

## Interview with Lee Hudman

**Interviewer: Susan Gillis**

**Transcriber: Susan Gillis**

**Date of Interview: November 12, 1986**

**Location: Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, TX**

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*Begin Tape 1, Side 1*

**Susan Gillis:** Today is Wednesday, November 12, 1986, and my name is Susan Gillis, and I am here interviewing Lee Hudman, Executive Director for Development at Southwest Texas State University.

**Lee Hudman:** I first came to Southwest Texas in 1948. I had just finished college at Southwestern in Georgetown and married immediately after graduation and came here with my husband who was working on his master's. So, that was the first time. But then I began to absorb a lot of family history in connection with Southwest Texas. Both my husband's father and his mother had attended here back in the twenties, so it was logical that he came here. He started here before the war.

And so, here we were, the two of us, and we lived in Jimmy Taylor's garage apartment. Now, to a newcomer that wouldn't mean anything, but to an old-timer it means a lot. But to someone halfway initiated, Jimmy Taylor was Dr. James Taylor, head of the history department, and now it's the Taylor-Murphy Building, and there's a scholarship in their names that the history department is working on. He had this great little garage apartment behind his house on Guadalupe, and it was so intriguing as a first home because it was a one-room with a murphy bed—a murphy bed that pulled out of the wall. I had never seen one before, and here I had one. It was really spectacular, and it [the apartment] had this little, tiny kitchen with a dinette set built in with two benches. But it was so well-planned that each bench lid lifted up and there was storage in it. And it was just like a little doll house to live in. It was my understanding that he didn't often rent it, so we were lucky to be able to persuade him to stay there, and in fact, he let us live there again the next summer. But the third summer we were here, we were not so lucky, and we lived on Scott Street, and one day I'll have to go by and find out where that was—I have not yet looked it up again. That was a happy memory, and the funny thing, when I came back here to work in 1981, I had been away from Texas for many, many years, and I went looking for that little garage apartment to reminisce, and that's now where Jones cafeteria sits. (Laughs) So, it was a delightful place to live.

During the summers while I was here, I had begun work—at Humble Oil in Houston and realized that Humble Oil didn't [offer] three month vacations. And so I ceased working there, and then I enrolled here in education classes for that summer and was able to get my teaching certificate. So then I too became a teacher, much in the tradition of students at this university, or as it used to be. Now it is not that typical. Back in those days, people just didn't major in anything else. That was really the only basis of study here that I was aware of.

So, we had spent three great summers here, and in the summer of 1950, when my husband received his master's, there was another unusual thing there. In that same commencement ceremony, at the end of the summer of 1950, my husband got his master's, his sister got her master's, and their mother got her bachelor's. She was one of those that long years ago, when it was a normal school, did a little work and then taught. She continued over those twenty-five years taking correspondence courses, taking extension courses everywhere she could find one. And then, finally, she took a leave of absence from her school, came up here, and did her last year of residence here. So, that was a happy day for her, to get her bachelor's at last in the same ceremony with two of her children getting their master's. It was really an impressive time.

So, that's the family connection with the history. But it means, I guess, that I've had ties here a long, long time. And I find when you have them, they don't really go away, they sort of stay with you wherever you are. In our various job changes, everywhere we were close enough, we always came back for homecoming. We would be up on the quad in front of Old Main, and the term we used for our sessions was "quadrangling." We would gather out there and drink coffee and visit with our friends, and everyone came back.

But then our journeys took us further away from that, and we moved up into the Washington D.C. area. It was really not the kind of distance where you come down for homecoming on the weekend, so we found a way to keep our connection up there; this was during the time when President Johnson was president. We found there were a number of Southwest Texas people in Washington. Some he had appointed; some who had just gravitated there because of the pull in working in the nation's capital. I'm certain that having President Johnson there certainly attracted a lot of Texans, especially Southwest Texans, because of his being there.

It was sort of interesting; we formed an ex-students club up there. It was very well-structured. My husband and I headed it. He was the president, and I did all the work, which is fairly typical. (Laughs) We would get together regularly. We would have socials and dinners and receptions, and at one of those events, we were invited to the swearing-in ceremony of Willard Deason, who was one of LBJ's roommates here at Southwest. After we had attended his swearing-in, we had planned a reception that evening for him. It was a very nice event. Congressman Pickle and his wife would come, and we had a lot of fascinating people.

About a week after that, Commissioner Deason called and asked me to go to work for him. So I left my job with the IRS and moved to Interstate Commerce and was his confidential assistant. That was very, very delightful. He was a remarkable man, and I think he was typical of a lot of students that came out of that era—very hardworking. They had all come through the years of the Depression, they had all become successful. Before he was appointed, he had been the owner of KVET radio in Austin, and he sold that to take that appointment. I got to meet a lot of their close friends—the people who had studied together and worked together and played together. And so that was an interesting experience.

