

**Oral History Interview of  
Selden Hale**

**Interviewed by: David Marshall  
July 17, 2012  
Amarillo, Texas**

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## Transcript Overview:

This interview is part two of a series featuring Selden Hale, former chairman of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice. In this interview Selden continues the discussion of his law career, and speaks about working with former Lieutenant Governor of Texas, Bob Bullock, and former Governor of Texas, Ann Richards.

**Length of Interview:** 00:56:22

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### Keywords

legal studies, lawyers, politics, Texas Democrats

**David Marshall (DM):**

The date is July 17, 2012 and this is David Marshall interviewing Selden Hale at his law office in Amarillo, Texas. And this is part two, we talked in January, and I want to fill in with some stories about your legal career and also your political career.

**Selden Hale (SH):**

Well I got out of the Marine Corps and went back to college a little while and decided I needed—I didn't know what I wanted to do. So I started writing for two or three months for the newspaper up in Spearman and I really liked it so I got them to give me a recommendation. I came to Amarillo in 1961, I think, it might have been a little bit later than that, and I worked for the *Globe News* as a police reporter and that was the most educational thing that ever happened to me when I did that. I learned about people and about politicians, greed and envy, and hatred. Amarillo was a segregated place

DM:

Human nature is what you learned.

SH:

Human nature. And I just enjoyed it and I worked hard. I went to work at two or three o'clock in the afternoon and sometimes I'd stay out all night. And I learned an awful lot about law enforcement and police. They had a pretty good Chief of Police named Wiley Alexander, and he was always trying to improve his police department, so one day he told me he was going to have this guy named Leo Robertson, who weapons trainer and expert from Dallas, come in and do a school for revolver shooting. He wanted me to take the school and write a story about it because he wanted the PR. So I did it and had a good time.

And from then on—I had been in the Marine Corps, but I never shot anything but a 1911 Colt so I started shooting revolvers and I liked it. But I met an awful lot of people, and so when I met my wife, my first wife named Juanita—she was Hispanic and it was just a, she was pretty. I met her and fell in love. She worked as a nurse in St. Anthony's Hospital and I met her when I was going up there to cover killings, and stabbings, and shootings. So we got married and lived for a while in a little apartment in North Amarillo. And I went back to college. I thought maybe I better get my degree and started back. It took me eight or nine years to get my degree. And the last semester that I was taking it I was down there I had an eight o'clock class and I was trying to get my brain working because I had been down there the night before working and I was drinking a cup of coffee and I looked at the bulletin board and they were going to have the LSAT test for admission to law school in Albuquerque.

So I thought that would be fun. So I talked the newspaper into sending me over there in the company car and paying for my way, and then I wrote stories over there and took the test and came back, and really didn't think too much about it. And then about two or three months later, it was in the middle of the winter, maybe January or something. I got this letter that had been

delayed in the mail, because I met my wife and married her and so we had changed addresses and I got this letter that said I had been accepted into St. Mary's Law School. And I didn't know much about St. Mary's, but I put it on the application for the test because you had to put some law school that you wanted the results sent to. I knew two lawyers here in Amarillo that had gone there, the Priola [?] boys, I used to drink beer with them and so I just put down St. Mary's Law School.

So I got this letter accepting me and I didn't know what to do. I thought, Maybe I ought to do that. But I had to be there in a week for late registration, so I went to Gruver and I asked my daddy and momma for advice of what I ought to do. And they were angry at me for marrying a Hispanic but they were starting to get over that. So my daddy, we talked for about an hour. He said, "Oh hell Selden, I think you ought to go to law school". My mother had a depressive mentality, she didn't think it was much of an idea to leave my job and go to work and try to be a lawyer. But Daddy pulled his pant legs up and counted off about three thousand dollars in hundred dollar bills (laughter) and I just got in the car and the next day or two went down there. We went through Paducah, where the Duke of Paducah, Bill Heatly[?] was, and he was in the legislature down there, and we stopped for breakfast. We went up to the door of the coffee shop there on that highway in Paducah to eat some breakfast. It was maybe nine or ten o'clock, and there wasn't hardly anybody in the little cafe. We walked in there and sat down and I noticed my wife, we'd been married maybe two or three months, got awful nervous, and I looked around and no one would wait on us. And there was a guy standing there by the counter, you know, the cook and he was wiping a glass or something and he had a cigarette dangling out of his mouth, and they had a little old girl there, a little white trash girl and she was the waitress.

