

Jack Bass: What's been the greatest change in Texas politics in the last twenty-five years? Well, let's say the last twenty years, in the life of the Texas Observer?

Ronnie Dugger: There has been subtle acceptance of the progressive environment, the change of milieu, the cultural change. There has been a subtle movement forward. I wouldn't say leftward. Into the period, there has been a subtle moderation of the harsh themes of the right. For example, twenty years ago, federal aid to education was unthinkable, now it is accepted. Sympathy for the poor was unthinkable, thought of as Communist, and now it is acceptable, not enforced, but accepted. Blacks have been integrated in most ostensible aspects, that was unthinkable twenty years ago. Generally, the state has moved with the country somewhat towards civility. But fundamentally, it has not changed, fundamentally it is still governed, in my opinion, by the principle of corporate interests.

(interruption. Excessive background noise and tape speeded up.)

Walter De Vries: changes in race as a significant issue in the last twenty years?

Dugger: No, it has been a significant issue.

W.D.V.: In statewide politics?

Dugger: Yeah. For example, McGovern did less here than he would have because of the Wallace feeling in the labor movement. The Wallace feeling

hurt Farenthold, labor didn't endorse her. It really didn't. No, the race thing is still there, it is residual rather than overt. I think that it is true in the border states, it certainly is in Texas that people are rather shamefaced to say, "Nigger." That may be the difference. But there is surely a residual prejudice and surely it's a large political factor. Otherwise, Wallace wouldn't be so strong.

W.D.V.: Do you still agree with V.O. Key when he said that the key to understanding Texas politics is to understand where the big money goes?

Dugger: No, that's too simple. Another thing that has changed in the last twenty years has been the emergence of somewhat uneven but continuously present urban political base. The most conspicuous example of it has been the Harris County Democrats from Houston. Less even, but just as persistent has been the Bexar County Democrats. The key to understanding Texas politics . . . I don't know what the key is, but it is not that simple. It has to do with an intuition that would keep the principle variables in solution. And the principle variables would surely include big money, out of state capital, as it relates to what you might call the "politicization of individualism." That is, the rugged, Western macho. When that became politicized, the individual was connected to the corporate in a way that most individuals don't understand. It is a very potent connection. You have to keep that in solution with the dynamic facts that we have two million Mexican-Americans. We have a million and a half blacks. And these form the fundament of half of a divided state. It is a divided state. There is a stereotype that the state is conservative. I don't think that is true. I think that it is divided about half and half. Or more literally, probably 40 - 40, with twenty in the middle.

About 40 - 40. If the blacks and Chicanos voted in proportion to the wealthier voters and the more conservative voters, it would be a liberal state. I think that fundamentally, it is a liberal state, but that the prism is clouded over by the effects of money.

W.D.V.: Where do you see it going in the next ten years? Will it stay pretty much the way it is?

Dugger: Well, on a few occasions in the past, the progressives and liberals have almost won the governorship. They did win with Yarborough. Now, why that happened when it did and when it almost did, is difficult to say. I think that Don Yarborough would have been governor if Connally hadn't been shot with Kennedy. That's probably true. And why, I don't know. I am not optimistic about the general direction of the country, in terms of my values, progressive values. I think that the national Democratic party looks increasingly like the Texas Democratic party did in the 1950's. Strauss and people like that are singing harmony as a way of repressing dissent nationally like they did in Texas in the 50's. I am afraid that the direction is toward nationalization of harmony. Now, what will happen, I don't know. It really is sort of what like happens to the country. It's up for grabs. What happens with a nuclear war? I don't know, it's all in doubt. If national politics is Europeanized in the 1970's by say, three or four parties, the same thing can happen to Texas politics. And in an Europeanized environment, where people are running as independents, well, I don't think that can make it, but . . . it's hard to predict. I think that all you can usefully say about the future is that seen realistically, the fundament of the political culture is truly divided. It's truly split in that the black and Chicano self-interests being so fundamentally progressive in its political aspects, will not go away. So, there is no reason to think that the conservatives are going to consolidate

and reverse it. Unless they do nationally, which they might.

J.B.: What's the role, in effect, of La Raza Unida.

Dugger: La Raza, in my opinion, is largely the responsive extension of Jose *Martinez* Gutierrez, who is a powerful, angry, Chicano intellectual. A revolutionary. I think Jose would like, from what I have read about his views and what I have heard about his views, would like a Mexican state. He is a separatist in a fundamentally radical way. Now, in my opinion, La Raza is using the electoral process for purposes not really related to the electoral process. It is fundamentally a free revolutionary usage of the electoral process. Now, its effects are another matter, but its purposes to me do not seem to be essentially electoral, except locally. Statewide, its purposes are not essentially electoral. Its effects are obvious, it takes votes from the liberals. La Raza should have learned something in the last local election. In the University community around Austin, they got around, as I recall, you can check the figures, it was 15% against Briscoe. When they ran against the most liberal candidates for the legislature, they went down to 3%. So, the vote for La Raza is a disgust vote, except for 3 or 4%, whatever it gets. It is fundamentally a disgust vote. Which is not too significant, because the minute a liberal alternative comes along, they vote for him. Am I helpful on that?

J.B.: Has it had the effect on the Democratic party of making them more open in terms of access and trying to give Mexican-Americans a larger voice?

Dugger: No. Because . . . it has not, in my opinion. La Raza has had almost no effect on the statewide Democratic party or on the statewide

liberal movement. It has had . . . there have been , but opening the Democratic party has been the work undertaken by people like Joe Bernal, the Democratic national committeeman from San Antonio, or Leonel Castillo, the Democratic comptroller of the city of Houston. They have undertaken to carry the Chicano message forward into the Democratic party. They are the ones doing the fights. Now, rhetorically and argumentively, they and in fact, I, have argued to the Democratic party, "Look, we have a third party already to cope with and if you are not open and responsive to the Mexican-Americans, there is a danger." And I guess that that has some weight, but not much. You see, La Raza, if people thought it could win, the answer would be "Yes." But people really do not think that La Raza can win. It is not a party on the rise, it is not like the Populists after 1892.

