The judgement did not contemplate that they were to be separated in separate campuses. At any rate that became the bedrock case, and from there on out we used that case to handle others.

Some of the other lawsuits that the GI Forum handled involved the schools of Hondo, to the west of San Antonio, Kingsville, Mathis, Driscoll, Pecos in West Texas, and a number of others. Some of the major ones were as late as 1957. In that year the Driscoll Case went to trial in the court of Judge Allred in Corpus Christi. Dr. George I. Sanchez of the University of Texas

testified as an expert witness in that case for a couple of days. I'm not too familiar with this now, but I understand that James de Anda, an attorney from Corpus Christi and former State Chairman and National Chairman of the GI Forum, as late as a year or two ago also filed one or two lawsuits involving the segregation of Mexican-American children.

This problem of segregation still remains, but it is no longer what it used to be. It is no longer quite as acute. Considerable progress has been made.

Another major issue that the GI Forum tackled was the issue of denial of jury service or denial of an opportunity for jury service. This involved the Hernandez Case which originated in Jackson County, Texas, I believe, in 1953. Hernandez was a Mexican-American who killed another Mexican-American and who was tried in Edna, the county seat of Jackson County. Gus Garcia of San Antonio and John J. Herrera of Houston were the trial attorneys. They determined to make this into a test case on the whole question of jury service. As I recall the record in that case, the District Attorney stipulated with the defense attorneys that for twenty-five years or more there had been persons of Mexican descent in Jackson County who fulfilled every qualification for jury service. That is, they were taxpayers; they had bought their poll taxes; they had property; they were heads of households; or whatever it takes to be a qualified juror. Nevertheless, they had never been called to serve on a jury. They further stipulated that for twenty-five years or more there had been segregation of Mexican-American

children in the public schools of Jackson County. In fact, at the very time that the trial was held there was segregation of the Anglo, the Negro and the Mexican-American in the restrooms in the courthouse itself, all of this being part of the record that went before the U. S. Supreme Court. At any rate Hernandez was tried, was found guilty and was given, I believe, twenty-five years. And then the case was taken on appeal and went all the way to the U. S. Supreme Court, and by a unanimous opinion of the Court in 1953-- or it could have been 1954--that court held that Mexican-Americans were members of the Caucasian race and that Hernandez was tried by a Caucasian jury and therefore presumably was tried by a jury of his peers, and there was no violation there. Nevertheless, the court held that the Mexican-Americans were treated not so much as a race but as a class apart, and on that basis it reversed the conviction. It is my understanding that Hernandez later was tried again, and I believe received fifteen years and after serving five or six years, eventually came out on parole.

I can still recall that immediately after that case was decided by the U. S. Supreme Court and even before the decision was in the law books we had a criminal case in Williamson County near Austin. And the defense attorney--an Anglo-American attorney--was able to have the court quash a jury panel on the basis that Mexican-Americans had been excluded or had not been given an opportunity to serve as jurors. There were several other cases immediately thereafter within a month or two that I recall reading in the newspapers where attorneys immediately took advantage of this

decision. This law has gone a long way in insuring that Mexican-Americans do have an opportunity to serve in juries.

I practiced law in San Angelo, Texas, for six years from 1962 to 1968, and I saw the effects of this decision in that West Texas area. I was in courtrooms within eighty to a hundred miles of San Angelo, and I was able to see Mexican-Americans coming in on the jury panels and in some cases serving on the trial juries. We even had them on grand juries in San Angelo and some of the other counties in that area, so I know as an attorney the important effects that that decision had. There is still a problem, however, for in too many cases the opportunity to serve is given only on a token basis.

The GI Forum spent, I would say, about \$3 or \$4 thousand by way of legal and attorneys' expenses in handling that lawsuit and in carrying it through the U. S. Supreme Court.

Of course, another major issue that the GI Forum faced from the beginning was the whole question of apathy on the part of the Mexican-American when it came to political action. Along with our back-school drives we also started out with our poll tax drives. At the end of the year and through January we'd encourage our groups to conduct poll tax drives and get the people registered to vote. I recall one particular poll tax drive in the Rio Grande Valley where the CIO in this case helped us with a limited amount of money to hire one full-time person in the three valley counties to run this drive. We had part-time paid coordinators in each of the three counties and then our full-time person had a secretary. With

this limited amount of money, a drive was conducted in the three valley counties. As a result of this particular drive for the first time in history the Mexican-Americans in the Valley had the majority of the poll taxes even though they had always been anywhere from seventy to eighty per cent of the population in the area. As a result of this drive, the establishment in the Valley conducted a grand jury investigation in Hidalgo County. They brought Bob Sanchez, an attorney down there, who was the one that headed the drive. They had him before the grand jury two or three times with all of his records and everything. They were trying to see what they could do to show that we had been out spending thousands of dollars in buying people's poll taxes. We didn't have that kind of money, quite frankly. The limited money that was raised was simply to pay for the people that were working full-time or part-time on the drive.

