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Don Adams

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Abstract:

In this interview, Nancy Beck Young talks with former Texas Governor Mark White on a variety of topics related to his career, as well as state and national politics. He discusses the political shift that occurred in Texas which was once dominated by the Democratic Party. Governor White talks about his tenure as the attorney general of Texas during the first and second governorships of Republican Bill Clements. He discusses how difficult it was to work with Clements and illustrates the bullying tactics Clements and other Republicans used in order to get many elected officials statewide to switch from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party.

Mark White also talks about the highs and lows of his term as Governor of Texas, including energy policy, compromise, intervention from the federal government, unemployment, education, the influence of oil prices on the Texas economy, the criminal justice system, and many others. He examines two prolific United States Supreme Court cases, *Edgewood v. Kirby* and *Ruiz v. Estelle*, and the influences they have had on Texas politics. Governor White also honors the three Texas politicians that have become President of the United States (Lyndon Johnson, George H.W. Bush, and George W. Bush) by offering his personal take on each of them as politicians and as human beings. The interview concludes with the former governor discussing the changing demographics in the state and potential Democratic Party strategies for responding to this change.

NY: I'm Nancy Beck Young and I'm here with Governor Mark White, and we're going to have a

conversation about Texas politics in the 1970s and the 1980s and carry it forward a bit as to how we got where we are today. Governor White, I'd like to start out by asking you a big question about why and how Texas politics has realigned so much from the 1970s and '80s when most Texans still describe themselves as "Yellow Dog Democrats," as in, they'd sooner vote for a curly-yellow dog than a Republican to folks not even knowing what a "Yellow Dog" is?

MW: Well, it's very clear, we've been guarding the wrong border. If we had been keeping out these people from New York and California, that kept moving in from all over the South, they all came in here with a history of being Republicans. They didn't realize the Democrats had been in charge of running Texas and made it the great state it was, which attracted them to Texas in the first place. And then they brought their Republican values, such as they are, and we have seen a change in the way in which our state is being governed, priorities have changed, and as a result, I think as in almost everything else, there's a pendulum that swings, and just as they built the reconstruction government after the Civil War, they developed a Constitution that was very limited. It's one that Governor Hobby was very critical of from time to time. I was very-somewhat satisfied with it. It was very restraining of government, but it also made it more difficult to do things, as Governor Hobby was naturally inclined to do. Were Governor Hobby to have continued in public service for years and years, then he would have been right. Since he didn't and others are there now, I was right, and we do need certain constraints. But when you're doing the right thing, you should be able to generate the support of the people and given enough information, I think the people will come to recognize that there is a better way. And the

Democratic Party has long been that better way.

NY: Sure, sure, sure. Let me ask you about a few other things that were headline-grabbing in the 60s and 70s, and see whether you think they had much of an effect as well on changing political identities. And here I'm thinking about things like the Civil Rights movement, like the women's movement, Chicano and Chicana activism, the Vietnam War, the Great Society, the latter of course being the brainchild of (pause)...

MW: Lyndon Johnson.

NY: Lyndon Johnson, a Texas politician.

MW: Yeah, I think that a lot of this shift in political identification is a result of racial changes, racial demographic changes which happen to favor Hispanics particularly, in that the growth in their population has been disproportionate to others. When you look at that, their identities rise in many places today in the urban areas, and urban Texas is becoming more and more Democratic, and rural Texas flipped from being conservative Democrats to Republicans over the past 30 or more years. It started before I took office, but not long before that. We had a first governor, Clements, who was the first Republican governor since the Civil War- err, Reconstruction. That reflected the very narrowness between people voting for Democrats and Republicans, but you really shouldn't identify right there with the shift. It has been a long-going trend that has occurred, beginning with Texans voting for Eisenhower for president, our first Republican president in which Texans supported a Republican for the White House. I think, maybe, you have to go back to Al Smith since that had last happened. As a result of that, you look at John Connolly, and John Connolly barely beat Jack Cox for governor. Jack Cox was running for governor in about 1962 and I think Connolly, by a very narrow margin, beat him. Then, you can

go from that point. Republicans didn't mount a very good campaign until you get to Doc Briscoe

Doc Briscoe barely beat the Republican nominee from Houston who was a professor at Lamar high school, and he beat him by about 100,000 votes. That was indicative of some of these trends. It really broke when Clements became governor. He made a concerted effort to try to change rural Texas Democrats into Republicans, and used threats and intimidation to do it. He would go to the county commissioners in a rural county and say, "If you don't change parties, we're going to run against you, and you'd be facing, at that stage, a Republican running for president against a Democrat running for president." So, those were usually years that they maximized Republican turnout. So, he would get them to convert to being Republican by virtue of saying, "We won't run anybody against you if you just change parties." And so, many people in Texas did that and, as a result, became identified with the Republican Party and started voting for Republicans, something that would be obnoxious to most people back in those days.

NY: Sure.

MW: Prior to there, too.

NY: Sure. That was very helpful and in the course of that, you brought up Bill Clements, who was the first Republican governor since Reconstruction. He was a one-term governor because you defeated him when he ran for reelection. Can you talk a little bit about your race against Clements in 1982 and your defeat of Clements in 1982?

MW: Well, we were- my wife, Linda Gale and I- were very undecided as to what to do. Everybody said, "Oh, just go ahead and run for reelection as Attorney General and then you can just walk right into the Governor's office." Well, you don't do that. Nobody just walks right into the Texas Governor's office. It's always a pretty hard-fought campaign. And then one morning,

as I was getting ready to leave to go to the Attorney General's office, she offered her advice. She said, "I think we'd be better off if you were to run for Governor and lose than to run for reelection and have to serve with this guy." And let me tell you, she was absolutely right. I had been Attorney General; I had tried to explain to him what the role of the Attorney General was. He never understood it. He was a big corporate guy who had a corporation that he owned 100% of the stock or nearly, and he controlled it, and he thought that was what the governor of Texas did, was he a 90% shareholder of the people of Texas and, quite frankly, Texas doesn't work that way. As a result, we had several disagreements during my time as Attorney General. We wound up settling potential lawsuits with the federal government over desegregating higher education. We were the only state in the Old South that did not have a lawsuit to desegregate its higher education facilities and institutions. That was a huge step. He was much embittered by that. He thought that was his job, and of course, he wasn't about to "knuckle under," as he would have termed it, to the federal government. All we did was go in there and show them that Texas was going to do what was right and that was all it took to get them to say, "Okay, that's fine." So, we got that settlement and kept Texas out of years of long, multimillion dollar litigation. Another thing, we had the world's- at that time- largest oil spill. Fortunately, his company that he had divorced himself from when he became governor, was the company that had supplied the drilling rigs for that place down in Campeche Bay that blew out. And then, when all the oil hit the Texas beaches- it's incredible, I don't think a gallon of oil hit the Mexican beaches, even though this was deep in Campeche Bay, it all hit the Texas coast from Brownsville up to about Port O'Connor. And when I was explaining to him that we were going to have to file suit against the people who caused the damage to the Texas coast, he was outraged. As a result, when we did sue, he made the comment that all it really takes to clean this up is one little hurricane. Well, that

didn't help very much in his reelection effort because we used to remind the people along the

Gulf Coast that this guy from up in Dallas may not understand hurricanes like we do down here.

That's not something you'd pray for. So, in any event, we wind up filing suit against his company and getting a big settlement for the damages done which wiped out the tourist industry for one year, wiped out shrimping industry, and so much of the sport-fishing was ruined as a result of it, not to mention all the people that used to go down to the coast and enjoy the beach in the summertime. An interesting part of this was, the press wanted to see some oiled birds. So, as attorney general, we touring the area and looking for, among other things- there was oil everywhere- oiled birds. We toured a hundred miles of the coast looking for an oiled bird and finally the press were very frustrated, the TV cameras wanted to see these oiled birds and we never found any. And I said, "Well, just goes to show you the birds here in Texas are a lot smarter than the ones in California. They'd know better than to get in the oil." Really, it was amazing the way in which natural will help recover from such an environmental disaster. Best thing is to avoid it in the first place, the second thing is saltwater will pretty well reduce to its common elements everything, I think, except concrete. So, as a result, over time the environment tends to cure itself. It's better, of course, not to have been damaged in the first place. Also, the other issues became involved in that campaign was one of teacher's salaries were too low. I think at the time, believe it or not, was around-the-state support for the salaries around \$11,000 a year.