J.B.: Well, in your opinion, it is already beaten, in terms of a statewide

Dugger: Well, I have a real scruple against predicting as though one knows the future. The recent shape of its electoral returns are declining, which is not good news for it. That doesn't say that La Raza might not be a part, it if could consent to be a part of anything, that might not become a part of a more effective third party or independent movement in the future. I don't know, it might. Jose is not to be underestimated, he is a very intelligent man. Very cool and occasionally makes statements that are very hot-headed, but he seems to know that he is doing that when he does it. You should go see him.

J.B.: Is there any move toward the blacks and Chicanos getting

informally but actively together in a coalition?

Dugger: Yes, that happens. It happens nationally and it happens in this state.

J.B.: Does it happen consciously?

Dugger: Well, there is a separatism that works between them. And it is also very complex about the black leadership. The black leadership, for example, is centered in Houston, which is where the dominant black leadership is in this state, and it is divided between those who are tough, are or regarded by folks like me, as tough blacks, and those who cope very gingerly with the problem of being effective by relating to the power that is, against whom considerable bitterness is directed. That bifurcation, it's almost a bifurcation of the black leadership, makes it difficult to have any effective liason between the caucuses because it makes it difficult to have an effective black caucus.

J.B.: Where does Barbara Jordan fit into that?

Dugger: Well, Jordan has become increasingly a black who is used by the white power structure, in my opinion. By the white power structure, I mean the white power structure in the Democratic party. She is used sort to the right of the center of the left half of the spectrum. By used, I don't mean that she is doing anything that she doesn't . . . I think that I want to take that back and take it off the record and start the answer again, because it tends to reflect on her in a way that I didn't intend. Can I start that answer again? At the Democratic National Conference, the information that I had from leading black national delegates was that Barbara was isolated. She was not really with the black caucus. She was operating independently

and she was on the stage much of the time. Because what she chose to do was also, as it happened, what Strauss wanted done and said by blacks. It seems to me increasingly that the white moderate to conservative establishment in the Democratic party looks for prominent and articulate blacks whose views tend to mesh with theirs and then push them forward. The national black leaders are becoming aware that they have a serious internal problem, because they cannot publicly criticize their soul brothers or sisters. The whites are not in a position to do effectively much about that, so there is not much being done about that. But in my opinion, Barbara is a national liberal of the finest kind. She votes splendidly in the legislature, but she has become increasingly associated with the conservative-impact state level and national party level figures. I had an interesting conversation about this very problem with a black legislator from Houston, by the way, in Kansas City. He was explaining to me that in the black community, to be effective is very important and that there is enough disgust with everything white that there is some thought running in the black community that it doesn't really matter which whites you relate to as long as you get for blacks. The trouble with that narrowing of the focus, as I was responsibly arguing back to my friend who is involved in this kind of compromising, is that it tends to commit the energy, one of the main sources of the energy for broad-gage social reform to conservatives, or to people who in their impacts are in the net, conservative. And that is a serious thing for black leaders to do. So, it is a real dilemma. On the other hand, it seems to me that the Chicano Democratic caucus in this state is very strong. It is fundamentally based in San Antonio and Houston with scatterings

down through Corpus Christi and the Valley and I think that the shortest hand way to describe it is by naming Joe Bernal and Leonel Castillo. Castillo, who has only about 10% Chicanos in his constituency, has the largest constituency of any elected Chicano in the United States. Bernal was a state senator who got beaten and incidentally, La Raza Unida didn't help him a damn bit. La Raza can turn elections. But his fidelity to progressive causes and the Chicano causes leaves him in a very strong position, nevertheless. As I recall, he is a member of the Democratic national committee. Well, it is a very strong caucus. And of course, they have complexities of exactly the same kind where you are drawn toward power to get benefits for your people even if so doing, you advance causes that in the larger way, hurt your people as well as the general welfare. But it seems to me that to the extent that the black and Chicano caucuses cohere around progressive causes and candidates, they certainly cooperate, they certainly do.

J.B.: But it is not a conscious getting together, am I correct?

Dugger: Well, I don't know of joint caucuses, no. But that's not the nature of the beast. The coalition beast is separatist. At Kansas City, the women caucused separately. The blacks caucused separately. The Chicanos caucused separately and the youth caucused separately. Separatism is the essence of the need for caucuses. In fact, I have begun to advance suggestions to friends of mine in the Women's Caucus and others that we need a white progressive male caucus, because in a caucusing environment in a convention, the white progressive males go around hangdog as if they had shot their mothers or something, utterly

inefficacious. So, why not design a caucus? You see, it is a separatist phenomenon. That is not to say that there is not all kinds of interaction . . . (interruption, Tape speeds up)

W.D.V.: What has been the impact of the Observer on Texas politics? You have had your twentieth anniversary.

Dugger: Well, since your book will be after that, let me refer you to the twentieth anniversary piece I did. I really tried to talk about that and I think that I said it better than I would if I tried to resay it. I think that we have done a lot of good and basically have failed. (interruption. Tape speeded up.) . . . the purpose was, if the purpose was really to try to break the political culture free from corporate domination, the purpose has not succeeded. But a great deal of good has been done and I . . . (tape turned off) . . . a great deal of good has been done and I tried to specify the different kinds of good that I think we have done. I think that it is a better state than it would have been if the Observer hadn't been there.