So they wouldn't wait on us, so I noticed Janie, my wife was real nervous and I said, "What's the deal?" And she said, "The door, the door," and I said, "What about the door?" She said, there was a sign in Spanish on the door that said, "*No mas blancos*, only whites." Here I was, an ex-marine, and they were telling me, my wife couldn't eat breakfast. So I looked at this guy and pointed at him in a nice way, I said, "You better get over here and get me a menu or I'm coming after you." So he did and we ate and got the hell out of there. But that was my first brush with real prejudice that affected me personally.

So I loved law school. I had a good time; I met a lot of people down there that I liked. It was very small, it was down on a river walk, and San Antonio is the most civilized town in Texas. And I had friends there that I still admire and get along with and then I came back and went to work a Pioneer Gas Company and I did a lot of stuff that was interesting. They were involved in Water Incorporated. It was active in Lubbock and they had big meetings down there. I worked on that and then after two or three years of that I went out on my own.

DM:

When you were working with that, were you at all involved in this idea to pump water up from the Mississippi River and all that kind of thing? Wasn't that Water Inc. that was involved?

SH:

Yep.

DM:

And was that a feasible project?

SH:

Oh, no, no it wasn't. But when we started talking about it nobody knew what it was, so I was really one of their guys and we talked about it a lot. Because the guy that was involved, one of the main guys, Buck Buchanan he was State rep from up at Dumas, and he was a friend of my father's. And so it was mainly just discussion and brain storming—what if? What could we do?

DM:

Right.

SH:

And they thought maybe they could get gravity fed water down from Canada. But even then they understood that there was a crisis coming in Texas and we needed to do something about it. And as much as anything it educated a whole generation of farmers, and executives, business executives. Pioneer Gas Company really pushed it because they thought it was important. They were selling a lot of gas to irrigation farmers. And one time they talked about trying to get atomic generation to have electricity to pump water to various places, you know they talked about it but all that was so new and space age that they really didn't do it, but after a while it died down. But those stories I wrote about it—the little company newspaper that they had, but of course it went all over West Texas. They sold gas all over the Panhandle.

Anyway, I got involved in that and then I got out on my own after three or four years of that and I started handling these really tough cases and I'll tell you one thing in my career that some people view with concern and I am proud of. I was practicing law and the judge appointed me—as best I remember it was a murder case. And this black man was accused of killing his wife near the airbase out there. I think it was on airbase property after they moved the airbase off there. But his story was he got home about nine or ten and his wife was dead. Well the Amarillo police arrested him and charged him with it and appointed me to represent him. And then a police man told me quietly on the "Q.T." there was a witness that heard the gun fire around six or six-thirty in the morning and it was an alibi witness.

But the police, those were the days were the police or the district attorney's office wouldn't give you anything, any discovery. And so here I was defending this guy charged with murder, and it was before the case of Brady that required the release of information on the case discovery. And so all the civil lawyers in Amarillo at that time were paying police officers who worked in the records division, they would give them fifty dollars and get a copy of accident reports and police reports that had to do with civil stuff, but they wouldn't do that for criminal defense lawyers. At

the same time I had filed a single member district lawsuit against the city of Amarillo trying to make them let the blacks and the Hispanics have some representation—filed here in district court. And so the city was very opposed to what I was doing, you know the commissioners and the city manager John Stiff. They had a lawyer named Harlow Sprouse and he was fighting me tooth and toenail.

So I went and got a copy of the police report. I introduced it into the record. I said, “Here it is.” I admitted where I got it and as I recall, they didn’t find my guy innocent but they gave him probation (laughter). And so after that the District Attorney called me and said, “Selden, the city and Spradlin and Stiff are going to come after you on that.” So they filed a criminal complaint on me for bribery because I had given the cop fifty bucks. Bribery was cheap in those days. And then the District Attorney was Tom Curtis. There were two other lawyers, criminal defense lawyers, Gene Storrs and Charlie Fairweather, my partner, that were involved. They had been doing it for years. And so I said, “I ain’t going to lie about it and I’m proud of what I did.” So they cut a deal—the powers at the court house liked us, so they cut a deal with the grievance committee, that if the grievance committee would sanction us and suspend us for six months, Curtis would not indict us. But he said, “Somebody’s going to have to go into the grand jury and take the heat,” so I was elected to do that.