Today, you couldn't get anybody to work at the golden arches for that kind of money, but teacher's salaries became a big issue. And public utility rates were a big issue. What had happened over that period of time, we had been through various decisions made prior to me being in office, tied to Montana and Wyoming, for supplying coal to Texas. We were forbidden by the fuel USAC from using natural gas- our own natural gas- to generate electricity. So, here

we are with all this natural gas, cheap, relatively easy to access, and can provide all the electricity we need, and the federal government says, "You can't use it." Well, what can you use? Well, you can buy coal. Well we have (unknown) here and we use some of that. It's not a very clean thing, it's kind of like burning dirt. Then, we were forced- not "we" the state, but the people particularly in San Antonio and Houston- to buy coal. The coal that you bought was from Wyoming, mined there, and shipped by rail to Texas. And there were promises made to ship that coal for seven, eight dollars a ton. They never hauled a single ton for seven or eight dollars. The railroads, the minute they got the contract, started raising the rates and they were running a monopoly, and so they raised the rates. Then the utility companies said, "Oh, okay, we'll just pass it on to the customer." So, the utility company didn't have to argue even about the rates, they just got it all back the next month when you paid your electric bill, frustrating the people in the sense that electric bills skyrocketed. My electric bill in the west side of Austin in about a two thousand square-foot house went to \$800 a month. This was back in 1970- 1982. And literally, I was paying more for electricity than I was for my house. So, that became kind of a theme of our campaign, when your electric bill costs more than your mortgage on your house, you know something needs to be done. Well, only about 120% of the people agreed with me on that, and so, as a result, they said, "What are you going to do?" Well, we're going to sue Montana, we're going to sue Wyoming because they're the ones that have put a huge new severance tax on the coal. Well, they saw what was coming in Montana and said, "Watch this: we're going to raise our severance tax and just choke those Texans to death." I think Governor Perry found out that just because you're from Texas doesn't mean that everybody that's not from Texas loves you; they don't. They're envious in many cases. In any event, we did file a lawsuit, we weren't successful in the outcome because of the federal courts that intervened or were involved and they

said that we could not sue over that, and it gets very technical. But in any event, we lost that, but

what we did win was a fight to break the monopoly of the railroads. So, Kansas City Southern built a spur that broke the monopoly and we started seeing railroads rates start to come down. So, we stopped the pass-through expense on coal. Effectively, the only time in Texas history since they passed in 1975, the Texas Utilities Commission- Public Utilities Commission- we saw electric rates actually come down and as a result, we got lower rates for the people of Texas. And we also got the teachers because of Bill Hobby's leadership in the Senate and our help over in the House. We wound up with the biggest pay increase percentage-wise in Texas history for our school teachers. Couldn't have been done without Bill Hobby.

NY: So, can you- I want to explore the education reforms of your administration in a bit, but before we do that, can I get you to talk some about Bill Hobby? More generally, his role in Texas politics. How would you assess it and did it change over time or exactly how would you characterize it?

MW: Well, I think Bill Hobby came into office in 1973 when he was sworn in as Lieutenant Governor. He was a freshman, it was not brand new to him because his mother had been a secretary of the Senate, I believe and his father had been the Lieutenant Governor and Governor of Texas. As a result, he kind of grew up in not only a historic family, but a historic family that was closely related to the history of Texas. I think that Governor Hobby's even "pre-predecessors" to his mother and father, he had people that were members of legislature back in the 1800s. So, his family has been closely tied to Texas. Fortunately, I guess it was good that they didn't have any at the Alamo or we wouldn't have had Bill Hobby. But as a result of his history in Texas and then his leadership when he became Lieutenant Governor- I came to know

him at that stage, I did not know him before that; he had been active at the *Houston Post* and a

very active civic leader in Houston- but got to know him because Governor Briscoe had appointed me as Secretary of State, and that role, traditionally, has you work with the Senate.

Having worked over there with Bill over that first legislative session, got to know him. Of course, Secretary of States are really not nearly as important as they think they are. That self-satisfaction with what a big job you had was sometimes punctured by the reality that the

Lieutenant Governor had the even bigger job and more importantly, I was not elected, but appointed which Governor Briscoe would remind me of sometimes. I came to know him and even though at that time our family thought he was too liberal. We came out of Baylor

University and were conservative Democrats, others in my family were liberal Democrats, they'd gone to the University of Texas. So, when we'd get together, there would be a fight- not over football, nah, we didn't care about football, that wasn't important; politics was important. So, it came as an interesting phenomenon for me to see because Bill Hobby was not the wild-eyed liberal that his opponents had said about him when he was running for office. He was very moderate, and Doc Briscoe, who everybody knew was a conservative, they got along famously.

Not agreeing on every issue, they didn't; Bill was more progressive than Doc Briscoe. They were both gentlemen, they were both mature in their understanding in their roles in the government, and they worked very closely together. They never had, as far as I know, a public disagreement. I'm not even sure they had many private disagreements- I'm sure they did over policy- but one thing I learned was that Bill Hobby was very differential to the Governor's office, he was very respectful to the Governor's office, and let me assure you that when I became Governor, I returned that respect to his office. There has never been a better Lieutenant Governor than Bill Hobby. I'm not talking about years of service, and I'm not talking about quality of service. He

had a great vision based on his historic perspective, a great vision about what should be

happening in Texas. If there was any frustration, I guess, in his service, it was probably that he couldn't do it all by himself, but he knows that isn't the way it works. So, with compromise and strong leadership, he played probably the most significant role in the 20th century in leadership in Texas because of his tenure, as well as his good vision for the state. Governors came and went, Briscoe was there 6 years I was there 4. Clements had a 4 and a 4. As a result of those governors, who had different views- dramatically different views- he was able to chart a course that was probably not as good as he would have liked under some of those Governors; maybe, hopefully better than he would have expected under my time in office. But he was truly a quite, a firm-of-hand on the utter of Texas politics and he did a marvelous job.

NY: How would you characterize his vision for the state? What did he want?

MW: Well, you know, it was pretty simple: he had a great feel for people who were less advantaged than he was, which was most of us, frankly. He also was very concerned about education. He viewed education as being the most important thing the government in Texas does. He spent an enormous amount of time, he had very talented staff members who worked on educational issues that resulted in legislation and appropriations. Legislations one thing, appropriations is the second step. If you don't have the money, it doesn't matter how good your idea is. And he got both of those done. I think he understood the importance of transportation; I mean, there was no question about need for good roads across the state. Doc Briscoe, of course, was the man who started the farm to market roads in Texas when he was in the legislature back in 1947 and '8; '6, '7, '8, all in there. So, Bill Hobby understood that. He also had a very deep concern for the less fortunate in our society, the people with mental health issues. He was very

supportive and very effective in getting resources devoted to that. He had the Farabee family,

which was one in the Senate and Helen was on his staff, I believe. They were two of the most effective team members in Texas history. They were working under not only the guidance but the inspiration of Bill Hobby. He gave them an opportunity to do what every good leader does and that's get good people who have good ideas and give them the chance to develop ideas. He helped make certain that that all came to pass.

NY: Okay. So, let me push you a little bit on the mental health, mental retardation issues.

What were the problems in MHMR services and-

MW: Oh! We had horrible problems. We had people- and this predates- I guess I was Secretary of State- we had beatings in some of the schools for children. We had terrible abuse; lack of supervision from the state. People that were hiding behind the First Amendment and Freedom of Religion, that this was a religious organization. It was no more religious than they were pagans the way in which they were dealing and treating these children. It was horrific. Bill Hobby had the courage to stand and really lead along with some others. We had John Hill as attorney general, he took a positive step in trying to change and correct or stop some of the abuses that were going on, and Lester Roloff, I guess kind of the centerpiece of all this. Lester Roloff probably was instrumental in the defeat of Bill Hobby- pardon me, in the defeat of John Hill when he ran for Governor because he did to John Hill a massive effort in taking churches across East Texas particularly and trying to penalize John Hill for having done the right thing in closing some of these homes. I succeeded John Hill as Attorney General and I got to observe up close what Bill Hobby had done to make changes in the way in which mental health is dealt with in Texas. Quite frankly, I'm sure he would probably agree; wish we had done more, tried as best

we could to do what we did. It was not easy. People in those days were- mental health was something you didn't talk about. It was hidden. It was kind of like the crazy uncle- or grandfather or uncle or something- upon the third floor. You didn't want to hear about, talk about it, do anything about it. Bill Hobby had the courage to do something about it. He took the lead on it and he made the biggest strides in improving mental health in Texas of any person prior to his days in office.

NY: Okay, let's move into your administration, then, and let's start by talking about HB-72, the big educational reform package. How did that bill get put together?