Those were the years when Mexican-Americans had little or no political leadership outside of a few border towns. I can recall that those were the years when in San Antonio the only elected Mexican-American public official was Gus Garcia, who was elected to the San Antonio School Board sometime around 1947 or '48. Those were the years before Congressman Henry B. Gonzalez, before County Commissioner Albert Pena, before Senator Joe Bernal, before a lot of these, and before other younger political leadership that has now developed in San Antonio. In fact, Commissioner Albert Pena in San Antonio started out in his career through the GI Forum. It was the GI Forum that gave him the inspiration to get into politics

in San Antonio. And he has now become one of the most powerful political leaders of the Mexican-Americans in Texas.

Cuellar: Do you feel that these advancements could have been done without the GI Forum?

Idar: I rather doubt it because you must recall that the GI Forum started right after the Second World War. At that time the LULAC organization had already been in the field since about 1928 or 1929. In fact, my father and couple of my uncles were among the early LULAC leaders. In its early years the LULAC was an aggressive organization. It did a lot of good. However, as its membership grew older and what have you, it became a little more conservative in its approach. As a result, after the Second World War a lot of its leadership, aside from a few people such as Dr. Sanchez of The University of Texas, Gus Garcia, Raul Cortez, and John Herrera, was ineffective. By and large LULAC was a dying or a static organization. It was constantly involved in factionalism. In fact, I was a member of LULAC myself, and I attended two or three state and national conventions of LULAC. You'd go to a LULAC convention and about all that occurred was a lot of rivalry or a lot of factional fighting between the Laredo LULACs against Herrera or the El Paso LULACs against the San Antonio LULACs. It was just a constant fight between themselves, and they were making little or no progress.

The politicians attempted to use LULAC to divide the Mexican-American people. I can recall under the administration of Allan Shivers that during one of the elections--I believe this must have

been around 1954 when Senator Yarborough was running against him-- the LULACs, who always claimed to be non-political, had a convention in Corpus Christi that I attended. At this particular convention they had a reception on Friday night preceding the opening of the convention on Saturday morning. This convention was held in June preliminary to the Democratic primaries. Allan Shivers, who was running for re-election, was invited to attend the reception on Friday night. The beer companies and other presumably wealthy financial interests laid out a tremendous buffet--all kinds of meats and cheeses and olives and what have you. Governor Shivers naturally presided over the thing. Now, of course, this was just a reception and he was the Governor, but everybody who was there knew the political implications. The LULACs were yielding themselves then to this move on the part of the Governor. Senator Yarborough had already mustered a lot of his strength among the Mexican-Americans a couple of years before, and Governor Shivers was trying to find a means to appeal to this group. And the LULAC organization lent itself to it. So what I'm trying to say is that after the Second World War LULAC was there, but it had become a static and a fairly conservative organization that was not particularly interested in stirring up any trouble. It didn't want to shake or to rock the boat too much.

Cuellar: Did LULAC become reactivated or reorganized after the GI Forum organized and more or less regained impetus?

Idar: LULAC always did have several good councils. For example, in San Antonio they've always had one or two good councils. Down in

Houston in those years Herrera who was certainly a LULAC leader always had one or two . . . well, he always had a fairly good council from that area. Corporation Judge Alfred Hernandez in more recent years has done a good job in Houston. In El Paso Albert Armendariz, an attorney over there, had a fairly good LULAC council. There were some other smaller councils throughout Texas that were fairly good councils. Unfortunately, the Laredo LULAC council which in those years was controlled by the Laredo political machine headed by County Judge M. J. Raymond along with other councils that he controlled had substantial control of LULAC as an organization. Now I can't say that LULAC ever reorganized. I don't believe that in the last fifteen or twenty years LULAC ever has been as strong as the GI Forum grew to be. They have had some good local chapters but as a state organization, to my knowledge, they have not developed the strength that the GI Forum did develop within a few years.

Cuellar: How about the politics of the GI Forum? Of course, is it a political organization or not?

Idar: We have always had from the beginning a provision in the GI Forum constitution. In fact, I wrote the present state as well as the present national constitution of the GI Forum. There is a provision and has been from the beginning that we are not a political organization. You cannot use the name of the GI Forum or any derivation of the same or any insignia connected with the GI Forum on behalf of any candidate or party.

Unfortunately, however, some people got the idea that we were political simply from the fact that although as an organization we did not endorse anybody, we did conduct our poll tax drives, and we did encourage our officers and members to become active politically as independent persons in their own right, not using the name of the organization. But we did want them to run for city councils, for school boards, to become active on behalf of candidates for the legislature or for state office or what have you. Not only that, but naturally once you become identified with an organization and after that you come in and support a candidate for public office, naturally the news media has a tendency, whether you ask for it or not, to come in and say, "Dr. Hector P. Garcia, a GI Forum leader, is supporting Senator Yarborough," or what have you. So even though we tried to bend over backwards not to use the name of the organization, too many times we've had no control over what other people had to say.