So I went to the grand jury and told them the truth and said you know we had a right to that information and it’s wrong the state won’t let us have it and this kid’s life was horribly ruined if I didn’t get it and I did it and I’d do it again. As I walked out the grand jury there were two black men on the grand jury which was helpful. And as I walked out, I think it was Mr. Warford, he was the funeral director. He said, “I’ll tell you one damn thing, if I ever get in trouble, I’m going to hire that kid” (laughter) so it was interesting times. I did six months on suspension; I worked as a cowboy for the Kritser Ranch north of town. I’ve kicked poachers off their place during the hunting season, and after I got back to the practice of law I was kind of a cult figure.

DM:

You had a reputation by then.

SH:

I had a reputation.

DM:

How many years—

SH:

And not long after that the supreme court and the Brady case came out and said that you have a constitutional right to know all the stuff that the Amarillo cops refused to give us and there was another case in Texas called, *Houston vs. the Houston Chronicle*, where it said that the *Houston*

*Chronicle* was entitled to get those police reports. So I was vindicated both morally and legally for what I'd done.

DM:

What year was that Brady case?

SH:

I don't know what year it was but it wasn't long after that, and every time I file a Brady motion and I think, Oh if they only knew.

DM:

Do you think it had any impact—this particular—

SH:

No not me, it didn't, but from then on I had a lot of business. I mean people in trouble would say, "Hey I heard about you, and I want you to be my lawyer."

DM:

Did this launch your criminal defense?

SH:

It kind of did, it kind of did. And not only that, it gave me an attitude. I was not scared to go in and fight with them and raise hell. The other thing that helped was because of what I had done. We had a period of time here called Pottergate, where the newspaper and the District Attorney—his name was Tom Curtis, they got after him as a political deal and they indicted him, got a runaway grand jury to indict him six or seven times. I became his lawyer. The cops came to get him and he picked the phone up and called me. Here I was one of the youngest criminal defense lawyers in town at that time and there was a kind of comment on who the head cop wanted as his lawyer if he was facing trouble.

And I learned more law during those two or three years of Pottergate than I ever learned in law school and I associated with some big lawyers down state who helped us, helped Curtis. I filed an appeal to the court of criminal appeals for contempt that they filed on Curtis and won that. I got Judge Bryan Poff recused from Curtis' case. I made a lot of law and made kind of a reputation. And I think I did the right thing. I still go back and say I did the right thing.

DM:

What have you learned about human nature in the course of all of this? Because you have a better perspective on it than most people do.

SH:

I have learned that there is a lot of greed and selfishness, but I've also learned is that there is a lot of good. I mean even in prison, I've learned that there are convicts that, while they may have done something bad, they have redeeming social qualities. I sort of am resentful of law enforcement, of cops and prosecutors; I think they do things for political reasons rather than doing what's right. But that's just a political view.

DM:

I want to tell you something that a district judge from near hear told me one time and get your prospective on it. He said that, "You know, 80 percent of the people that come through my court and are in trouble, weren't bad people, or mean people. They did stupid things."

SH:

Well I think that's true.

DM:

I thought that was interesting.

SH:

I've fought the death penalty tooth and toenail forever, and by being chairman of the prison board, I went to every prison in Texas when I was chairman. And I met a lot of convicts. There are people who need to be locked up and not get out until they are seventy, but most people in there are in there just for social and economic reasons. Of course Texas, having been a southern slave state has got a terrible history of incarcerating blacks and browns and we've deprived those people of education and employment for over a hundred years, a hundred and fifty years. And we pay the price for it socially, and they make up the majority of the prison system. Ann Richards and I did a wonderful thing when we enforced the system to try to start trying to do drug and alcohol treatment. And then the minute she was defeated, Bush stopped it all. But at least people for three years or so figured out that there were other ways to treat alcoholism and drug addiction, rather than just locking them up and throwing away the key

DM:

Right.