MW: Well, House Bill 72 came about through the frustration- or by frustration- in being unable to accomplish what I had promised the people of Texas for schoolteachers and improving education. The legislature, as everyone should know and I did know but didn't realize how that is a continuing interest of their part to make sure the governor has as little to do with the funding of programs in Texas as possible, so by the time I got in office, the legislative budget board and that's Bill Hobby and Speaker Lewis, and they had already allocated most of the resources. I'm the first governor to have less money available when I took office than the prior governor had in his last year of office. So, we were sitting there with declining oil prices being unable to give teachers any pay raise and not doing anything of any consequence to improve education in the state. As a result of that frustration, rather than immediately call a special session to go back into these issues, I had the wise council of Bill Hobby and also Gib Lewis. Gib Lewis' comment was, "We're not going to pass any tax bill just because you want to raise taxes. We're going to only pass it if after we study the education issue and it seems that there is a demand and a necessity for changes that requires more money, then we'll get the money." Well, his commitment to

raising taxes, if needed- or if proven- coupled with Bill Hobby's leadership in suggesting the way in which we go about bringing the attention to the people of Texas and the legislature on to the educational issues we were facing, that combination brought about the special committee on education- select committee on education- that was chaired by Ross Perot. I picked some of those board members, they picked- "they" being the Speaker and Lieutenant Governor- picked several of the board members and as a result, we had a collection of people- some of the brightest talents across Texas and a pretty good cross-section from the more liberal spectrum. We had teachers not represented directly, and the reason why I was criticized heavily for that was because they said, "Well, my God, you don't have any teachers here." I said, "Don't worry, you know what the teachers need. You don't have to study that very long, they don't have to be here to tell you. They need more money to keep them in the classroom and they need changes in the classroom which gives them the ability to do their job." The study really meant *What do we do to make it right for teachers?* My mother was a first grade teacher. She said- and everything you see in House Bill 72 is a reflection of everything she said she needed as a first grade teacher. First of all, you need the pay. We didn't pay teachers well and still don't. We need to be able to attract them now, not just out of the household- in fact, let me explain this. Women have been subsidizing education for generations. What changed dramatically in the teaching profession is the time in which a young woman had an opportunity going through college- she could be a nurse, a teacher, a homemaker or a nurse, a teacher, or a homemaker. The options for a young woman, highly educated, well-educated, well-motivated to do much more than that was rather limited. You had a few women doctors. You had very few women scientists, very few; but because of the way in which our country has progressed and saying to women, "By gosh, women can do anything a guy can do, maybe better." So, we now have a woman who had just been

nominated to be the president. Wow! That's big. Well, by opening those other opportunities, women started selecting to be lawyers. Well, when I went to law school I think there were three women in my class in 1965. Not in my class-in the whole school. Now, there are more women in the school than there are men. And let me tell you, when I became Attorney General, I found out how good they were. First of all, what was happening, they wouldn't let women- the big law firms- didn't even hire them. Senator Hutchinson's first job was with my old law firm. The reason she got on there was because everybody else in the big firms had turned her down. They didn't want women. My firm hired her and she got her first law job there at Reynolds, White, Allen, & Cook in Houston. Well, you know what she would've been? She would've been a great schoolteacher, but she was a great Senator. So, what do we do? We've changed our society and now we've taken what was a concentrated pool of talent and have spread that pool out and in order- it used to be we didn't have to bargain with pay to get talented people to come to the classroom. Now, as soon as we figure out that we've opened the door to get great people in our classrooms, we were going to have to pay great, competitive salaries, and it's the most important job we do in Texas. If we do it right, you don't have to worry about the future. Bill Hobby played a huge role in making certain that we got the reform in House Bill 72.

NY: So, House Bill 72 involved the pay raise for the teachers-

MW: That was a big part of it. Also-

NY: And- go ahead.

MW: Also, you had a 22-to-1 class size. This was very important because my mother being a- and it only applies to the first 1, 2, 3, 4 grades, I guess- my mother, as a first grade teacher, the law back then under the Gilmer-Aikin Bill was that it could be a 28-to-1 class size. Well, my

mother- and I have on my wallet in my office, a picture of her first grade class at Briar Grove

Elementary School. Go count those bright and shiny faces, and under the 28-to-1 average, she had 34 kids. Well, the way they averaged it was they counted the guy mowing the yard, the person back in the cafeteria, the special aide over here to the principal, and that rounded it down to 28-to-1. Well, it never worked that way. So, 28-to-1 under House Bill 72 was a hard number: 22-to-1. 23-to-1, you get two classrooms. Oh, my God, they screamed and hollered.

Superintendents were going up through the roof. And we maintained that resistance to them, gave them a little out, and they could apply for an exemption due to short funds or give us some more time to build the classrooms. Well, you can see by the number of exemptions they've asked for, they tried to work around the 22-to-1. You ask a schoolteacher- and I've had people who are really great reformers in education, most of them were businessmen that don't know- come here from sic 'em about education, that want to go in and tell you what we need to do to make our schools better again- well, they said, "Well, there's no evidence to support a 22-to-1 small class size." I said, "Well, why do you send your kids over to St. John's where they have 8 or 9-to-1, and why do you send them to Episcopal, and why do you send them to all the other private schools?" What's good enough for those rich folks over there should be good enough for the rest of us over here. That doesn't- you know, it's all money. You ask any first grade teacher if she says, "Would you rather have 12 in your class or 24 in your class?" I'll let that be the guide.

NY: Yep, I think so. So, yes, that certainly was a controversial and important reform. There were some other aspects of HB-72 that were just a little bit controversial-

MW: That's right.

NY: I'm thinking of the teacher testing and the "No Pass, No Play."

MW: I made a terrible political mistake on teacher testing. One of my staff members said,

“Governor, do you want to make the teachers pass the test before they get the pay raise?” Should have said yes; didn’t. I said, “No, give them the money now, they need it now.” Well, by the time they got around to taking the test, which was a 9th grade reading comprehension test- by the time they got to take the test, they had forgotten about the pay raise; that’s over with. “Oh, yeah, we deserved that. Now, we have to take this test? Whose fault is that? Oh, the governor’s! Old Mark over here, we’ll get him, watch this!” I mean, I had my car out of South Texas, teachers up there rocking my car and my security detail said- you know, it wasn’t pretty, it was ugly. But nothing quite exemplified what we were trying to do with teacher testing as good as the front page picture of the *Fort Worth Star Telegram* back in 1986, I guess it was, and I was attending a Chamber of Commerce meeting, I believe it was in Brownwood, Texas, maybe Wichita Falls, somewhere around there, and they had all these demonstrators- schoolteachers- out there about Mark White and what an evil guy I was. One guy had this sack over his head, brown paper sack, big sack; had cut-outs for his eyes and it says, “I am embarrassed I voted for Mark White.” Front page of the *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, the whole upper half, nearly. He misspelled “embarrassed.” Now you know why we needed teacher testing. So, when we had this ninth grade reading comprehension test, 8,000 I believe it was- 7 or 8,000- teachers couldn’t pass it on two tries with support in the meantime to help them pass it, and we lost a significant number of teachers. That was probably 4 or 5% at the time. I suspect that every one of them had voted for me. Well, when you lose your job, you’re looking for what caused this and that was me. So, that made a big difference in the outcome of the next election, but it’s what we had bargained for with the Speaker of the House, he wanted to make sure that we weren’t just paying bad teachers more money, so we had a huge house-cleaning on teachers; sad deal, hurt a lot of people. The

other big problem, of course was No Pass, No Play. Well, having come from Houston- and I don't think Houston has ever had a high school football coach fired because they lost a game- but when you go to Corsicana, if your team- if the Corsicana Tigers are not winning their football games against Mexia and Waxahachie and 2 or 3 others, then that coach is going to get fired. He'll be back in the classroom before you know it. So, I had imperiled all these football coaches- or at least they gave me the blame for it- the coach at Austin High School though, where my children were going, he figured it out. Sadly, he may have been the only one that figured it out, but I said to him just before No Pass, No Play came into effect, which was the six weeks- at the six weeks testing period, if you didn't make a C or better, the kid had to sit out for the next six weeks. Well, that cleared him out of the football program. That second six weeks he was out for the more important end-of-the-season games. I asked the coach at Austin High, "What impact is this going to have on your football team, coach?" He turned to me and he says, "Governor, it won't matter to me at all. Right now, we're 0-5, we haven't won a game. No Pass, No Play isn't going to make any difference. It might even help me because it will knock some players off of some of these other teams, otherwise we'd lose by more." So, most coaches had forgotten they either- you know, a few ties-but you either win or lose every game. So, those that are losing, it really helped them; those that are winning, it had the potential to hurt them. Or it could make them even better, if that guy down the highway, he lost two of his players and we didn't lose any of ours. What I was trying to do is exactly what the coach does with his football players: practice, practice, practice. Go back and get it right. If they're not doing it right, go back and show them how to do it; get it right, practice, practice. All we were trying to do, was get these kids that weren't passing- "Well, my gosh, coach, don't you think your kids ought to know how to count past 'Hut, 2, 3, 4?'" Hut's not the first integer. So let's see if- No, I didn't do a

good enough job selling that one.

NY: Yep, yep, but one of the problems you were trying to deal with average SAT scores for Texas high school students versus the rest of the nation, correct?