J.B.: how come Texas could support a paper like this and no other state could? No other state in the South, much less the country have

Dugger: A lot of them have tried. I understand that they have just started a Hawaiian Observer.

W.D.V.: Yet, you've lasted twenty years.

Dugger: Probably because of special circumstances. One was that it was very firmly begun in sound journalism, if you will pardon a simplified statement of the fact. Another was that it had seven or eight years to

grow on a subsidy. It was basically an investment subsidy. That is, Mrs. Randolph went ahead and invested in it until I could put it on its own feet. It now sustains its income out of its costs. The third reason is, and I think that it is still a unique reason, it has had for twenty years, people who would sacrifice to work on it. I mean, financially and reputationally sacrifice. Actually, now working on the Observer is reputationally a boon. Many of the people go from the Observer nationally. But at first, it was not, not at all. People were willing to take chances. So, I don't know. I think you could have an Observer in Georgia. Atlanta would sustain an Observer. New York doesn't need one, it's got the New York Post. And if the culture has to be negative in terms of progressive life in the first place, well, then Georgia could probably sustain one. California has tried, but it really doesn't need one. It has the San Francisco Chronicle.

W.D.V.: Texas supports a very large liberal community.

Dugger: Yes, and no liberal newspaper, so there is a need. That's why I say that Georgia could do it, a place like Florida could do an Observer. Maybe even a place like Pennsylvania, but the environment in the first place has to be negative in respect to what the liberals or progressives would consider political enlightenment. In the second place, you have got to have very good journalism, because when you are on the knife edge, if you make a mistake it cuts deeper. It cuts you deeper. So, you have to be careful about the mistakes you make. In the third place, you have to have financial backing that will last while you do the very difficult thing of trying to find the liberals and the leftists

and idealists. You have to find them. The practical problem of circulation drives is always, "Where are they?" We knew they were, you know, that half a million people would vote for liberal and progressive candidates, but where were they? And another problem was and is, the serious attention to public affairs on the state and local level is more than most people want, not matter how they vote. They really don't want to have to think about it that much. So, you really get into a pretty narrowed potentiality, although a very efficacious one, if you can survive, because as you know, politicians on both sides and people that I guess we would call elite are if you survive. I think that the reason that the Observer has survived for twenty years is that at several junctures, a number of us have consciously made sacrifices to keep it going.

W.D.V.: Is the difference between the liberal community and the conservative community ten years ago and twenty years ago . . . are they still fighting about the same issues?

Dugger: No, it's different issues. And the conservative community is more sophisticated than it was twenty years ago. It was a pretty low level of political information and culture twenty years ago in Texas. Now, I mean that people on the loyal liberal Democratic side were shocked when I put "liberal" on the masthead of the Observer. I don't believe in inevitable progress, but I think that the whole country is more sophisticated. Look at what's happened to the country. Twenty years ago, you wouldn't have thought about a cultural revolution like they had in the 60's being

tolerated. It wasn't tolerated at the beginning of the 60's. We are a much more European country now and the state of Texas is more European, too. Much more sophisticated.

W.D.V.: Well, are the basic differences still
We keep hearing a lot about the moderates from Texas. What are they?
How would you define them? We came up against four Democratic terms.
Liberal, moderate, conservative, Wallace.

Dugger: Well, you can look at it that way, but I think that it is not quite real. I think that the major elections polarize into the middle, the right and the left. And the left is about 40% and the right is about 40%, including Wallace, and the middle is about 20%. That's about the way it is.

W.D.V.: Yeah, but the 40% on the left don't register and don't vote.

Dugger: No, that's about 40% of the vote. That's the way it is.
I mean, Yarborough would start with 40% every damn time he would run. If they voted, it would be a majority. But to call it a four party state is unrealistic. It is either a no party state, because the Democratic party is not really a party, but a way of neutralizing the left. It's a means of neutralizing the left. You can say it's a three party state if you see the Republican party as one party, the conservative Democrats as another and the liberal Democrats as another. But you really do blur it up if you . . . I mean, I understand that there are people who would say that, "I am neither conservative nor liberal or progressive, but I am moderate." I can understand that. But in operative fact, they go one way or the other and get counted and get shorn as well as the sheep. One way

or the other.

W.D.V.: Are there any statewide liberal leaders?

Dugger: Yeah.

W.D.V.: Who are they?

Dugger: Well, I would hate to say. I mean, I think that it is kind of invidious to say off the top of your head who is statewide wouldn't it be for the Mexican-Americans to say who their leaders are and for the blacks to say who theirs are.

W.D.V.: Well, what I am saying, is there anybody in statewide office who is identified as a liberal?

Dugger: Well, of course, that's too exact a question, using that term. Bob Armstrong is considered something like a moderate progressive. Well, my opinion is that Armstrong is probably the most progressive of current state office holders. John Hill is probably somewhat more towards the center than Armstrong, but neither is he a conservative. I would not call either Armstrong or Hill a conservative.

W.D.V.: Neither would you call them a liberal.

Dugger: That's right.

W.D.V.: You'd call them a progressive.

J.B.: How about Hobby?

Dugger: Hobby is . . . I don't know what to make of Hobby and he does some things that would be conservative and some things that would be progressive, although not necessarily liberal. He's a hard case, mainly because I think that he has to decide, when he decides to run for governor, whether to run as a conservative. If Hill or Armstrong becomes the

standard bearer of the reformers, of the left, well, then Hobby will have to take the other side. I think that he might be jimmied by that structural logic into being more conservative than he would be otherwise. I just don't know. You don't get a clear picture from Hobby of his ideology. In my opinion, both Armstrong and Hill have a good deal to be said for them, from a progressive point of view. I wouldn't want to label them, but they are both very thoughtful people and they have both done some things that takes some character and they also have done some things, particularly Hill, that I don't agree with. But Armstrong has not done a whole lot of things that I don't agree with. I really think he is, I mean, from my personal point of view, he is a very good person.