SH:

And there's still some of it going on, and as much as anything, people on the parole and probation departments realize that you can't lock everybody up and you need to have intermediate sanctions where you can try to sober them up and try to educate them about what their problem is.

DM:

Well about how effective is rehabilitation in the Texas Prison System?

SH:

It's not now.

DM:

But there is potential.

SH:

Yeah if they wanted to. They incarcerate far too many people; they have far too many criminal laws. Everything is illegal, everything is a stacked sentence. I think most offences, the maximum time ought to be ten years, sort of like in the federal system and you'd have to do six or seven of that. I think for these bad murder deals you ought to give them a lengthy sentence and make the first part of it pretty tough and put them on a farm, make them work, and then move them to a better farm next time and at the end let them go. But that's all politics, and politicians can't get elected to governor or the senate by advocating those kinds of libertarian views. I have met a lot of wonderful people being a criminal defense lawyer—politicians, smart people, and I've learned an awful lot about human nature. I've had a good time.

DM:

What an adventure anyhow. Do you have any other anecdotes that you can tell without naming names necessarily, interesting cases for example?

SH:

Well, one of the things I was talking about—I've had a lot of death penalty cases and mainly sort of escaped most of it. But when I was chairman of the prison board, we had twenty-eight thousand beds and we split them up, and so all of the politicians were trying to put them in different places. And so Governor Richards, she and I had a funny relationship, we were admirers of one another but she was a politician, she was the governor, she was first. (laughs) But one day I got this little thing in the mail because I had proposed some prison sites to her staff, and so then I got an envelope and it was a plain envelope, but it was addressed Austin, and in the envelope was this letter and in the letter it has locations, and some of that I listened to and some of it I didn't because the federal district judge in one of those southern districts had Colorado City in his district, and then he was chairman of the appropriations board in the legislature. So I made sure Colorado City got a unit, and I liked the people in Fort Stockton and I thought that was a good place. They had a hospital there and I thought that they'd have good medical care and they already had a little private unit there that the state had taken over, so I put it there. Then she complained about West Texas and I didn't pay much attention to that.

DM:

(laughs) You also didn't pay attention to where it says, "and shred."

SH:

(laughs) That's right. Isn't that a typical political deal?

DM:

That's funny.

SH:

And I don't know who typed it up. I don't think the governor did it but I think somebody on her behalf did it. I keep that in there because it always—politics is the art of the possible, knowing what you can do and what you can't do. You know it's who can help you and who can scratch your back. Now I had an interesting relationship with Bob Bullock. His speech writer was a guy named Glen Castleberry from Perryton. Glen and I used to ride back and forth to the University of Texas when we were freshmen and sophomores, and I stayed in contact with him forever. And I helped—when my wife, when I first met her and we got hooked up, I got her a job as the head of the district controller's office here in Amarillo.

But Bullock had heard from Glen and then when he hired Claudia he heard about me, and so he had me do a lot of interesting things when he was controller, and then later on when he got to be lieutenant governor. He hated cops, and so when there were times he wanted some security or thought that he needed security; I was the guy. One time he wanted to go to the King Ranch on a hunting lease with the teamsters. I don't think it was my wife, I think it was one of his staff members who called me up, and I was chairman of the prison board and he said, "Selden, the governor wants to go down there but he wants to have a little security because it's way on down in the bush and he doesn't know any of these people. He wants you to be his security." And I said, "What about all those Texas Rangers?" He said, "He hates them." (laughter)

So I went down there and rode around with him and was his bodyguard and he was funny. Right at dusk we were in this jeep and I was riding on a running board behind and I had a big old pistol on and I also had a short barrel up close rifle. And we had a flat tire on the jeep and the jeep kind of rolled to a stop just at dusk, it was almost dark. And this big old Nilgai thing, it was an antelope, an African antelope.

DM:

Oh, yeah.