MW: That's correct. They had been falling. SAT scores has been falling on a consistent basis for years. Other schools around the country were trying to improve theirs. One year after we changed House Bill 72 and implemented it- 'cause it had impacts all the way up through high school graduation- we started seeing more kids taking the SAT which would generally dilute your averages because the last one to decide to take it is probably not the A-student that's really intent on going to college. So, we had more students taking the SAT scores and I think we had a 10 or 12-point increase in one year. That's dramatic.

NY: Mhm, mhm, mhm, it really is, it really is. And then it gives the kid an option to go to college. "Oh, I did well on this, I guess I can do it after all."

MW: Yeah. All we're trying to do is get these kids prepared to take advantage of their own talents. Obviously, you can't make a scientist out of me, no matter how you train it, but you can make them do something else. And it was well-said the other night that we- the nation is not sitting here saying that everybody's got to go to college, my gosh. Have you ever had your electricity go off on the Fourth of July? Who are you looking for? You're not looking for a lawyer. You're looking for where is the electrician. And how much you going to pay him? You don't even ask! So, come on, let's get out here and help these people. You see somebody without a job, you know what you probably have? Someone without any training. So, let's get the training programs and Bill Hobby was good about understanding that. That's one of the incredible features that Bill Hobby brought to bear in Texas. He understood that if you don't start

off on the right foot, you don't end up on the right foot. He understood that if you ignore these problems, they're not going away. He understood that when you have increasing populations of young students coming in here with another language than English that we've got to do something to bring them into an English understanding and he helped pass the bill that did that; took the lead on it, in fact. As a result, we're starting to see more Hispanics doing better as they graduate. We need to do more. Bill Hobby would have.

NY: Mhm, sure, sure, sure. Let me get your thoughts- one last question on education- let me get your thoughts on the direction education reform has taken since you left office and since Governor Hobby left office and that's the increasing testing of students and the standardized testing of students? We're on the S.T.A.R. test now after having been through several other acronym tests in the state of-

MW: Well, we've gotten to a point where we think a test is the last word in how to assess someone's talents or their ability to learn, and that's just not true. We do need some tests, there's no question about it. I took tests; I didn't like it, but we took them. I thought I made all A's but I looked at some records here the other day and I didn't quite get there. But there's some minimum things you have to do. I mean, it doesn't matter what anybody says, you've got to teach these young people how to read. If they can't read, you just, you know, you've condemned them to a life of inadequacy and inability to be anything except depending on someone else, even government. So, are we teaching them to read? No, Not as well as we should be. Many of our young people can't read. Well, how can they pass the test? You say, "Oh, my God, we've got to ease up on these tests." Well, it's not- you could put the test down as easy as you can make it, if people can't read, they're not going to pass the test. So, let's go fix that first and that's something

that desperately needs to be done. That's something that happened since Bill Hobby left office;

it's gotten worse, not better because everybody's sitting over here trying to do gimmicks with

tests. You don't need a gimmicky test; just go in here and do the blocking and tackling. This is

not complicated work. It *is* more complicated today because of the influx of more people into

this country, in particularly Texas, who come from places of a different language than English.

But, my gosh, look at the performance we get out of those young people, particularly many of

the people from the Far East, the Middle East. They come in here- boy, they are eager to learn.

And then you have parents that are also oriented towards education. The Hispanic community

had a wonderful opportunity and something we pressed for- or tried to before it was socially

acceptable- and that is, let's don't graduate every kid in Texas with the ability to speak English.

What's wrong with graduating them with the ability to speak English *and* Spanish. I mean, we're

one of the few countries that are so arrogant that we won't even learn the language of our

neighbors. You go to Luxembourg and I've got a friend from there that speaks five languages.

My gosh, I didn't even know there was five languages over there. That's the mark of a real well-

educated person. We're crazy in this state not to take advantage of this Hispanic population

that's already functional in Spanish. Let's make our whole state functional in Spanish, but

absolutely functional in English; that's critical. If we don't keep our common language- and

that's the only one we have that you can say is a common language. I mean, every air controller

in the world speaks English. So, what we're trying to do is add-on; be additive to this educational

process. No excuses for not learning English, *none!* No excuses. And those young people pick up

languages so quickly. Elementary schools- that I fortunately had one named for me; I guess that

was about my highest level of academic achievement- it's going to be French. They're going to

be teaching French. We have others here in Houston; Mandarin Chinese. This is incredible. We

don't know even what we should be asking our young people to do but, boy, you ask these first,

second, third, fourth graders to speak another language, they'll do it at the drop of a hat. You ask me to do it... you know... "adios," that's about it. I didn't get the opportunity to learn that.

Spanish was a- I took Latin which is really not very helpful in most places; maybe in law school, of course. These are opportunities that we are missing today. Bill Hobby would not, today, have let that opportunity get away.

NY: Correct, correct, correct. Well, I want to change gears and talk to you about another policy area that you had to contend with. You had the great misfortune to be governor during the oil crash of the early '80s, and the crash it did. Talk to me a little bit- Talk to us a little bit about the effect of the oil crash on state politics and state budgets.

MW: Well, when I took office in '83, we were seeing the beginning of a drop in oil prices and a drop in revenues for the state. When I took office, 22 or 3% of all the revenues in Texas came from the oil and gas industry. When I left office, for a variety of two reasons- one of them is price of oil went down, and we increased taxes in other areas- that the oil revenues four years later represented about 9% of the total budget of Texas. Well, we had to raise taxes and, literally, almost every tax got raised a little bit. Not enough to really notice it except on the car tags. That was a big mistake politically. Car tags are about the only thing you write a check for in Texas to pay your taxes. Rest of it is sales tax, your other taxes on your gasoline goes into the gasoline bill, sales tax on your bill along with the products you buy. And, as a result, when we doubled, from 25 to 50 I believe it was on the car tags, wow! And then we did something really smart. The assessor collectors who were all my friends had told me, "Good gosh, when you do all the car tags issued on January in one month, it's a heck of a burden. We have to staff up for it. Would

you just spread it out over the whole year?" Makes a world of sense; politically, it's devastating.

What happened is, we spread it out so a twelfth of all the car tags expire each month. Well, in that month in which they expired, you go down and get you a new car tag and- oh my gosh- you look down and it's doubled. Last year- lookit here- my check says it was \$25, this year it's 50! Well, that made a twelfth of the car tag buyers mad every month and, so, when you have a twelfth of the population and a new twelfth and a new twelfth and a new twelfth getting mad every month, it kind of has an accumulative effect, all of which bore down more heavily on me for being so smart. Helping my assessor collectors was one of the dumber things I did. And so, the other thing we saw was that by virtue of having to make a combination of raising other taxes and essentially, in order to maintain services- you know, we could have said, "No taxes, to heck with it. We're not going to raise taxes." It wasn't easy because a lot of people were saying, "Oh, no, don't you dare raise our taxes." Well, we raised such a small percentage on sales tax, a small, little here, little there on fees that nobody really felt it, as I said, except for that guy right now at the car tag. As a result of that, when the oil price went back up, my gosh, everybody popped up with a lot of money, my goodness, lookit here. And of course, they didn't say, "Oh, thank you, Mark for having raised those taxes which brought in all this revenue." That's long forgotten.

That was a huge issue and it also created a significant amount of unemployment, and the governor- well, you've seen here recently Governor Perry talking about the "Texas Miracle" and taking credit for it. I guess the main credit he should take for it is that he was here when we had \$100 oil. You talk about a miracle, if we had had \$100 oil when I was in office, they still couldn't have spent all that money. When I started, it was \$28 a barrel, it went to \$9. Had it gone to \$100, it would have been another miracle, wouldn't it?

NY: Mhm, it would have been.

MW: Yeah.

NY: It would have been.

MW: Yeah. So, all of those things had big impacts on the state, but we tried to diversify our economy, we made big investments because of Bill Hobby in research. One of the first things I did in office was to- MCC, the Microelectronics and Computer Technology Corporation I believe it was, led by Bobby Inman, was trying to find a place to locate and they were looking at the research triangle in North Carolina, San Diego, and Austin, Texas. Well, one of the first things we did is I asked Bill Hobby over and Speaker Lewis, and we sat down and talked what can we do to attract this enterprise which we think is foundational to a whole new industry for Texans. This is almost like, oh, we discovered oil, this is kind of the Santa Rita number one for the University of Texas. High-tech was kind of the new oil field for Texas. Bill Hobby couldn't have been more helpful. He was forcefully moving to help finance the needed changes that had occurred in order to successfully attract them to Texas. We got the job, we did it, we were the envy of the nation, and now they call it "Silicon Gulch" in Austin, all that high-tech industry that's been attracted to Austin, some and tech, on and on and on. Some had huge successes, not all were, but it made a change in the whole economy of that part of our state and is a roadmap today for what other communities should and are doing. You're seeing Waco starting to invest in research at Baylor University, you're seeing all of what's developed at San Antonio, what a great educational investment has been made there. Bill Hobby was one of the originators of UT – San Antonio and all the work that was done there. You see right here at the University of Houston campus, you have leadership of your president, now a tier one institution- research institution. You can't do this by brute force, you have to have funds to go along with it to support the

program. Bill Hobby was a great visionary because he understood the basic changes that needed to be made to broaden the economy in Texas and the need for money to get the job done; he did both.