J.B.: What about Briscoe?

Dugger: Well, Briscoe just really doesn't matter much. He is a sort of a caretaker, conservative, he just doesn't matter much. The real drama in the election in which he was elected was between Farenthold and Barnes. Barnes was a very strong, viable, conservative-moderate-with-an-appeals-to-the-liberals guy. And defeating Barnes was a sophisticated purpose of a lot of people that I have confidence in. That is, he was in my opinion, a dangerous political figure, because he was so viable and yet, fundamentally so conservative. He was politically viable and fundamentally conservative, in my opinion. Not stereotyped. And Farenthold was beating him, the polls showed that Farenthold was beating him. Apparently they were taking daily polls in the conservative camp. I've heard this story, Farenthold will tell it to you. And one day, the polls convinced them, . . . (interupption by another person) . . . at one point the polls came in and they saw that Barnes was beaten. And Briscoe was in the race and they just jettisoned Barnes. You could see

the switch in power. And at that point, Briscoe was elected. Well, he has not been a consequential governor, he has not done very much. He generally doesn't know what is going on. In the constitutional convention, he did not intervene. He just doesn't matter much. He is a caretaker governor.

J.B.: Well, why was there no formidable opposition to him this time? Why is he popular?

Dugger: Well, Farenthold might have . . . oh, why is he popular? Probably because people are sick of politics and as long as he hasn't done anything wrong, it is all right.

J.B.: He promised to be honest and he has been. Is that basically it?

Dugger: No, I wouldn't say that. I don't

J.B.: I'm asking you, I didn't say it. I mean

Dugger: Well, people obviously didn't have much against him. He also said that he kept his promises. That was argued, but people finally concluded that he had. But I think that the basic thing is that people were negative about politics. And a crusade was not

W.D.V.: Well, Ronnie, why didn't somebody run against him in '74?

Dugger: Farenthold went against him.

W.D.V.: Well, why didn't Hill or

Dugger: Oh, lack of guts.

J.B.: Hill and Hobby and

Dugger: Lack of guts. What else?

J.B.: Suppose they had, would they have beaten him?

Dugger: I don't know. Who the hell can know? I mean, they all

decided not to do it and Farenthold found herself down at the wire with nobody running. She knew that nobody was going to run. Everybody told her that they weren't going to run. So, it was only Farenthold.

J.B.: They did not run because she was running, she ran because they weren't running?

Dugger: That's right. That's the way it was. I was with her while she was thinking about it and if Armstrong had announced, she would not have run. If Hobby had announced, I don't know if she would have run. But if Hill had announced, she wouldn't have run.

J.B.: Do you know of any polls taken showing Briscoe being that strong?

Dugger: I don't know. It's in my memory that there were, but I don't know.

W.D.V.: Well, if you look at the potential field of candidates

Dugger: Also, there is the second term tradition. I mean, that was the basic contest, that you couldn't beat Briscoe for a second term. Because that is traditional in Texas, you almost never beat a seated governor for the second term. That was the context in which they made the decision, which I regard as rather over cautious.

W.D.V.: Well, if you look at Hill and Hobby and some of the others that you've mentioned, that are mentioned for 1978, doesn't that suggest that Texas politics are almost going to become more moderate? Won't that in terms of who the candidates are?

Dugger: Yes, it does. That's correct. And another thing that is very important. If you think that politics is going to flow with personality instead of personality with political forces, and I think that there is a fallacy in thinking that way. Candidates tend to appear to express forces

that exist. Now, that might happen. Another negative thing that has happened recently and you will find it in a recent Observer in my column, we have hooked into a four year cycle setting state wide elections in off presidential years. And this has serious implications for turnout. I mean, you have a minimum interest in off presidential years obviously. Now, what exactly that will mean, I don't know. But it certainly means that the Republicans are in bad shape in this state, the two party system cause is in bad shape, because the principal hope for a two party system is riding a president's coattails and thus . . . you know, that is the most practical way that you change a state in the two party system. That is now wiped out by the Democratic legislature. A very shrewd move. I don't think that necessarily means that the politics in the primaries are profoundly or permanently affected because who is going to stay home? You just don't know what the proportions and ideology of who stays home the most in an off presidential year are. I don't know those facts. I don't think that anybody else can know them. It is an unpredictable event. I think that in the first place, a lot of people are assuming that Armstrong won't run. I think that if Armstrong ran and was elected, you could have a progressive state. Hill, might be , if politicians are responsive to forces, and Hill is a responsive person. He is a person of character and he might also see that in order to win, he has to be right with the blacks and he has to be right with the Chicanos and he has to be at least mainly right with the intellectuals among those caucuses and among the Anglos. You know, the progressive intellectuals. You've got forces at work. A man like Hill, for example, if he is running

for governor, has to keep in mind that it is not just a question of who votes for whom, but who is enthusiastic about whom, who has workers, what happens on the campuses. The new fact, the new force. If the candidate does not get enthusiasm on the campuses, he is missing a major bet, if he is a progressive candidate. So, you see that that is all going to cause

W.D.V.: Is the role of money going to diminish in campaigns?

Dugger: Well, I really don't know. You know that the whole tendency, the trends in the law, would indicate so. I guess that I am not too optimistic about that, though. Are you?

W.D.V.: Well, it has always seemed to be very important in Texas.

Dugger: But those reforms, how much do they really effect state level politics? Not much. California has passed a strict post-Watergate campaign finance law, but we have not. And until the states do that, I think that you can greatly exaggerate the effects of the federal law on state politics.

