

Hotfoot Tape #3--Side A
Interview With Ross Perot
November 1, 1981

KF So you did.

HRP So we went to a hotel, and then we... something with a Post in it

KF Post House Hotel

HRP Yes, I don't know it very well, somewhere.

KF It's near the airport.

HRP There, we went there. We spent a couple of hours in bed, had to get up and go on over to Gadwick, uh, we Dallas, ... keep see there's a tremendous... while I'm living a relatively tranquil life, here going to sleep and what have. All the people in Dallas are turning the world upside down trying to get us on the airplane, trying to rent the upstairs bubble in the 747, so and so forth. They got all that done and then the...Braniff, said under international rules they couldn't rent us the bubble, and when we left the Post Hotel I was to check in with the Braniff agent who I knew from prior trips.

KF This is the Braniff agent, I...

HRP Their, their top man at Gadwick.

KF Gadwick, right.

HRP Is coming out to help us.

KF Right

HRP See Braniff is Dallas based, their headquarters is in Dallas so that's the reason we were getting out there. Uh. He greeted us, met us, but before we met him we had to walk through the terminal. I was behind the others, just be accident, and people literally backed up against the wall, they looked so bad. Then we we got to the airport, to the Braniff gate I shook hands with this passenger agent and he looked at these fellows and he said, "And these are your associates"? and I said yes. He pulled me aside and said "We can't sell you the upstairs lounge, because if this group goes upstairs no one else will come up." So they did, and no one else came up and then as we were closing the doors the captain came up, who I knew, I'd flown with him, I didn't know him. But I mean he recognized, I knew him, I recognized his face. And said "Ross, first class passengers are real nervous", he said "alot of them are Texans because this flight goes back to Dallas." and said, "if you don't mind coming down and just shaking hands with them, and calming them down, I'd appreciate it.

HRP So I went down, and went from seat to seat and told them who these men were, and what they've done, and of course the passengers were just thrilled! Just thrilled! And they just liked it. So then the trip back was uneventful, except they counted the money, celebrated a little but they were all so tired, there was no joint celebration. But they had a good time coming back. Then I'm sure that the crowd that greeted them at the airport, the men will never forget, because it was just a spontaneous outflowing of affection for Paul and Bill, and for the people who had done the job. And, we all had beards and they were all giving me a bad time coming back about they were going to have their beards. And I said no, I'll pay you guys a \$100 a day for everyday that your wives let you keep those. So the rest of the fellows played it straight, of course they went home and their wives said they were the worst thing they had ever seen, they all came to work the next day with no beards, except Coburn, who told his wife she could keep the money.

HRP So he had the last laugh on that one.

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KF And how long did he keep his beard?

HRP Several days, you will have to ask him. He kept it to rub it in, but he resorted to trickery, and ...

KF Did you pay him?

HRP Oh sure, sure. I couldn't live without me if I hadn't paid it. But I thought I was being so shrewd here by saying you know, your wife is the problem not me. In most cases, the wives didn't think much of the beards. So they, uh. When we got back, and there were all these little ^{incidents} ~~extincts~~ incidents. Colonel Simons going out to eat with Tom Marquez. Colonel Simons was so recognized, just absolute hero status. I've never seen anybody go from a man that nobody knew in this area to a man that everybody wanted to touch and shake hands with, so on and so forth.

HRP And then he pulled his usual act, he left and went to Florida, after a couple of days. He was anxious to see the dogs and the pigs and what have you, and went back home. A little xxxxx down there. He threw one guy in the dirt. See Simons was interesting, he would be nice to you for awhile in his own way, but when he felt like he had told you all that he had to tell you, he'd say "Well I need to go feed the pigs" and this fellow wouldn't leave him. So Simons picked him up, see Simons was just incredibly strong, you know picking a man up and just carrying him down the road and just dumping him over the gate is hard to do. But, he just apparently just picked the guy up by the back, by the belt and just walked down the road, and dropped him over the gate. That's the end of the interview. Uh.

KF Who told you that story?

HRP He called me the next day.

KF Simons.

