

INTERVIEW WITH

Alvin H. Lane

by

Dr. Maclyn Burg  
Oral Historian

on

November 3, 1972

for

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library



Gift of Personal Statement

ALVIN H. LANE

to the

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library

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ERRATA SHEET

Donor editing of this interview was done by Mrs. Alvin Lane.

Insertions made by Mrs. Lane have been enclosed in brackets [ ].

Mrs. Lane has incorrectly identified David Ingalls as David

Ingram. Therefore, reference to Ingram should be read as Ingalls.



This interview is being conducted with Mr. Alvin Lane in Dallas, Texas, in Mr. Lane's home. The interview is November 3, 1972, the interviewer is Dr. Maclyn Burg of the Eisenhower Library staff.

DR. BURG: Now, Mr. Lane, you are a native Texan?

MR. LANE: Born in Dallas, May 28, 1895.

DR. BURG: And you were educated here in Dallas.

MR. LANE: Well, my primary education was here. I attended public schools until in 1907. I attended Terrill Preparatory School for Boys and graduated head of my class in 1911. When the time came to go to college, my father decided to send me east, better schools. I went to Yale for four years and graduated at 20, Phi Beta Kappa.

DR. BURG: You were twenty years old when you--



MR. LANE: Twenty in June. And then I went to Harvard Law School because the law schools in Texas weren't up to par at that time. And in April of my second year, World War I broke out. I volunteered and was sent down to Leon Springs, Texas, and attended the First Officers Training Camp. And in August I got my commission as a 2nd Lieutenant. And then we trained at Camp Travis, Texas, just outside of San Antonio until, oh, I think it was about August. In the meantime, I had an

infection from a wood tick bite and was laid up in bed. When my regiment went overseas I recovered from that and went over as a casual and joined the regiment at Camp Arcachon near Bordeaux, France. It was an amusing thing to me, I remember a 2nd Lieutenant and I from my regiment took over about two hundred and fifty airmen who were so anxious to get over that they dropped all sorts of non-com commissions, and went over as privates. Also they had some engineer corps. There was one old Negro who came down to serenade the troops off, and he sang, "The Titanic Blues."

{Laughter}

LANE: And he sang, the words of it went, "When the Titanic hit that cold iceberg she didn't linger long. She just lowered her nose and gradually sunk."

BURG: And there you were boarding a transport and on your way across the Atlantic and German submarines active--a beautiful choice of music for the occasion. When you were at Leon Springs, did you encounter Eisenhower by any chance?

LANE: No, I never met Eisenhower until the start of his campaign.





BURG: All right, because I think that the two of you were there at approximately the same time.

LANE: I know he was at Ft. Sam Houston, I think, a little earlier.

BURG: Yes, and he was assigned briefly at Leon Springs, too. He did work with training people, but then that assignment wasn't very long, and he moved on, but I thought there was an off-chance you might have run into him.

LANE: No, never heard of him then.

BURG: Now may I have your regimental number too, please, at this time?

LANE: 345th Field Artillery, 90th Division and I was in Battery D.



BURG: And the campaigns or actions that that regiment was associated with, did they take part in St. Mihiel or anything?

LANE: Our infantry was at Ardennes, oh, several of those early battles. A bunch of my friends got killed in them. But our artillery, I didn't ever get into actual combat.

BURG: And you spoke earlier to me of being in a 155th outfit.

LANE: 155th Millimeter Howitzer regiment.

BURG: And toward the end in a burst of youthful exuberance you signed up for balloon work, artillery observing from balloons.

LANE: Yes. They wanted trained artillery officers for observance.

BURG: And the armistice saved you from your folly. Now when you returned from France, you then finished the last year at Harvard Law School?

LANE: Yes.

BURG: Now what was your career from then on? You became a practicing lawyer?

LANE: Yes.

BURG: Here in Dallas?

LANE: Yes.

BURG: What kind of law did you enter when you got back here?



LANE: General, civil, corporate, estate practices. I never cared for criminal law; I never took any criminal cases.

BURG: I see.

[I believe Mr. Lane first started to work in the law office of Hart Willis. Then I believe he and Martin Winfrey became associated or partners. Later Mr. Lane and Julius Runge became associates. And Mr. Lane first took Wallace Savage into partnership. At one time Mr. Lane was state chairman of the Republican party and Wallace Savage was state chairman of the Democratic party. They shared the same office and the same secretary. They had an elephant on the secretary's desk pointing to Mr. Lane's office and a donkey pointed toward Mr. Savage's office.



The firm enlarged to become Lane, Savage, Counts and Winn, as it is today, except Mr. Lane is retired and Mr. Savage stopped practicing law to become a writer of novels. He had one published.]