No, we have never been political. The GI Forum, to my knowledge, never has consciously used its name as such on behalf of anybody. If on occasion local people did it, they did it not knowing that they were violating the constitution of the organization. And whenever we find out about it we try to make it clear to the people involved that we wanted them in politics, but we did not want them to use the name of the organization.

Cuellar: Perhaps the GI Forum should have been a political organization from the beginning?

Idar: Well, of course, you've heard that argument, and I don't know that

I agree with that because of the experience that we had with PASO. I just don't know whether you will ever be able to organize Mexican-Americans into a political group as such. They are not that sophisticated as yet, I believe, by and large. We're going to get into PASO after a while and then I can tell you what happened there and the reason why I say that perhaps it was best that the Forum did not start out as a political organization. I don't think we would have lasted this long if we had, nor would we have grown as fast as we have if we had become a political organization.

Cuellar: Want to take a break?

Idar: Yes, if you want to. I hope we're speaking up enough.

Cuellar: Yes.

Idar: Do we have enough tape left?

Cuellar: Right. The tape is played very slowly.

Idar: Okay.

Cuellar: Okay. We can progress now from the American GI Forum to the Political Association of Spanish-speaking Organizations, otherwise known as PASO. Do you mind telling us of its beginnings, its organizations, where it originated?

Idar: You can trace PASO directly back to the Viva Kennedy Clubs that originated during the John Kennedy campaign for the presidency in 1960. There is a tie-in again between this and the GI Forum. I attended the GI Forum National Convention that was held in Wichita, Kansas, that year. Carlos McCormick, a man from Arizona, at that time had been on Senator Kennedy's campaign staff. Carlos McCormick is half Irish and half Mexican. He was active with Kennedy in the

West Virginia campaign and in one or two others. He had been active in the GI Forum for two or three years before. He sort of became, I suppose, Kennedy's contact man with the Mexican-Americans. Carlos went to the Wichita convention and during one of the sessions he told us that when the convention ended that he wanted to have a little session with some of the leadership. So on Sunday afternoon after the convention completed its business and adjourned, a group of about thirty or forty of us from different parts of the country got together with Carlos McCormick. And that's when he told us about this idea of forming the Viva Kennedy Clubs. The entire idea revolved around the slogan itself--Viva Kennedy. Never in a national campaign had that type of a slogan been used. We all readily agreed that the slogan was a catchy one, that it would have a tremendous amount of appeal to our people. Of course, the personality of Kennedy also had appeal.

At any rate, we all left Kansas--those of us that were there--with the idea of getting back and immediately becoming active in the Viva Kennedy movement. I know that when I got back to Hidalgo County--I was practicing law in McAllen at the time. I believe the convention was held the early part of August, and we organized the first Viva Kennedy Club--I like to say the first one in the country--because I think we organized it in Hidalgo County within a week or ten days or two weeks after the GI Forum Convention. I have the records somewhere where I can determine the exact date.

At any rate mainly through the GI Forum organization these Viva Kennedy Clubs sprang up almost overnight all over the Southwest

and even in some of the middle western states like Chicago in Illinois, like in Ohio, Kansas, and others where we had GI Forum groups active. We started printing car stickers and placards and what have you. It was easy to organize the people. The slogan was catchy; the name went over well; and these clubs became quite active. In fact, I can still recall reading a newspaper story after the election was over quoting Senator Thurston Morton, who advocated that we change the electoral college system of electing the president. He specifically pointed out that we had the so-called Mexican-American group that was concentrated in certain key electoral states. He cited Texas, Illinois, California, and others. He pointed out that our group was susceptible to emotionalism, that we could be appealed to on the basis of emotion, that we were concentrated in key electoral states, and that therefore we were in such a strategic position that we could influence a national election as happened exactly in 1960.

Well, anyway, after the election was over, in 1961 in Texas at least, which is that I'm familiar with, the question arose as to whether we were going to allow these clubs to die on the vine. There was a meeting that was held, I recall, in Victoria, Texas, sometime in the spring of 1961 at which we debated whether to continue with the organization and if so what name to select. Several names had started cropping up. I believe that in California the Viva Kennedy Clubs were renamed MAPA--the Mexican-American Political Association. Initially in Texas we started to use that name but over in Victoria for some reason some of the people objected

to it, and instead of naming it MAPA in Texas we agreed to name it the Political Association of Spanish-speaking Organizations. That's where you get the name PASO.