After my husband died while we were up there, I took a break and decided to rest up and spend more time with my two daughters while they were both still at home. During that period, I diverted from my Southwest Texas ties because Senator John Tower, with whom I had graduated at Southwestern, learned that I wasn't working. So I worked a spell in the [US] Senate up there for him, and that, too, was fascinating.

After a few years of that, I retired again. I keep trying to retire; I can't tell you how many times I've retired! (Laughs) And obviously, I'm not meant to be. I took a break again, and then I realized both of my daughters had come back home to Texas to go to college. I was sitting up there, all by myself, buying plane tickets flying them back to see me, and it just seemed to logical thing to come back to Texas. So I did. I decided with no job, no nothing, except the question "where do you want to live?"—that Austin just seemed ideal. It was much smaller [this was 1976]. I knew the climate was nice, I knew the environment was nice, and it just seemed to me the ultimate. And it seemed a nice change from the bustle of Washington to go to Austin.

So, I went down there and bought a house and was just unpacking when Commissioner Bill Deason called. He had since retired and gone back to Austin, which was his home. He asked me if I had a job yet, and I said no, but I was going to start looking soon. He said, "Oh don't, don't because I know who's waiting to hear from you. I saw him last night, and he's moving to a new job at the University of Texas System. He's waiting to hear from you." And that was Bob Hardesty.

I called him that morning and went up to see him that day—he was still in the governor's office then—and we chatted a few minutes, and we agreed that I would go to work for him just a couple of weeks when he reported. We started the same day [at] the University of Texas System office downtown on April 1, 1976. So, it's been ten and a half years now that I've worked with him, and it's been a fascinating experience. It was really delightful being involved in something like that, the system. It's really mind-boggling when you consider the size, the size of the budget, the number of students, when you get involved in their health institutions. It was a very satisfying and complex operation, and I enjoyed it thoroughly.

When President Hardesty was asked to come to Southwest Texas as president, he called me in and said, "I have been offered this job, but Mary and I feel like we just can't go and take it unless you go, too." I said, "Well, I really don't think you ought to go unless I go because are you aware that I am an alum of Southwest Texas State?" And he was not; that was something we had never discussed. He didn't realize that when I came here with him that I was coming back home. So this was my return journey back to Southwest Texas after all of those years. It was fascinating to me to move back here and to establish myself in a very comfortable home, which now I plan to make my final resting place. I would like to stay in San Marcos and not ever leave again.

As I journeyed around and looked at the change in San Marcos, I was amazed. Things that you take for granted were a shock to me. I still remembered before the interstate, the highway circle—Carson's, was called Carson's at the Circle. It was a complete circle with all the bridges and highways going everywhere, and that was no longer there. And then I was amazed that there was a shopping mall in San Marcos. I delighted in looking around and seeing the changes that had come about in those years that I had been gone. It was sort of fun to see the things that were still here and that was satisfying, even though I couldn't find Jimmy Taylor's garage apartment. My next trip was downtown; I wanted to find the courthouse on the square. And so that made me feel better to find that it was still there. And I'm pleased to see that it's being so well-preserved around there now and improved. It's going to be very attractive.

But the joy to me to come back to Southwest Texas at the stage where it is now is very satisfying, to see not only the growth of the students but the increased awareness of our own worth. I think it's been a very good school for a long time, but I think Bob Hardesty has done a lot through his vision to make us aware of how good we are. I think he has the knack of being able to draw more from us than we might normally be able to put out.

I think there's recognition being gained in a lot of our areas and a degree from this institution will mean more than ever before. But because of the quality, it also means that every alumnus who's ever gone here, the more value we can put on a degree today also raises the value of the earlier ones. It's an increased awareness of our own worth. I think we have achieved that now, and it's very, very desirable. With the plans that are underway, regardless of the economic situation, the things that we're looking for can be accomplished; the goals of intent and purposes that need to be accomplished, many of which can be without a great expenditure of dollars. But I also think we're going to have more dollars available to use because many, many donors like to be part of what we're doing, they get satisfaction by joining in with us. I think we will always be able to look to our friends for support. I think that will increase as long as we stay top-notch like we are now. People don't like to give to a loser, they want to give to a winner, and we've finally moved into the winner's circle. And I think that's good.

**Gillis:** Where do you see Southwest ten years from now?

**Hudman:** I think we will be doing pretty much what we're doing. I think it's likely we will add one or perhaps more doctoral programs. We have an excellent proposal before the coordinating board, and that's a perfect tie with our education background. I don't think there is any intent, and I think it would be foolish to attempt to become a great research institution. Smart planning would mean that it's best to concentrate on a few—

I visualize us being the best undergraduate institution in this state. I think we care enough to be that. I don't see use ever competing outside of our class—that's our goal, to be a strong institution through the master's and select doctoral programs. We do that so well, I see no attempt for us to try to compete in the giant defense contracts. We truly do not have the additional dollars that are available to A&M and UT through their own separate funds. It would be foolish to try. I think that we will gain even more recognition in our general education.