LANE: All my career evolved with several different lawyers. Wallace Savage was my original partner, and our current law firm, which is Lane, Savage, Counts, and Winn, W-i-double n.

I practiced in Dallas from 1920 on with the exception of a three year period from 1957 to 1960. My mother's father, Joseph Huey, was a co-founder of the firm of Huey and Philp which was originally hardware and hotel supplies.

BURG: And that Huey is H-u-e-y.

LANE: H-u-e-y.

BURG: And Philp, P-h-i-l-p.

LANE: Right.

BURG: Now before coming back to the 1920s, let me just ask you, did you then see service in World War II?

LANE: No. No, I was married. I married my second wife in January, 1940.



BURG: Now at what point in time did you actively enter politics?

LANE: 1938.

BURG: Not until then?

LANE: No, John Philp was a lifelong Republican, and he was the Third Assistant Postmaster General under [President Herbert] Hoover. And when Philp came back here, we set up a five man executive committee, on which I served, and Philip tried to interest me in Republican politics and did. And in 1940, [I think this was 1940] I attended my first Republican state convention at Beaumont. In fact, they nominated me candidate for attorney general of Texas.

BURG: Now, Mr. Lane, why no earlier than 1938, as you think back on it?

LANE: Oh, I just didn't get interested in politics. I was practicing law and trying to make a living which was pretty tough during the depression.



BURG: Indeed it was. Now let me ask you this, if your interest can be dated back to 1938, do you remember specifically what it was that now turned you from not being interested into being concerned about politics, so concerned that you now actively participate?

LANE: F. D. Roosevelt! Well, in 1957, when I became president of Huey and Philp, I figured that I ought not to be actively

engaged in politics so I gave up my position as the state chairman of the Republican Party. Oh, I had done that a year or two before, and I didn't take active part in politics until 1960. At that time I didn't get back too actively into it, but I have always been quite interested and have contributed financially and in any way I could.

BURG: Well had Landon's defeat in 1936 disappointed you? What caused you to suddenly begin to take this active role in Texas politics in '38?

LANE: Oh, I think the biggest single thing that disappointed me was [Franklin D.] Roosevelt, especially after his second-term election. I thought that then with one term behind him and elected again ought to be more conservative than he was. Instead of that, he got worse.



BURG: So actions, especially as he got into the second term, his own actions, were a disappointment to you?

LANE: Yes, his attempt to pack the Supreme Court was the most shocking thing to me. And I decided he was a dangerous man in the Democratic Party which, under his influence was dangerous, and I ought to get in the fight.

BURG: Now let me ask you this, what did you find to be the state of the Republican Party when you entered it here?

LANE: Oh, it was minimal. [R. B.] Creager, who was the national committeeman and had been for some time, used to talk about how you could hold a Republican convention in a telephone booth.

BURG: But you saw hope for doing something with that party?

LANE: Yes, I did, and I wanted to try.



BURG: Well it strikes me as being remarkable. You were taking on a tremendous job if I understand, how minuscule the party was?

LANE: That's how it was. It was very minuscule.

BURG: Now you've mentioned that Mr. Creager was one of those who was leading the party in Texas. Do other names from that time come to your mind now, people who were, when I say active in the Republican Party, there's some question about that.

LANE: Oh, I think my interest and acquaintance with the party, early days from Creager, were stimulated by John Philp who was a close friend of his. But there was a character name of "Gooseneck" MacDonald I think. I think he was a Negro, and he got interested. I don't know whether it was the patronage or what. But then there was a man named Nolte from San Antonio who was a state chairman, I think. His son came along after him and kind of wanted to get involved, and nobody, when I say nobody, Creager I think himself didn't think too much of Nolte, and I didn't, but he was all right. He was a Republican.

BURG: It sounds as though one had to do some adjusting to like Mr. Nolte.

LANE: Think you had to kind of accept him as Republican.



BURG: Now how about Mr. Creager, when you first met him, when you first had dealings with him in 1938, what kind of a man was he? What is his character? What kind of personality did he have, Mr. Lane?

LANE: Well, I think he had a good personality. I think he was sincerely interested in building the Republican Party, and he figured the best way to do it was to get well recognized men of integrity as candidates. And he never put up a hum slate.

BURG: People he selected were reliable and good people in your view.

LANE: Well regarded.

BURG: And how about his ability to handle what must have been a number of factions within Texas. It seems to me that in this state you do have some distinct factions within the Republican ranks alone?

LANE: Well, I think he did very well at it. George Hopkins was Republican state chairman when Creager wanted me to run



for governor in 1948, I think. And I agreed that I would, but George Hopkins, a highly regarded man, and Mike Nolte kind of got together. Hopkins went along with Nolte and if any mistakes was made in that relationship I think it was mine because I probably should not have opposed Hopkins' renomination as state chairman. I think it embarrassed Creager a little bit, and it eventually led to Nolte defeating me for the nomination for the governorship. So as that happened, I moved that his nomination be made unanimous, and it was. Two years later I was unanimously nominated, in 1950 I think, to run for governor of Texas.