During the remainder of '61 naturally some of these PASO groups remained active. I know that in Hidalgo County we kept one going, and over in San Antonio and Corpus and in other places they kept meeting. By that time you had a certain amount of political leadership among the Mexican-Americans outside of the border, machine-controlled counties like Webb and Duval and Zapata and Starr and Jim Hogg and Maverick. By that time we had a significantly large Mexican-American vote outside of that immediate border area, and we had developed some political leadership. Most of us had worked together through the GI Forum, were good personal friends; we trusted each other; we had confidence in one another. We had Gilbert Garcia in Fort Worth. We had Hector Garcia and James de Anda in Corpus Christi. We had Gregorio Coronado in Lubbock. Myself and Bob Sanchez in Hidalgo County. We had Albert Pena and other people in San Antonio. We had Dr. Fermin Calderon and Chris Aldirete in Del Rio, and in other parts of the state we had developed political leadership by then.

Now as the 1962 elections drew near, we had learned that there is a period of jockeying for position among candidates preceding the filing deadline every election year. I can recall in 1955 when Ralph Yarborough lost his second race for the governorship that Labor was through with Yarborough. They didn't want him to run again in '56. They were going for John White. But John White and

Yarborough started jockeying for position as to who would get support from the different minority and liberal elements. We held fast by Yarborough in '55, and that was one reason why eventually he got the nod of the liberal element in Texas and squeezed John out of the governor's race. Well, the same thing started to happen around the fall and winter of 1961-62 preceding the filing deadline for offices in 1962.

Some of us that were active in PASO made a personal commitment among ourselves that we would not make any individual commitments on our own to any candidate for state office, that we would all wait for a PASO Convention that was to be held in San Antonio in February at which time we would invite all the candidates to come and address the convention and subject themselves to questioning and then we would get the convention to endorse those that it wanted.

Now I know the thing that we discussed and that we agreed among ourselves was this: by that time, mind you, this was in 1961 and '62 . . . by that time we had already been supporting the liberal movement in Texas for years. We had started out with Yarborough in '52 and had lost with him. We had lost with him in '54. We lost with him again in '56 . . . or was it Henry Gonzales that year? No, I guess it was Yarborough in '56, and then Henry Gonzales ran in '58 for governor. And we lost with him. We supported Henry again in '61 in the special Senate race to fill the position of Senator Johnson when he became vice president, and we again lost. So we had been faithful to the liberal movement, but we had lost

consistently. We finally decided that in '62 we were going to consider everybody--liberals, moderates, and conservatives--and we were going to try to see if we could come out with a winner and so that even if we didn't get all of the things that we hoped to get from a friendly state administration, if we could support either a moderate or even conservative who could get elected, we figured we might be able to get at least part of the things that we hoped to get for our people. So that was the atmosphere. I recall that Bob Sanchez and I were sounded out by the followers of this candidate or the other in Hidalgo County, and we told them, "We can't make a commitment." The same thing happened in Corpus Christi with Dr. Garcia and de Anda; the same thing in Fort Worth with Gilbert Garcia and Harold Valderas. Anyway, I think the word got out in state political circles that most of the Mexican-American leadership was not making any commitments and that they were going to wait for the PASO convention. Not only that, but that we were going to give everybody a fair shake, that we were going to consider liberals, moderates and conservatives.

So the convention came around. It was a three day convention. It started on a Friday with a nominations committee meeting. By that I don't mean just a few people in a smoke-filled room. This nominations committee consisted of anywhere from thirty to fifty or sixty people in a room. We started off on a Friday morning at around 9:00 in the morning interviewing candidates. We wound up our work around 2:00 the following morning with only short recesses for lunch and dinner. We had most of the major state-wide

candidates come before the group. It included Governor Price Daniel. It included John Connally. It included Waggoner Carr. It included Judge Reavley from Austin who was then running for Attorney General, as I recall, It included Senator Jarrard Secrest who was running for lieutenant governor. It included Senator Bob Baker from Houston and Will Wilson who were running for governor. Almost every major political figure in Texas went before the convention with the exception of Preston Smith. I believe Crawford Martin also was not there. At any rate, these interviews started on Friday morning in the room there. I believe it was the Granada Hotel.

We had anywhere from thirty to forty or fifty people through the day and into the evening. The format was such that Albert Pena, who was chairman of PASO, was sitting at the head of a long table. There was a seat next to him to his right. The rest of us were seated around the table with others seated on chairs along the walls. The candidate would come in. He would sit at the right hand of Albert. Albert would introduce him. He would give a short statement, a little ten minute talk, and then he would open himself up to questioning from different people that were there. I remember that John Connally went before the group around 8:00 at night. Governor Daniel did not appear until about 11:00 that night. We got some scuttlebutt during the convention that Connally and Daniel had been **jockeying** throughout the day to be the last one to appear before the nominations committee. How the hell they ever worked it out, I don't know, but Connally did come in at

8:00 that night, and Daniel came in late in the evening. He was the last of the gubernatorial candidates to appear before the committee. Will Wilson appeared earlier in the evening. Anyway, these men were interrogated and asked questions and what have you.

Then next day on Saturday we had an open convention session with about 300 delegates or so from different parts of Texas, and the format was repeated again. The candidates appeared before the convention. They gave a short talk and then they answered questions from the floor. This did not take quite as long as the nominations committee session the day before because the question period was restricted.