W.D.V.: Is it an oversimplification to say that in the 50's, Shivers really dominated that era, in the 60's, it was Connally and the 70's is really nobody? You've got Preston Smith and

Dugger: Yeah, that is kind of an oversimplification like everything else. In the 50's, Shivers was dominating until 1956 and that was the end of it. The scandals that begin breaking in '54 wiped him out. So, he dominated from '49 through '56 and that was the end of that. After that, I'd say that it was a contest in Texas between Johnson and Price Daniel in one grouping and Yarborough in the other. And Yarborough got

and a movement went into the 60's and it was a very complicated contest. It was basically divided between the Price Daniel moderate-conservatives with the hangover from Shivers in there, the Johnson moderates who were aligned with the conservatives and the Yarborough reformers. They were about 40% on the other side. When you get into the 60's, a fight began between the progressives and the Connally people. Daniel went too far in the legislature against the oil and gas lobby interests and business dropped him. He was done for because of that. Really, I think, mainly because of that. And Connally came in, speculated to be Lyndon's boy, denied that and Connally dominated Texas politics from '62 through '68. But that is a very deceptive thing to say. Actually, Johnson dominated Texas politics from '62 to '68. Connally was merely his agent. He was Johnson's governor, in spite of all his stuffed-shirt independence of Johnson, he was really Johnson's governor. When you have a president from a state, he dominates the state, that's all there is to it. Connally was strong in the legislature, Johnson didn't care much about that. So, in that sense, you could say that Connally dominated state politics, but I would say that through the 60's, there was no really significant liberal candidacy after Kennedy was shot.

W.D.V.: Well, certainly from '69 through 1974, there is no dominant figure and if you are right about this governor, he won't be dominant for the next four years. There may be a period there where there is no dominant political force in

Dugger: I was just reading a piece by Harry McPherson in the Washington Post, that the nation is without leaders, not only political, but

cultural and artistic and musical. Certainly Farenthold was a strong starter and a strong drive in that period you are mentioning. She is still potent, she is still influential, but that second governor's race hurt her, obviously a lot, in terms of her clout in Texas. I'd say that on the left now in Texas, there is now not anybody as conspicuous as Connally in the 60's and on the right, there isn't either. Briscoe is the ostensible leader, but he is not very strong. Now, what we are getting into obviously, is the subject of Bentsen and

J.B.: Before we get into that, I want to make sure that I understand just what went into Tower. Let's go into Tower first. My understanding is that Tower got elected, that the liberals supported Tower because they were trying to get rid of the conservative domination of the Democratic party. I wondered if you would elaborate on that period.

Dugger: Some liberals supported Tower on that logic.

J.B.: But they helped elect him?

Dugger: A margin of them. And he was elected, as I recall, by 10,000 votes. Generally, those liberals . . . Tower's election was attributed to those liberals as the swing factor. The logic at that time was that the ^[only] way to get a two party state, the virtues of which were taken to be self-evident, was to encourage the Republicans by giving them some offices. Then the conservative Democrats, who voted Republican every presidential year anyhow, would flock as to the piper's tune to the winning side. So, on that theory, yeah, Tower was elected. Then he was re-elected and now we find that defeating him would be a major project. The theory is obviously inoperative. He is one of the most

conservative mossbacks in the United States Senate. If the Democratic movement could have beaten him, they would have. But when Barefoot tried, Barefoot was too moderate to really get much enthusiasm from the liberals, although there was enough enthusiasm to appear to . . . no, he is a very tough guy. He is an incumbent and he's hard to beat. But that is not a Republican presence in Texas. I'm about convinced that the only way you really have a two party state is to have the governor's office. If you don't have the governor's office, if you have never in recent times held the governor's office, you don't have a two party state. You can have a few legislative seats, you can have a Senate seat, you may have some patronage, but where there is a one party tradition, and now with the elections in off years, it is all over. We are not going to be a two party state.

J.B.: So, if one of the moderates wins next time for governor, then it will be a one party state dominated by a moderate Democratic party as opposed to the present conservative Democratic party?

Dugger: Well, you use those words as though they had content. They don't. What do you mean? I mean, "moderate." What does that mean?

W.D.V.: That's what we've been asking for three days. What the hell does "moderate" mean in Texas? What does "liberal" mean?

J.B.: Is the split on taxation, is that the question where it splits?

W.D.V.: A form of government? Is that it?

Dugger: Well, you have to go to history. A general sales tax was passed in 1961 with the liberals opposed and the conservatives for it.

"Moderate," hell. You voted yes or no. And they voted "aye" and the majority carried it. "Moderate" is probably just a word that politicians like to use to escape labels that they feel will cost them votes. I mean, they take middle positions and

J.B.: Well, what issues does it split on? Does it split on the issue of sales tax on food?

Dugger: Sure.

J.B.: Corporate income tax?

Dugger: Sure.

J.B.: Personal income tax?

Dugger: No, the liberals are generally not courageous enough to be for a personal income tax. There are limits. They are probably, most of them, for it, but they won't say it.

J.B.: They are for a corporate income tax. How about moderates?

Dugger: No, most of the moderates wouldn't go that far. Most of the people that call themselves moderates.

J.B.: Most of them . . . would they go so far as to say that if you had to have a tax increase, they would favor corporate income tax?

Dugger: Most of them wouldn't, no. That's too much of a symbol that could interpret hostility. I mean, when you get down to the issues, it doesn't really matter if you say someone is moderate or not, o.k., test them on a corporate income tax. If they are for it or against it, or they have no position. If they have no position, they are probably a moderate. (laughter)

W. D. V.: Now we have a lack of a position.

J.B.: We have a definition. Neutral on the corporate income tax makes you a moderate.