NY: Mhm, mhm, mhm, I think that's very correct. Would UT have its new medical school in Austin without this initiative from the 80s would Michael Dell have-

MW: Probably not. You know, it's hard for a man to give millions and millions of dollars if he doesn't have it.

NY: That's true.

MW: If I had it, I'd have done the same thing but didn't have it. How did he get it? Well, he started off in the garage doing something nobody had thought of at that time and started making his own computers and selling them out of the garage and made hundred of millions- billions of dollars for people. That's the innovation, that's the entrepreneurship that you want to attract to your state, and so this is one of those things that one hand kind of washes the other. If you make the investment in education, you're going to develop these young minds and you don't know what they're going to do. But I can tell you this, if you don't develop them, I'll tell you what they won't do: they won't be contributing \$50 million to University of Texas because they won't have made the money. They won't have the opportunity to contribute to the state or to their society or their city, family, whatever if you don't get that education. Sure, you could find people with no education that made a lot of money. A lot of those made it in the oil business and sometimes they forget that it was more fortuity than it was intellect that got them there. Not to say anything bad about them; that's good! What we're blessed by is people who did find it, went ahead and made contributions to the betterment and the future of the state. You can look at our

friend over here that started the research center up in The Woodlands. I'm trying to capture his name in the oil business, just passed away; Mitchell!

NY: Yes, yes, yes!

MW: George Mitchell. This guy was a graduate of Texas A&M, and they ought to change the name of the school for all the things this guy did. Now, I know we got Democrats out here saying we ought to stop fracking, but the fracking that he developed almost single-handedly is what brought about this glut in the oil and gas resources that we have which has changed our relationship with the rest of the world in which we are no longer as heavily dependent upon foreign oil. You don't stop fracking; you just make certain that it's done properly. There's no reason to stop it; that's too often an overreaction. We can show how it can be done, and George Mitchell is one of those people. I doubt that he would have been able to do that if he hadn't had been a graduate of A&M. That's the majesty of the free enterprise system, but you know what? That free enterprise system went to a state-owned school.

NY: And that's important.

MW: And Bill Hobby helped make certain even in the tough times that Texas higher education would be funded. I'll never forget a meeting at the Governor's mansion with Bill in which we were trying to put a little money together for some research program, and Bill, as much as he loved Rice University where he had attended, he loved the University of Houston. Somewhere in his majesty, he found \$50 million, as I recall, for a research program here at the University of Houston back when oil was running at \$9 a barrel. I've always suspected that Bill Hobby had a private source of funds that he didn't let anybody know about in the state government that he could pull out for his personal enterprises that he thought were important. Well, thank goodness

if he did it, and I'm glad he did it.

NY: Sure, sure, sure. I would agree with that. Let's move on and talk about a different natural resource problem in Texas, one that's not just limited to your years as governor, but is a perennial challenge and that's water resources.

MW: Well, this is another example where you're looking for George Mitchell. This is the sort of guy that we need right now- or gal for that matter. We have women that are equally talented and well-educated. We have vast water resources; that saline out in west Texas. So you need desalinization, that ought to be one of the top priorities right now, is to develop an economically viable desalinization technique that can take that salt water that's now of no use to us- except for maybe some re-injection effort on a fracking well- but could be put to a much higher-valued use if we could just get the salt out of it. Also, it would have impacts along the Gulf Coast where we have a vast array of salt water available. It would be nice if it were just potable. Then we've seen what happens in a drought and we're subject to the drought-flood problem here. Right now, we've got more water than we know what to do with up the Colorado River, up the Trinity River, up the Brazos River. I think every reservoir is at or near maximum. When I was in office, there had been an effort at the Upper Colorado River Authority to build a dam upstream on the Colorado. The Lower Colorado River Authority had fought it forever and were stronger politically and thus were successful in stopping the dam being built. I, of course, having tried to understand the problem, brought in those people from west Texas to meet with the LCRA people who had been blocking it, and put them in a little office outside my main office and said, "Don't come out of here until you get you a deal." Now, I didn't tell them what the deal was. It was too complicated for a one-day study on the part of the governor to figure out what's going to happen.

In any event, I had forgotten about them. I had them locked up and I don't know if we even fed them or gave them anything to drink. Before the day was out, they came up with a compromise that worked into what's now a dam out in west Texas that, because of this most recent drought, it supplied drinking water for five cities in west Texas that otherwise would have been in a much more emergency situation. We have all the water we need in Texas in the foreseeable future, but it's all in east Texas. And so here's an overview of it: the people in east Texas have been drilling for oil and selling the oil, much to their advantage and much to the richness of that area, both personal riches as well as the local riches from oil revenues that flow through property values all across east Texas. The word is, "Don't you come over here stealing our water." Well, we're not going to steal your water. Someone in a leadership position has to come up and, "Look, we're going to treat water similar to oil and gas. We're going to pay you for it and you're going to get rich beyond your dreams because we're going to take that water, which can be easily transferred by a canal along the Gulf Coast, and you can start dropping it off where you need it for the rice farmers, for the cities, for the rice farmers, and for San Antonio." And then you can tell San Antonio, "Hey, quit drilling for groundwater and sucking all of the water out of what's known as the 'winter garden.'" And when you dry up the "winter garden," you're drying up a huge agricultural industry that supplies enormous amounts of value in the vegetable produce world. So, if we handle this properly, with strong leadership at the top, with the understanding that those people are not going to be- that their water will not be stolen, they're going to be highly paid for it such that they will be able to see a Lamar University with more money than they've ever had at Lamar University. They'll be able to see the port in Beaumont and Port Arthur have the resources they need to develop their port facilities. They'll have- because that water comes from Naches River, Sabine River, and some others- that you will see all those communities revive

themselves because of the new revenues coming into the community, they'll be able to improve facilities; better schools, all these assets will be improved. And we will also conserve water-much of that water goes into the Gulf; it's just going into the Gulf, it's kind of like *whoosh*, there it went. It's like pouring oil on the ground, you don't want to do that, but you need sufficient fresh water flows to keep our bays viable for their ecological life. But when you start moving this water across there, it leaves water upstream that will be available for Austin because they don't have to commit it to the rice farmers downstream. So, you get to hold this water back here while you bring this other water from east Texas across to San Antonio, essentially. That solves the problem of the "winter garden," you make a lot of people rich in east Texas, a lot of communities rich in east Texas, and you save communities all across Texas and keep them viable. It seems pretty simple, doesn't it?

NY: It does seem pretty simple.

MW: Except it's complicated. You've got to get those people who think you're stealing their water to show them how much money they're going to make by selling their water.

NY: And then the economic development just from the infrastructure project building the-

MW: Oh, yeah. It's several billions of dollars to build a canal and this can be artfully done in ecologically sound ways. You don't destroy your economy or you don't destroy your ecology with it.

NY: Well, and this isn't even necessarily a new idea. I recall talk back in the early 1970s to turn the Trinity River into a canal from-

MW: Yeah, well that's a good thing they didn't do that. Dallas has been wanting to make the

Trinity River into a canal and the one thing they wanted, they never got; the one thing they didn't want, they got. It's called "DFW airport." Nothing has been a bigger economic boon to north Texas than the DFW airport. And Dallas fought it tooth-and-nail for years. Sometimes our leaders don't know where their best advantage lies, but the jealousy they have between Dallas and Fort Worth, my God! What do you mean, "us versus them," it's "we!" Time to use *that* word: "we." And look how much better *we* are in Texas and, particularly, Dallas and Fort Worth, by saying "we can do this."

NY: Yeah, we just recently got over some of the legislative problems that grew out of the construction of DFW. We can finally get on a flight out of Dallas – Southwest, and go a little bit farther than one state over, which is-

MW: Right. That was the compromise that got the deal done, the Wright Amendment.

NY: Sure, sure. Okay, some other crises and problems during your administration; talk to me about the savings and loan crisis and changes in banking, more generally.

MW: Well, that took place late in- well... I'll never forget a group of the bankers. The biggest bankers in Texas came in to see me one day, and they were saying, "We have to have interstate banking so we can go out and acquire these other banks around the country and we can grow." So, we wound up getting them the ability to go buy other banks. Well, it worked in reverse. When the decline hit Texas- oil prices down, everything down- then that let other states come in and buy our banks, which saved them, saved those banks. Otherwise, they'd just shut down. So, another thing's on your credit card. And this is something that, because of federal regulation, the big banks and the big credit card issuers got into the comptroller's office, I guess, in the U.S. and got them to issue some rulings which overruled all state law on credit card interest rates. They

were having trouble because if you remember, interest rates were going through the roof. I mean,

we got as high as 20%, and that's something the governor can't do anything about, but they were saying, "You've got this lid on the price of interest that we can charge on these credit cards and we're going broke!" "What do you need," I just asked them. "What's the spread you need between what money's costing you and what you can lend it on a credit card? How much spread do you need?" They all came back; two points. And I said, "Okay, that's what we'll give you."