At any rate we heard them all on Saturday, and then on Sunday we had our closed convention session where only the delegates were admitted--not even the press was admitted into the room. It was a big session and we went into the question of endorsements. Throughout the convention we had a terrific fight between the Daniel and the Don Yarborough forces. I was one of the people that agreed to support Governor Daniel on the theory that we did not think that Don Yarborough could win. We were tired of going down the line for the liberal and losing every time. We wanted to come out with a winner for the sake of getting at least a part of our program.

Now Governor Daniel was criticized bitterly over that thing when Wilson put out statements that he had bought us with the promise of a hundred jobs in the Texas Highway Patrol. There was no such thing. To my knowledge there was no deal made behind the

door, and there were no promises by Daniel that he was going to do this, or that, or the other. It boiled down very simply to this: Will Wilson by that time had already run in the special senate race and had lost. Everybody in Texas at that time knew that the man was lost. He didn't have anything left. He couldn't win a state-wide race. John Connally went before the group. However, he had very little to say that was of interest to the people. We asked him what stand he had on repeal of the poll tax and he wouldn't even take a stand on the poll tax. Price Daniel, on the other hand, when we asked him about the poll tax pointed out that as Attorney General in 1949 he had campaigned for repeal of the poll tax, and he came out and said that he was still in favor of repeal. He took on a very good stance on some of the issues that the people were concerned with.

Now a little sidelight here and one reason why Daniel did so well, as we found out after we interrogated the man, was the fact that a day or so before he went down to San Antonio he called Dr. George I. Sanchez down to the Governor's Mansion in Austin. They were old friends. Daniel called him down and told him, "George, I'm going down to San Antonio. I want to talk to these people. You know them. You know what they're interested in. I'd like to have your guidance." So Sanchez went down and met with the governor for two, three hours and apparently briefed him very adequately on some of the issues that we were concerned with because when the governor appeared before our group, he was ready for us on most of the issues about which we were going to ask him questions.

I can recall, for example, a major issue was the fact that in five years as governor he had made very few appointments of Mexican-Americans to major state agencies and boards. There's a register of Texas public officials, appointees to state boards and agencies. I had gone through this thing carefully, and I had picked out every single Mexican-American name on that list. I had prepared a mimeographed paper on the thing, listing the different agencies and the few Mexican-Americans that were on. Anyway, when the nominations committee asked Governor Daniel about that--I can still remember it--he pulled out this mimeographed list from his inside coat pocket, and he said, "By the way, somebody showed me this thing. I knew it was coming up. I saw it here around the convention." He said, "Before I answer that question let me ask you one thing." I think he looked around the room. There must've been fifty, sixty people there. He looked around the room, and he pointed around with his arm to everybody there and he says, "I want every person here who in the last five years has written to me or called me on the telephone or made any effort to contact me on behalf of himself or anybody else for an appointment to a state agency or board. Anybody here who has done that, please raise your hand." Well, only one hand went up. That was Charles Villasenor, a funeral director here in Austin, who had written for an appointment on the State Board of Morticians, but he was the only one. Of course, a lot of us had not bothered because we felt that Texas government was such that it was fruitless to even write on this kind of thing. At any rate, what I'm trying to say is that for

different reasons Daniel was the one that made the best presentation to the committee.

After we interviewed all the candidates on Friday and on Saturday, a few of us got our heads together. We went over the different men. We realized that Don Yarborough had a tremendous amount of appeal. They had labor organizers working the floor of the convention. We knew that in order to support a moderate or a conservative against him, we were going to have to support somebody who had made a fairly decent presentation. Wilson hadn't. Connally hadn't. Some of the others hadn't. The only one that we knew we had a chance to defeat Don Yarborough with was Price Daniel. Furthermore, nobody imagined at that time that Daniel was going to be as weak as he turned out to be later on when he didn't even make the first primary. At any rate a few of us--Albert Pena, Hector Garcia, James de Anda, Chris Aldirete, myself, one or two other people--well, we put our heads together and decided that we were going to go ahead and support Governor Daniel. On Saturday night Dr. Garcia stayed up practically all night lobbying with different state delegations trying to sell Governor Daniel.

On Sunday morning the nomination session convened around 9:00 in the morning.

[At the request of Mr. Idar, the use of pages 31, 32, and 33 will be restricted until the death of Dr. George I. Sanchez.]

Ronald E. Marcello, Coordinator

I recall having walked into the convention floor half an hour before, around 8:30 or so. I was standing around there when Bob Sanchez and Dr. Sanchez walked in. Dr. Sanchez had had Dr. Garcia and myself at his hotel room the night before about 2:00 o'clock in the morning, making a last desperate plea to try to get us to go for Don Yarborough. By that time we had already agreed on going with Daniel. Sanchez told us he thought we ought to go for Yarborough, same as he had been trying all through the

day. He had tried to save Governor Daniel embarrassment during the nominations committee session on Friday night. I recall that after Daniel gave his little talk and after three or four pointed questions were addressed to him and he had given his answers, Dr. Sanchez, who was present, got up and told the committee members there that Daniel was our Governor, that he had waited until a late hour of the night to come before the convention, that he was tired, and that we should be courteous with him and that we should excuse him and not subject him to any further questioning. Anyway, he pleaded with the group. We all got the impression at that time that he was going to support Daniel. Nevertheless, the following day on Saturday and through Saturday night and through Sunday morning he started plugging away for Don Yarborough.