Dugger: Now you know what it means. Why not be whimsical.

W.D.V.: Well, it's the best definition that we have got so far. We are serious, we're not whimsical.

Dugger: O.K., a moderate

W.D.V.: We are not putting you on, we're

Dugger: I'm putting you on.

W.D.V.: . . .hearing about the liberals and conservatives in Texas . . .

J.B.: And the moderates.

W.D.V.: We've been hearing about it for twenty years and

Dugger: O.K., you take John Hill. He is probably going to say that he is a moderate. And the reason that he wants to say he's a moderate is that he is afraid that the conservatives will detect in him a liberal. And he is afraid that the liberals will detect in him a conservative. So, he says, "I'm a moderate." And actually he is a compound. He has got some liberal points and some conservative points.

W.D.V.: Well, those are the terms

Dugger: The terms are ridiculous.

W.D.V.:

Dugger: They are shorthand, I mean, we've

J.B.: Is Bentsen a moderate?

Dugger: In my opinion, Bentsen is a conservative who is sounding moderate on the national context. He has carefully taken a position so hedged and so ideologically compound that he can call himself a moderate. But when I see what he has done, he has voted very conservatively on some things, rather liberal on others, you know, he is a compound. It is like

a pastel that you try to smear colors with. People take positions on issues and probably the main reason that we use labels is because people don't pay any attention to issues. Most people do not pay attention to issues, including most political scientists, including most writers of books. Including most journalists.

J.B.: We are just about up to the subject of Bentsen. Let's let the tape run out. . . .(social conversation until tape runs out)
(End of Side A of tape)

W.D.V.: O.K., Lloyd Bentsen.

Dugger: Lloyd Bentsen.

W.D.V.: His campaign in 1970.

Dugger: It was a dirty campaign. I was in an elevator at the Democrats mini-convention at Kansas City and somebody appeared to detect that we were from Texas and volunteered to me . . . he asked if we were for Bentsen. I'm not for Bentsen and some of the other delegates weren't for Bentsen. Not for president or vice-president in my case. I favor him for neither. And one of the other delegates from some other state said, "Well, I'll tell you this. Defeating Ralph Yarborough has no redeeming social value." (laughter) And I agree with that. I think that campaign was a dirty, vicious, conservative campaign. It was unjustified, it was indefensible. And he now says that he made mistakes in that campaign and he regrets it. And what that puts me in mind of is Nixon's campaign against Helen Gahagan Douglas. It seems to me that once a man attains power in a dirty campaign, he should not be forgiven that. He should have learned

that from other politicians who have done so.

W.D.V.: Can a man repent from that?

Dugger: A man can repent and furthermore, can attain redemption,
but

W.D.V.: But not through the political process?

Dugger: But the necessity to repent and the as
he approaches redemption does not require us to trust him with higher
office, especially the presidency. I hope that Bentsen's redemption is
consummated, but not in the presidency. When a man asks you to be
president, he asks you to trust you with everything, including the lives
of hundreds of millions of people, that is a substantial request. It is
a major request of us as citizens. I think that we saw who Bentsen was
in the campaign. My mind leaps back to 1951 when he was a member of the
House of Representatives and advocated that if the North Koreans did not
give up, or whatever it was that he said, we should atom bomb them. Now, he
is taking positions much more rational on military, on questions of war
and peace. But I do remember that.

W.D.V.: What about Lyndon Johnson, do you

J.B.: No, let me get back to Bentsen a little bit. Do you find any . . .
the Trident submarine going to Lockheed, for whom Bentsen was once a board
member, do you find anything nefarious about that?

Dugger: I do not, I don't know enough about it yet to conclude that
it was good or bad. The interpretation has been put forward to me that
his representation that he delayed the contract being let in order to save
the government money, covered activity to get the contract for Lockheed.
Which of course, eventuated. I do not know if that is so. It is certainly

worth knowing to be true or false, but I don't know.

J.B.: How about the allegation by Senator Yarborough that Bentsen spent six and a half million dollars in that campaign? I'm not asking you whether you know it to be true or false, but do you believe it to be believable or just an exaggeration?

Dugger: Well, he spent an awful lot of money. He spent an awful lot of money. And I'm just afraid that I don't know whether that's an exaggeration or not, because I think that they have been lying to us for so long about how much they spent and that was before any honest reporting had to be done. It doesn't seem to me that he could raise the scruple to spend it to get the Senate seat, but I don't know whether he did or not. And I just don't want to characterize it. I don't know what he spent. He spent a hell of a lot.

J.B.: But you don't view it automatically, then, as gross exaggeration?

Dugger: No. It's just not in the range of my knowledge. Six and a half million dollars or 650,000 dollars. Most progressive candidates for governor or senator spent half a million dollars. So, the idea of a monied candidate spending ten times that, that's not beyond my imagination.

J.B.: What is the connection between Robert Strauss and Bentsen? Particularly in Bentsen's political ambitions?

Dugger: Well, Strauss is a close friend of John Connally, as he openly acknowledges, of course. And raising that fact has to be done carefully, because Connally is now generally anathematized in some public opinion and it is unfair to emphasize that point. I do not raise it for that purpose. The connection is between Connally and Bentsen. Connally sought to get Bentsen to run against Yarborough in '64 and he got him into the race in

'70 and raised scads of money for him. I mean, everybody knows this. Bentsen was Connally's candidate against Yarborough. Now, it is also true that Connally is a close friend of Strauss. It is, in other words, a circle. I consider it, as I told Strauss the other day in Kansas City, I consider Strauss in Texas as a conservative Democrat, a very conservative Democrat. Nationally, he is playing the broker's game, just like Bentsen is. In Texas, Strauss was a conservative Democrat and his connections to Connally the nexus of a group of friends, including Bentsen. I would not go anywhere near as far as to imply or hint or even believe that Strauss is partisan to Bentsen's candidacy. I think that the national situation is far too complex for Texas friendships to govern. But they are friends, obviously.