HRP "He said yea," he said "I probably shouldn't have done it, but there was some guy out here," and see the thing is, Simons never overstated. And he says "if you get some bad press about this," he said, "I finally reached my point, but I asked him to leave several times and he wouldn't move. In my mind he became a trespasser" so he threw him over the gate and that was the end of that. So then, the press kept bothering him. And I said Colonel, let's do this. Why don't you go up to my place in Colorado or go to Hawaii, take a trip, and I'll send another man down to your farm. And he said, "I can't leave the farm", and I said now wait a minute, I said the farm ran pretty good while you were gone, didn't it? He said, oh yea their great like that. I said ok fine. So you can leave the farm, so why don't you. So he went to Colorado. And that's where he had his heart attack. And I was spending the night, see I was xxxx xxxx my schedule, I was spending my night with my Mother, and I got a call at 2 o'clock in the morning from Merv, in my Mother's room. And he says, "I've got some bad news," he says "Colonel Simons has had a heart attack". So then, interestingly enough the whole process the same people. I said ok, Merv I've got to get an airplane, I've got to get a doctor. All the things it takes. You wouldn't believe what Merv had lined up in a couple of hours. We had a flying heart lab, we had the kinds of materials that are in intensive care units. In terms of the oscilloscopes, all the things you see in the intensive care, all that was set. Part of it was on the airplane, the rest of it was flown from Denver to Vale, and put on the airplane then. We got, actually we were ready to go before we could get into Vale, cause you can't land there in the middle of the night. So we landed, we took off at night, my sister came down, to stay with Mother. I left, we got there just at sunrise, landed at sunrise. Had the top heart specialist in Dallas with me. And he went in to see Colonel Simons, and said "we'd be better to move him now. Because the nature of a heart attack is if you survive it, for two or three days you're in pretty good shape, and the critical time comes with the sixth, seventh, eighth day, some period like that," he said so, he said "we'll move him this afternoon." I made the decision that I didn't want Colonel Simons to know that I had come out. Now that's pretty tough to do on a Lear Jet, that's a small airplane. But he was heavily sedated, and what have you, I never went

to the hospital, and what have you, the doctor was handling it. We got him on the airplane, and he was sitting with his head, his head, the stretcher was in like this and then just as I closed the door, I squeezed in behind him. And it wasn't until several weeks later he realized that I was on the airplane, and that preoccupied him the rest of his life, that anybody could get that close to him, without him knowing it. Not that I was there, but that anybody could get that close to him without him being aware of it, and sit for an hour and a half.

HRP So we got him back to Dallas, got him in the Intensive Care Unit, got him patched up, got him on his feet. And you have to let the tissue heal, so that the stitches will hold together when they do the operation. And that's when he lived out here. But it was just that the old heart was gone. When they opened him up, they could see all the stress of all these things he'd done for 35 years. It might not have shown anywhere else, but they said that his heart was a roadmap of the life he'd led in stress. And, he was gone.

HRP But that kind of bridges, once he went to Colorado, he never went back to Florida. He came back here, and stayed here, and was never really strong enough to go to Florida.

HRP The, ... But the Rescue Team Members just went back to work. They all, typically took some time off, took vacations, went somewhere with their families. And, they just went back to work.

HRP But I think the thing you'll find exciting is, when you get, the... the things that tie a story together and will grip a reader, are here in such abundance, and I've only given you a few. That, out of all of it, I think you'll have plenty of material. Just telling it as it occurred.

KF Yea.

HRP To keep the reader as excited as he expects to be when he buys one of your books.

KF Alright

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KF Alright, this is Part II of the interview please start a new sheet of paper.

KF OK, we're going to go back a little further than even you think we're gonna go back. I want to know where your Father was born.

HRP We're going back even further than that, my Mother's parents came from Ireland and Scotland, my Father's parents were French. My Mother's parents, I'm the fourth generation in this country, in Texas, on my Mother's side, the third generation on my Father's side. My Mother's ancestors came out of Tennessee and from that general direction. My Father's ancestors came into this country from France through New Orleans. They were traders, and they would set up trading posts on the Red River. And you can come from New Orleans up through the Red River up into this area, and keeping running into our family. And I don't even know what the relations are, but they would set up little trading posts, up... My Grandfather set up a trading post in a little town called New Boston, Texas. My Mother grew up in Jefferson, Texas which is one of the old cities in Texas. This is the city that Jay Gould wrote on the hotel ledger, that grass would grow on the streets of Jefferson because they wouldn't let the train go through Jefferson, the railroads come through. He was one of the great railroad builders in our country.

