

Interview with Dr. William D. Liddle

Interviewer: Lori Ann Jones

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**Location: Dr. Liddle's Office, Taylor-Murphy Building,
Texas State University, San Marcos, TX**

Begin Tape 1, Side 1

Lori Ann Jones: Do you understand that this tape will be available for historic purposes, to the public, unless otherwise stipulated?

William D. Liddle: Yes.

Jones: Okay. This is May first, [1986], I'm Lori Ann Jones and I'm interviewing Dr. William Liddle. [Let's] start out with some of your history: where you were born, where you got started and everything.

Liddle: I was born in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1937. My father was a construction worker; my mother was a public school teacher. I grew up at schools in Nashville, [attended] junior college at [a] little Methodist school in Gillespie, finished my baccalaureate degree at Peabody College. From there, I went to Claremont, California, to Claremont Graduate School for a couple of years and got a master's degree. [I] came back to Vanderbilt for one year, thought I wanted to come back and finish there but decided I didn't. But we also had a child by that time and we were getting pretty hungry, and I started looking for a job and wound up being interviewed by Emmie Craddock at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, at what was then the Mississippi Valley Historical Association meeting. I was hired. I came down here for a couple of years, went back to Claremont for one year, finished up some coursework. Language and comps. I came back and did the dissertation while I was teaching, which is something I would not recommend to anybody.

Jones: Difficult, huh?

Liddle: It was a strain. I'm only one of two survivors, I think, who came in in that period without the PhD or who came in close to just barely having a master's, as I did, who had the rules changed on them after they got here, who were then told they had to have a doctorate to get tenure, who made it. (Unintelligible name) was the other, our (unintelligible). (Laughs)

Jones: Wow. Okay.

Liddle: I wasn't very interested in local politics those first couple of years. I voted, of course, but I didn't know too much about what was going on. Some of the other people in the department were more active. Some of them obstreperously active.

Jones: How do you mean?

Liddle: John Quincy Adams is the fellow I have in mind. He was what we were then, in the division of social sciences, so we were all together, and John Quincy outraged some of the local conservatives when a group got together at a precinct convention. They tried to call the meeting down, that is they tried to call themselves on a majority, and John Quincy got up on the back of a wagon and threw the guy off. He called for a standing vote. The blacks, Chicanos, and the college types had them by out, oh, fifty votes. But John Quincy didn't last long after that. He left here in the mid-sixties and has been at Millsaps College in Jackson, Mississippi, ever since. He was also very active in AAUP.

Jones: In the what?

Liddle: The American Association of University Professors. Of which—well, I'm in that organization, too. In fact, I'm local chapter president right now. It's an association of all university professors, not by discipline, and its primary commitment is to academic freedom. The whole concept of tenure is largely the product of AAUP's operations, its involvement, its lobbying, its willingness to go to bat for the idea—not job security because that is not what tenure is meant to establish, but protection from being arbitrarily dismissed for having eccentric views.

Jones: So, it's not freedom of what you can teach?

Liddle: Yes. Yes, it is basically for academic freedom; that the instructor not be restrained in his pursuit of truth as he understands it in his own discipline by the conventions of the community at large.

Jones: Have we ever had problems with that here?

Liddle: Yes, we have. We have indeed. Back during the McCrocklin years, there was a speech professor's promotion denied because he wrote a four-letter, nasty word on the board as part of a speech exercise. It was a rather nasty case. He wound up leaving, too. We've had some awfully good people leave and wind up with jobs, in many cases, with greater prestige. That's just one that comes to mind, but there have been some cases. Before I came, in the fifties, there was an outrageous case, involving—I believe the gentleman's name was Wright, in the English department, who wrote a piece of doggerel verse criticizing Allan Shivers. In the fifties, Shivers, the Democratic governor of Texas, openly supported the national Republican ticket. And as I understand the story, Wright drafted, on his own time, he drafted his little doggerel verse making

fun of Allan Shivers. It got out in the local community, and somebody took it straight to Austin, and he was fired. He didn't last the week out. (Laughs)

Jones: Oh my gosh.

Liddle: So, yeah, there have been cases involving academic freedom. I guess my own involvement in local politics started about the end of the sixties. I tended to be a little too busy surviving before that time. It likely came out of the close friendship and association of a colleague named Bill Emery. Bill came in the mid-sixties, '67-ish. He had all but his dissertation finished from the University of Kansas. He was a European scholar, doing his dissertation on the organization of the Nazi Party, which he never finished. That's the reason he's not here. He's the best teacher I've ever known.