BURG: So in '38, when you came in, at what level did you come in, Mr. Lane, into the party? What kinds of activities did you do starting at that point?



LANE: Oh, I don't suppose I had too much real activity excepting that I was the nominee for attorney general, I think, right up to the [Texas] Supreme Court and finally for governor. But more and more as things got along, I think along toward '50 or so, I got more active and actively going out around the state to conventions, and campaigning for governor.

BURG: So you didn't handle precinct business; you were not a precinct chairman here in Dallas?

LANE: No, I never was.

BURG: Not directly associated with the Republican executive committee or anything of this sort. Had you ever served on that?

LANE: Well, for ten years before I became the gubernatorial nominee, I was an assistant general counselor, Orville Bullington was the general counselor. He and I got along very well, and we worked well together.

BURG: What kind of a man was he? You knew him and worked with him?

LANE: Orville Bullington, Wichita Falls, fine man. He was a lawyer. I liked him very much.

BURG: A man who could be relied upon?

LANE: Absolutely. I never doubted him.

BURG: Not a vindictive man?



LANE: No.

BURG: Because I'm getting a picture from time to time of perhaps Mr. Hopkins as a man who was--

LANE: He was a little bit vindictive.

BURG: That's the impression I get.

LANE: I didn't really like Hopkins too well. However I think about all of the other Republican officials that I ever knew, I had high regard for.

BURG: Now, Mr. Lane, one thing, as long as we are on Mr. Hopkins and because he does figure, it's difficult for me to understand how Mr. Hopkins rose to the position he held within the Texas party because he doesn't sound like a very astute man in some respects, and he sounds like a man who would antagonize on frequent occasions.

LANE: Well I think he was in the thing for Hopkins, and he was, I would say, below the general grade of Creager's picks.

BURG: But somehow that happened.



LANE: Yes. Well, old "Gooseneck" MacDonald was there, but he was long before my time. But I think that Creager elevated the general standard of the party, but Hopkins then kind of whished in on him, and some of my friends persuaded me to oppose his re-election. Then he and Nolte joined forces, and Nolte got the nomination.

BURG: Now may I ask you, sir, we're coming up on 1948. Who were the people who asked you to oppose Hopkins?

LANE: Well, Joe C. Thompson or Jodie Thompson, the founder of the Seven-Eleven chain here. I think Bill Luse, L-u-s-e, a prominent, wealthy oilman. The Dallas clique I think pretty much were opposed to Hopkins.

BURG: When they broached this matter to you, what was their intention? Did they think that with Hopkins out it would be possible to have a better working relationship and a better opportunity to build the party in Texas?

LANE: I guess so. I think that we thought he was not qualified to be chairman.

BURG: And of course he knew that you were--



LANE: He knew that, and that's when he and Mike Nolte worked all night, the night before the convention, lining up votes. There was another guy named, oh, he was from Paducah. They called him the Duke of Paducah. He had a kind of a west Texas machine.

BURG: Now I've heard of that west Texas faction. What I don't know is what was in it for west Texas? Now is west Texas primarily a cattle area, agricultural--

LANE: I'll think of this guy's name, but he had patronage ideas. In fact up until '50 or '52 the Republican Party was pretty generally regarded as a machine, a group influenced by hope of patronage. I'm sure Creager got benefit out of being national committeeman, but I think he did a clean job. I think that this Paducah guy was a state committeeman. I never had too much use for him. I didn't know him well.

BURG: Now these people I presume had come to power in the party during the period of Warren Harding, Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover.

LANE: Yes.

BURG: That I presume is when patronage meant something to them.



LANE: There was a Henrietta Fricke, F-r-i-c-k-e, of Brenham and--

BURG: Brenham?

LANE: I believe. Isn't that kind of south central Texas?

BURG: Well, that could be.

LANE: And there was a Ruth Bacon of Amarillo, and they were in the picture.

BURG: Were they members of the state executive council or did they hold, well, perhaps county chairman or positions like this?

LANE: I don't know exactly. I believe they were state committeewomen.



BURG: I've heard it said that one of the problems of the Texas party in the '30s and as we come up into the '40s was that its leadership, some of the people that you've named, did not want the party to prosper, didn't want it to grow. Do you think that's a fair assessment?

LANE: That was a general opinion. I don't think it was true

of Creager. I know it wasn't true of the group that I went into like John Philp for example. We all tried to build the party, but there was a lot of conversation about the Republicans just wanting it small so that they could have fewer people to call on and get the patronage. And it was up until I would say about '48, at least, pretty much a patronage machine. And it was true all through the southern states.

