

Interview with Nancy Palm, chairman, Harris County Republican party, Houston, Texas, December 16, 1974, conducted by Jack Bass and Walter de Vries, transcribed by Linda Killen.

Jack Bass: Wanted to ask you this question. What effect have single member districts had in Texas politics and in Harris county politics?

Palm: Well, in Texas politics generally--and Harris county Republican party did lead the way for this--it has given more representation to Republicans and other minorities. I fought very strongly for the black population here as well as for Republicans. However, in Harris county it has resulted in a major division between liberal Democrats. The old establishment Democrats have simply not been able to hold on to any of the districts. So we now have a labor dominated delegation from Harris county. Now the six Republicans are the exceptions. All of the others are labor persons, and, I think you could probably say are controlled by labor. We have three AFL-CIO organizers in the delegation.

Walter de Vries: Did you win as many Republican seats as you thought you would?

Palm: We won more than the Democrats thought we would. We lost one this time in the east end of the county.

W.D.V.: Is that the only one that was lost state-wide?

Palm: Yes, in the Pasadena area. And we were very, very badly gerrymandered in Harris county. Both from a state representative point of

view and a state senatorial. Of course, Congressional also. Barbara Jordon was vice-chairman of the redistricting committee. The state senate seats were drawn in order that she could have her Congressional seat. And the blacks did not get a state senatorial seat, and they certainly, by population, deserved one.

W.D.V.: Do you agree with the state chairman's assertion that this wasn't really much of a loss for the Republicans?

Palm: Of course that's perfectly ridiculous. When you have to go back fifteen or twenty years to find a time when the state wide Republican slate did as poorly as they did this year, it's sort of foolish to say that you did not suffer any major loss. And when you lose a Congressional district that you've held for three terms actually--I believe Bob Price has been up there. It was a major loss. The problem with the Texas Republican party is that it has always been organized from the top down. And that it has been run almost entirely for the benefit of the senior Senator from the state of Texas.

J.B.: There wastalk a few years ago, I believe both on the part of the Republicans in Harris county and the liberal Democrats that single member districts would result in political realignment. The Republican party would become the conservative party. The Democratic party would become the liberal party. That the conservative Democrats would move over into the Republican party. Has that happened?

Palm: Not to any great extent. And the reason it did not happen was because of Watergate. It would have happened and it may yet happen. Because the Democrat state hierarchy is becoming more and more liberal,

labor dominated. So that we may see that in the next four to five years at a state level. But we have not seen it thus far. See, we do not have a significant number of persons in the state legislature and no state-wide Republican office holder on a state level. The major breakthroughs for the Republicans in the state of Texas--and somebody from out of the state may not be able to understand how very important the outdated commissioners' courts and county judges are. But they are indeed the dominant political factor in the state. And we were able, here in Harris county, and they were able in Dallas, to elect a county judge. And this is a major breakthrough for Republicans. Because we have now a third of the state's population that is governed, at a county level, by a Republican rather than by a Democrat. Remember in Harris county, electing a county judge is the equivalent of electing a US Senator in eighteen states from a population standpoint.

W.D.V.:

Palm: Well, it's very interesting because we only spent about \$31,000 and we hit hard on issues and on organization. And we turned out our vote. That's how it was done. We knew how to make use of the issues that we had and we beat a sixteen year incumbent here. And in Dallas the race was very similar in that they used issues and approximately \$30 to \$35,000. Which for a county wide race is astounding. The sheriff two years ago--and he was running as a Democrat--used over \$100,000 to unseat an incumbent Democrat. So for a Republican to unseat an incumbent Democrat with \$30 to \$35,000 is nearly a miracle. And we won with 57 percent of the vote.

W.D.V.: What is it that you do that's so different in this county than the others?

Palm: I think probably that I give my services full-time and have had a very varied political background. And we keep an active precinct organization throughout the year. And the Republican party has had good relations here with the media. This has made a big difference. But if I had to put the finger on one thing, I would say it was on organization. On the strong Republican women's clubs. And on the strong precinct organizations. We're in a period of time where organization is going to be far more important than money. Because money is harder and harder to come by. And certainly at a federal level it's going to be almost impossible for a challenger to get enough money together--with this new federal campaign spending law.