The legislature did this. Bill Hobby's leadership made it possible where every six months, we would adjust the interest rate level to account for whether it went up or down, and the bank credit cards got a two-point spread which is what they needed to make money. That's what they said; I didn't tell them, they told me! And we didn't argue with them, we didn't know what it was. I just said, "Sounds reasonable to me." So, as a result of that, Texas consumers were protected no matter which way the interest rates, LIBOR in this case, went. If it went up, the credit card people could still loan you money because it had jumped up to stay 2 points ahead. If it went down instead of staying up here when interest rates are here, it went back down, so the consumer was protected on a down market. So, that's one of the things we did. Here's a great difference.

The evils of our government and the way they dealt with the savings and loan industry in Texas was horrific. It was the greatest transfer of wealth out of Texas to New York and other places of any time in the history of the state. They let savings and loans go broke; sure, there were abuses. Don't get me wrong, there were abuses and there are things that can be changed through regulation and oversight and going in and maybe have a temporary receivership for a bank or a facility or savings and loan, and work through the problems. They didn't do that. They said, "Let's mark everything to market." So, if you loaned money when the price of oil was \$25 a barrel on values then, and 2 years later they mark it to \$9, all they want is, every loan you have is

upside-down. And then they said, "Okay, you're upside-down, we're closing you down. And we're going to sell all your assets - oh! - to New York." All the investors in Wall Street got to buy Texas on the cheap. Now, let's look at how the federal government reacted at the end of the Bush and the beginning of the Obama administration. They didn't close any- oh, one; I think one major bank- and the rest of them all survived, all making money. They all got bailed out. Everything was taken care of and they just acted like that's the way we're supposed to do things. They didn't do that for Texas, they dropped Texas in the grease. I tried to holler and scream about it. I was out of office, and then hollering and screaming, "Quit," because the other guy was one of them.

NY: Yep, yep, yep, yep, that's correct. Okay, I've asked you about problems during your administration. I've got a couple more of those, but I'm going to change to a happier thing toward the end of your administration, that's the celebration of the Texas sesquicentennial, and you had a bit to do with some of the festivities associated with that. Talk a little bit about Texas pride.

MW: Well, the sesquicentennial was an opportunity to celebrate our founding and all the things that happened even starting earlier, that led up to the revolution here in Texas. And it was a great thrill to get communities all across Texas to have their own local celebrations, and part of this was a great time for education, for young people to get to know how Texas came to be, the reasons for it, the uniqueness or the exceptionalism of Texas. The sesquicentennial, of course, we had a great celebration out here at the San Jacinto Monument. At that time, Vice President Bush came down and announced the creation of a new aircraft carrier, of course, the U.S.S. San Jacinto. We had a great celebration that day, April the 21st. Barbara Jordan gave a fantastic

speech. I'll never forget, as only her voice out there on that prairie, late in the afternoon around 3 o'clock, which was when the battle took place. She was at the microphone- of course, she was in a wheelchair- and they brought the microphone to her, and she waited, as good speakers are prone to do, until everything got quiet. And I don't mean "quiet," I mean you could hear the birds chirp. And in that booming voice of hers, she comes out: "Freedom! Freedom! Freedom!" That's what it was all about. Woo! You can just feel it was almost like a cannon shot. And then she gave a speech about freedom and who can better give a speech about freedom than an African-American woman who has not only the intellect and the voice and the history to talk more about freedom than any of us. And she made a brilliant speech, one I'll never forget. Another thing that I'll never forget, we had the Houston Symphony out there as part of the musical extravaganza, and we also had Willie Nelson, and so I was seated in such a place where I could look at Willie Nelson there, and I could see the string section of the Houston Symphony here. And Willie Nelson was up there humming and strumming and carrying on and singing good songs and we're all enjoying it, and the people over in the string section were laughing at his work on the guitar. They were having a great thrill watching him play the guitar and I'm sure they were getting some serious criticism about his musical talents, but he stole the show. Barbara Jordan and Willie Nelson stole the show.

NY: Sure, sure, sure. That is not hard to imagine. An issue- I guess I'll put it that way, try to use more neutral phrasing- issue in Texas politics in the 70s and 80s and on has been the challenge of "federal intervention in state affairs," and we see that in several different policy (unknown). We see it in redistricting, we see it in education, we see it in prison policy, we see it in the welfare state more generally, we see it in, as President Eisenhower termed it, the military-industrial complex and others have come along and inserted education in there, "military-

industrial-education complex,” OSHA, EPA, et cetera. I’m thinking, in particular, of two federal court cases that bedeviled Texas politics for quite some time: The Ruiz v. Estelle case and the Edgewood v. Kirby case, the (unknown) in the matter with school funding.

MW: Let me talk first about OSHA case.

NY: Okay.

MW: Worker safety.

NY: Sure.

MW: We used to have a lot of cave-in deaths here in Texas. Back when I was governor that was happening and it had been happening for a long time. Took about 15 minutes to figure out what needs to be done. It took a little longer to get it done. But that is, if you go in there and require anybody that’s digging a hole over a certain depth to put in steel shoring, you don’t have cave-in no deaths. Simple as that. And we got that done in a rather brief period of time, and as a result, we went without any cave-in deaths, particularly if they happened to follow the rules and provide that sort of protection for the workers. Now, that’s back to Ruiz versus Estelle. Texas prison system was being criticized being unconstitutionally cruel, harsh, blah blah blah, and as attorney general- started in ’72 as I recall- so, John Hill assembled a group of lawyers on his staff, and let me say on John Hill’s behalf, he probably pulled together more talented lawyers during his administration as attorney general then any time in the history of Texas, with the possible exception of when they only had one or two lawyers over there. But he did a marvelous job of assembling great legal talent, and when I became attorney general, I kept all those people that I could, many of whom were on the Ruiz task force. So, that same legal talent was there under John and under my administration. The Ruiz case finally boiled down to how we were

treating prisoners. In many ways, we were doing a good job. We had very few deaths and one of

the arguments I made when I was arguing as attorney general before the 5th circuit was that I can't tell how many brutal incidents have occurred in Texas prisons where a prison guard beat up a prisoner or one prisoner beat up another prisoner or group of prisoners. I can't tell you about that. All I can tell you for certain is how many died, and we had fewer deaths in the Texas prison system early in my administration as attorney general than any other state in the nation. So in the sense of life or death, it was fairly good. It still wasn't good from a brutality point-of-view because we came to find out- because as a lawyer you want to know the facts- that we were doing things we shouldn't be doing and we did not correct them upon being aware of the problems. I did not believe it when they told me that they appointed a master, a special master, in the case that was going to come in and essentially tell us what to do, that I would ever like him. He said, "You may not like me, but the prison people will love me." And I said, "I doubt that." I was wrong, he was right. What happened is, the special master came in and started ordering all these changes that the prison people could never get the legislature to do, and so essentially the legislature had to appropriate money to pay for the changes that had been ordered by the special master operating under the district court in Tyler. So, many of those changes were long needed, should have been done but weren't because who in the heck gives a damn about prisoners? It's just the last ones you're sympathetic towards. So, anyway, I was having trouble as attorney general- this is one of the great conflicts I had with my governor Clements. They were criticizing me, it's the middle of the campaign, I was running for governor, Clements was over here saying I'm an incompetent attorney general, horrible attorney general, awful job, terrible terrible, and of course he had appointed all the board members over at the prison board. And so, they were just singing his song. "Oh, this attorney general is not representing us well, he's not doing a good

job." Well, this is not the best way to get elected governor, is based on how bad you were as

attorney general. So, I went over and met with the prison board and after our meeting I said,

"Let's go walk through one of the things" they were criticizing us for in the court was dirty

medical facilities; dirty. And I said, "Let's go walk through your clinic over here at the Wallace

Unit." The Wallace Unit is one of the oldest units there. As you walk in, you got these beautiful

brass bars; I mean, they are glowingly clean, shiny bars. Look like someone when I was a private

in the army shining my brass; belt buckle-shiny, bars are shiny. So, we walk through the bars and

all that shine- guy was out there shining the bars- walked through, went over to the facility where

the hospital was in the Wallace Unit, went upstairs about five floors. I observed all the dirt under

the beds; all the lint and dust and everything. I said, "Well, why don't you get this done, clean

this up?" They said, "Well, we don't have the personnel." I said, "You don't *what*!? Have the

personnel!? You got all these prisoners over here, what more do you need? Get the mops out and

get to mopping!" Next thing you know, they're mopping up the floors. And then I have this

observation; nobody ever knew this: as we were walking up, there is an emergency fire escape

outside the building that attaches- you know, you've seen them- and so, I'm up on the inside of

the building, there's the emergency exit. It had these push bars, you know that go like this. These

were a little different; they had a chain and a lock on them, so you couldn't get out the

emergency exit. I said, "What is that chain?" "Well, that's for security." I said, "Yeah, and how

do you get out of here when the fire starts?" "Well, we'll unlock the door." I said, "Okay, where

are the keys? Let's unlock the door." And I've got the head of the prison system, the warden of

the prison, I've got the chairman of the board of the prison board, I've got all of the member

sitting there. I said, "Let's just see how long it takes." Took over 20 minutes to find the key to

unlock the door; everybody's dead. I said, "Now, you telling me I'm your bad lawyer (?), I'm

telling you better fix this before you really get in trouble." You got dirty floors- this was fun; this

was really fun. I didn't say, fully, what I wanted to say, "Hey, you dumb (unknown), you get somebody over here, you talking about me not being able to represent you well. We're fighting them over dirty floors in the prison, not dirty bars in the prison. You get the S.O.B. who is shining those bars to get his butt over and shine those floors. And when you get those floors shined, we're going to win the lawsuit." And that's what we did.

