

INTERVIEW WITH

H. J. Porter

by

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Oral Historian

on

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for

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library



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This is an interview being taped with Mr. H. J. Porter on December 16th, 1975 in Mr. Porter's home in Houston, Texas. Present for the interview, Mr. Porter and Dr. Maclyn Burg of the Eisenhower Library staff.

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DR. BURG: We were just discussing before we started the interview and Mr. Porter was going to speak to the question about the New York group, Tom Dewey and Cabot Lodge and Herb Brownell, and their role or lack of activity in connection with the Texas situation in 1952.

MR. PORTER: Well, they set up a committee while General Eisenhower was in France organizing NATO composed of Governor Dewey, former Senator Cabot Lodge, and Senator Jim Duff of Pennsylvania. I had a great deal of difficulty getting recognized as the Eisenhower leader in Texas by that committee, except for Senator Duff, who came down here in the fall of 1951 and made a tour with me over part of the state of Texas. Governor Dewey had an old political friend by the name of Dick Wall of Dallas and apparently Wall had assured the governor that he could get some delegate votes in a trade with Zweifel.

DR. BURG: This is Henry Zweifel.



PORTER: Henry Zweifel, who was the leader of the Taft forces in Texas and national committeeman. So apparently Governor Dewey and Cabot Lodge wanted to do business through Wall instead of me, and they really got mad at Jim Duff for having come down here when he did. Finally, in early 1952 they partially gave up on their plans to have Wall handle the Eisenhower campaign in Texas and sent--now I can't recall this fellow--sent a man down whom I knew to be present at the opening of the state headquarters in Dallas. I met him in Ft. Worth and driving over to Dallas he told me that he had been instructed to see Dick Wall. And I told him emphatically that he was down here to participate in the opening of the state headquarters which Wall would have nothing whatever to do with and that after we had opened the state headquarters we would have a visit with Wall. I told him that Wall had an understanding with Zweifel for a certain number of delegates and Taft would get the rest. Well, after we opened the state headquarters, we went over to the Adolphus Hotel where Wall met with us. The account of the opening of the state headquarters for Eisenhower had gone out over radio. We hadn't any more than gotten in the suite until the phone rang and it



was for Dick Wall. We retired to the sitting room so he could talk privately if he wanted to, but we could hear his end of the conversation. And it was with Henry Zweifel he informed us after it was over with. And apparently Zweifel was asking him if he was going to have anything to do with the campaign. And after that--oh I wish I could call the man's name--I told the gentlemen from New York, "Now are you satisfied that what I've been telling you about Wall and Zweifel having a trade?"

And he said, "I'm fully satisfied."

And I had no further trouble with the group in New York.

BURG: So it sounds like this Wall-Zweifel thing was in the old pattern of Texas Republicanism, where you're going to be satisfied with a little bit. And what you had in mind was you could take the whole Texas delegation for Eisenhower. And the New York crowd almost let themselves get suckered into taking a little bit of the Texas delegation in preference to taking the whole delegation that you probably could deliver.

PORTER: That is right. If it'd been left to them entirely, they would have settled on Wall to handle the Eisenhower campaign in Texas and taken eight or ten votes and been satisfied, which



would have resulted in the nomination, in my opinion, of Senator Taft.

BURG: Now do you think that they made the contact with Wall pretty much on the strength of Dewey's friendship with Wall?

PORTER: I don't think there's any doubt of it. I doubt if the others even knew him. Now Herbert Brownell came into the campaign after all that maneuvering. He came in and took charge of the campaign as chairman of it. I'd known Brownell for several years and we had the best of relations all during the campaign and are still friends.



BURG: That was what I was going to ask you, if you were satisfied with the way Brownell viewed and handled the Texas situation.

PORTER: I was perfectly satisfied. As a matter of fact, at my invitation he came to the state convention at Mineral Wells and stayed in my suite and was an observer of all the events preceding

the meeting of the state convention. And he made the remark after the state committee had ruled out all of our delegates, all contests, all forty of them, resolved in favor of the Taft people, he made the remark, he said, "Now we have an issue."

BURG: I was going to say that when he appeared, at your request, you must have come under a heavy fire from the Taft Republicans at Mineral Wells.

PORTER: I don't think--they might not have known he was there.

BURG: Oh, really?

PORTER: But I did come under heavy fire and so did Jim Duff when he had come to Texas the previous fall. His plane had no more than crossed the Sabine River until Zweifel let out with a blast of his coming down here and interfering in party affairs.

BURG: Well I figured the same kind of remark would be made about Brownell. But your impression was that maybe the Zweifel group didn't really know Brownell was here.

PORTER: Well if they did I don't have any recollection of it.



And I know at the hearing before the credentials committee one member of the committee asked that he ask me some questions. And he asked me if Brownell was present in Mineral Wells at the time of the convention. I told him, "Yes, he was."