SH:

—Indian antelope. It jumped up out of the bar ditch and kind of ran out in front of the pickup, startled by the lights and the noise. And Bullock said, "Shoot it Selden, shoot it!" I went *bam* and accidentally hit it in the eye. And so he turned to all these teamsters and said, "That's Selden Hale

and he's dangerous, you got to watch him." (laughter) And then three months later, I'm sitting here in the office and a teamster truck rolls up out there and they say, "Are you Mr. Hale?" and I said, "Yeah," and they said, "We've got a box for you," and I brought the box in and opened it up and I couldn't figure out what it was. And I said, "Do I owe you anything?" "Oh no, this is just a favor, we're hauling this for somebody." And so I opened it up and it was the stuffed head of this Nilgai, and I had to take it home. It was ugly but I took it home.

And the same thing happened with that. I hadn't been chairman for very long and all of a sudden a prison pickup pulled up front. They gave me that plaque the eagle, globe, and anchor. All the marines down in Huntsville who had this kind of secret society had it made and sent it up here on a prison chain bus, and of course everybody denies knowing where it came from. I did a lot of stuff. I talked to Bullock a lot on criminal issues.

DM:

As an advisor?

SH:

Yeah, what would happen is—see the FBI tried to get him once. Ronnie Earle tried to get him two or three times, but he and my wife would get in a car and he had a guy named George who was kind of his bodyguard and they'd go somewhere to a phone booth. And he and Claudia, my wife, would get in the phone booth and they would call me and talk, and sometimes I'd talk to them for an hour. But he was scared about being taped and wire tapped and it wasn't anything bad, he just wanted to say, Well if it happens, what does that happen? If they put the prison here, what will this happen?

DM:

Right.

SH:

And it was really funny. The funniest thing that ever happened, I was at a prison in—first of all, I'm the first chairman of the prison board that had the lieutenant governor come to the confirmation hearing and recommend my confirmation. Secondly, when he and Annie were inaugurated, I was appointed by both of them to the inauguration committee as security. What's a criminal defense lawyer doing as head of security? But I knew enough about it.

DM:

Well they knew you.

SH:

They knew me. But anyway, I was at this prison in South Texas and I got the phone call from his office, "The lieutenant governor is calling. Mr. Hale you've got to talk to the lieutenant

governor.” So I went back to the warden’s office and said, “Hello?” And it was one of his assistants said, “Selden, Selden you have to be in Llano by tomorrow at one o’ clock.” I said, “Llano? What the hell for?” And he said, “Well he’s got a vacation house up there in Llano, and guess what? There are these wild pigs that are tearing the yard up.” They had just planted a brand new yard. So I had the warden, I had Jim Lynaugh, the executive director and I had Wayne Scott, who later was the executive director, they were down there with me. They had to put me in a prison car and race to the airport. I think in Austin, I had to catch a plane, fly to Amarillo, get my weapons, fly back to Austin, get picked up by a cop car and get hauled up by the prison car and get hauled up to Llano by one o clock. And when I was there the governor was sitting in the jeep waiting for me. And it was when CB radios had first came out and he was talking on the CB radio. So he rode me around and I killed pigs, they were these feral pigs all afternoon long. I shot so much even as a marine I got tired of shooting. But you know that’s interesting, he was an interesting guy

DM:

He was a character.

SH:

He was a real character.

DH:

Did he have a streak of paranoia or was it justified? Whatever his concerns were, were they justified or did it go a little farther?

SH:

Well of course the cops were always—no telling how many times he got stopped for a DWI, and of course Ronnie Earle had tried to investigate him for stuff, and I think he never did anything that any other politician wouldn’t do. I know that he had a pond down there somewhere someplace that had a deer lease. I’m sure that the game warden didn’t go by there and check his hunting license you know. He probably had five or six hunting licenses. You know it wasn’t anything bad it’s just—well he came up here one time to have a fundraiser in Amarillo when he was running for lieutenant governor, and there was a writer from the Amarillo paper that wrote a threatening letter to him, he was kind of a crazy guy, and threatened to hurt him. And so Bullock didn’t want the cops involved so he made Claudia, who came with him, be sure that I was in charge of security.