W.D.V.: Won't that drastically effect the nature of Texas politics because of the size of the state. If you have to rely on organization rather than money, rather than media?

Palm: Yes, I think it will. And if the Republican party were well organized, they could easily take over the state. But the Republican party state-wide is not.

W.D.V.: Is it a country club party?

Palm: It is to me. It always has been. That's the reason I would say--other than the fact that there is a total difference in the approach. Meaning that I think you start at the bottom and work up. But I also think that you go to the people who have the votes and not to the so-called country club set. Which the state party has courted.

W.D.V.: If you were the state chairman, what would you do differently?

Palm: That would be a book unto itself.

W.D.V.: Would you emphasize organization?

Palm: I would emphasize organization. I would also emphasize the small donor and I would also emphasize a total openness for the party, for financial records. We prepare a budget, present our audit, both to the press and the public. I would help people to understand what they are getting for their money and I would develop the issues on a liberal-conservative basis. Because Texas, even with the tremendous influx of population, is basically a conservative state.

W.D.V.: Some of the people that we've talked to assert the same thing, that the party is run here for Senator Tower. And that the net result of that is that he doesn't really encourage other candidates to run state-wide or in local races because it may draw finances or effort away from his campaign. What do you think of that assertion?

Palm: I've been very open in saying that the Republican party was run by, for and for the benefit of Senator Tower. It has really been one of the things that, to me, has defeated the building of a two party system.

W.D.V.: But don't they argue that you really need a state-wide office at the top first before you can build a state-wide party.

Palm: Well, if the state-wide office is a federal office, it's not going to do you much good. Particularly if the state-wide federal officeholder wants the party in his vest pocket. You will see this again,

I'm afraid, through '76. I think you will see Tower carrying the Texas delegation. John Tower simply has not built the state party. I mean this is very obvious. The fact that we've elected no state-wide office on a state level.

J.B.: Does Tower actively discourage state-wide candidates in '72?

Palm: It would have to depend on what you mean by discouraging them. He certainly gave them no support whatsoever. Remember, we only had five. We didn't even have a full ticket.

W.D.V.: Let me put it another way. Did he actively go out to find candidates?

Palm: No, he did not. No, he definitely did not.

W.D.V.: Has he done any of that sort of activity?

Palm: Oh, in '74 his executive director in Austin did recruit certainly relatively unknown, untried candidates that had no base, organizational or financial influence. And that's shown by the fact that our gubernatorial candidate got the smallest percentage of votes since I believe 1962. And he was Tower's handpicked candidate.

J.B.: What's your reaction to the assertion that the Republicans could have won the 1972 governor's race if there had been support from both Nixon and Tower?

Palm: There's absolutely no question about it whatsoever. The Republicans would now have the gubernatorial chair and with, in '74, going into four year terms, we would have held it for eight years. Another \$100,000 would have elected a Republican governor in 1972. Or

even that, had it not been for the animosity of the Committee to Re-elect and Senator John Tower.

J.B.: How was this animosity demonstrated?

Palm: With cutting off funds where they could, and in running a separate campaign.

J.B.: Tower-Nixon more or less ran together but did not include the candidate for governor.

Palm: The Tower-Nixon people ran totally as a ticket. The Committee to Re-elect helped finance John Tower's campaign in the state of Texas through the extensive boiler rooms that they had. They called out the vote for the Tower-Nixon ticket.

J.B.: Was part of that an arrangement through which Connally could support Tower and Nixon and in effect represent Democratic support for Tower but at the same time be credible by also supporting the Democratic candidate for governor?

Palm: I don't know whether I would want to agree entirely with that. I think Connally's situation is that he is a nominal Republican only. He did not give any support in '72 to local or state-wide Republican candidates.

J.B.: He was still a Democrat then.

Palm: He came over in--yes, he was heading the Democrats for Nixon.

W.D.V.: Has his switch meant anything?