He says, "Where did he stay?"

I said, "He stayed in my suite." I said, "Carroll Reece and Dave Ingalls were both there, too."

BURG: Staying in the same suite?

PORTER: No!

BURG: But present while Brownell was there.

PORTER: Yes. Carroll Reece and Dave Ingalls were the leaders of the Taft forces. I said, "They were also in Mineral Wells." But that man said he had no further questions to ask.

BURG: He would liked to have gotten you on that--

PORTER: Yes.

BURG: --if he could have. I'd forgotten that Reece and Ingalls were there, too.



PORTER: Well they were.

BURG: Sort of a swarming taking place. That gives some impression of how important the Texas fight was considered to be, by both sides. Let me ask you since you've mentioned Brownell--I've never met him personally. I've read some interviews done with him. Can you describe him as a man? When you think of that man, what major attributes come to your mind about him, about his character and his ability?

PORTER: Well, first place, Herbert Brownell is a fine lawyer; he served as attorney general in the Eisenhower Cabinet. Very personable, likeable man, and with a great background and experience in national politics. When he came in and supplanted that committee as chairman of the Eisenhower campaign nationally, things began to fall in place and operating smoothly all over the country.

BURG: Did you ever hear, Mr. Porter, what individual or individuals made the strong pitch to bring Brownell into the campaign to help organize and manage it?



PORTER: I do not know that, but it might have been General Lucius Clay. He was working with that committee. As a matter of fact, I went to see General Clay in New York and explained what was going on and I think that the fact they sent that man down for the opening of the state headquarters was probably at the insistence of General Clay.

BURG: Now you had gone to see Clay, would it have been the autumn of 1951?

PORTER: Oh, yes.

BURG: About that period of time.

PORTER: Or it might have been early January.

BURG: Yes, of '52. You knew he was associated with this movement to elect the General and yet what I don't understand-- how did you happen to pick him out to go to? You did not go to Lodge--and Duff had come here--but you went to Clay. Do you remember why you went to him?

PORTER: A mutual friend of General Eisenhower's and mine, L.F.



McCollum, who at that time was president of the Continental Oil Company suggested I go see General Clay.

BURG: So Mr. McCollum knew that Clay was closely associated with this.

PORTER: And I'm sure General Clay was in touch with General Eisenhower while he was in France. The reason I know that is when I wrote General Eisenhower and asked him for a commitment on state ownership of the tidelands, especially Texas, the reply I got back from him was sent to General Clay.



BURG: From France.

PORTER: Yes. And General Clay sent it down here.

BURG: Do you remember just the gist of that reply, because I wanted to talk with you later in this interview about the tidelands situation. Did he give you what you would consider to be a hopeful prognosis with respect to tidelands?

PORTER: Well he made a definite commitment that he favored Texas owning their Tidelands. If you'll cut it off I'll explain some-

thing to you.

[Interruption]

BURG: Now, pardon me Mr. Porter, you were saying that when Texas entered the Union--

PORTER: In the treaty of annexation Texas reserved her tidelands out to the eleven-mile limit.

BURG: And they had it written into the treaty.

PORTER: It was written into the treaty. And the Democrat administration had refused to do anything about concerning or acknowledging Texas ownership of those lands, those submerged lands.

BURG: When you say the Democratic administration, Roosevelt and Truman?

PORTER: Yes, administrations. So Senator Taft had made a commitment favoring Texas ownership of her tidelands; it's the reason I wrote General Eisenhower in the first place, asking him to make a commitment on it. The other states got their tidelands



out to the three-mile limit, which was the custom. I don't think the United States at that time asserted ownership beyond the three-mile limit.

BURG: No sir. Three miles was it.

PORTER: But the difference in Texas and other states was that Texas as a sovereign republic had entered the Union by annexation.

BURG: And for whatever reason had chosen an eleven-mile limit.

PORTER: I think that eleven mile was an old Spanish custom of claiming eleven miles.



BURG: I see. Be interesting to check that out.

PORTER: Texas having been under Spanish rule prior to the Texas revolution.

BURG: Sure, sure. Let me ask you this. It's kind of a tough question this late, but can you recollect what your course of action might have been had that letter, which General Eisenhower asked General Clay to give to you, had that letter stated that he was against Texas having that? Would that have changed your actions here in Texas?

PORTER: I'm confident it would have.

BURG: You'd have taken a totally different look, or at least another strong look at Eisenhower as a candidate. You had the Taft assurance that he would accept that Texas plan.

PORTER: It would have made it practically impossible to wage a winning campaign in Texas if he had taken a contrary stand on it.

BURG: I see. So your campaign approach in '52 rested to a considerable degree on his announced stand regarding Texas tidelands.

PORTER: Yes, I would probably have supported him because I thought he would make a good President, but we could not have waged the campaign successfully like we did had he taken the other viewpoint.