There was a great big banker here in town who was a pro football player, I forget his name, I knew him real well, he worked for First National Bank. And so I told him that I want him to sit there by Bullock or stand there by Bullock in the receiving line, and if we had trouble just pick Bullock out and run him out of the back door and get him the hell out of there. And Bullock didn’t want any cops around, but I went and hired a detective named Jimmy Lefevre [?] who’s

still here, he's a private investigator. He was really smooth and well trained. And I said, "Now Jimmy now you come just don't tell him you're a cop." Then I put a pistol on the small of my back. Jimmy and I stayed in the receiving line right there by him and looking at everybody that came up. I did a lot of things like that. He had a security guy named Jess for a long time who was a former DPS intelligence officer that was really good. I don't know what it was, if it was it a personal thing about police. When they inaugurated him he didn't want the Austin Police near him, he wanted—he had some Texas Rangers march by the—and I was kind of involved in the security of his inauguration. I just think he thought that cops were—I don't know, he just didn't like them.

DM:  
Maybe he had some bad experience along the way.

SH:  
I'm sure he did.

DM:  
I can imagine him being a little jumpy, too, with all that.

SH:  
And he kind of liked me because he heard stories about me and you know, he heard about fights and that kind of stuff.

DM:  
He knew Claudia.

SH:  
He knew Claudia and he just—he knew I'd had a lot of weapons training and so he just thought I was alright.

DM:  
Plus you shot the eye out of some exotic—

SH:  
Yeah an exotic animal.

DM:  
(laughs) So I wonder what the wardens thought of you having to rush up at one o'clock to Llano.

SH:

They understood that I was on duty. It was my duty to take care of the lieutenant governor.

DM:

I wonder if that boosted your reputation a little bit. "Oh yeah they called out here—"

SH:

I tell you somebody, if you wanted to talk about my prison stuff that you could talk to, his name is Jim Lynaugh, he was the executive director then.

DM:

Where is he?

SH:

He lives down outside Huntsville. His phone number I think is [REDACTED].

DM:

Outside Huntsville.

SH:

He was the executive director.

DM:

Executive director of?

SH:

He was a bean counter. He had been in charge of funds for the controller's office and he was a budget whiz. Before I got there they had made him executive director. Now when I first got there he was real paranoid but then one night I cussed him out and from then on we got to be close. I thought he did a hell of a good job running the prison system, which was the toughest job in Texas—

DM:

I'm not surprised.

SH:

Running the prison system.

DM:

So he was the executive director of the prison system? That was his title?

SH:

Of TDCJ, you might talk to him. And then there's another guy you might talk to. He was the warden here at Amarillo, but he's an academic, he's got his master's degree. Here let me get you his phone number. He's retired but he was all over the system and he kind of saw what I was doing when I was training so much. [pause]

Woman:

I've got your keys back for you.

DM:

Oh, okay.

Woman:

Your car is parked on the side of the building over there.

DM:

Oh okay, thanks.

Woman:

You're welcome.

[pause]

SH:

This picture here of this guy with the warden with me at the prison is McCloud. He's kind of retired now but he's an academic, he's got his master's. That's the latest phone number that I have. You know he was an academic, he wrote a dissertation and all this stuff. He might send you a letter or talk to you about me. I think he'd be real objective. When I quit, or when Ann Richards didn't like me anymore, all the troops out there at the prison bought me that. They had a secret name for me, anytime I'd be on a prison unit the word they'd say, "code traffic one." See I was probably the first chairman of the prison board to go to—

DM:

Go around all the [prisons].

SH:

Go around to all of them and look at them and say, Hey what's going on here, do you have any problems? And you know I specialized in talking to sergeants because sergeants are middle, first rung of—and they'll tell you most of the time they don't know who you are exactly and they will just tell you what they know or what they think.

DM:

Oh, okay and they can see down the line too.

SH:

That's right.

DM:

That makes sense.

SH:

A lot of the guys that were wardens when I was there went on to work for the privates and made big bucks, and that's a real problem now because of the privatization of prisons, which I am strongly opposed to. The lobby at the end when I was there, I didn't like the privates and I didn't want to give them any more units and so they pretty well came after me with the governor and said ugly, mean things about me because I thought privatization was merely for them to make money and they didn't do a good job and it wasn't secure. And they took the very best prisoners, the low risk, and then didn't treat them well. I think the thing that really got me in trouble with her at the end was I was telling all the private prisons that one of these days I was going to get twenty chain busses and go to Eastham [?] and fill it up with the meanest sons of bitches I could find and send one chain bus to every private prison. And I told everybody that, and of course the prison guys like it, they loved it you know, but the lobbyists didn't like it.