Palm: No. Of course with Connally's problems. . . . No, it's meant nothing to the party. . . that I see.

J.B.: What did you anticipate would happen, before his other problems developed in the court? His switch. At the time of his switch how did you analyze the effect of it?

Palm: At the time of Connally's switch I thought his major value to the Republican party would be in the fundraising field. After all, he never had an organization, so he could not bring that. And his endorsements had not been very productive in that he had endorsed Ben Barnes and his own brother and they had not gotten through the Democrat primary. So I think his chief value was that the establishment Democrat money would have been more available to the Republican party. So his benefit would have been primarily financial.

J.B.: Is that likely to be effected by his problems?

Palm: Oh, very much so. It's very difficult for a person who is under indictment to call somebody and ask them for a \$1,000 donation. I don't think that political scientists or the public in general, unless they have been running campaigns and unless they have been legally responsible for all these various laws under which we now operate financially, understand the effect that they have had on the financial substructure of politics all over the country. And we're under a very confusing and conflicting state law as well as the federal law. Make an honest attempt to follow them both, but there is absolutely no question but what the day of the big donor is over. And that was where Connally had his influence. Always said that he could go in and make eight or ten telephone calls and come up with \$100,000. This day is passed. I will say this. I think it would have been passed with these laws regard-

less of what had happened to John Connally.

J.B.: What's that going to mean say for John Tower in 1978?

Palm: You're looking very far, far ahead.

J.B.: Here's a man who ran what has been reputed to be the most expensive campaign ever.

Palm: \$3.5 million.

W.D.V.: \$2.4 reported.

Palm: I believe it's closer to \$3.5 million. It's based on newspaper coverage. I think that most of Tower's money this past time came from what you would consider a small donor, meaning less than \$1,000. So that I don't think it will have a major effect on Tower's ability to raise a sufficient amount of money to run a winning and a creditable campaign in '78. Incumbency carries an awful lot of weight with it. Let's face it. He brings a tremendous amount of contracts into the state of Texas and an awful lot of jobs. Particularly with him being on the Armed Services Committee. And the aerospace industry, as it is in Texas, is very beholding to Tower. I don't think Tower will have a terrible problem getting re-elected. I do think that he's going to be surprised that a Ford-Rockefeller ticket won't carry the state of Texas. And it won't.

J.B.: Why not?

Palm: There will not be a sufficient difference, philosophically, between it and the Democrat ticket. And the majority of people in the state of Texas are either Democrats or independents. They will go with the Democrat nominee. Remember, we had not carried the state of Texas

for a presidential candidate since Eisenhower and then this last time, '72, for Nixon. And that was with a massive, massive amount of money spent here. I do not see how a Rockefeller-Ford ticket can carry Texas.

W.D.V.: What kind of a ticket would carry it?

Palm: Probably something like a Reagan-Brock, or some new face that's willing to take a position that is more in line with southern thought. But again, Texas is not just totally a southern state. It is a conservative state. This is one of the real--and I hate to use the word--tragedies of this redistricting that Ben Barnes foisted upon the state. Ben Barnes and Barbara Jordon. They thought they still had an establishment which we call the old conservative Democrat party. And it did not exist. And this redistricting has thrown the state legislature into the hands of the liberals. It has accelerated the split between liberal and conservative thinking. And people do not look at Gerald Ford or Nelson Rockefeller as a conservative. If, by conservative, you mean a limited form of government.

W.D.V.: What is the difference between a Democratic liberal and conservative in Texas. We can't find another group in any other southern state like the Texas liberal. That has a recognized group of so-called liberals.

Palm: Probably the reason for that is that you do not find any other southern state where there are the large number of organized labor that are well supported by labor unions. This whole gulf coast area is very solidly union. So that's it's been even more remarkable that we have carried Harris county where there is a built in union vote against

us. And a built in minority vote of approximately 40 percent against us. You have what, a 1.2 million Mexican-Americans here plus a very large black population in the state of Texas. And they tend to be more liberal. Plus the fact that you've got a strong base of organized labor. So I would think that that's the reason that Texas has a split in their Democrat party between liberal and conservative.