BURG: May I ask, did General Clay send that letter to you through the mails? It was just forwarded to you; he did not have it hand-delivered to you and you did not go to New York to pick up the letter.



PORTER: No, I tell you the way it was delivered. General Clay first sent it to Oveta Hobby for delivery to me, which she did. He apparently wanted her opinion of the letter. And she highly approved of it and she and I discussed what newspaperman in Texas would be the best one to handle the story, and she suggested a man with the Dallas News. I can't recall his name right now, but I made a trip to Dallas and he and his editor came to my quarters at the Baker Hotel and saw the letter and made a picture of it and then they broke the story.

BURG: Why did Mrs. Hobby counsel you to use a Dallas newspaper, passing over the Houston Post?

PORTER: I think she wanted wider coverage. The Dallas News was state-wide; the Houston Post had a limited coverage outside the Gulf coast territory. I think that was the reason. She wanted the letter to get the widest publicity possible.

BURG: So she let the Dallas News break the story; then the Houston Post copied and spread it further. Now you had never met General Clay at that point, you had not met him personally.



PORTER: Yes, I had met him before that letter.

BURG: Oh, you had?

PORTER: Yes. Well, on that trip to New York.

BURG: So you made the trip to New York prior to the release of this letter.

PORTER: I think that's right.



BURG: May I ask your impressions of Clay on your first meeting? He was just back, relatively soon after his experiences in Germany.

PORTER: I was very favorably impressed with General Clay. He was a very nice man and I think smart and capable.

BURG: How much political savvy? It seemed like such an odd thing for him to suddenly appear in the middle of that campaign, although I suppose maybe his experiences in Germany had been some kind of preparation for this sort of thing.

PORTER: Well it wasn't in the middle of the campaign; it was the early days of the campaign.

BURG: Yes, I mean in 1952 suddenly there he is working intimately with a political campaign--

PORTER: My guess is that General Eisenhower had great confidence in him and asked him to kind of keep an eye on things. I think that may have been the reason. Of course, naturally when he supported me, like I think he did, in that controversy with Dewey and Lodge, I'd naturally think he had a lot of political savvy.



BURG: And he strikes me, from what I've read about him in some of the correspondence and cables that he sent back from Germany, he strikes me as being a very intelligent man, highly intelligent man.

PORTER: I don't think there is any question about it.

BURG: And capable in the business world, as I think he's proven many, many times in these last twenty-some years.

PORTER: Yes.

BURG: Now, we were talking, too, about Brownell and Brownell

also seems to be cut from that kind of mold. Now he had had political campaign experience with Dewey on perhaps two national elections at least, plus perhaps some work in New York state.

PORTER: He had been national chairman. And I don't think that at that time there was any man in America with more political savvy than Herbert Brownell. And everybody that knew him liked him. And I'm sure they still do; I know I still do.

BURG: So he was popular with your group here. I would assume not so popular with the Henry Zweifel crowd; they perhaps saw flaws in him.

PORTER: Well, I never read of any criticism of Brownell by them.

BURG: Here in the state.

PORTER: Yes, Yes.

BURG: I see. So your relationships with him were good then and continued good. You spoke of the fact that you still count him as one of your good friends.



PORTER: That is right.

BURG: And Clay as well, I assume.

PORTER: That one visit was the only one I ever had with General Clay. But I was just most favorably impressed with him.

BURG: Now we had spoken, too, at our last session together, about the convention; we covered that I think pretty thoroughly. And one of the things that you mentioned to me as we broke up at our last meeting was that I was to ask you about the vice-presidential nominations at the Chicago convention in '52, and I think this would be especially interesting in view of what has happened in the past eighteen months.

PORTER: Well, Brownell, of course, was in charge of the Eisenhower forces at the national convention in Chicago, and he invited me to serve on a committee to select a vice-presidential candidate after the nomination had been made.

BURG: You were part of that group.

PORTER: Yes. And I remember very well that Governor Dewey was



also there and his opening statement to the members of the committee were, "Now if any of you favor a certain candidate, why, we'll hear what you have to say, then you have to withdraw from the meeting." Come to think about it, I believe General Clay was on that committee and that I sat next to him. But after a good deal of conversation among all of us, finally Governor Dewey said, "Well, what about Dick Nixon?" Well everybody knew that was the word, as we say sometimes in Texas, from the horse's mouth.



BURG: And that was the first time Nixon's name had been mentioned in that meeting, I take it.

PORTER: That's right, although there was some, well, agitation at the convention for him as the running mate.

BURG: Was that agitation on the floor; from delegates?

PORTER: Well, no, among delegates, they were talking about it. Then, after Nixon was nominated, I can't remember, but a week or two, maybe three weeks, he was attacked in stories about having had a fund raised for him in California for the purpose of making

anti-communist speeches over the country, to pay his expenses. So when that story broke, I had a schedule of the campaign--

[Interruption]

BURG: You had a schedule and you knew that Eisenhower's campaign train was then in St. Louis.