J.B.: What were you going to ask about Lyndon Johnson?

W.D.V.:

Dugger: By the way, before we go on . . . obviously Bentsen is . . . I mean, if Briscoe is leaving a vacuum, Bentsen would like to fill it. Now, he has one problem that Johnson did not and that is the death of the unit rule. The favorite son tradition was founded on the unit rule. Everybody understood that the majority took the convention and then everybody got behind the state's candidate. And it was very difficult to oppose a favorite son. Now, I don't know whether the favorite son psychology will be as strong for Bentsen as it was for Johnson. If it is, Bentsen won't have any trouble. But if it isn't, then . . . I think that it probably won't be. Wallace is going to take 20% or 30% of the delegates, 10%, 15%, 30%, 35%, who knows? The progressives will then get behind whoever emerges as the

progressive candidate, the surrogate for Mondale in our present context, what do they get, 30%, 40%? What if Jimmy Carter comes over and gets some of the Baptist vote? You see, by the time that you get into this Europeanized context, the question is, will Bentsen have a majority? I do not regard it as a foregone conclusion that he will and I hope that he doesn't.

J.B.: Do you anticipate that Yarborough will play an active role in trying to see that he doesn't?

Dugger: Yes, obviously.

J.B.: And he would be reasonably effective, I would presume, in Texas.

Dugger: He certainly would be effective with those 40% of the people that followed him in every election, wouldn't he? I mean, granted that he has no power now, but he has access to a lot of opinion. How effective he would be just depends on how open and active he was.

J.B.: Would being more open and more active make him more effective?

Dugger: I think so.

W.D.V.: He's not likely to be one to be reticent about it.

Dugger: He is not. He's not reticent at this point, although off the record, everybody knows that he is against Bentsen.

J.B.: He doesn't hide his feelings.

Dugger: He does not. I really think that much more depends on the national context.

J.B.: Yarborough would think that if Bentsen became president, he would be the voice of big wealth?

Dugger: I think that's correct.

J.B.: You would agree with that?

Dugger: I agree with that. I think that Yarborough is wise and correct when he says that big wealth knows that it is cheaper to buy a convention than it is to buy an election. And if they can buy both conventions, they will. And that's what they are trying to do with the Bentsen candidacy, in my opinion. If I were big wealth, that's the way that I would look at it. If I were corporations playing political strategy, I would say, "Well, let's see if we can't win the Democratic convention, too." That's exactly what I would do. And that is what they are doing, in my opinion, with Bentsen. I think that he knows it. I think that he knows that's what he's got.

J.B.: Is Bentsen is his own man?

Dugger: I have never been willing to discuss loosely another person's integrity. You would have to ask him.

J.B.: Well, I know what his answer would be.

Dugger: Well, I just don't believe, I mean, when Shivers was governor, I was not willing to do that. I am not willing to do that unless a person does something that is . . . you know, like writing on a blackboard, I just don't want to do that. Character and personality are too subtle to reduce to those terms. I have private opinions, but this is all on the record.

W.D.V.: We'll turn it off.

Dugger: No . . . O.K., take it off if you want to.

(tape turned off)

W.D.V.: What was the story in the Kansas City Star about Bentsen?

Dugger: Yeah, I'll find it for you before you leave town, if you want me to. Yeah, that Bentsen's bar bill in Kansas City was \$20,000 and he used 500 quarts of liquor. I mean, unfortunately, people vote when they are drunk sometimes. He made something like \$50,000 at one dinner in Houston. Well, his defense is that he didn't accept any corporate contributions, I'm sure. Of course, we know about that. We know more and more about that.

J.B.: Has wealth in Texas developed a sense of social responsibility?

Dugger: No.

J.B.: Does it have to soon?

Dugger: Well, it depends on what you mean by social responsibility? If you mean cosmetic, sure. I mean, American business is becoming much more cosmetically concerned about social responsibility. The major oil companies are hiring competent ecologists out of the Sierra Club. The question is, what happens to those people? Do they help make policy, or do they prevent the corporation from making errors when they could follow another course that would have the same or approximately the same effect on optimum profit-making? It is a cosmetic question. You remember when Lyndon tried to get the corporations to take on jobs, the jobs program in the summer of 1968. They did it for one year. It was responsive to power. If the Democrats got back in, you wanted to be on the best of terms. I rejoice at every sign of corporate responsibility that there is, but I think that whenever you get up against stockholder expectations and the current American definition of appropriations as charged to optimized profit, I think that is what is going to prevail. I was saying to Barry that the basic problem is the profit

motive as it is opposed.

J.B.: I was thinking in Texas more of personal wealth as opposed to corporate wealth. Because people have a hell of a lot of it, more than any other state we've been in.

Dugger: Well, you see, people are absolutely idealistic and in Texas . . . Bernard [Rapport] Let me tell you a story. In 1955 or '56, I went to . . . well, I may not have to tell you this story.

J.B.: Go ahead.

Dugger: No, I better not. . . . has to function in the business community. I'll be more general. . . . funds are idealistic causes all the way from amnesty . . . to

. I mean, he's

J.B.: Did he fund Yarborough?

Dugger: Yeah. He was state campaign chairman for Yarborough. He was the campaign finance chairman for Mondale, before Mondale withdrew. He is just a great person, he is full of ideals.

J.B.: Does he have an impact on Texas politics?