Jones: Did he teach in the history department?

Liddle: Yes. And he was a fantastically good teacher. As I said, I think he's the best teacher I've ever known. Bill was also an extraordinary competent political organizer. He was one of the people involved in organizing what came to be called the Hays County Independent Party. It was involved mainly in local politics rather than the broader sphere; city and school. It was kind of a coalition of Chicanos, blacks, Republicans, interestingly enough, and those who were commonly labeled, however accurately, liberals. It was a coalition that worked pretty well for (unintelligible) briefly. Yeah, this is the late sixties, moving into the late sixties. 1969 was the year of the McCrocklin furor. It was the first time students did anything on this campus other than meekly wandering in and out of classes. They actually had a sit-in up on the mall. It sent administrators all atwitter.

Jones: What were they sitting-in for?

Liddle: They wanted the board of regents to not simply give Mr. McCrocklin another contract until the controversy over his dissertation [allegations of plagiarism were abounding] had been resolved. And about fifty kids sat-in, just sat in that grassy area between the two sidewalks, or what used to be the grassy area, I'm not sure it's even grassy anymore, headed up towards Old Main. That's the first student demonstration to ever appear on Southwest Texas campus. The following year, 1970, is the year of Kent State and students demonstrated against the war in Vietnam on campus that year, and ten were in fact expelled for refusing to leave an area right out in here. The dean of students put a little string around them, held up by some of the football players, and told them if they didn't walk out and leave it and disperse within so many minutes, their student activity cards would be taken up. And they were right there. That is also about the time we voted in liquor by the drink in town. That was probably the issue that got more student votes out than anything up to Reagan. (Laughs)

Jones: Yeah, I can see why—

Liddle: There were some students involved in that coalition, and in some ways they were the most troublesome element in it. Because as with many of the young, they tend to be rather insistent on ideological purity. The coalition, in the early seventies, on one occasion, backed a Republican, Herb Yarbrough, a local businessman who was very broadminded and a decent type.

Interruption

He didn't have many of the limits some of the local businessmen in this town have, which seems to be a terribly restrictive, narrow little sphere of activity. Herb supported the Nixon administration, and, of course, he supported the war. To the students, that was wrong, so they ran a student against Herb, and it began to break, the coalition began to break down. That was about the time some of us who had been involved in this sort of moved towards involvement in the local Democratic party in a more successful fashion. I can remember precinct conventions before that time. (Unintelligible) We voted at the city library. I can remember two or three precinct conventions where I don't think my wife even bothered to go with me and I would end up standing next to Max Braffett and his wife. Thirty or forty people around would already have a slate ready, and they would call the meeting to order and elect the slate to county convention. There would be forty-seven votes "aye" and three votes "no," and we would go home. (Laughs) There was a very tight-knit little group that, well, they simply were the operators of the Democratic Party in Hays County. And in the early seventies, we managed to kind of break through that. That restrictive circle. Again, Bill and I were involved together. We both lived, at that time, in Precinct 46. He was precinct chairman. I was sort of Boy Friday, and we were both elected to a county convention. It must have been 1974. Of the so-called liberals, there was only a small contingent. We got into the county convention meeting, and the local establishment group had slates for all of the convention committees. Meeting resolutions, committee nominations, etcetera. And it was just simply a slate of entirely local, conservative types. Well, the first committee the convention voted on came up too quickly to act, but it was a strong "no" vote. But as the second committee came up, Emery is sitting there writing furiously names down and saying, "Liddle, get your hand up, get your hand up." The local establishment decides to present their slate and the chair, I've forgotten who chaired that convention, recognized me. And I simply got up saying, "I wish to nominate in place of those added to this list," and I read Emery's list. When I looked down at it, it took some minutes to figure out what he'd done. He was offering a group of rural names. People from Wimberley, Buda, Kyle, and Dripping Springs. Because the convention was being stacked entirely not by Hays County conservatives but San Marcos conservatives. And so Bill started nominating people out in these—