PORTER: Yes. So I called Arthur Summerfield and asked him if Nixon used any of that money for personal uses, other than expenses to go to make these speeches. He said, "Not one dollar of it went into his pocket."

And I said, "Where in the hell can you find a senator or governor that hasn't had something similar to that done for him."

He says, "I don't know where we'd find one."

And I says, "I think that that makes him a most attractive candidate for vice president and I certainly hope that he stays on the ticket."

BURG: I was going to ask you about the timing involved. The story broke, did you call Summerfield literally as soon as that



story broke? Because Summerfield had an answer for you, which means Summerfield would have had to have been in contact with Nixon to get that information he gave you.

PORTER: Well he might have had a rumor of it and been in contact with Nixon, or else they had checked Nixon before his name was put up for vice-president.

BURG: Well, that's also possible.

PORTER: But I remember very well I was reading the paper, Saturday morning paper, and then I just reached for the telephone and called Summerfield. And then I got up and had breakfast and went to my office. In the conversation he said, "I wish you'd send me a telegram saying what you have said." I went to my office to type it so I could take it to Western Union and not risk it being garbled. And as I walked into my office the telephone rang, it was Summerfield, said, "Where's that telegram?"

I says, "I'm down here to write it and I'm taking it down to Western Union in just a few minutes."

And I remember very well that when I gave it to the Western Union girl and she read it. She said, "Mr. Porter, I



think you're right." And then I knew I was right about him being a fine candidate. And he was. He drew big crowds everywhere he went. And a general rule, a vice-president almost had to speak at coffee parties or such.

BURG: Yes, in previous years.

PORTER: Yes.

BURG: That's right.

PORTER: We had Nixon, several appearances here in Texas. I don't think he drew less than ten thousand at an airport meeting. He drew, generally, as well as General Eisenhower did.

BURG: I see. Now I was going to ask you, it's tough to pose a question like this--do you, first of all, remember how many of you took part in that meeting to propose a nominee for the vice-presidential spot?

PORTER: Oh, I would say there were six or eight. One of them was Dan Thornton of Colorado, former governor.

BURG: He was there.



PORTER: Yes, he was there.

BURG: Tom Dewey was there; you were there; you wonder if perhaps--

PORTER: Brownell was present.

BURG: And Brownell was present. Lucius Clay, you thought.

PORTER: I think he was sitting right by me.

BURG: Do you remember any others in that group?

PORTER: Right now I can't recall any others.

BURG: Can you speculate as to why that particular group of Republican party leaders happened to be chosen for that particular task?

PORTER: Well my guess is that they were chosen by Brownell with approval of General Eisenhower.

BURG: Dewey and Brownell, both New York types; Thornton from the West; you from the South; Clay is the non-political figure that Eisenhower evidently had a great regard for.



PORTER: Well I don't think it was selected on a geographical basis, but there were three or four others there and I can't call their names now.

BURG: Don't happen to remember if Frank Carlson was there?

PORTER: I don't believe he was. He could have been; that's been a long time ago.

BURG: Various names were passed around and I think that the various records and accounts speak of some of the names that were brought up. It interests me that it was Mr. Dewey who you recollect as bringing out the name Richard Nixon.



PORTER: That is right.

BURG: No one else had really spoken of that. When his name was mentioned, it was a familiar name to you?

PORTER: Oh, yes.

BURG: You knew something about him and his background.

PORTER: Everybody knew something about him.

BURG: Do you happen to recollect, Mr. Porter, when his name was mentioned, how did the group react? Was it an immediate reaction, or did people stay silent and think about it for a while?

PORTER: The reaction was immediate, and we voted on it unanimously, and I don't think it all took five minutes after his name was mentioned.

BURG: Did Mr. Dewey leave the room?

PORTER: No.

BURG: He did not.

PORTER: Under his rules he didn't have to. He didn't recommend him. He just come up with his name. And you see Nixon was a very popular man at that time on account of his work on the committee--anti-

BURG: The House Un-American--

PORTER: The House Un-American--



BURG: --Affairs.

PORTER: --Affairs Committee, and he had been responsible for sending Alger Hiss to the penitentiary. He'd done a great job on that committee.

BURG: He was a young man and a Westerner, all of which--

PORTER: Yes, and from California, geographically that was good.



BURG: So in a language more typical of today, the image that he could project was a very good one, would do the party no harm; you're running, really, an elder man as the candidate and you give him a very young running mate which would do no harm.

PORTER: That's right, and a very fine campaigner.

BURG: Energetic--

PORTER: Yes.

BURG: --in his campaigning.

PORTER: Yes. I think Nixon was practically inexhaustible at the time. I spent a night and a day with him and Pat at Ft. Worth and then at the Dallas fair, and late in the afternoon, early evening, after an airport reception--that was after he was vice-president--he was still going strong and I was worn out. And I was a lot younger then than I am now.