BURG: I would imagine.

LANE: That's why when [Senator Robert A.] Taft contested for the Presidency with Dwight Eisenhower, Taft's cousin, Carroll Reece, was one of his campaign managers and another one was Ingram--

BURG: David Ingalls?

LANE: No, Ingram. Well, they just tried to flat steal the southern delegates to the convention for Taft. And I don't think Taft knew about it. I think Taft was a fine honorable man, but hell, the biggest steal they tried to pull was here in Texas and in neighboring southern states.

BURG: Well that's the one that we want to get to of course.



In '48 you challenged Hopkins, and Hopkins combined with Nolte and with west Texas elements would you say?

LANE: Yes.

BURG: And beat you so that the nomination went to Nolte. Now you acquiesced in that and called for a unanimous support for Nolte?

LANE: Yes.

BURG: What was Mr. Hopkins' relation with you after that time? You had challenged him in effect, and how did he treat you?

LANE: Oh, we didn't have any dealings.



BURG: Is it safe to say he was never one of your best friends in the first place.

LANE: Yes.

BURG: Was there anything in your mind as to what might be done next? '48 was an election year, and did you begin to plan for a further attempt to get Hopkins out? What was the course of events then?

LANE: Oh, that's kind of vague in my mind. I think Hopkins-- I don't remember him much after that. They got the nomination. I don't know whether Hopkins got sick; I don't even remember who succeeded him.

BURG: Do you know that you are the second person, I'll name no names, but you're the second person who cannot remember what happened to him at that point either.

LANE: He faded out. I think he died.

BURG: Then who becomes the man in charge of the Texas Republican Party, the national committeeman--

LANE: The national committeeman has always run the Texas Republican Party in my experience.

BURG: Now this is Mr. Creager's position?

LANE: Yes. Until he died.

BURG: And the view that I'm beginning to get as I talk with people is that he ran it with no small degree of skill. He, however, dies.



LANE: Yes.

BURG: Who is the man who takes over next? Is it, I was going to say Zweifel and--

LANE: Henry Zweifel succeeded him.

BURG: Yes. All right now, may I have your views on him? Did you know him?

LANE: Oh, I knew him quite well. Oh, I never was a friend of his. I didn't like him really. He was frankly out to run the thing with patronage only, and I don't think he had the mind in view of trying to build a party as Creager did.

BURG: Now do you happen to know the story of how Zweifel was able to get Creager's job? Was this again through the influence of some of these people who wanted to keep the party small?

LANE: Well, I don't think Zweifel ever wanted to build it. I think that he was just the next in line, and he managed to get a group together, and it was small enough to where the group he got together went along with him.



BURG: And some of you, you in particular, had been pushed away by Hopkins. There had been a combination against you.

LANE: Yes, but after I was nominated for the governorship, they went along with me! I got good support from the entire group.

BURG: Oh, you did. Hopkins was gone?

LANE: I think he was out.

BURG: And Zweifel supported you, lent you support?

LANE: Oh, in a way. I think that in '50 is when Jack Porter came into the picture, and I was the candidate for Governor. He had been on the executive committee about four years. The Democratic nominee for senator I think, had a cloud over him, and it looked like a good opportunity for the Republicans to nominate a sound man for senator. And Porter worked hard, and he made a good campaign, but the tendency of the whole organization was to stress hardest for the senatorship, like it is today. And Zweifel could not raise any money from the one or two state affairs. He ignored me pretty much in favor of Porter.



There's always been a tendency in the party, which I hope we're growing out of, to feel that it's all right to push hard for one prominent office; but if you push hard for two of them you antagonize too many entrenched Democrats. Each county machine is centered around the courthouse. There are two hundred and fifty-four party machines in Texas. That's what makes it so hard to make any progress toward getting [State Senator Henry C.] Grover, for instance, elected governor.

BURG: There's still not a coordinated effort then?

LANE: Well, I think that in two more years we may have that real Republican Party. It is even possible that Grover might upset [Dolph] Briscoe; I don't think much of Briscoe. His record in this election--the way he wobbled around and first he was for [George C.] Wallace and then he finally come out for [George] McGovern which he had refused to do at first. And that's what's wrong with the Democratic Party. They're trying to hold a group together whether they have anything in common or not.



BURG: Now, in '48, did your personal support go to Thomas Dewey or did you stand more with the Taft people?

LANE: Oh, I was for Taft for two tries. After he got the nickname "Mr. Republican," I knew he could never carry Texas at that time with that picture.

BURG: Did you know him personally, by the way?