DM:

Okay, so they worked on Ann?

SH:

Yeah.

DM:

Well tell me more about Ann. Now you've mentioned her a number of times. You've given me a good look at the personality of Bob Bullock and last time at William Wayne Justice, a little bit about him, but if you could tell me what Ann was like as a person.

SH:

Well she changed when she got to be governor. She was smart, she had a lot of native cunning, she really was kind most of the time, but she was ambitious. Methinks yon Cassius has a lean and hungry look. (DM laughs) She got to be governor, and then I could have stayed on, but she sent word to me that I was causing her too much heat, and I didn't need the job. I had done a lot, I got that agency kind of straightened out. I'd gotten Ruiz settled, and we were in the process of getting it settled right then, it and passed the board and everything. So I just wrote her a letter

and said, Thank you for letting me serve you governor and I am out of here. And then it wasn't three or four months when she called up here and wanted to know if I was still going to help her in the election, and I said, "Well goddamn, I can't believe you would do that to me," but I did it. I picked her up and hauled her around, I took her all over the Panhandle. But it wasn't enough with Bush. Bush just had too much industrial clout.

Woman:

Here's McCloud's number. Do you have the heater running in here?

SH:

No. Is it hot? Are you hot?

DM:

No I'm fine. Thank you.

SH:

Maybe you're having a hot flash.

Woman:

No it's just cold out here and then you come in there and it's just a bunch of hot air.

DM:

Where is McCloud now?

SH:

He's in Maine now; he's up there, he's got some deal up there. You ought to just call him up and say who you are and what you are doing. He might write you an article or story about me, because he knows, he was everywhere in the system. At the end we—see we had all of these units that were coming on, and we voted them in and then after they got in, the next chairman or two didn't really know much about them, so I would call about the units and what they were doing and what was going on. So this kid McCloud, he had an expertise for opening these big units like Clements Unit here, it's a big complex operation. And he was smart and he'd done it here, he opened this unit up, he opened some little ones. So the last unit to be opened up was at Dalhart and the executive director then was Wayne Scott. They were naming a prison after Lynaugh in Fort Stockton that I put down there, so I went down there and they asked me to make the speech.

Woman:

Do you want to talk to Glenn Jefferson on the phone?

SH:

No tell him I'll call him back.

Woman:

Okay.

SH:

I went down there and while I was down there, Wayne Scott said, "Chairman," they still called me chairman, "Chairman we've got real problems. I'm out of good wardens. I've got to open Dalhart up and it's way off up in there and it's isolated and I don't have anybody." I said, "You ought to send McCloud," and so he did, he sent him up there. But he kind of did that, he opened up the big prison at Galveston, this one, and Galveston, and then there were two or three more that he helped open up. But he's a literate scholar; he's different from a lot of the wardens.

DM:

Yeah I look forward to talking to him. Well back to Ann Richards, you said something that she changed when she became governor. How was she before as compared to after?

SH:

Well that letter that I gave you—before she'd have just called me up and said, Selden I don't want you to do that, and we would have talked, but then she became governor and started having emissaries. She almost got a little bit—a regal attitude, you know.

DM:

I see.

SH:

Always before if she had wanted me to shut up about how I disliked private prisons, she would have just call me on the phone and said, Goddamn it, shut up, you're causing trouble. Instead she would send emissaries or one of her assistants would say, Selden you said this to so-and-so, and he's a lobbyist for the private prisons. I'd say, Yeah I told him I might do that, I might send him a chain bus from Eastham. And so she got to be more regal. She still had a good heart and she still was better than Bush but she just—and it's tough to be governor. It's really a tough deal, and everybody's after her and I understood. See I was a liberal democrat and she was having to run against a republican and the minute I left, she appointed a cop and former district attorney from Harris County as chairman of the board, she just moved him over which gave her cover. She got rid of the Civil Liberties Union criminal defense lawyer and got the district attorney in as chairman.

DM:

Did he lean more conservative?

SH:

Oh, yeah.

DM:

And so he was a political move.