BURG: Sometimes, Mr. Porter, you can look at someone and you can judge how they are reacting to the situation they're in. Was he the kind of man who enjoyed meeting people and being with people?

PORTER: I certainly think so. I always got that impression of him. And Pat was just as good a hand at it as he was, that's his wife.

BURG: You didn't find him reserved, aloof maybe would be the word I'd--

PORTER: No, I wouldn't, I'd never call him aloof. He was a very natural person at the time.



BURG: I'm glad you qualified with "at the time" because of course more recently this kind of thing has been raised in many, many circles in the country that it seemed as though in the White House he progressively became shut further and further away from the realities of the country, its temperament, everything.

PORTER: That always happens to a President.

BURG: Your judgment is that they all--

PORTER: The staffs always build a fence around them. Mr. Jesse Jones told me that, when he was secretary of commerce in Roosevelt's administration and head of the RFC [Reconstruction Finance Corporation], that he could not get an appointment with the President through the staff, that he had to get a mutual friend to arrange for him to see the President.

BURG: A cabinet member.

PORTER: Yes.

BURG: He had to come in the back door.



PORTER: That's right.

BURG: Would you make that same observation about Mr. Eisenhower? Was it your impression that his staff similarly shut him away from contact?

PORTER: That's right. They'll always do it. Apparently always have. You know when a man crosses the Potomac, and especially if he goes on the presidential staff, overnight becomes a 'great man.

BURG: You think that may be written into the commission that the President signs for him? A little phrase in there--"you are now a great man."

PORTER: I've seen it happen too many times.

BURG: Probably to the detriment of the country.

PORTER: No question about it. I think a President--of course he can't see everybody that wants to see him, but he should not allow his staff to shut everybody out, and apparently Nixon's staff shut everybody out from him.



BURG: It seems to be the absolute case in American history. I don't think I can come up with another President who seemingly became so isolated as a result of a staff over-protecting him. And I wondered whether it was your impression that Mr. Nixon had always tended to put up other people as a shield to keep people away from him, or whether that might have been something that occurred over time or perhaps, as you have suggested, occurred when he entered the highest position in the land.



PORTER: He was never that way, in my opinion, prior to becoming President.

BURG: Now let me ask you, because I know--

PORTER: As a matter of fact, it was so bad during his administration that, if I wanted to get a letter to him, I addressed it to his personal secretary for delivery. I knew if I didn't, he'd never see it.

BURG: But letters addressed that way did reach him and you received responses--

PORTER: Yes.

BURG: --that indicated to you that he was handling that matter himself, that is he was responding to--

PORTER: Well it indicated to me that he saw the letter. I didn't have many occasions to write him, but I did a few times.

BURG: You knew him best and most frequently during the years of the Eisenhower administration.



PORTER: Yes.

BURG: Well I was going to ask you to continue, because I know that this was an important thing to all of you here in Texas and particularly to you and the group that worked so hard here for the President's election--the tidelands matter which you've already introduced by speaking of that letter, did not go as you had hoped it would go. Things did not work out as you hoped. Can you fill me in on--

PORTER: Oh, yes it did.

BURG: Did it?

PORTER: Oh, by congressional act and the President signed it.

BURG: So you got, then, the thing that was so vitally important to you.

PORTER: Texas got out to her eleven-mile limit and all the other states out to three miles. And Louisiana has had a tremendous number of fine oil fields within their borders.

BURG: Within that three-mile shelf off the coast.

PORTER: Yes. In fact it got far more than Texas has because the most productive sand pinches out off the Texas coast, but it's a big, thick sand off the coast of Louisiana.

BURG: Just by a geological freak it--

PORTER: By a geological freak there's more oil off the coast of Louisiana than there is off Texas.

BURG: And three miles of Louisiana compared to eleven miles of Texas.

PORTER: That's right.



BURG: I see. Well, somehow I had the impression that this had not gone as you might have wanted. Was there anything else in connection with the oil industry itself that proved a disappointment in the administration?

PORTER: The main disappointment I had with the administration was the fact that they did not limit oil imports more than they did. Oil was cheap in those days and the oil men were having trouble financing exploratory wells, that is independents were, because they weren't getting enough for their oil. And we were bringing in several million barrels a day from Saudi Arabia.

BURG: So what you wanted in effect was a tariff against that cheap foreign oil--

PORTER: I didn't care anything about a tariff; I wanted them to limit it. I took the position that time in testifying before a Senate committee that it was dangerous to become so dependent on oil in the Middle East, especially in time of war. Now that was--

BURG: Twenty-three years before we found out the hard way.



PORTER: Yes.

BURG: So an importation limit would have satisfied you.

PORTER: Yes, to cut it down some. I didn't want to cut it all out, I didn't ask that--but reduce it.