Well, we got beat. The slate was rejected. I thought, Well, that's the end of that, we've lost this convention. Lo and behold, by the time we were at the end of it, the people getting nominated to state convention for the at-large seats, one of them was a student. Fact he was the son—he was a student of mine. Al Homan, son of the present sheriff. In his speech he gave the convention once he was nominated, Al got up and made a liberal speech, as a matter of fact. "Al, don't do this! They'll nominate somebody against you." But it was a fairly representative slate. I found out

later that what had happened once the nominations committee met, the rural conservatives couldn't do enough for Emery. They wanted to nominate him to go to state convention! He said let's just spread this around. Well, from that point on, the kind of people I've been associated with became more and more prominent in local Democratic politics. We tended more and more to be the precinct chairs. The Hays County Democratic Committee, particularly once Bob Barton was elected county chairman, began to take on a more open aspect to it. I guess you could say that I've been the establishment now for about—at least ten years, it may be closer to twelve. It's sort of one of those stories about outsiders coming in.

Jones: Do you see the Independent Party we talked about before—is that still here? Or did that disband totally?

Liddle: Well, it pretty well disbanded. It came back together in the mid-seventies over controversies involving the school board. The seventies were kind of a wild time, particularly the earlier part of the decade. Dress code at the high school got to be a nasty issue. We happened to have a superintendent who was a thoroughly authoritarian personality type. He simply wouldn't budge on a fairly rigid dress code. Well, as it happened, it offended two fairly numerous groups; one is the local Chicano population, where among the Mexican-Americans, long hair for men was becoming a kind of cultural symbol. And the other was college types, whose kids are growing up and going to high school and who are assuming that they can pretty well do it their own way as long as they don't do anything obscene. Well, Gordon Harmon was the gentleman's name, and he just absolutely booted any student out of school who showed up with long hair. That sort of dynamized the Mexican-American community; it isn't just liberals up in this end, so-called, but all sorts of people up on this end of town who were offended by this sort of regimented approach. We managed to pull a kind of a coalition together until it got to the school board elections, and once they were won, the people who were elected—well, my thought at the time was that they moved too abruptly. What they really should have done was to have set policies that Harmon would simply have become so uncomfortable trying to administer that he would have decided to leave. But they fired him. That galvanized the local conservative community. So, you've got a series of elections in which now you've got the local conservative (unintelligible) winning control of the board, the objective clearly being to fire the superintendent hired by the devils who had fired their boy. The one time I ran for political office was when that was all coming to a head. It was about eight years ago. There were four seats on the school board coming up at one time, and that's a majority. The issue of whether the incumbent superintendent would be kept appeared to be a central one, as it turned out it was not. The man had some character problems of his own. Although the people who won that election got a majority on the board that was friendly to the Southside and the Northside, okay, liberal communities. This guy couldn't be straight in the mouth to satisfy one of them. He was not given a new contract. The man they hired to replace him was a Mexican American. He was also fairly rigid, but at least he was that community's authoritarian, and when he went on to bigger and better things, we got the best superintendent in the state.

Jones: Which was?

Liddle: Charles Hundley. Who's still there. The consequence is that school politics has been almost boring since about '78 or '79. In that election, he had all sorts of forces coming together. One was a growing rift between the black and the Mexican-American communities. Of the people who decided to run in that election, there was an elderly woman. She lived outside of town. Her family had great wealth, as matter of fact. They had fairly enlightened ideas about school policy. She, as a matter of fact, as it turned out she was ill and wasn't able to finish her term. She was one candidate. Woody Anderson's wife was one of the group. And in fact, it was Woody's wife who decided she simply couldn't stand the superintendent that had been hired to replace Harmon. Johnny Diaz, a local businessman, was the Chicano candidate for one of the seats. A young black woman named Chris Banbury had decided to file for the fourth spot. The problem was that Chris was the head of a local NAACP, and the NAACP had been awfully brusque in its criticisms, particularly of Gary Job Corps hiring policies. That many of the students at Gary Job Corps are black, and they were demanding a bigger black representation in the staff. Of course, in the local population of those who were looking for jobs, the Chicano population is much bigger. So there was sort of a natural conflict there, and Chris had gotten to be very prominent as a spokesman for the black community. Not in a broad, open way, but in a very abrasive fashion. The fact of the matter was that it looked like with these four seats open, things might just absolutely turn cross-wise. So I filed against Chris Banbury, the black woman. For a year, I had the black community mad at me because I was obviously anti-black. I'm not sure what the other side was up to—it was a funny damn campaign. Louis Gilcrease, a local dentist, was one of the incumbent school board members. Holly Smith, who was formally one of our board of regents members, was another. Keith Hoffman, coach here, was a third. The fourth spot was empty, there was no incumbent. I disremember exactly what the situation was there, and that's the one I was filing for, as a matter of fact. Gilcrease decided not to run again. Another candidate stood in his place.