W.D.V.: But by liberal and conservative you mean the use to which government is put. More government vs less government.

Palm: Yes. I think that's more taxes vs less taxes, more government control vs less government control.

J.B.: Where do you see Republicans in the legislature lining up next year when school financing because a major issue, in particular who pays for it?

Palm: I'm very familiar with what you're talking about. This is the reason we lost one of the best legislators up there, meaning Ray Barnhart, the one from the eastern part of the county. The Republicans up there are not a cohesive group. You've got the Dallas group and the Houston group and then a few from west Texas. They don't vote as a bloc. I think in these two major metropolitan counties you are going to feel that there is sufficient tax base for the schools to be supported from the local level with the state money that they are now getting. I think, however, with the Democrats having almost total control of both houses, even though the speaker of the house is nominally a conservative Democrat from the panhandle, we will see increased state financing for public school education. It's just difficult to say where the Republicans

will be on that issue. If you're looking for the definitive issue on liberal or conservative basis, you would either go to whether we're going to have a corporate or a state income tax. Neither of which Texas now has or whether the right to work law in the state of Texas will be repealed. They are the two major liberal-conservative issues. For both parties. Rather than the school issue, the financing of public school education. With labor having made the gains that they made in the last state legislature, I think you will very likely see a major attempt to remove the right to work law from the statutes of the state of Texas. This is basically what defeated the presentation of a new state constitution. Was the fight over inclusion of a right to work provision in the state constitution. And I think that even though we now have a surplus--and the only reason any state has a surplus is because they are getting so much money from the federal government--I do not see the necessity for a new tax in the state of Texas. If there should be, I think again you would have this tremendous fight as to whether it would be an increase in sales taxes or whether it would be a corporate income tax. And the speaker of the house has tremendous influence.

J.B.: Getting back to political organization. How did Harris county get organized? What did you do?

Palm: That really is basic. You're almost going back to a precinct chairman's manual. You simply take a given number of precincts. And in Harris county I believe we have 495 now. You attempt to find a person within each of those geographical entities that is willing to work for the Republican party. It takes somebody recruiting all the time.

We have what is called a vacancy committee that is structured along state senatorial lines. Now that's the legal structure of the party in the state of Texas is the state senatorial lines. That's how our state executive committee is elected and the state chairman and vice-chairman. You simply go out and recruit people to work for the Republican party. We do not have much luck in the black community. I think we've got fifteen or twenty black precinct chairmen and we had two black candidates. But the real beginning of the hard core structure of the Harris county organization was the 1964 Goldwater effort.

W.D.V.: Have the people who started out pretty much remained in party organization. The same kind of people?

Palm: No. I would say pretty much the same kind of people in that they are willing to give their time to a political organization only on a philosophical basis. Basically conservative. Because they get no patronage. They get no pay. And up until the last two years they have not even been paid to conduct state primaries. I think we're the only state in the union where the party actually is legally responsible for the production of a primary. And that in itself is a major undertaking in this county.

W.D.V.: Is it your experience that conservative Republicans are easier to organize, or get involved in organizational activity, than so-called moderate or liberal Republicans?

Palm: Probably yes. Rockefeller was never able to get any real organizational effort off the ground in either '68 or '72. Of course he did not make a serious effort in '72. Neither was Percy. I think

that generally speaking in the state of Texas anybody who is a Republican is a conservative within a ten or fifteen percent variant.

W.D.V.: Can I ask you a little bit about the southern strategy? Kevin Phillips' idea that the way to build the Republican party in the South was to attract the disenchanted conservative Democrats. Going back to '64. That by '72 large numbers of these would move into the Republican party. That has not happened.

Palm: I don't think that's totally valid. It did happen in '72. A tremendous number of persons voted for the Republicans at a federal level.

W.D.V.: His thesis was they would move into the party, identify with it and become in a sense Republicans, not just split off for one election.

Palm: Well, the split ticket voter is with us in greater and greater number. I think that we've all got to recognize that the total fiasco of Watergate set the Republican party back in the South, I think, for decades. You just might as well be frank about it. I think that we will carry the stigma of corruption--either rightly or wrongly--for a very, very long time.