At any rate on Sunday morning when he walked into the convention floor, he and Bob Sanchez came up to me and they invited me over to their room. "Come on now," Dr. Sanchez invited me. He said, "Let's go over to my room. Let's have a cup of coffee. Let me talk to you one more time." I told, "George, it's no use. I've already made up my mind to make the change." He said, "Well, nevertheless, come on over." So we went over to his room--myself, Bob Sanchez, and Dr. Sanchez. Once inside his room he again started asking me to reconsider and to throw my support to Don Yarborough. I just about had had all I was going to stand, and I became a little harsh with him. I told him, "George, just what the hell is going on? On Friday night you tried to save Governor Daniel embarrassment before the nominations committee. You also met with

him at the mansion before this convention started and you briefed him on what we were interested in. He was able to prepare himself so well that he gave good answers to everything we asked him. And now you are trying to get us to go for Don Yarborough. I can't understand all this." So I think he leveled with me. He told me, "Ed, we have to go down the line for the liberal. We cannot put our people in the position of going for a conservative. We have to go down the line for the liberal. On the other hand, we know that Don Yarborough is not going to win. We are committed for the liberal because we stand for things that are liberal. We have to go down the line for the liberal knowing full well that the liberal is going to lose and that Daniel is going to win. However, my reason for meeting with the man is that after that happens, after the election is over and we have fulfilled our commitment to the liberal movement and supported Don Yarborough and gone down with our flags flying and all that, there would be at least one man among us that would have access to the governor's office." (And that man, of course, was to be George Sanchez. It became quickly evident why the doctor had acted as he did.)

At any rate we went back to the convention floor. Sanchez excused himself.

We had given our word when we registered and Albert Pena reminded us again as he opened the last session of the convention that we were pledging our word to abide by the decision of the majority, whatever that might be. Everybody pledged to do so. Dr. Sanchez excused himself and left before the session had progressed too much, that last session. The only other man that left when Albert Pena reminded the leaders that they were pledging themselves to abide by the decision of the convention was Apolonio Montemayor of Corpus Christi, who pointed out that he was a member of organized labor; that he was committed to go with his union; that in the event his union went for somebody other than the one our convention endorsed, he would have to go with his union, and for that reason he could not give his word to abide by the decision of our convention; so he got up and was excused and left.

Then we went into the nomination session. We had a terrific wrangle on the floor--people who were for Yarborough and what-have-you. Ultimately Daniel carried the day by ten votes. I don't recall the exact vote, but I do recall that he won by only a majority of ten votes among the delegates present. He became the nominee of the convention.

Nevertheless, as soon as the convention was over the organization promptly split down the middle. A lot of the chapters who were there who were with Don Yarborough did not keep their word. Dr. Sanchez, with the help of organized labor which was supporting Don Yarborough, attempted to set up a rival organization right in the middle of the campaign. He held a meeting in

San Antonio. He went down to Hidalgo County where he talked to my own PASO Chapter and which, incidentally, broke its word also. I was the only one of the leadership in Hidalgo County that worked for Price Daniel during the campaign. Leo J. Leo of La Joya, Dr. Ramiro Casso of McAllen, Bob Sanchez, all of the Hidalgo County leaders went for Don Yarborough despite the fact that they had been in San Antonio and had given their word to abide by the decision of the convention.

I have always said that PASO died in 1962 which was the year when it was at its peak because never in the history of Texas had you seen the kind of statewide high caliber politicians appear before a group of Mexican-Americans to solicit their support. It had never been seen before; it has not been seen since. PASO did remain active--it's still active--but it has not got what it takes anymore. However, I will say also that one reason for the failure of PASO that year was that along with the GI Forum leadership we had brought a lot of other diverse elements into the organization. A lot of people had come in who did not have real trust among themselves and who were not used to working together. Most of the GI Forum leadership at the PASO convention stuck together, and we stuck together after it was over, and we have stuck together since. But it was persons such Roy Elizondo of Houston and many other people that had joined PASO who thought that there had been a sell-out to Price Daniel. If you want to confuse Mexican-Americans, it's always easy by accusing somebody of having sold-out. The easiest thing you can do to tear up the Mexican-American organization is to accuse

the leadership of selling-out. So these people fell for it. They thought that Dr. Garcia and myself and a number of the other people had sold-out to Price Daniel, which really wasn't so.

Cuellar: What were the results of the election that you . . .