LANE: Yes, I knew him personally, very well. I wanted to support [Senator John] Bricker at Chicago in '48.

[Interruption]

BURG: You were saying that you had wanted to support Mr. Bricker.

LANE: I went to Chicago as an alternate delegate, George Hopkins was the delegate--

BURG: In '48?

LANE: Well, let's see if I remember. It was eight years before Ike got nominated. Ike was nominated in '52 so '48, '46 I think it was '46 that I went to Chicago as an alternate



delegate, but I didn't get to vote. I would have voted for Bricker.

BURG: Or would it have been '44, Mr. Lane?

LANE: '44.

BURG: '44, right.

LANE: Then in '48 I went to Chicago as a delegate for Taft. I voted three times for him, and that's all there were.

BURG: Was the Texas delegation in '48 split between Taft and Dewey?

LANE: I think the Texas delegation was pretty much for Taft.

BURG: Now do you remember this, was it an instructed delegation?

LANE: Yes, I think it was.



BURG: Is that pretty much a common Texas practice?

LANE: It was until the last time or two.

BURG: So you were there, and you voted three separate ballots for Mr. Taft.

LANE: That ended him.

BURG: That ended him.

LANE: That's when Dewey won. And I thought that it was a mighty sour choice as proved by the miserable campaigning.

BURG: What seemed to be wrong with him and with the campaign and with his managers? Could you ever tell from your vantage point?

LANE: Well, I think Dewey's fault was that he was a liberal from New York. He was a brilliant man. I had no objection to him, but I've never liked New York governors.

BURG: You haven't?

LANE: They were too liberal for me.

BURG: All right, let me follow that because--

LANE: I like Nelson Rockefeller better now, but I didn't.



BURG: What, from the Texas viewpoint, which is the way you were seeing it, (I'm, of course, from the Pacific Coast, and we see things differently perhaps) but from the Texas viewpoint, looking at a choice like Dewey, what was wrong with their Republicanism as seen by you people here?

LANE: Oh, they were too liberal, I would say. The South has always been, since I've known them, much more conservative than the East.

BURG: They're more concerned about retaining control at the state level?

LANE: Yes.



BURG: A little less willing to give power into the hands of the federal government?

LANE: Yes, I think I would just say a little more conservative. I could elaborate on it, but I would have to think it through a little more.

BURG: And Mr. Taft more closely met your picture of things.

LANE: He certainly did.

BURG: Now Mr. Taft had been accused of pretty strong isolationist sentiments. Did you feel that that was a fair accusation from what you knew of the man?

LANE: No, I didn't. He might have tended that way, but Taft had an open and flexible mind. I think he was capable of changing a position that looked like it was wrong.

BURG: Now how about Mr. Taft's personality, Mr. Lane? As you met him on a face-to-face basis how did he come across to you?

LANE: Not too well. He was not a charismatic man. He had to impress you mentally which he did in character, integrity. But he didn't have anything like the personality of Eisenhower.

BURG: Was Mr. Taft's mind a keen mind?

LANE: Very.

BURG: A mind that you could describe as an incisive mind? I know that these aren't the things that often win votes, but you saw him with a lawyer's eye.



LANE: I saw him as a lawyer. I saw him as a student of government, a man wanting to do the right thing for the country as I saw it. I admired him greatly. I admired also the fact that unlike what [Senator George S.] McGovern did, saying, "If I don't get it, I won't work," Taft, bitterly disappointed as he was, pitched in and helped Eisenhower take control. I think he was responsible for much of the initial success of the Eisenhower administration during his lifetime.

BURG: I see, through his actions for as long as he lived.

LANE: As long as he lived, he knew what the government was, and he tried to steer right. Ike went with him too. They made a good combination.

BURG: Now when you returned from the convention in '48, you had gone as an alternate in '48.

LANE: I was a full delegate in '48.



BURG: Oh, you were a full delegate in '48. Now when you came back home, (difficult to phrase this, I want to phrase it correctly), you had just seen the Democratic Party win again.

They had won consistently from 1932 on. They have just won again. Your party lost with a man that you personally did not think was the right man, and, as you have indicated to me, he wasn't. What then was your--

LANE: Now you're talking about '48?

BURG: '48, yes. Dewey and--



LANE: Well, that was Dewey, yes. Oh, he ran a miserable campaign, and I didn't like his picking [Governor Earl] Warren as Vice-President.

BURG: What did you try to do about it here? The next one coming up will be 1952, and do you recall what your reactions were when you got home to Dallas with an eye to the future of your party?

LANE: Well, I went back to practicing law. I practiced law; it was my main interest all the time, but I took a pretty strong interest in politics.

BURG: But you did not get together with any of your friends or those friends who felt as you did with an eye towards changing things by 1952?