W.D.V.: Then you don't agree with those Republicans in the South who say that it's just temporary.

Palm: No, I do not.

J.B.: Where does George Bush fit into the picture in Texas Republican politics?

Palm: He has very little influence at this point. He has been

out of the state for six or eight years. And certainly most of us down here feel like he was literally banished to Siberia. So that his influence in the party at a state level has never been what it should have been.

J.B.: Does he have any potential as a candidate if he should come back? For state-wide office.

Palm: Oh, I think he would make a very attractive candidate state-wide. I doubt that he would ever consider a state-wide office because his interests have always been at the federal level. Although he has been in Texas as long as probably most Texans have, his roots were not here. And he did not have an affinity for state-wide politics where he did have one for federal politics.

J.B.: I was thinking in terms of US Senate as a state-wide office also.

Palm: Well now remember he's tried it twice and was defeated. And it's pretty hard for a person to take a third beating at that level. The Bentsen defeat of Bush was just another major defeat for the Republicans. Had we been able to gain both Senators at that time, I think you would have seen certainly more of a party developed state-wide.

W.D.V.: Why do you think Bentsen beat him?

Palm: Well, strangely enough, Bentsen went to the right of Bush and presented himself as the arch conservative. He also played on the fact that George was a Yankee and that we needed--since the state was neither Republican nor Democrat and certainly it is not really when you see how many people vote in either of the primaries--we needed a person

from both parties in the US Senate. I think Bentsen is in a very, very strong position now in his quest for the nomination. Although I do not think he will secure it. I don't think they're going to take another Texan for an awful long time. Not after Lyndon and Connally. I just think that at a federal level the Democrat party is going to be quite shy of nominating anybody from Texas.

W.D.V.: Are there any potential Republican candidates that you see in the future in state-wide office that you can identify right now? If you were thinking of potential candidates for state-wide office, who would you cite?

Palm: In a state of this size, it is very difficult to build a state-wide image when you do not first have a public office. We have three state senators, but they represent a given geographic location and really are not known state-wide. It's very seldom that a Congressman can come back in a state this size and run for a state-wide office. See, this is what George did. And although we have three very attractive Congressmen, I do not see them as being material for state-wide office. I would be hard put to say that I see anybody right now who is a potential state-wide candidate. Now maybe this will not be the case by '78. But it certainly is now.

J.B.: Does someone, say like H. Ross ^{Perot}~~Perro~~, who's been active in public affairs outside politics be perceived as a potential political candidate?

Palm: Oh, someone of his type might be. I do not believe that he personally would be. I think the public is so distrustful of politi-

cians that there's always the possibility that someone who has never held public office, if they had the sufficient money or organization, could be elected. Certainly this happened in Harris county with John Lindsey, the county judge. There was hardly anybody that was more unknown than John Lindsey. It can be done. But here again, you've got to have an awful strong organization and you've got to hit the issues.

J.B.: What issues has he hit?

Palm: The issues that he hit this time was the long incumbency of the Democrat and the corruption of the county court house and--
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W.D.V.: What is your background?

Palm: My background in politics is very varied and therefore that's one reason I can understand Democrats and independents. I am from Tennessee, which is a southern state but which is also a border state and in many ways is similar to Texas. I have been interested in politics since I was in college at Vanderbilt. And actually had worked in politics in Tennessee and I cast my first vote for Franklin Roosevelt. By '51, when I had moved to Texas with my husband, I had become extremely interested in the Houston independent district school board and ran the 1951 organization for the school board candidates slate that won. And increased the vote from 7,000 to 21,000. So I got a reputation as somewhat of an organizer at that time. I guess I've been active in every campaign since then. Bond issues. And when you ask why I always just have to say it's both congenital and acquired.