Well, the funny part of it was, Hoffman filed early. Hoffman filed beforehand. But on the very last night of the filing deadline, Louis Gilcrease drove Holly Smith, and I'm blanking on the man's name, he won the election. This character and the guy who filed against me all got in a car and drove to the school officer's house where the forms were and filed within the last hour and a half before the deadline. They were all members of that community that was leading the fairly conservative element in this town. Jim Standley, who was in the criminal justice department here, was the candidate who filed in the place I was in. They just handed me the perfect way to attack. I didn't run against Standley, matter of fact I like Standley a lot; I ran against the whole group. We had a—the League of Women Voters had their usual candidates rally, and it was down to the usual routine until I got out of it, quite frankly. I got up and gave about a five minute speech saying that the issue was to vote for the midnight carpool or for an open school board. And it did hit the fan at that point. All sorts of people were angry at me after that and also some others were very happy about it. Basically, what I was trying to do was to draw fire. And I think

it worked. The black community got madder at me than they did at the Chicanos. Diaz didn't win, he lost by four votes. It was that close. But (unintelligible) and I'm blanking on the other woman's name, they both won. So that the other side simply didn't have the free-links in the school board that they would have had. The very next year, Reverend Alphonso Washington, who is a much broader leader of the black community, filed for the school board. I didn't work very hard, but I gave him some money, which surprised the hell out of him. We've been fast friends ever since. School politics has become—that's the last really nasty election I've seen. City elections have gotten very nasty lately. But school elections have been very calm, people get out and run for school board, and when they talk about what they want to do, it's about schools.

Jones: What about the recent one? Arredondo.

Liddle: Arredondo and Clyde? I think Frank probably could have won that election with a little bit different campaign effort. But Clyde was not a bad candidate. He's a member of the same family as Gilcrease, but Louis has a mean-streak in him and I don't think Clyde does. I get along with Louis alright—we understand each other. That's all fine and good. Clyde, I think, is going to be an acceptable school board member. If Frank had worked Northside a little bit better, he probably could have won. The ethnic divisions and the very deep hostilities that have prevailed in school politics evaporated, and I think I contributed to that. I want to congratulate myself. I feel good about that. I lost it. I was hoping I could come within 50 votes of Standley; actually, I lost by 235 or something like that. It was fun, and I could do it because no one was going to get back at me. So, I could be pretty free-swinging in ways that some candidates can't. It took Jim Standley awhile to find out, somebody finally told him right after the election, you know, Liddle wasn't running against you, he was running against those other turkeys. And I think it did—it helped defuse that very politicized school. In fact, Charles Hundley came by here when they hired the superintendent who preceded him. He was thinking about applying then. We walked, and I told him, this was a year or two after that election, and I wasn't sure just how much things had calmed down. There had been rather bitter divisions, and I was thinking about telling Charles not to apply. But after the next—how long did that superintendent take? Three years? Three or four. By the time he decided to leave, the situation was so calm here that Charles had no reservation about coming here at all, and he's done a fantastic job.

Jones: You mentioned it just for a second; I wanted to ask you about the McCrocklin crisis, or whatever.

Liddle: Do you know anything about it?

Jones: Just briefly.

Liddle: McCrocklin was a very competent administrator, probably the best president we've had here on most terms. There was just this one little problem. When he came, there were some rumors out of Kingsville, he was at Texas A&I before he was here, [was] chairman of the