Idar: Well, if you'll recall we endorsed Price Daniel, and he lost in the first primary. Don Yarborough and John Connally went into the run-off. Now in the run-off naturally, since Daniel was out of the race, most of the PASO chapters who had gone down the line for Daniel went ahead and swung over to Don Yarborough. However, Connally beat him out in the run-off, if I remember correctly, by around 25,000 votes. I never did verify this, but it is my own understanding that Stuart Long here in Austin made an analysis of that election and pointed out that between the first primary and the run-off 80,000 votes in South Texas swung over from the Daniel camp to the Don Yarborough camp. I don't know whether that is correct. I remember hearing about it, but I never actually saw the study. I don't know whether I have correct information or not. It would be interesting to find out if that is true, because if it was it would signify that to that extent anyway, PASO did have a significant impact on that election.

Cuellar: So in other words we should say that PASO since then has not been effective among the . . .

Idar: Not to my knowledge. Let me say this also about that election. As I recall we endorsed Senator Secrest for lieutenant governor. We endorsed Tom Reavley for attorney general and we lost with both of them. One of the reasons being that the bitter feud that went

on between the Daniel and the Yarborough followers affected our entire effort in the other races. Actually the endorsement that we gave Secrest and Reavley was not as effective as it could have been. The governor's race affected the whole thing.

Another thing that was done in that convention, for example, is that each of the major candidates for the different state offices, that is the ones that were endorsed, had committed themselves that they would use Mexican-Americans in their campaign organizations. The nominees did have some Mexican-Americans on their staffs-- Daniel, Reavley, and Secrest--all kept their word, and we did have Mexican-Americans campaign full-time for those men during their campaigns. That was only in the primary. Now, Gilbert Garcia, as I recall, from Fort Worth, campaigned for Senator Secrest, but when Senator Secrest was knocked out in the first primary, Gilbert went ahead and campaigned for Connally in the run-off. Gilbert had been hurt particularly badly by the Yarboroughites, and he just couldn't see supporting Don Yarborough in the run-off. Governor Connally's people got hold of him, and I think he did go in there and worked for Connally in the run-off election.

I, myself, as soon as that election was over, because of what happened in Hidalgo County when my own PASO Chapter in effect turned on me, concluded that I would now get out of politics. I promised my wife that I would get out of politics and devote myself to law practice. By then I had been in San Angelo two, three times, and I had explored the city, and I had some friends over there who were trying to talk me into going there. I determined that summer

that I would move to San Angelo which I did in August of 1962. I borrowed \$1,500 from a couple of friends of mine to make the move. I moved over there and started my law practice, and I have sort of been outside of political activity since then.

Cuellar: So you were not actually intimately involved with the Crystal City election. But do you feel that the election being of a local nature was a reaction on the part of PASO leaders to remake or re-establish PASO as an influential organization?

Idar: As I recall I withdrew from PASO in '62, but other men remained active in it for a while longer. For example, Albert Pena was the chairman of PASO in '62, and he remained in an active leadership position with PASO for several years after that. Dr. Garcia remained active in the organization for a while after that. Other GI Forum leaders remained, but gradually--oh, in the next three to four, five years--most of these men started dropping out.

Now, your Crystal City situation, as I recall, I think occurred in 1963. At that time you still had Albert Pena and Albert Fuentes, incidentally, who used to be his right-hand man in San Antonio, quite active in PASO. With the help of the Teamster's Union and local activists in Crystal City, Albert Pena, Fuentes, and others stirred up this local movement. I think most of the financial support, from what I have heard, came from the Teamster's Union. I know the GI Forum was not involved because I know that Dr. Garcia was bitterly critical of PASO as a result of what happened in Crystal City. At any rate--and incidentally, I was the state executive secretary of the GI Forum during that time, and I know

first-hand that we didn't contribute any GI Forum money nor did we have a GI Forum council or chapter active in Crystal City when this happened--at any rate, the PASO name still carried a certain amount of wallop, and all the people in Crystal City became identified with the organization. Albert Pena went in there and made speeches, and they used Teamster money. They did have that initial success in '63 when they took over the city council. However, of course, two years later they fell apart, and the Cornejo slate was defeated by a slate made up of more moderate elements about equally divided between Mexican-American and Anglo-American people there in Crystal City. I believe that it was after that Crystal City election, at a subsequent PASO convention, where Dr. Garcia criticized Albert Pena, PASO, and the Teamsters for what had gone on in Crystal City, and I believe that Hector dropped out of PASO sometime after that. Gradually most of the other men dropped out. To my knowledge, PASO right now as of today doesn't amount to anything. A lot of people think it does, but it hasn't got anything left.

Cuellar: I'm sure you have heard of the possibility--at least a lot of people think so--of forming a political coalition of the liberal forces in Texas. In your opinion, how does it look to you? Is it probably, impossible?