W.D.V.:

Palm: You mean after starting out somewhat as a liberal? Well,

of campaign literature. And then I do think also one of my chief values to the party and the reason I have been effective is that I am able to work with the media. Because I have a media background. I worked my way through school as a person in the news release office and then did public relations work for the Harris county medical society. Which, during that period, was the most potent political force in the county. So I had a county-wide basis of contacts before I ever moved into county wide Republican politics.

W.D.V.: Why do some people in politics call you napalm?

Palm: I think it was simply a natural derivative of my name being Palm and N.A., Nancy. A lot of people think I'm explosive and they judge that image primarily from radio and television. When I think somebody's wrong, it does not bother me at all to stand up in public and say so. I am very rational about it but people are always somewhat surprised when they meet me personally.

J.B.: How do you summarize your political philosophy?

Palm: I'm still a very strong individual initiative person. And I still feel that every problem that can be solved should be solved by the individual. If they can't solve it, they go to the next level of government. Meaning your city and county. And this has been one reason I have been so frustrated with the state Republican party. They have not seen the validity of city and county politics. Then you would go to the state level. And the very last resort is going to the federal level. I am simply for fewer laws. I think this country has become so entangled in a mesh of laws that we have lost sight of why we were a

country to begin with. Which was to get away from a dictatorship. I cannot see anything in the future of this country except a one party Democrat dictatorship. I think we are so close to a man on a white horse using the Democrat party as a vehicle that it is really very frightening to me.

J.B.: That man. The Democrats are looking for him. Who is he?

Palm: There's just not much telling who he may be. I do not believe it's George Wallace. We have not gotten into this third party. And it's interesting that you should not even ask about it since Wallace is so strong in Harris county and actually prevented Nixon from carrying the state in '68. It may be a totally independent person, such as it was in Maine. But the Democrats have got an awful lot of candidates floating around. Whether they're the one on the white horse or not is hard to say. But again I say the Rockefeller-Ford--now I'm putting Rockefeller first already--or the Ford-Rockefeller ticket, to me, is not going to be able to carry the country. And certainly it's not going to be able to carry Texas in '76. The image is too old. The image is too rich. And I have said this publicly to the New York Times. I think I'm one of the few Republican office holders--even party office holders--who opposed the nomination of Rockefeller the day it was made. And did so publicly, on television, radio and the New York Times. I don't know where we're going as a country. It's something that troubles me very, very much. And I said last night at a social function that I was going back to see *Gone with the Wind* and Doctor ^{2h.} ~~Savago~~ because I think we are in a period in this country of almost as total turmoil as those two eras

in Russia and America were at that time. I think we may be in for an absolute change in the form of government that we have. I think this is particularly true if we see the growth of independent candidates being able to get on the ballot. Or third parties. Now I do think this new federal campaign spending act will make it very difficult for a third party or an independent candidate to secure federal financing. And that the two major parties will have a great advantage there. But when you realize that tremendous money can be raised in small donations by one major, nation-wide television appeal, there's still the possibility of somebody coming out on that white horse.

W.D.V.: You've been in politics the whole period of time that we're looking at. What major changes have you seen in Texas politics in that twenty-five years?

Palm: Actually, in Texas politics, very little. The last four years you have seen a tremendous growth of strength of the liberal element of the Democrat party. At a federal level, whether it was under a Republican or a Democrat administration, you have seen a tremendous concentration of power in the federal government. Nixon attempted to reverse it with his revenue sharing, but I never was much of a devotee of that. Because I think all they were doing was sending back money that they did not have. But the change certainly has been more and more and more to government solving all problems. And this is one of the tragedies. People expect government to solve the problems and government can't solve them. I've been amused that they want to take over, industrialize the oil industry. The fellow that was just elected from Vermont. This

seems to be his great ambition when he becomes a US Senator. And then you look at the US Postal Service. We've gotten one increase after another in that giant corporation. And how they think the federal government can more efficiently operate any major industry. Or if they could look at the railroads. But I think we are moving into probably a type of capitalistic socialism like they have in Japan. I wish I could say I saw any real bright future in this country. I don't. I'm not at all sure but what we're on the verge of a very, very major depression.

J.B.: Do you see political realignment coming about in Texas?

Palm: No, I do not.