political science department. His wife did a MA thesis there, and rumors followed him up that her thesis had been literally taken out of his dissertation. I heard it within a year or two; I didn't much want to be bothered with it. That kind of nastiness is not something you invite. McCrocklin also; if the man's administrative approach was flawed in any way, it was that when someone crossed him, he had a tendency to hold a grudge for a very long time. He had a tendency to kick directly out whoever he felt had done him wrong. There was some people in various departments who crossed him in one way or another. A member of this department, Dave Conrad, a twentieth century historian, ran against him in a precinct convention, nearly won, too. And Dave was a (unintelligible) after that to McCrocklin. He was that sort. If there was a failure with McCrocklin, it was that sort of—at least there was no ambiguity about whether he was after you or not. If he didn't like you, you knew he was coming. Well, some of the people who that ran crosswise with McCrocklin apparently did more digging into the story about the "his-and-her" thesis. It really never got much of anywhere until '68-'69. That was the tail end of the Lyndon Johnson presidency, and Johnson invited McCrocklin to Washington as Under Secretary of HEW [Department of Health, Education, and Welfare]. That's when Ronnie Dugger blew the story in *Texas Observer* and Dugger's view—LBJ or the LBJ group was priming McCrocklin to move into UT–Austin. And so Dugger breaches the story on the "his-and-her" thesis as a ploy to kill the prospect. Well, that made it public.

Jones: Did he not like McCrocklin? Is that why he did it?

Liddle: Dugger had no use for McCrocklin. No use for many of the people who made up the Texas establishment at that time. John Connally as the big honcho of those days, although I guess we were impressed with Smith's administration as governor. There was a group here of ten guys who published a letter calling for a public hearing on the issue of whether her thesis had been plagiarized out of his dissertation.

Jones: Why did they want to have a public hearing?

Liddle: They just wanted to have an airing of the thing. A meeting, so to speak. I was asked to sign that letter, and I didn't. I didn't think that was the way to go. But ten people did. The meeting was held over in what was then the student center, it's now the bookstore. Up on the second floor there was a big, open area. I went to it late, also around the back. There were some people simply reading sections out of her thesis and then reading sections out of his dissertation, and they were in fact, you know, the same thing. There were people who defended McCrocklin at that meeting. It caused a big flap, and it was brewing. This was late fall of '68. About that time, a man named Robert Heintz, Marine Colonel, military affairs writer for a Detroit newspaper, I think it's called the *Detroit News*, but I wouldn't swear to that, publishes a column in which he says, in effect, there are a bunch of people in Texas who are all stirred up about a wife who seems to have plagiarized her husband's dissertation. What they don't know is that the real problem is that the dissertation is plagiarized.

Jones: How did he find that out?

Liddle: He was in Naval Intelligence. Apparently, when McCrocklin finished his dissertation, shortly after he sent it to the, oh, what outfit is it? It's naval publications' center. But it goes into Washington, to get the dissertation published by the U.S. Navy. Well, whoever was assigned the manuscript was apparently reading through part of it or checking out part of it, and Heintz was in Washington, in the Naval Intelligence Office at the time. As soon as he heard about it, he said, "Hey, that's the"—I forgot the name of the report now. But this 1926 U.S. Marine report on the Marine occupation of Leyte, that was the subject matter of the dissertation. It's been so many years; I've forgotten what the name of the damn report is. In any event, he does a check of it at the time, and in fact an overwhelming, the overwhelming majority of the material in McCrocklin's dissertation is lifted directly out of this report. Somebody did a statistical breakdown; over 50% of it is verbatim. Another thirty-odd percent is minor adjustments in the language, but essentially, reproducing another document and claiming it as your own. Over 90% of the dissertation is fraudulent. That's just, that's the only thing you can say about it. Once that hit the fan, that brings the University of Texas in because Texas issued the degree.

Jones: Let me stop for just one second and flip the tape.

End Side 1, Begin Side 2

Jones: How long had you been here when that came about?

Liddle: I had been here six years. Fact, I was still untenured.

Jones: You were talking about people defending it. How could you—how can you defend something like that?

Liddle: Basically, the people I know who defended McCrocklin refused to look at the material. He was a good man, they liked him, he was their friend. They would not—