NY: Sure, sure.

MW: I mean, this stuff- you want to play politics? All right, pal, here we come.

NY: Mhm, mhm, mhm.

MW: And that's the reason that it was a fulfilling moment in my decision to run for governor. That was what we were up against.

NY: Sure, sure, sure, sure.

MW: The other one you want to talk about, though?

NY: The other one, the Edgewood v. Kirby case, the school...

MW: We essentially- and let me say the attorney generals that have followed me have not done as good as I would have hoped they would have done. One of the things in Edgewood, they kept saying, "We are desperately- desperate... disparate funding between the rich districts and the poor." My position was, legally, I don't care how rich you are but the poor districts have to get up to a level of quality that is going to be giving this child as good a quality education as that one over there at Hyland Park. Because, you know, some of those things they do to use those rich funds, you might have noticed their cost \$60 million stadiums. Well, you know, you don't need a

\$60 million stadium to educate a kid in any school in Texas. Now, if those people up there want a \$60 million stadium, let them take it out of their pocket, and let them pay more taxes over and above what the state's funding for this minimum educational quality- minimum in the sense that it meets constitutional standards. My standard was simply this: when I became governor, my daughter went to school at De Zavala Elementary School. All my kids went to the public schools closest to the governor's mansion. De Zavala was overwhelmingly Hispanic, secondarily it was African-American, and thirdly was Anglo. She would go over and spend, you know, sleepovers at some of her classroom friends' houses that would- our security was very nervous. My wife and I weren't nervous because we knew the people.

NY: Right.

MW: They were good people. They weren't rich, but they were good people. Anyway, so Edgewood has been always a fight about taking from the rich and giving to the poor. I've always been of a view that we don't- you don't have to pull the rich people down, you just lift the poor people up. And soon you'll have even more rich people, because if you do it right, you're not going to under-educate anybody. But I wasn't able to do that work after others came along and so that argument kind of fell on deaf ears. But the one thing that it's sad to have to see happen is- and that's the other thing; House Bill 72 provided the funding which bought us a lot of time as far the inequality in the funding of schools. We aren't doing it right now. We've got kids out here- we have children in the Houston school district that don't have nurses, they don't have libraries, they don't have the assistance or the support they need at these schools. That's pretty simple stuff; it's called "money." And then you have another competing factor over at charter schools, and some of these guys come in and say, "Oh, we can do a better job than you can." Let

me tell you, when you show up at a charter school and they show up with all these kids that are mentally retarded, kids that have physical disabilities, they don't go over to the biggest, best charter school in town. No, they get to kind of cream the crop, and the difficulty is for a public school has to meet all these obligations without any exceptions with less money than what is required. So, those are two issues our prison system today probably is not as productive and gang-free is could and should be, because most of our prison administrators have gotten away from the business of everybody here that's able has a job to do and we're going to work. So, at the end of the day, when a guy's been out the working hard labor, he comes home, he's not looking for a fight. It's the ones that start the fights and get into all the gangs is the ones who have a lot of idle time on their hands, and the strongest men in Texas are probably sitting around our prison system right now because they sit out there in the gym all day and workout. Well, let me say, now you can go have you a gym but if you're doing your job right, they're going to have plenty of meaningful work to do, both educational work- and let me say, the Windham school system was designed by a guy who served on that board and they named the school system after him- that we, years ago started trying to educate these people coming into school. We still don't do as well as we should. We don't do as well as we should for those who didn't commit crimes, so it's hard to get money for those who did just because, my God, why are we doing that for the crime problem as opposed to the ones who didn't commit crimes. It's pretty simple stuff, it's called "money," and if you don't have sufficient money, it's hard to make this work. If you do have sufficient money and proper leadership, it will work and work very well. And really what you're doing, you're going to be paying for prisons; do you want to have a good one or bad one? Good one may cost a little more, but you're going to get the long-run advantage of having a – and this is one thing I did that made a huge difference. I was upset because the minute we were

overcrowding prisons... Well, you know, the governor doesn't build prisons, the legislature does. And so we hadn't built enough prisons, they had passed all these tough laws to bring more prisoners in, but no place to put them and so we were seeing them go out and then come right back. The recidivism rate was horrible. And so, you would let them out one day and a month later, they're back in the prison. I sat down with several people and we- first of all, I called in the Texas Employment Commission is what it was called then, Workforce Commission today- I said, "I want you to find jobs for every-" and this was when we had high unemployment and \$9 oil- "I want you to find jobs for every one of these prisoners before they leave the prison, so the first day they get home, they have a job to go to." "Oh, we can't do that! We can't do that, we don't have any money." I said, "Why don't I do this?" I said, "I'll just get that prison chain bus and we'll just pull it up over there about two blocks from the governor's mansion and it will unload them right there where everybody else is standing in line looking for a job. How are you going to handle that?" "Oh, governor, don't do that!" I said, "Well, how much money do you need to do what we're asking," and they wanted a half a million dollars. We got it for them; I had a little fund over here like Hobby did. And so, we got the money for them and started a program finding jobs for these people for when they got out of prison. Our recidivism rate among those people that had jobs went from about 50% down to about 5%. That's the difference between having thoughtful leadership and just leadership that just says, "That's not my job." That's what the worker's comp people- err, the Workforce Commission said, essentially. But there's one other component here that's very important. Carol Vance, who had been the district attorney here in Harris County for years and years, has a couple of prisons named for him down here south of town, in Brazoria County I believe or Fort Bend. Carol Vance instituted some spiritual change groups in which people who volunteered to go to these meetings- they had, I think primarily-

well, I'm sure they were all Christian- ministers there to minister these people about life

changing spiritual changes in their life that would make a difference when they got out of prison.

And all those people volunteered to do it, it was all done and then when you combine the spiritual change and a job, you never see them again. It's over. They're not coming back to prison. And we need to do more of that. That's very cheap; *very* cheap. But, until you- You know, when I left office and Bill Clement took over, everything I did, he changed the name of it or tried to abolish it. Well, this was such a good program, all he did was change the name. And so he made it something- I don't remember what he called it- but the main thrust of it is, it is a wonderful program, it should be done. You ought not to let them out until they have a job.

NY: Yep, yep, yep. So, talk to me about your rematch with Clements in 1986, the one that didn't work out quite so well.

MW: Well, when he announced he was running for governor- I think it was probably January of '86- the polling for me versus him, I was like 25 points behind. He was so far ahead that he didn't dare brag about it, because he had bragged about it the time before, that he was ahead when we beat him. We were so far behind, I dang sure didn't say anything about it because I wasn't going to admit how awful a shape we were in. So anyway, over the course of the campaign, we narrowed and narrowed and narrowed the margins down to, I don't know, 3 or 4 points, and he ran an ad- and a very effective ad- about me raising taxes, raising taxes and showed every tax I raised. And he wasn't inaccurate about it, but the impact of it was, "My God, this guy's just... the governor down here just spending his way and us into oblivion." Well, turns out that we didn't raise taxes any more than absolutely necessary and when he said- *promised!* "I'll not raise your taxes!" Well, within 90 days of having taken office, he signed the biggest tax

bill in the history of the state of Texas before that time and since that time. So, you know, if you

lie long enough, you can go a long way in this world. As the old story goes, that a lie will go around the world before the truth will get off the front porch. And that's kind of the way politics works. If you have enough money to lie about it, then you can have a good chance of being successful. Another point, he was independently wealthy, has his own money, he tried to buy the election in the first case to the point where I think he put a million dollars of his own money into the campaign in the last month. And he had to pretty much fully finance his campaign the second go around. If he had been in the same economic position as me; number one, he would have lost earlier and number two, he wouldn't have run at all because he didn't have the money. But this is where rich folks have a huge advantage.