J.B.: You see the conservative Democrats remaining Democrats.

Palm: Well now you have got to recognize that these people are not conservative. This is one of the fallacies of this reapportionment. I think you're going to see the Democrats go more and more liberal. And if the Republicans had the organization and the leadership, they could take over the state of Texas. They do not have it.

W.D.V.: How does a conservative Democrat differ from a conservative Republican?

Palm: Very little, except some of them get elected. But actually, very little. Here in Harris county, and I think throughout the state, there were less than thirty percent of the voters who identified themselves with either party. So here again, you are talking about a major group of independents.

J.B.: Do you think there is a significant group of voters out there in Texas who respond positively to the theory that it's good to

have one Republican Senator in Washington and one Democratic Senator, who vote both for Tower and Bentsen--or whoever it might be--on that basis.

Palm: Well, they obviously do or they would not be there. The American public must feel that you need a split party government at a federal level since they have a Democrat controlled Congress--and have had--and a Republican president. I think here again you see such a distrust of parties and a distrust of politicians that they think they better spread the blame around a little bit.

W.D.V.: Any regrets in the last twenty-five years? Anything you would do differently?

Palm: Well, there has to be a lot of regrets. I guess if I had any one regret as a person--although I have had what you would call a platform here--is, had I been of a younger generation of women I would have gone into public office. I think that the mature woman in public office is one of the answers to our problems in government. I think that they approach government from a different point of view than a man does. I didn't know we were going to get on this subject. I'll just be blunt. A higher class woman goes into politics than a man does. A woman has to have a tremendous amount more going for her, both intellectually, morally and so forth than a man does to get elected in this country still. And while I have refused to join any of the women's liberation groups, I do think that more women who have raised their families or whose families are in a situation where they can should enter public office.

J.B.: What's the difference in approach?

Palm: They approach government from a philosophical and an idealistic level rather than from a practical level as a man does and what he's going to get out of it for his business or for himself and what good it's going to do him. I think a woman literally her whole being is caring for others. She cares for others. Where a man's characteristics are to protect his own interests. We see this over and over in politics. I wish Judy Petty had beat Wilbur Mills and she may yet. She's a smart woman.

J.B.: Why aren't you active in women's political caucus?

Palm: Because I have never felt downtrodden and I have never felt discriminated against. I have felt that I don't want to get anything simply because I'm a female. And I don't mind competing with men on their level. I beat two very prominent ones in Houston for this office. I just don't see the need to go out and stress the fact that some man has kicked you in the teeth. Because frankly if he had kicked me in the teeth, I would have kicked back. I don't see their whole point.

J.B.: Isn't their point that more women need encouragement and need to understand that difference and need examples?

Palm: Well, the women who are preaching it are not the ones to be preaching it then. I don't think they make a very convincing argument.

J.B.: Do you find, among women, a psychological barrier to entering politics as candidates? Why is it that more women don't enter politics as candidates? Because collectively, more women tend to have more time than men.

Palm: Women are more active at an organizational level, and they are effective there. It's pretty hard to make the break between a family, or to get a family organized to where you have got the time to go into it. And then, frankly, I think it's just one of these psychological barriers that politics has been so dirty that the man ought to do it and let the clean little lady stay at home. We have two excellent Republican women in the state legislature. One a senator and one a representative from here. And I wish that the men in the state legislature were of the same calibre as those few women.

J.B.: Do you think the Republican party tends to be more open and receptive to women candidates?

Palm: Yes, I do.

J.B.: Southwide? Nationwide?

Palm: I would say nationwide. We are a minority. And when you get a good candidate, you don't really care what sex they are. If they are willing to go out and work and present your philosophy and you can get them financed.

J.B.: What does the party here do in terms of assisting candidates? Do you actively recruit candidates?

Palm: We have a candidate recruitment committee that is active all the time. Not just in election year. All the time. Our public relations committee of the local society helps them in their campaign management and in their media work. The party structure, meaning the precinct organization, is behind every one of them. And the county organization raises money and dispenses it for candidates--both individually

and collectively.