Jones: That was enough—

Liddle: —be a party to any sort of attack upon him, and they wouldn't tolerate being any part of it. As I said, I was very much on the fringes of this business. There were some people very much more deeply involved in keeping the issue alive and trying to press the matter. Heintz actually came down here sometime in early '69 and met with some people out at Holiday Inn or some such place. I was—I wasn't any part about it, but campus security was following all sorts of people around. I was working on my dissertation that year, I had to finish the next, by the next June, or I was out. And I did have a funny experience. I was working on that dissertation that year, in my office over in Evans, way into the night, two o'clock in the morning. Not unusual. [I] finally got tired and decided to go home. I went out in what was then a complete, that whole area back there where the Derrick Building is was a parking lot. There were two cars in it; mine and the campus police. I got into my car and started to drive home, he started driving out, and he

followed me all the way downtown until I turned off going up by San Antonio Street, and then he turned away. Strangest thing that has ever happened to me in this town. I guess I was supposed to be checked to see if I was going to another clandestine meeting with Colonel Heintz or somebody else. But I was never very close to it. The University of Texas did establish a committee to look into the degree. In the spring of '69, a group of people, I'm not sure exactly who put it together, but they did draft a letter to the board of regents of the Texas state colleges, [of] which we're part. It asked the board of regents to postpone a decision on whether McCrocklin's contract for the next year until the University of Texas rendered a decision on the case. I did sign that letter; I think there were a total of seventy-five faculty who signed it. That's all.

Jones: Wasn't that a pretty big percentage?

Liddle: No, we had about five hundred faculty at the time.

Jones: I guess it wasn't then. Okay.

Liddle: A number of people who signed that letter didn't survive here.

Jones: Because of that?

Liddle: Yeah. They were non-tenured and for one reason or another, their tenure contract never came. I sometimes wonder why I managed—

Jones: I was going to ask.

Liddle: I'm not sure. I finished the degree, barely in time. That last year—again, let me finish with '69 first. We signed the letter. This was February–March-ish of '69. That's about the time McCrocklin comes back to campus; LBJ's term is over, Nixon is inaugurated, and the man comes back to his job at SWT. He had a faculty meeting in Evans Auditorium, marched onto the stage with the rest of the administration. It looked like a military review. Ben Archer and I were late getting there and so we had to find seats down front. McCrocklin got up and gave about a thirty minute speech in which he said, in essence, he was the victim of a leftist communist conspiracy. [He said] that every charge was fabrication, there was no substance to any of them, and that he intended to stand his ground, etcetera, etcetera, until the end. He got a standing ovation. I remember sitting there—Bill Archer and I were looking at each other, and everybody around us in standing up applauding. But we sat conspicuously and quietly in the middle of the auditorium down front. The break came in April of '69, there was one member of the board of regents who was an oilman, and I don't remember his name. But he apparently decided that he was going to find out what this thing was going to turn into. The story I have is that he flew to the University of Texas and went to the graduate dean's office and said, "I'm not caring about your academic politics; tell me what your committee's found out." And apparently the dean told him. Within a week he flew down to here, and I don't think anybody knew he was here until he

was gone, except McCrocklin, because he went into McCrocklin's office and had him sign a letter of resignation. It was fairly typical. I was away that weekend. The Organization of American Historians was meeting in Philadelphia, and my wife and I went. So, I think I can safely say I was the last man in San Marcos to find out that McCrocklin had resigned. That was Monday morning when I came back and something was different; everything was loose.

Jones: Did UT take away his degree?

Liddle: They did not rescind the degree, but they made a public statement that the degree was of no value. There was a legal technicality. As a matter of fact, conferring a degree is a ceremony that in a sense can't be rescinded. So, he still technically has the degree, but the University of Texas has said publically that the degree is fraudulent and has no—no academic standing.

Jones: Where did he go after that?

Liddle: Wimberley. He was already living in Wimberley. He didn't—the president's home here, which Flower had built for himself, was much too cramped, and McCrocklin had already bought himself an estate in Wimberley. So he stayed there, and, of course, went into real estate and is a multi-millionaire.

Jones: Do you ever speak with him or think about him?

Liddle: No. I see him from time to time. I think it must have been—the most recent time must have been when Hardesty came. There was a big reception. I disremember exactly where. I think it must have been in the San Marcos Room, and I was talking to Emmie Craddock. McCrocklin came up, apparently to say something to Emmie, looked straight at me, and just turned away. (Laughs) Which is okay. I didn't much care one way or the other because I really didn't dislike the man. If I hadn't been for the fraudulent degree, I think it would have been good for us to have kept him.

Jones: Apparently the students really liked him. You talked about the sit-in they had.

Liddle: Well, that was again because of his degree. They wanted—well, they wanted academic integrity to be upheld across the line. If they are going to be held to reasonable and respectable academic standards, why shouldn't the president of the university?

Jones: So it was kind of against him—it wasn't in favor of him.