BURG: You spoke of this with people in the administration I'm sure. Not just congressional leaders that you could count on as friends of yours, people who would listen to your point of view. May I ask who you took this matter to within the administration itself?

PORTER: Sherman Adams.

BURG: Did you take it personally, Mr. Porter. Or did--

PORTER: Yes.

BURG: You went to Washington and talked with Governor Adams.

PORTER: Yes.

BURG: What kind of reception did you receive from him? You knew him from the campaign period, of course.



PORTER: Yes. Well, he was courteous but I wasn't getting any results. They had a president of some college or university, I forget his name now [Kevin McCann], was in charge of that, and he thought he could do it by writing letters to these importers. And I told him and Sherman Adams at the same time that they couldn't do it that way. They had to have positive action.

BURG: He thought the oil importers within the country could be convinced to voluntarily cut back on the quantity that they imported.

PORTER: Yes.

BURG: It doesn't seem like a very reasonable way to approach it.

PORTER: As a matter of fact, as president of an independent oil business association, I was able to get a reasonable cutback long before Eisenhower was elected President. This was back in the '40s.

BURG: Among the independents.



PORTER: No, among the major oil companies.

BURG: Oh, really?

PORTER: Talking to them one at a time. I didn't talk to two of them at once, that'd been violating anti-trust laws.

BURG: One at a time. But in the period from the '40s when you did this and the early '50s, the early Eisenhower administration, evidently they had gone back to--

PORTER: They had gone back up and they'd found more oil over there apparently. And that was before the Suez Canal was closed.

BURG: Before that 1956 affair.

PORTER: Yes.

BURG: Now I know that you would not have been content with one approach to Adams. You, I assume, went back and persisted in your efforts.

PORTER: I probably did. I saw him many times. I'm sure that I did.



BURG: But it never seemed to get anywhere.

PORTER: No. All I'd get was those letters asking them to do it.

BURG: Did you ever take the matter to the President himself?

PORTER: No, I never did.

BURG: Was it because you thought it was something that should be handled at Adams' level or was it that you weren't permitted to get in there?

PORTER: Well I could have seen him, but I thought that this is something that the President ought not to be bothered with; that they could do it.

BURG: So the end result was that all of your efforts came to nothing.

PORTER: That is right.

BURG: And until very recent times.

PORTER: Yes.



BURG: No substantial change whatsoever. We continued to bring in as much cheap oil as we could, and it would be your suggestion that that handicapped the American oil industry, restricted the exploration that they did for new fields and--

PORTER: Sure it did.

BURG: --worked to our disadvantage.

PORTER: See oil was pretty doggone cheap back in those days. I had a property depleted during World War II on a dollar and fifteen cent oil.



BURG: In effect, a field reduced to the absolute minimum at a dollar fifteen cents--

PORTER: A dollar and fifteen cents a barrel. And at that time you couldn't find oil for a dollar fifteen cents a barrel.

BURG: And the exploratory price going up all the time.

PORTER: Yes, going up all the time.

BURG: Now let me ask you a question about patronage. Was it,

as you now remember, was it felt in Texas that Texas Republicans got their fair share.

PORTER: I saw to it that they did.

BURG: Did you?

PORTER: Yes, sir.

BURG: Who was your point of contact there? Were you again working with Governor Adams?

PORTER: Well it depended on what department was involved. Whether it was a federal judgeship, I dealt with the attorney general's office. There wasn't a great deal of patronage other than the Post Office Department and the attorney general's office. Of course on postal appointments I dealt with the postmaster general's office.

BURG: Arthur Summerfield.

PORTER: See we had no Republican senator in Texas at that time. We had two Democrats up there. Had we had a Republican senator,



he would have handled the patronage. But as national committee-  
man, I handled it.

BURG: Yes, and satisfactorily.

PORTER: Well I didn't satisfy Senator [Olin] Johnston of South  
Carolina. He decided I was selling postal appointments for ten  
dollars a piece on account of my letter I had written Republican  
appointees, addressed to their homes, asking them for contribution,  
campaign contribution, and I got a good response from them. Any-  
how, he had a hearing up there; had me up there, tried me in the  
papers for, oh, eight or ten months and then finally, right in  
the middle of the presidential campaign of '56, in October, he  
had his hearing. And when I got through with him, he didn't  
think enough of his record to have it printed.



BURG: You had asked for contributions that would have gone  
into Republican campaign funds for the state.

PORTER: Locally, yes.

BURG: Locally, and on the strength of that--

PORTER: This happened before the presidential election of '56. I know out of those funds we elected a Republican to Congress from Dallas County. And so Senator Johnston, the only remark he made after the hearing was that one or two witnesses had perjured themselves--he didn't say which, just one or two witnesses, of his witnesses that he had--he didn't accuse me of perjury at all.

BURG: That you were selling them for ten dollars apiece.

PORTER: Yes.