J.B.: A Republican candidate from Harris county for the legislature who was recruited through the party--what would he get in terms of financial support from the party?

Palm: It would depend on whether he was an incumbent or whether he was newly recruited. So it could vary anywhere from \$500 to \$5,000. In '72 several of them received \$5,000 because we were bucking an absolutely new situation. As incumbents this year. . . incumbents get less. We do not give money at a federal level. We do give money to state-wide candidates and to local and county candidates.

J.B.: What do you look for in a candidate?

Palm: You look for intelligence is the first thing that you look for. You look somewhat for how a person presents himself and his ability to speak. Although we have put candidates and their wives through public speaking courses. But generally, you look at their background, to be certain there is nothing in their background that could be used against them or the party. And what their general, philosophical concept of government is. It's very seldom that you find an ideal candidate. So you take the best that you can get and put them through a primary situation and go from there.

J.B.: Where do you get them?

Palm: You look in various organizations. You look at people who are active in the community. You have people contacting you. I already have had what I guess you would call some of the downtown establishment contact me as to whether we would put our organization behind someone

for mayor. In this particular city and throughout Texas, the municipal offices are not elected by party affiliation. So I am very hesitant about putting the party organization back of a candidate. But when a person wants to enter public life that's in a generally Republican area, they very frequently contact us. They fill out a questionnaire. Although it is not legally required, it would be very rare that they would get party support if they refused to fill it out.

J.B.: What kind of questions?

Palm: I could give you one. It's somewhat similar to a civil service questionnaire. [Interruption] We do tremendous statistical work here.

J.B.: What happens to the questionnaire?

Palm: It's held, confidentially, in this office by the recruitment committee, which is elected by the executive committee and by me. And it's held on file here. It's to give us some idea of what. . . . You cannot believe how many people have been scared out of running when they get around to having to fill out. . . . You can take that if you want it.

J.B.: There's a screening process.

Palm: And again, I say legally it has no validity whatsoever. We had a very sad situation in this party this time. A fellow walks in and files and puts down his \$150 and three months later he is murdered in a gangland murder. And there he is, a Republican candidate. Of course the fact that you never saw him before. A county chairman receives and certifies candidates for the primary ballot and for the general

election ballot.

J.B.: I presume this is primarily for screening.

Palm: That's correct. Just so that we will have some idea of what kind of background an individual has who comes in and wants party support or who wants to file on the Republican ticket.

J.B.: It's involved primarily with record of performance and this sort of thing as opposed, say, to philosophy?

Palm: No, there's a philosophical question on there also. It's both. You have to have philosophy. You have to have some public background. You certainly have to have education. As I said to begin with, it takes an awful lot of luck and work to find a perfect candidate or even a well rounded candidate.

W.D.V.: What's your assessment of the city controller?

Palm: Oh, he's a terrific grandstander. He won on a fluke and has done what I presume is at least an acceptable job since he got re-elected. I think he is using the position for personal advancement and certainly to espouse his particular political philosophy. And I'm not sure but what he is using the office for things that are extralegal. Meaning that he is trying to. . . the comptroller's office here does not have the right to do some of the things that Castillo would like for it to do. And of course this has been one of the reasons there's been friction between him and the city council. We do not get in to city politics to a great degree. I will not say that we have not used our organization for city candidates, because we have.

W.D.V.: Are there any chicanos or blacks in the Republican party

in this county?

Palm: Oh yes. We ran two black candidates. Had hoped we were going to elect them both. One for the state board of education and one for constable. We do not have a great deal of luck with the chicano candidate. The rise of the laraza is something that may be a definitive thing here in this county and in this state although it appeared to me that their influence slipped backwards instead of forward. And I think that Castillo, staying in the framework of the Democrat party, would indicate that the chicano intends to use the Democrat party as his vehicle rather than laraza.

J.B.: There's speculation in Austin among news paper people that the Republican party is helping to finance laraza.

W.D.V.: That they started to do this with CRP in 1972.

Palm: I would feel that this was true in 1972. I do not think it has been so since then. But I do believe that it was done in '72.

[End of interview.]