**Gillis:** Do you think Southwest will get bigger and bigger?

**Hudman:** Possibly, a little bit. I don't think it will get a great deal larger than it is. We took steps a few years ago to raise the admission standards. That in itself will be one limiting factor. We also expected more with the new suspension and probation standards, which will be a natural leveling agent to eliminate a few.

You know, it's hard. You always say you want to offer a college education to everybody who wants to be able to go, and I certainly believe in that to a certain extent. However, I think you do a disservice if you let in those who are not prepared and are not able to do college-level work. I think there are other training avenues for those people who perhaps don't come to Southwest Texas. At least the two-year community college route would suffice to add some enrichment, and perhaps that would bring them to the levels that once they could get past their basics, maybe they could compete. For an entering freshman, we should make it so they have a pretty good chance of making it. It has to be very disheartening if you begin something and don't measure up—if we let people start where it's obvious they cannot do it, you're just guaranteed a big disappointment. I don't know what other steps [are being taken] at the current time. I know there are space limitations. Once those are corrected, once we have more faculty, then perhaps we can accommodate more students, but under our current situation, I would say we would not increase drastically.

**Gillis:** Not like UT with forty thousand students?

**Hudman:** I would hope not, I think we would lose some of our magic—we do have it here. I see it when I walk on campus and I'm walking down the quad or sidewalk and I meet students and they look me in the eye and smile and speak. It's an attitude of pride and happiness in being here. I'm not sure we could maintain that same atmosphere, and I would hate to see us lose it. I'm amazed we still have it at almost twenty thousand. When I was here, there were fewer than two

thousand, and it was a happy, friendly place, and I'm really amazed to find that it's still like that. I don't know where the magic line is—when it ceases to be that.

Certainly some of the factors that cause that would be an ideal environment. It's pretty here. I love Central Texas. Of course, I grew up in swampy Southeast Texas where it's very humid, and I think this is ideal. The river certainly has to be a drawing factor that makes people happy. You don't have to go in it to enjoy it. I can just drive by and see it and be satisfied. There's something uplifting about looking at the beauties of nature. Another factor that makes our students so happy is the quality of the faculty. I know that our faculty pays more attention to students than you'll find in some other institutions. And there's something about the magic of the place. Often, faculty members come here with the career plan where they would stay here a few years and then move on to a larger school with a plan to become a department chair and then a dean and on and on and on. And some way or other, they come here and like it so much that they just stay, which reflects in their attitudes of treating students. They themselves are happy to be here, and students reflect that feeling. I've had students tell me they certainly don't hesitate to call their faculty at home to ask questions at night. I think that closeness we have is another plus factor for us.

Here, you see the president [of the university] walking Orloff [his dog], which is a unique thing for us, and I think that is a plus.

There are a great number of things going on here, even though I'm nearing the point where I've already made my first step in my plans toward retirement. I've now gone part-time, and I'll gradually add to that, so that each year I drop a day. I look forward to retiring in San Marcos because I already have a lot of activities I'm involved in. I have a built-in—hobby—

**Gillis:** This old building that we're in, the Alumni House, who used to live here? What did it used to be?

**Hudman:** This is spectacular. This is called the Hutchison House. It was built for Colonel Beverly Hutchison and his family in 1896. It's gone through several ownerships since that time, but it's now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and we're frequently on the Heritage Association tour of Distinctive Homes.

It became a boarding home for Southwest Texas students, and it was a little further up the street, nearer to the corner. It was transferred from the San Marcos Urban Renewal League to Southwest Texas in '67, I think. I'd have to go look at the plaque on the wall. It was moved here, and it was renovated, and it became university property—in fact, I was working for Bill Deason, President Johnson's roommate, in Washington when he came down for the dedication of this house. I tell you, my ties keep going back and forth. Wherever I was, I always had some tie here.

We now house the alumni offices here and the development offices. It really is a joy to come in and have this as your work environment. I just recently moved from an upstairs office into this

parlor. I have worked in sterile, modern skyscrapers before, and this is better. The atmosphere is delightful. I sit there in my chair and look at the woodwork in this mantel. I am just awed every day that craftsmen did such as this. The whole house is filled with beautiful woodwork. It is basically as it was when President Johnson lived here his entire time. The history will tell you he was here several times. If you've read some of the background, you've heard the stories of how he periodically ran out of funds. He would leave and go work and then he would periodically go live in President Evans's garage. You've heard that story, I'm sure. He called him Prexy Evans.

The daughter of the owner of the house was here a year ago in May. We were on the Heritage Tour, and I called Joyce Sutton from Austin to come down and look. She was a child during those days that LBJ was here. It was fun to listen to her reminisce of the various spots in the house where she could remember him having been and having done something.

We have our picture there [on the wall of the office] of the autographed picture he gave to Lola Miller, who was the operator of the boarding house. It's sort of fun to be here, officed in this environment.

**Gillis:** How long was this a boarding house?

**Hudman:** I would have to look back through the history. As a matter of fact, we have a brochure that we put together, but I'm afraid I'm not good at quoting dates, number of years. My mind doesn't work that way. It's rare if I can remember a number.

*End of interview*