Dugger: Yeah, he really does. And . . . is another. A very wealthy man who is considered progressive on everything but oil. He funds liberal candidates, he funds progressive causes. So, sure, there are individuals who are socially responsible, wealthy individuals. Walter Hall is another one, a liberal banker in Dickinson. I can think of others. But that is not the subject. The subject you asked is, are corporations becoming socially responsible and generally, the answer is no.

J.B.: No, my question wasn't corporations. Is wealth in Texas becoming socially responsible?

Dugger: Well, but you see, you use a term like, "wealth in Texas." That's an unreal term. Most wealth in Texas is not, by my standards,

is not socially responsible. But some wealthy people are, a few wealthy people are. A number of wealthy people are, but not the bulk of them. You see exceptions. You look at the pattern and you see exceptions.

J.B.: Is it becoming more acceptable?

Dugger: No, I don't think so.

J.B.: So, is the fact that there is so much wealth in Texas, which remains relatively new wealth, likely to continue the sharp conservative-liberal split in politics.

Dugger: Yeah, well I think that the word, "progressive" is probably going to supercede liberal. I think that is likely.

J.B.: "Progressive" suggests that liberals are moving somewhat to the right ideologically.

Dugger: You mean to the left, to the left.

J.B.: I said liberals.

Dugger: The liberals are moving to the left and that is why they are calling themselves progressives. After the war, there was a corporate domination of the economy and the government and they are moving left.

J.B.: The progressives, then, are the old liberals.

Dugger: The progressives are the new liberals. They are the post-Vietnam, post-Watergate liberals who are sick of people who call themselves liberals and flinch all the time. That's their average. But obviously, you are just playing with words there.

J.B.: Well, words in Texas . . . we never got this in any other state. This is the eleventh state and this never came up, we never had it. What we are talking about is that Texas is the only state where there are enough liberals to be paranoid.

J.B.: Well, is

Dugger: It reminds me of a bumper sticker I saw: "Paranoids have enemies too." (laughter)

W.D.V.: Let me go back to your proposition that Connally was Johnson's governor and that basically, Connally dominated Texas politics in the 60's.

Dugger: Sure, what do you want to talk about?

W.D.V.: How did he do this?

Dugger: Well, one thing that he did was to defend the Vietnam war. That was the crucial question. Connally defended the war and he defended military spending and all that. Another thing that he did was he did not, except on the public accommodations law . . . in my immediate memory, he did not diverge from Johnson's domestic policy. He just sort of sat here and kept the state for Lyndon. And Lyndon would call him and

W.D.V.: Did he do this by appointments or by his policies or what? I mean, in terms of the state government, what did he do?

Dugger: Not much.

J.B.: But you had this interesting phenomenon going on in the 60's. You had Lyndon as president, Connally representing conservative Democrats holding on to Texas, Yarborough in the Senate writing the legislation of the Great Society.

Dugger: That's right. Well, you see, that's one reason why Lyndon . . . no, that's not true. Lyndon opposed to Yarborough being opposed . . . effectively opposed to Yarborough being opposed in '64. The question is why? What if he hadn't. What if Texas had been divided

between a conservative Democrat like Joe Kilgore or Lloyd Bentsen running against Yarborough. It would have hurt Lyndon. I wound up for Lyndon that year. Well, what about the Texas liberals at that time? What would they have done? Well, if Lyndon had so much as raised an eyebrow in favor of the conservatives, it would have cost him nationally. He knew that. It was to Lyndon's interest to break his life-long pattern of alliance with Texas conservative Democrats that year. And he did.

J.B.: All right, who was the real Lyndon Johnson? Was he the man of the Great Society?

Dugger: Oh, excuse me from that question. For the time being, excuse me from that question.

J.B.: No, no, really

W.D.V.: No, we

J.B.: I'm curious.

Dugger: No, excuse me from that.

J.B.: That's a crucial question, now.

Dugger: You answer it. I'm trying to answer it, but I've been at it for six years and I don't feel like I can do it in the next minute and a half.

J.B.: Well, take thirty minutes.

Dugger: I don't want to.

J.B.: Lyndon Johnson was a complex, very shrewd and calculating politician.

Dugger: Absolutely. Obviously.

W.D.V.: You're doing well, Bass, keep going.

J.B.: And he certainly would have been against his own self interest to oppose Yarborough in '64 because of the reason that you stated.

Dugger: Certainly.

J.B.: At the same time, he, knowing Yarborough, knowing Yarborough's talents, knowing Yarborough's tendencies, knowing Yarborough's abilities, knowing Yarborough's

(interruption by waiter. Tape turned off)

J.B.: . . . and knowing Yarborough's proclivities toward social legislation, Lyndon was thinking . . . and he certainly would have been capable of it, he is going to out-Roosevelt Roosevelt, would it not also be in his self interest to have Yarborough in the Senate to in effect use him?

Dugger: Well, I think it was you who was saying a minute ago how subtle Johnson's mind was. He was a very intelligent man. And that factor, like every other factor, I mean, Yarborough's utility as a liberal in the Senate, would have been in his mind. But you are suggesting . . . and it is true that it would be aligned with Johnson's legislative self-interests. That is the pertinent difference, because antecedently, it would never have effected Johnson that Yarborough stood for good things. Johnson gutted Yarborough up and down for all those years. So, I would not . . . I mean, the difficulty with your attempt to extract virtue out of that position, is that Johnson never paid any attention to Yarborough's virtue along as Yarborough was independent of Johnson's ambition. It was only when Johnson's political self-interest in 1964 and his prospective legislative self-interest in 1965 converged that he helped Yarborough. Now, if you wish to go to the larger question of whether he was nobly actuated in his legislative program, then, excuse me from that question.

J.B.: O.K., I accept your "No comment." (laughter)

J.B.: Walter, do you want to ask anything else?

W.D.V.: No.

(End of interview)