NY: And gets to the issue of money in politics which is something that we're talking quite a bit about now in the 2016 presidential race.

MW: Well, this whole business of calling a corporation a person and, therefore, they have a right to contribute like any other citizen, that lawsuit is as close to the most destructive case in the history of Texas. History of the U.S.

NY: There's a magnet I bought at a bookstore in Austin a couple years ago that says, "I'll believe corporations are people as soon as Texas executes one."

MW: (laughs) That's great, that's great! The truth of the matter, Citizens United was a squirrely opinion. Corporations are a creature of the state. They have no soul. As the person said, we don't execute corporations. The fact is, we bail them out in many cases. For them to be able to put money into the political process takes the scales and just over-weights it for the person with the money. And you see it happen with the military-industrial complex that

President Eisenhower warned against, and today you see it with the whole business that people

are frustrated by of seeing Washington being run incompetently by people who are tasked with a big job, and yet they can't seemingly secure the border. Both parties, big problem: secure the border. Guess what? Neither party wants to secure the border. Under the Bush administration, the guy who is currently the governor of Arkansas, Asa Hutchinson, privately said, "We're not going to do anything that will impede the cheap labor coming into this country." So, what many people in this country don't realize is half of all the illegal immigration that's occurred in this current circumstance where we find ourselves today, half of them came in under Bush. The other half came in under Obama, and I presume some before that under Clinton. But there's been more deportations under Obama, there's been more resources deployed under Obama, there's been more effective securing of the border, but let me tell you: they haven't done half the job that me and two ranchers in south Texas could do. They don't talk to people down there to find out what needs to be done. They went and spent billions of dollars under the prior administration, Bush, under Boeing contact for the secure border initiative, wasted about \$3 billion. For \$3 billion, you can have a border patrolman standing every 75 feet from each other just, *whoops, nobody coming through here!* No bridge, no walls, no nothing, just standing shoulder-to-shoulder. It would look a little silly, but if you tell me what you want done, we can get it done. Americans can handle that. What they're having to digest now is this guy that says "I, I, I, I, I," and the word is "we, we, we, we," sadly.

NY: We'll see how that works out.

MW: We will, won't we?

NY: There might be an exodus from the country if it goes-

MW: I've heard some are looking for places to go.

NY: I've heard the same.

MW: I'm in Texas and I'm sticking.

NY: Let's talk a little bit about some other of those Texas politicians and I'll start out with the three from Texas that have gone on to be president of the United States. If I can get you to talk for just a few minutes about the impact of Lyndon Johnson and George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush on the state.

MW: Well, by any measure, Lyndon Johnson was the greatest president in the history of the United States if you'll look at his legislative accomplishments and the impact those accomplishments had on the U.S. then and the following years. Nobody can compare to Lyndon Johnson. Those favorable impacts are just simply unbelievable, but it was his pure political talent and vision; because almost all of the Great Society was Lyndon Johnson. What are we going to do about these poor kids down in south Texas speaking and look up in your face and they lose the joy of the future because they don't have one? That's Lyndon Johnson. He did that; brute force, main force. He took advantage of the horrific death of his predecessor in getting Civil Rights legislation passed. He did every political maneuver you can do to get that whole process passed. Thank goodness he did it. You still have Republicans fighting it every step of the way, and the longer it goes and the better the impacts are perceived, the more out of touch they become. I can't say- The Vietnam War was the thing that he was severely blamed and criticized for, but I think that it would be difficult for any American president to reverse positions at any stage during his time there and have done a reversal and say, "Hey, we're leaving." We saw the crookedness of Richard Nixon in delaying- I mean, this is the biggest son of all is what Richard

Nixon did in sending signals back to the North Vietnamese that if you wait for me, you'll get a better deal.

NY: During the 1968-

MW: Yep. It was awful. That is equal to and maybe greater than the sin of Watergate, but here we are. Lyndon Johnson, I heard at the convention, his name mentioned more at this convention than I have heard since he left office, and it was positive and favorable. As the time goes by, he will be a domestic leader unparalleled in the nation's history. Now, as far as the Bush family, I don't want to ever say that you're not a Texan if you aren't born here. The truth of the matter is, the greatest heroes in Texas history weren't born here. They came from South Carolina, and they came from all over Tennessee, Alabama, Virginia. They came and died a little early sometimes, became heroes. They both came from Connecticut, essentially, and came to Texas and made their way through Texas and built the Republican party in Texas, by and large. They're both fine people. I happen to disagree with the father on some of his issues as many people did, but by being disagreeable doesn't mean you have to be hateful. There's no finer person in what they've done post-service than the Bush- George H.W. Bush- family. Barbara, Barbara lives around the street from us. Linda Gale runs into her at the Walgreens. Funniest thing happened the other day. Barbara was there, Linda Gale was chatting with her and they were both going to get their prescriptions, and Linda Gale said, "No, Barbara, you go first," and the little girl behind the counter says, "What is your name?"

NY: Oh, no!

MW: And Barbara's response was, "Oh, my, I didn't have my pearls on today and nobody recognizes me," and Linda Gale just about died laughing, I think. But that shows the humanity

and humility of Barbara Bush. She can be a tough soldier, let me tell you. That's good. She's a wonderful asset for this country. Her husband, George the elder, wonderful asset. The younger Bush family, George W., I frankly am very fond of him. I think he's an enjoyable person to be with. We have many mutual friends. His wife- my gosh! You talk about fabulous, she is absolutely *fabulous*. She did a great job as First Lady, Barbara did as well, but I got to know Laura a little bit better, and she and Linda Gale are very good friends. Laura couldn't have been more helpful, more courteous. Any time we visited the White House, she treated us as though we were the only visitor they had ever had there. So, I have nothing but good words to say about it. I am very critical of the way in which the Iraq War played out. Had we listened to Jim Baker- and let me say, I know a little something about Jim Baker, we ran against each other for attorney general; you kind of get to know your opponent. Jim Baker, when we started our campaign for attorney general, he didn't know how to spell it. Well, maybe he did. He'd gone to Princeton. But he didn't know anything about the office and I did. I'd been an assistant attorney general; I knew a little bit about it. So, we get in a debate and I think I did the better part, and he's a good debater; went to Princeton. So, anyway, by the end of the campaign, hell, he knew everything I knew about the attorney general's office, maybe more. And I told my staff, "No more debates with Jim Baker! I mean, this guy, let's just stay away, let's just stay away. He's gotten good." So, this guy is really smart. Jim Baker was an advisor to George H.W. Bush and one of those I suspect had said, along with Colin Powell, that we've done what we promised to do to kick them out of Kuwait, now that's the end of the story. We've also killed a huge number of them, destroyed most of their effective army, and let's leave. They were criticized then for having left before they killed Saddam Hussein. Boy, were they smart. They knew because of past experience and daddy, George H.W. Bush, had been the head of the C.I.A., and he had a much deeper

knowledge than his son did about the workings of international relationships and how you have

two people you don't really like over in the Middle East, Iran and Iraq, and how you take this

leader away, this leader here comes over and starts to dominate the other country. We had

already see them in a fight, so my gosh. The advice that George W. Bush was inadequate to the

advice of his father. I give Jim Baker great credit for being the difference.

NY: Sure, sure. I think that's a very fair and prescient observation, the difference between the two Bush administrations. Governor White, I could go on and on and on asking you questions and listening to you regale me with stories of Texas politics and Texas politicians, but I think we had you booked for two hours and we are at the two-hour mark. Is there anything that you think that I should have asked you that I didn't that you would like to make up the question and answer it yourself now?

MW: Well, you talked about the changes in Texas demography and how it's changed politically from being an overwhelming Democratic state to a significantly overwhelming number of Republicans, but yeah we're not that far apart from having it come back to being Democratic. If you would look- of course, the last election was not a 20-point spread- but if you look at the leadership that we have to have in Texas in a campaign- this no comment about other quality of candidates; it's really the quality of their campaigns. If you have candidates who want to talk about an issue nobody wants to talk about, then you're probably going to lose. If you're talking about issues that we Democrats *should* be talking about and talking about how we can go back into rural Texas and help restore those communities and make the economically vibrant- remember what I said about the water plan and some other things that can be done- then people will vote for the Democrat. You don't have to wait for the demographic change that everybody's,

“Wait for the Hispanics to outnumber the Anglos and we’ll soon be Democrats forever.” Well, if you fumble around forever, Republicans will go over there and start converting some of these Hispanics to becoming Republicans. One of the problems we had was well-described up in east Texas by an old judge up there. When asked about this business of where did all the Democrats go, he said, “Oh, Mark, some of these old boys up here got them a riding lawn mower and a bass boat, and they think they’re Republicans.”

NY: (laughs)

MW: That’s it.

NY: That says it all.

MW: That sum it up?

NY: That sums it up.

MW: Good.



NY: Thank you very much, Governor, this has been delightful.

End of Interview