BURG: If I'd known they were going that cheap, I'd have been down here; I had ten dollars in 1956. I could have put in for something. That's really rather remarkable.



PORTER: I might add this. All during the Eisenhower administration, it cost me in expenses a minimum of ten thousand dollars a year, and I never took one dollar towards expenses or anything else out of any money that was raised in Texas.

BURG: So your accommodations, your travel, stationery, stamps, all things of this sort, you footed that bill yourself.

PORTER: Well I maintained a state headquarters where they bought their stamps, but as far as letters I wrote personally out of my office, why I paid for that.

BURG: I've heard similar stories from people in other states, did very much the same thing. Now, in the period '52 to '56, did you remain committeeman?

PORTER: I remained committeeman. I went in at the convention in '52 and stayed until the spring of 1960, I believe it was, and I resigned on account of my health wasn't too good and I didn't feel up to going through another presidential campaign. One was coming up.

BURG: You had passed through the one in '56.

PORTER: Yes, I'd been through two of them.

BURG: Let me ask you this, was the '56 campaign as tough for you to organize and to manage as '52 had been?

PORTER: No.

BURG: Did you still have pretty much the same organization?



Could you count for the support and the assistance of generally the same people that had helped in '52?

PORTER: Yes, I think so. It wasn't as strenuous as the other one had been.

BURG: Did you make any changes in the way you approached campaigning on Eisenhower's behalf here in '56?

PORTER: I don't remember any. See we were running an incumbent President--

[Interruption]



BURG: We were speaking about 1956 and you had spoken of the fact that you were running an incumbent which was a great help to you. Did you get the impression, or is it now your recollection, that Texans, by and large, seemed to be satisfied with the President's record in the first four years?

PORTER: Well I think the best answer to that is that he carried the state in '52 by about a hundred and twenty thousand votes and he carried in '56 by over two hundred thousand.

BURG: The impression here had been good.

PORTER: Yes.

BURG: Had there been any fence-mending necessary with the Zweifel people? Let me put it to you in another way--did you seem to have more of their support in '56 than you'd had in '52? Or did they remain kind of out of it?

PORTER: After they were defeated in Chicago in '52, they seemed to disappear. I don't remember any of the ardent Taft people, among county chairmen and the state committee in '52, having had any part in the election campaign.

BURG: In '56.

PORTER: Yes. In '52, and certainly in '56.

BURG: Oh. Once the convention had occurred and they were defeated in the convention, they were really not present as part of that '52 campaign--

PORTER: So you can understand that, the Republican party was poorly organized prior to 1952. I went to state conventions



where if they had three hundred people they had a big convention.

BURG: That's for the entire state.

PORTER: Yes. And most of them were old people, weren't many young people in the organization.

BURG: An Old Guard that really was older in years. Now during the eight years of your tenure, were you able to--and I speak now as an outsider looking in and not knowledgeable in Texas politics--during those eight years were you able to create a dynamic Texas Republican party?

PORTER: I certainly think so, because we started electing some local officials and congressmen and a senator during my term.

BURG: And despite what happened in the election in 1960--

PORTER: Or right after, right after I went out. [John] Tower was elected, I think, in '61. But I hadn't been out over a year when he was elected.

BURG: And the organization survived the defeat in 1960 and remained viable and active.



PORTER: Yes, it's active today.

BURG: That was the next thing I was going to ask you, something along those lines. In your own personal opinion, are you satisfied with the state of the party in Texas now, today, as it stands today?

PORTER: Well, I think they've done very well, but as far as being satisfied, I wouldn't be satisfied until we got a majority of the congressmen and two senators and a governor.

BURG: You're going to shoot the whole ballot, and nothing less than that is going to satisfy you.

PORTER: That is right.

BURG: But it would be correct, I think, then to say that there's been a tremendous change in the Texas Republican party since 1951.

PORTER: Oh, yes, yes.

BURG: And the old ways of doing things, evidently, are not going to come back. The party is solid; there is a two-party system in this state now, functioning. And you are content as you can be



up until you get the whole ball of wax.

PORTER: Well, now you got a bunch of young and middle-aged people running it. Before '52 it was a bunch of ex-postmasters running it. You know they used to could fire a postmaster with every change of administration. One woman got awful mad at me because I couldn't fire the postmaster in a certain town in Texas and put her niece in as postmistress. Well during the Roosevelt years, you know, you couldn't fire a postmaster except for cause. And I found, my experience with the postal service, the agents you know that ride herd on , I found them a very fine organization. Had no trouble with them in nearly eight years.



BURG: In effect the inspection--

PORTER: Inspection service, that's what it is, yes.

BURG: Who followed you as national committeeman?

PORTER: Albert B. Fay of Houston.