Liddle: Oh, yes.

Jones: I took it to be in favor of him.

Liddle: No, no. They were demonstrating that he be removed. It was an awfully—an awfully turbulent and tense time. People who had been friends for twenty years became cross with each other because they happened to come down on different sides of that particular controversy. And

it was, as it was bound to be, very nasty business. I guess all we can say is that we're lucky we came out of it as well as we did.

Jones: What happened to his wife because of what she did? Nothing?

Liddle: Once his dissertation became the focal point, the thesis got just about forgotten. (Laughs) That was, in fact, a much less serious matter than his case.

Jones: I see how it would be, but I was just curious.

Liddle: Yeah. Again, there are some people around here who were much more closely involved in the center of events than I was. I was pretty much on the fringes. But close enough that I could get burned here and there.

Jones: Maybe you were lucky that you were on the fringes.

Liddle: To some extent—if I had signed that original letter calling for the public meeting, I have no doubt that I would have been gone. Ironically, if that public meeting had never been held, I'm not sure the controversy would have been resolved. It was the public meeting and the news reports that grew out of the public meeting that alerted Heintz that the issue was brewing.

Jones: Do you think it would have been hush-hush around campus just for a long time?

Liddle: Well, the problem of her (unintelligible) thesis simply not—I mean, this is not, this is not the sort of thing you do. But that's not going to be the kind of an issue that's going to lead to a resolution. I mean, it's going to cause a split in the faculty and the university, but it's not going to be a big enough issue to drive a man out. And once this kind of fight got going, there was no holding back. Either you win it—or you lose bad. And if that public meeting had never been held, I think McCrocklin would have won. As long as his dissertation didn't come up. The problem of her thesis was never going to get to be serious enough that people, that the people who mattered, the board, were going to consider demanding his resignation.

Jones: So the independent person, the oilman you spoke of, finally got him to sign it?

Liddle: Yeah. Dan Farlow, I think, would probably know—would remember his name better than I would. He was a member of the board, and one of these wealthy oil people who could wander about the state asserting authority and get listened to. And he did both in Austin and here.

Jones: Let me—the recent election, Emmie Craddock lost it to Younger. How do you feel about that? Do you think it's for the better? Was it time for a change?

Liddle: Oh, I can't possibly feel that an election that Emmie would lose would be for the good. I guess—well, I've been close to Emmie longer than anybody on campus. She's the one who interviewed me for the job. And although Emmie has aged a good deal in the last few years,

Emmie in her declining years is several leagues ahead of most of the other types around this place. Emmie lost, really, because nobody thought she could lose. A lot of people didn't think she could lose, seriously. And the effort in the election was not quite as well-organized as it might have been—well, you can figure that out by the run-offs. When the neighborhood groups realized there was a real chance of losing the seat, the council seat as well as the mayor's seat organized much more effectively and did something that is almost impossible to do in a run-off election, and that's increase the candidate's vote. I was a part of that.

Jones: In what ways?

Liddle: Mostly, mostly in advising work on phone banks. If I have a political skill, that's probably where it is. And that's knowing what phone banks can do and what they can't do and how they should be used. A lot of people use phone banks very, use telephones for political purposes, very haphazardly and inefficiently. You never persuade a voter on the phone—it just doesn't happen. And yet I've worked with any number of people who just can't get over themselves, and they think if they can talk to somebody long enough, they can change their mind. And I don't believe I've ever seen it happen. The only thing a phone bank is valuable for is identifying your supporters; where the support already is. Its secondary value would be a look at people who honestly haven't made up their minds, who have a question here or there. If you can get data on that, a candidate can go and meet that person in person. He can go and knock on their door and talk to him. That face to face contact can win a vote, the phone won't. It can simply tell you where that potential, where that vote is. But its only value is identifying the votes that are going to come in for you, so that on the election day, you have people on the phones making absolutely certain that those who are going to vote for you show up. And if it is done right, you get the kind of results we had in that run-off election.

Jones: There was a pretty big turnout, wasn't there?

Liddle: It was fairly impressive, and again, I take almost no credit at all for that. I mean, the people around here were anxious enough that volunteers were falling out of the woodwork almost. And the sympathy for Karl Brown was out there in the community, all that we, all that needed to be done was to reach it. It was just that we were organized very well to reach it and then on Election Day to nail it down and bring it home!

End of interview