Idar: Well, quite frankly I really don't know too much if there is any kind of movement underway to set up a liberal coalition. There is a lot of young leadership that is moving nowadays--a lot of young people that I don't know. In my work I have been coming in contact with some of them. Possibly these younger people may be able to

work something out. If you are going to rely on the old hands like Hector Garcia, myself, and a lot of other people, I would say that it's going to be difficult to get into any kind of coalition because we have been burned too many times already by the liberal element and the labor element here in Texas. That's another story. I could give you two or three examples of the way the liberals, simply in effect, try to use the Mexican-American. That's what it boils down to. When it comes to using the Mexican-American, the liberal is every bit as able to do that as your conservative and moderate politicians. At any rate I know that there is a lot of skepticism among the older Mexican-American leaders. Now whether or not the younger people who have not yet had some of the experiences that we had are getting involved and to what extent, I am not able to say because I'm not really up to date on that.

Cuellar: Okay. Do you want to add anything further to that?

Idar: Not if you don't have any further questions, I don't know.

Cuellar: Do you want to add anything about the political movements of the Mexican-American?

Idar: Well, one thing that I could add is this: there is a growing disenchantment among the Mexican-Americans with the Democratic establishment. By that I am talking about the state, not the national. We saw this for the first time in 1961 when Judge Raynaldo Garza was appointed as Federal District Judge in South Texas to fill the vacancy that was left on the death of Judge Allred. The PASO organization was very influential and very active in this thing at that time as was the GI Forum and a lot of other people.

A number of people were supporting Judge E. D. Salinas from Laredo because at that time we had three men in Texas who had held a state district judgeship; these were Salinas in Laredo, F. M. Guerra in McAllen, and Judge H. A. Garcia in Brownsville. However, of the three, Salinas had the most seniority, that is, he had been on the bench longer. Not only that, but he had confronted both Guerra and Garcia, and they had both indicated to him that they were not interested in making a bid for the federal judgeship that opened up when Judge Allred died. Therefore, Salinas started making a bid for it. A number of the people in the GI Forum found out about it, LULAC and the border county area and what-have-you. At any rate, Salinas had a lot of push behind him, and there was a tremendous amount of correspondence and wires and telegrams that went to Washington. Most of this was channeled to Carlos McCormick, whom I have mentioned and who was on the Kennedy staff. However, despite all of the effort that was put behind Salinas, Reynaldo Garza became the nominee. That left a bitter taste in the mouth of many of us for the simple reason that although we had nothing personal against Reynaldo, and although the man was qualified--there was no question as to his professional qualifications--the fact remained that he had bolted the Democratic Party both in 1952 and 1956. He had gone out and campaigned for President Eisenhower. We just couldn't see how, in the light of that record as far as the Party was concerned, they could nominate a man like that over a man like Salinas who also, in our opinion, was professionally qualified

(had been on the bench already) and had stuck with the Party during those two crucial elections.

So as a result of that we had the special Senate race in 1961. In the original go-round we, of course, supported Henry Gonzales, but then when we got to the run-off between Cowboy Bill Blakely and John Tower, that was a horse of a different color. Bob Sanchez and I and other of the liberal leaders in Hidalgo County among the Mexican-Americans couldn't very well go out and vote for Senator Tower--at least we couldn't advocate that--but we determined that instead of doing that we would go fishing. I know that the same feeling was held by other Mexican-American leaders throughout South Texas who had been involved in the Salinas deal for that judgeship.

As a typical example of what happened, as I recall, Kennedy had carried Hidalgo County in November of 1960 by approximately 5,000 votes whereas the Democrats lost the county to Tower either in April or May of the following year--just a few months later--by better than 1,500 votes. We think that a lot of that was because a lot of our people went fishing. We told them to go fishing, and they went fishing. Now, that was the beginning. Tower, in a sort of a negative way, did get a substantial Mexican-American vote for that reason. Then when he came up for re-election in 1966 by that time you had the Valley farm workers march that had taken place that summer. You will recall that Governor Connally, Waggoner Carr, and Speaker Barnes went down to New Braunfels to try to keep the march from proceeding to Austin. A lot of people, of course, were involved in that march. Hell, I was in that march myself, marching

from St. Edwards all the way down to the capitol together with my wife and two children. We had about 10,000 or 11,000 people marching, not counting those that had heard about it throughout the rest of the state. When Waggoner Carr ran against Senator Tower we were resentful of Mr. Carr. We did not appreciate what he had tried to do. We had gotten tired of the treatment we had received from the Texas Establishment. As a result, Senator Tower in his race against Waggoner Carr for the U. S. senatorship, as I recall, in a number of counties among the Mexican-American people carried anywhere from 20 to 38 per cent of the Mexican-American vote. I am emphasizing that this feeling is asserting itself against the state Democratic Establishment. In order to emphasize that point I would like to point out that in November of 1968 when it came to the presidential race, it was a horse of a different color. As you very well know, President Nixon didn't get anywhere close to the Mexican-American vote that Senator Tower had received in 1966.