LANE: No, I didn't. I thought this--that if Dewey got elected, he was an able man, and he might do a good job. I voted for him, supported him, but not actively.

BURG: Now when was it that you begin to find yourself drawn into the campaign or into the search for a candidate between 1948 and '52?

LANE: I would say in January of 1952, and I would give Jack Porter the real credit for that.

BURG: I see. You did not envision Eisenhower as a candidate prior that is in '50, '51?

LANE: Not prior to 1952 when Jack came and called on me in my office, and he said that he thought Eisenhower might be induced to run. And I said, "Well, it's probably going to take somebody like that with a national hero reputation to beat this Democratic machine. I think he's a good man, and I'll join you." And I helped him. He and I were a minority force in Texas state executive committee.

BURG: You and Mr. Porter?



LANE: Yes.

BURG: Now, Mr. Lane, activity had already begun here in Dallas and elsewhere to make the General a candidate in '52. I think that activity had begun perhaps as early as the summer of 1951 here. As I understand it, was it Mrs. [Allie Mae (Ralph)] Currie, had started sort of a club for--

LANE: Well, I don't know when she started that thing.

BURG: She spoke of the state fair, the state fair in 1951.

LANE: Had a booth.

BURG: Right, right.

LANE: I did not get actively into the thing prior to February of '52.

BURG: Do you remember at this date what your reactions were to those who did talk about Eisenhower as a candidate, that is up until the time you--

LANE: I wasn't aware, I wasn't affected by it.



BURG: Then Mr. Porter is the man who convinced you.

LANE: That's correct.

BURG: Did you have some doubts about picking a military man?

LANE: No, I didn't. I think that Eisenhower's always been kind of a politician at heart too. My impression of him was that he had enough flexibility, enough political ability to go ahead and do a good job.

BURG: So you as a practicing politician in your own way, a man who had been involved in politics, you were not shocked at this possibility of using Eisenhower.



LANE: Oh, I think from the time Porter first broached it to me, I was in favor of it. While I had a high regard for Taft, as I said, I didn't think a man nicknamed "Mr. Republican" could ever carry Texas. And I wanted Texas to vote for a Republican candidate not against a Roman Catholic.

BURG: Now what kinds of arguments did Mr. Porter advance as he discussed this with you? Do you recollect that? In fact,

can you kind of reconstruct, did Mr. Porter seek you out at your office?

LANE: Yes.

BURG: Make an appointment to see you?

LANE: Yes.

BURG: In a way I'm asking this too, Mr. Lane, were you two gentlemen friends?

LANE: Not particularly.

BURG: Or acquaintances?

LANE: Acquaintances would be all. I was assistant general counselor of the party. He was on the Republican state executive committee. Oh, I had met him and that's about all.

BURG: Was it your impression at the time that when he came to your office that he was in the process of contacting a number of you who were influential party members? In fact, did he use as an argument, "Well, Mr. Lane," or perhaps he called you Alvin--



LANE: Yes.

BURG: "I have contacted these people and--"

LANE: No, I don't think so. I think he simply used as an argument that we needed a man with a national hero standing to break up the Democratic machine and that Eisenhower had that, and he thought Eisenhower could be persuaded and would make a good President.

BURG: Did he give you an indication of what made him think that he could be persuaded?

LANE: Yes, he had some correspondence with him. I don't know whether Herb [Herbert] Brownell came into the picture at that time or not.

BURG: There is a possibility then that some of the people who steered the campaign may have been here in Texas discussing these matters with Texans early in '52?

LANE: Oh, after I got out of the thing, I had some meetings with Herb Brownell, and oh, the man that wound up as appointment secretary for him.



BURG: It wasn't Dillon Anderson, was it?

LANE: No.

BURG: I should know the name.

LANE: No, a New York man I think that--

BURG: Sherman Adams?

LANE: No. I think Eisenhower appointed him governor of Puerto Rico and gave him some appointment after that.

BURG: I think we can chase that down then. Eisenhower himself had been down here during the Columbia University period, had he not?

LANE: Oh, I had read something about him. I never met him until he came to Texas on this first trip here as an active candidate when I met him at Dennison airport out here.

BURG: Well, it interests me very much that Mr. Porter, simply because we try to pin these things down in time and try to find out when things occurred, it's interesting then that Mr. Porter is pretty convinced of the General's availability.



LANE: I don't think he was exactly convinced, but he thought he could be persuaded. And I think Mr. Porter has always been personally politically ambitious, and he wanted to have an active part in helping to nominate the next President.

BURG: I wonder if the same thing could be said about Mr. Hopkins. I understand Mr. Hopkins was very much a Dewey man.

LANE: He was, yes. Mr. Hopkins never amounted to much with me. I didn't think he had the personality to go anywhere nor the resources. All Jack had principally was resources.