BURG: Was he one of the younger men who had risen during the '52 campaign and --

PORTER: He had been active in the party and the '52 campaign, been a good contributor and a good money raiser. I selected him, recommended to the state committee that he succeed me. He's a good man and we needed a national committeeman that could raise money to keep the party going. You can't run a state headquarters and do the things needed to be done on credit. You know political parties don't have too good a credit.

BURG: Not very often.

PORTER: No.

BURG: We've just noticed in Kansas that Dr. [Bill] Roy still has an eighty-five thousand dollar outstanding bill in his unsuccessful political campaign of, I think, a year ago. So credit is not advanced to the parties. May I ask you two final things--you still remain relatively active in party affairs, do you not?

PORTER: Well, I wouldn't say in party affairs. I contribute to candidates and I've just made a contribution to the Republican National Committee recently, and I expect to contribute more



money in the next few months, next several months because I want to try to beat a lot of congressmen, liberal congressmen. I think we have the worst Congress right now that I've ever seen in my nearly eighty years of life.

BURG: What particularly bothers you about this Congress?

PORTER: Well I'll tell you what bothers me about it--organized labor's running it. George Meany, they dance to his tune. Now a lot of those Democrats, there are some good Democrats that don't. You take Senator [John] Stennis, chairman of the Judiciary Committee, I think is a fine man. I don't think George Meany tells him how to vote. I know he don't. And there's some others. But a great many members of Congress are beholden to Meany through organized labor for financial and political support getting there.

BURG: So when you spoke of making a contribution to the national committee, as though there are a lot of congressmen you wanted to get out of there, you're not speaking specifically of Texas congressmen that you'd like to get out; you are putting your money on the line to--



PORTER: Elect Republicans.

BURG: --elect more Republicans.

PORTER: Yes.

BURG: And I would expect that your advice is still sought from time to time on the Texas scene as far as party politics are concerned.

PORTER: Locally but not state-wide.

BURG: Oh, I see. I was thinking particularly of the young man with whom we had lunch today who--

PORTER: Well, he's just a young man that is vitally interested in government and very conservative and I'm sure of modest means.

BURG: I did not catch his last name, Mr. Porter.

PORTER: Lauck.

BURG: Lauck.

PORTER: I think it's L-a-u-c-k, way it's spelled. Chet Lauck.



BURG: Now one final thing that I'd like to ask you--can you give me your personal assessment of Dwight D. Eisenhower as a political leader and as President of the United States?

PORTER: Well, I'd say as a political leader and in dealing with the Congress and all, he was certainly adequate. As a President I think he did a fine job, although a lot of people won't agree with me. There's one thing that you can always remember. During the Eisenhower administration, not one soldier was killed in battle. Soon as he closed down the Korean War, from that time till he went out, not one American boy died in battle and not one square foot of land was lost to the communists.



BURG: And that, as you think about it, that's paramount in your mind.

PORTER: Well I certainly think it's vital to the interests of this country.

BURG: But adequate, at least adequate as a political leader.

PORTER: Yes.

BURG: You didn't feel he was outstanding.

PORTER: Until he ran for President he was practically a novice in politics, he'd never had any experience in politics. I don't think Eisenhower would have done anything drastic for politics, for political purposes. He wouldn't have done anything that he didn't think was for the good of the country.

BURG: That's an interesting observation to make.

PORTER: I think he was thoroughly honest.

BURG: Now one thing that is often pointed out by some who were not happy with his administration one way or another, many have felt that he did not make decisions, that he did not like to make decisions. From where you sat, was that an impression that you had?

PORTER: No, I never got that impression.

BURG: Your feeling was that he was perfectly capable of making them, did make them. You saw him during the campaigning period, the convention and campaigning period. Could I ask, did you



feel that he was learning the ropes pretty fast?

PORTER: Well, of course there's one thing about General Eisenhower--he liked people and being nice to people and friendly came naturally with him. He wasn't an aloof person. And I would rate him as a good campaigner.

BURG: Novice or not. He seems to have picked up the--

PORTER: He was a great speaker off the cuff. He could address a crowd without any notes or anything. I remember I wired Mamie not long after he came back--he made a speech in Detroit-- I could tell that it was a written speech. I wired her to please tell him not to write any more speeches or let anybody write them, to speak off the cuff.



BURG: And it was a speech in Detroit that--

PORTER: I think it was in Detroit. It was kind of a stilted when I read it; didn't sound like Eisenhower.

BURG: Others have mentioned one of the speeches, maybe they're talking about different speeches, but that early in the campaign

they, too, felt that he ought to put more of himself into the speeches and little less work with the speech writers.

PORTER: Well I expect Mamie got the word to him.

BURG: Your recollection now is that later speeches in the campaign came across better to you than the one that had disappointed you.

PORTER: Yes, much better.

BURG: Well I cannot take more of your time, Mr. Porter. We thank you so much for all of your help to us. It's very much appreciated.

PORTER: Well, it's been a pleasure to visit with you.

BURG: Thank you, sir.