SH:

He stayed away from the prisons and didn't go to look at them and he was a nice guy, I liked him but the minute he got on the board I could see what was coming.

DM:

After she came back, after her campaign, you took her around. Did you have any more dealings—?

SH:

No, I understood politics; it was just a political decision. She—I don't know, I guess you could say she was manipulative but I think she liked me. When she first ran for state treasurer, really before she ran was when I met her in Austin with these civil liberties people that's how I met Ann Richards, and she was drinking then, and one time the women had her come to Amarillo during that period of time and she was a little bit drunk. And I quit drinking in '74 and so I started talking to her at the party, they had it out in some woman's house, I said, "I'm Selden Hale and I'm an alcoholic and I quit drinking in '74." And you know it's not that hard if you just make your mind up to it and you feel a whole lot better every day and you don't have to worry about who you were with the night before.

DM:

Right.

SH:

And so it wasn't long after that she went into a treatment program and some of the women that were there that night said that I did it, because I just said, "Ann, I understand you're a drunk," the first time anybody's ever said that to her.

DM:

She needed some frankness.

SH:

So we were always that way, and the way she campaigned up here, I knew all the county judges and sheriffs. We'd get in my pickup, she always wanted to ride in my pickup, and we'd go around to the county courthouses. One time after she was governor, I think it was maybe the reelection, they opened a school up in Pampa and she wanted to come to it, and so she landed in the state plane and got out of the plane, and I had my pickup, a Chevrolet I think, and you know, I had a pump shot gun in the back and a pistol in the front seat. So she just told these highway patrol guys that were her bodyguards that she wanted to ride with me, and she got out of the state car that they rented and came and got in the pickup and drove to Pampa.

[When] we got to Pampa the highway patrol guys they were just frantic with her riding in my pickup with me, and so they saddled up to me and said, Why don't you let agent so-and-so drive your pickup Mr. Hale, and you can ride in the state ride with the governor. I said, You really want me to do that? They said, Yeah that would make things so much easier for us. (DM laughs) So she laughed about it and I crawled in there with her and we went from Pampa—and I don't know whether we drove someplace else that day. But at one time or another I hauled her all over the Panhandle to Perryton and places like that before when she was campaigning.

DM:

Did her treatment, did it hold pretty well?

SH:

Oh, yeah.

DM:

Was she good after that?

SH:

Once she went to some dry out place, I think it was some medically oriented dry out place.

DM:

Good for her.

SH:

She was a hoot, she was the funniest woman I ever met.

DM:

Even from a distance you could tell.

SH:

Even from a distance. But I would have done anything for her—legally. (laughs)

DM:

You took on a big chore—the prison system.

SH:

And see the thing about it is, what happened at the time that I did that, the prison system was—I did two things for it; it was terribly overcrowded, so what I did with the board's help and with Lynaugh's help—we got this prison straightened up enough for William Wayne Justice to let the prison system have some of the beds back that he had closed, which I think are about fifteen hundred beds in one fell swoop, which helped. And then we got the building program for twenty-eight thousand new beds, and then if they had just built that and just stopped and managed it appropriately and restrained the district attorneys, then she would have been alright. That was a big help to her, looking back, politically, and it kind of got the heat over about Ruiz and that kind of stuff.

DM:

And after that was solved to a degree then—

SH:

That's when I left.

DM:

—then you left, okay.

SH:

But all the prison guys still stayed in touch with me. It was kind of interesting. They come up here, some of them have got private jobs now, you know for drug companies and big corporations and stuff, and I still hear from them. And you know I liked them, they were all tough guys, smart guys, and most of them had come up through the ranks. This warden, McCloud, that maybe will talk to you, he worked as a guard in Arkansas, I think Arkansas prison, Arkansas or Mississippi prison, and then he decided he wanted to go to college, and of course he was poor, so he went to Huntsville to Sam Houston State and got a job out at the prison and met Dr. Beddow [?] and came up and kind of started coming up through the ranks. But he was back there when it was just one officer for every six hundred convicts you know, and it was terrible the way they ran things but he knew how bad it was. Then he went and got his master's at Sam Houston and he was an interesting guy to know.

DM:

Yeah I'm going to give him a call, well let me pause this a second.

*End of Interview*



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