BURG: Resources in what particular sense, Mr. Lane, intellectual resources or support in the form of votes--

LANE: Money.

BURG: Money. Was the money oil, petroleum?

LANE: Yes, it was. It's always been my impression that he was worth a couple million, mostly in oil.

BURG: I see. And with that he could influence the way things happened?



LANE: He campaigned for the Texas delegates. Porter raised the money, and I exercised my influence and ran the Texas headquarters for the Eisenhower nomination. And we had a young Jew, Ronnie Kahn, I think, that staffed the office, and he was a damned good man.

BURG: Was that K-a-h-n?

LANE: Yes.

BURG: Rodney Kahn.

LANE: Ronnie, R-o-n-, I think.

BURG: Oh, Ronnie. So then Mr. Porter contacted you. You agreed that you thought there was a possibility here. Was that the end of that conversation or did Mr. Porter indicate that he wanted you to perform specific jobs in getting the nomination for him?

LANE: Well he wanted my all around support, other than my influence. I had been counselor on the state executive committee for some years, and he knew that I knew the law pertaining to elections. We made a pretty good team that way.



BURG: What was the next contact then for you?

LANE: Well, as the thing began to heat up within the Texas state executive committee, we went to two or three meetings of the committee, and Porter was a committeeman from Houston. I don't remember who else was on their side. I remember some of the men that were against us.

BURG: Who were they, sir?



LANE: Zweifel, Bill Luse, that's L-u-s-e. Bill had several billions in oil, and Leonard Benckenstein, B-e-n-c-k-e-n-s-t-e-i-n, and Webster Atwell.

BURG: What form did that opposition take at that stage? Did they tend to ridicule you? Were there threats, political type threats of, "Keep on with this and you won't count for anything in the party?"

LANE: I don't remember any details of that, but I remember particularly when the campaign was getting pretty hot and pretty close, I think it was after we had had the big turnout at the Republican precinct conventions, twenty-five thousand or so which was outstanding for Texas, Zweifel and his crew knew that they were on the unpopular side. We had some discussions about making a deal where they would get a certain number of delegates and Eisenhower would get a certain number. What they wanted was out of all proportion, and, I thought, against the will of the Texas people because Texas was overwhelmingly for Eisenhower. So from that point on, it was a battle of negotiations.

BURG: So there was actually a meeting to discuss the possibilities of a bargain?

LANE: Oh, yes. Carlos Watson was the secretary of the state executive committee from Brownsville. He was allied with Zweifel.

BURG: And where did that meeting take place?

LANE: My best recollection is Ft. Worth; I wouldn't be sure.



BURG: And this was after the precinct--

LANE: Yes, I think so.

BURG: --where they had been simply overwhelmed?

LANE: Yes.

BURG: In the precincts?

LANE: Oh, hell, Zweifel held their precinct convention. There was so many people came there against him he went out and held his rump convention in his yard pretty much by himself.

BURG: It's staggering in one sense, and it's funny as all get out in another sense. So perhaps in Ft. Worth after that Zweifel would be there, Carlos Watson was present at that meeting, and you were present at the meeting.

LANE: I imagine Bill Luse, Jack Porter and I were about the only two. I think that Orville Bullington was pretty much neutral.

BURG: Who had called it? Did the Taft people come to you?



LANE: I presume that Zweifel called it.

BURG: You don't know. Be interesting to know, perhaps if I ever have a chance to talk to someone like, well, Mr. Watson, I suppose.

LANE: I don't know whether he's still alive or not. I haven't heard. I have a vague feeling he's not well, but I'm not sure about it. I always liked Carlos Watson and "Brub" Benckenstein.

BURG: Opposite side of the fence or not.

LANE: Walter Rogers was a Taft adherent. He moved down here from Ohio. Walter ran the campaign for the Taft group trying to get the nomination. I ran it for the Eisenhower group.

BURG: You ran it on the state level?

LANE: Yes.

BURG: I was going to ask you where your strength was? Really it was everywhere, wasn't it?

LANE: Everywhere among the people, although Zweifel had the



Old Guard that didn't give a damn. And they and Carroll Reece and Dave Ingram felt that what the heck there's no real Republicans in Texas. They persuaded Taft, I think, that after all that there was no Republican southern strength, and they might just as well railroad it like they had always done.

BURG: And somehow they are so inept that they don't know how much strength you have.

LANE: Well, they didn't want to recognize it.



BURG: And that I cannot comprehend among men who were well, I'll use the overworked term, surely, those men were practical politicians in the sense that they are in a state that requires you keep your eyes open and look and see where things are. And yet somehow they were not able to face the fact that you people had strength.

LANE: That is right. That's correct. They just ignored the will of the people. Well their supposition was that of these twenty-five thousand that poured out for the precinct convention, they couldn't have been Republicans because they had never been there before.

BURG: Right. And, as you said, hold the convention in a phone booth. Did they feel they were ringers?

LANE: They just refused to recognize the facts. They had a personal interest I think, a personal tieup. Well it was an odd thing because some of those men that attended this night long meeting in Mineral Wells where the decision was finally made I never knew, outside of their blindness on politics. Brub Benckenstein was a very good friend of mine, as was Bill Luse.

BURG: Now how about specific things that you did to help secure that nomination. I have some idea of what occurred in Dallas, in Dallas County. I get the impression that in a way sort of an education campaign was carried on that instructed these newcomers.

LANE: Yes.

BURG: It raises in my mind the question, if the newcomers had to be instructed on how to move into a precinct and had to be instructed in what a precinct meeting was like and how it worked and then had to be instructed in how to run a



county convention, is it possible that indeed they were not practicing Democrats? Had they been practicing Democrats there surely would have been no need to instruct them.

LANE: Oh, they hadn't taken any real interest in politics until Eisenhower came along. They were entranced by his personality and the opportunity to get him elected.

BURG: So they are political amateurs, do you think?

LANE: Well, I briefed it all and put out some notices about that. In Texas we have a law dated from the case of Tom Love who worked for Hoover. Then he tried to run for state representative I think. The Democrats tried to keep him from it and the case where the Texas Supreme Court handed down the leading case in Texas on party affiliation that said a man can be a Republican, can be a Democrat up to his election, but if he changes his mind and wants to declare himself a Republican, he can do it. And we had quite a hassle about that. The Old Guard bunch realized there was considerable law; they tried to make the Democrats gag at declaring themselves Republicans. So they passed the



resolution that anybody who wanted to vote in the precinct convention had to sign the little statement saying, "I am a Republican and will support the nominee of this convention," something like that. And twenty-five thousand turned out and did it. And it strengthened our case a whole lot.

BURG: So what you had done was to take a look at the legal basis for being a Democrat or Republican in the state of Texas, and your advice then to all of these twenty-five thousand was go right ahead and sign that pledge.

LANE: Right. They could change their mind. When you get into the ballot box in the general election in Texas, you can vote for whoever you think is the best man. And I wrote a letter about that and Orville Bullington backed it up.

BURG: And so that's the way you instructed your organization throughout the state.

LANE: Yes.'

BURG: Well I was going to say it stole the thunder of the pro-Taft group, but really it didn't did it? They simply ignored everything that you had done.

LANE: They ignored the fact that everybody that went there signed a declaration. They said, "Well, that can't be true. You never attended these conventions before, and anybody that was there was still a Democrat." That was the basis that they argued on at the convention in Mineral Wells.

BURG: And I think some of the historians who have looked at that situation since the time it occurred have generally felt that the correct side was the side you people advanced.

LANE: I surely felt that all the time.



BURG: There are so many other things I want to get to, but one that comes to mind now is these remarkable statements attributed to some of these Taft people virtually saying the hell with majority rule. They made some statements to the press that said that in effect the majority be damned. They didn't care anything about majority rule.

LANE: Well they were bull-headed and tried to steal Texas votes I think. I hate to say that about some of my friends, but I can't figure it any other way.

BURG: Now was it Marrs McLean, I believe--

LANE: Yes.

BURG:--was one who made a remark like that. I can literally think of nothing more damaging than to start issuing public statements like that in the face of this landslide that you had presented them with. I believe the national press picked it up.

LANE: Oh, there were two things in my book that had a very prominent part in Eisenhower's nomination. The governors of the nation met in Houston about a month or so before the Republican convention, and they got the background of this thing firsthand. They got the feeling that Texas was really behind Eisenhower, that the people who used their party positions to overrule the contest and declare that Taft carry Texas were wrong. That was one thing.



BURG: Even such Republican governors and pro-Taft governors as J. Bracken Lee, signed that protest from the governors' convention, even he did. In fact, there were two or three of them who were very, very decidedly pro-Taft, but they signed the protest of what had been done here.

LANE: Oh, that fair play resolution.

BURG: It ultimately went with Arthur Langlie--

LANE: That resulted from the governors' convention I think.

BURG: Yes, it did.

LANE: And that was what was the basis of Eisenhower finally getting the nomination. At Mineral Wells "Brub" Benckenstein said, "We'll have to follow the congressional ruling that anybody whose nomination is contested can't vote on the merits of his election." So that's why they contested damned near every county in Texas. And when we got to Chicago, some of the governors, Dan Thornton was I think a leading spokesman, took the position that fair play requires that anybody who is contested whether he was on the original roll call or not should not vote--