HRP She lived in Queens City, and Atlanta, and these are little towns right around there. And after my Dad was grown, my Mother was grown, my Mother lived in Texarkana, my Dad came to Texarkana to work as a cotton broker. As a younger man, he had worked principally, I guess as a cowboy. And loved horses, loved animals, but got in the cotton business and was a cotton broker as a young man working for himself.

KF Don't you have to have money to set up as a cotton broker?

HRP Not much, 'cause he didn't have much. You had to have credit, the bank's would finance you. Uh, the... His basic business, was buying from the farmer and selling to the mills.

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HRP So they met in Texarkana, and were married.

KF Do you know how they met?

HRP Oh sure, sure. There was a lady in Texarkana, my sister can tell you the story in great detail. That, it sounds to me like a hidden Dolly, in "Hello Dolly" but she arranged... She had dances for the young people, and she was very careful about who she would let come to her dances and what have you. And my Mother and my Father were at one of these dances, and each one had a date with someone else, and they met there, and that's how it started. And they were married, and very happily married, the first...

KF Do you know the date?

HRP No, I would have to dig that up.

KF Approximately?

HRP Well, they must have been married in 1925 or 1926 somewhere around in there, but all that's easy to come back with. They, my Sister and I grew up in the house we were,... we were born in the hospital but we didn't move around at all, in other words, when they brought us home from the hospital that's the house we grew up in.

KF OK, who's older you or your sister?

HRP My sister is 18 months older, than I.

KF And it's just the two of you?

HRP Yes. We had an older brother who died when he was three old. So I have no recollection of him. He had a stomach ailment that they couldn't cure.

KF Died before you were born?

HRP Died before I was born. My sister was not born either, I don't believe. He was the only child when he died. And this was as real tragedy to my parents. They,... I think it was particularly hard on my Mother. But anyhow, Betty and I were born and she had to stay in bed to have me. You can get these details from Betty. But she had to stay in bed some incredible period of time. It was very difficult for her to have children. And, then to top it off the day I was born, it was a 117 degrees, this was no air conditioner. She used to tell us some pretty colorful stories about that experience, because I guess, the doctor had some xxxxx that they couldn't even bring a fan in the room. And the rest of her life, she had a vivid memory about how warm it was the day I was born. So I was born, and Betty and I grew up in Texarkana and had a very happy life as children.

KF What was the house like?

HRP It was a small house, it ...

KF Made of?

HRP If you want to see it... See Mother, sold the house, moved to Dallas to be in Fort Worth to be with Betty and me. Which, we wanted her over here, then everytime she'd go to Texarkana, she'd get upset. Because the people that bought the house didn't take care of it. So, after EDS was successful I bought the house back, and put it back in every detail, like it was when we grew up. And she loved to go to Texarkana, and so that was where she,... she'd go to Texarkana and stay in her house. And it was one of her great pleasures, all these rugs were on the floor, that are hanging out here. That's where the rugs came from. And, it's just a nice little house. And...

KF But made of?

HRP Made of brick.

KF Brick. How many bedrooms were there?

HRP Three. One bathroom.

KF OK, so. Your parents were not rich, but OK.

HRP I would say that, that we had modest means. We never wanted for anything. Looking back on it, my parents made some tremendous sacrifices for Betty and me. And, my Mother worked...

KF What at?

HRP She was a very skilled bookkeeper and actually made the payroll and kept the books for EDS when it was a small company. She's one of the... when you start a corporation in the United States you have to have three directors. My three original directors are my wife, my Mother and my sister. See, 'cause I was by myself. And she made the payroll and kept the books and then she was way up in her 60's, very alert.

KF So, try and remember what she was like as a young woman. How would you describe her? She was totally... she...

HRP Oh very warm and loving, no she's small but you just... Betty and I just adored her from the time we were children. She and my Father were the shrewdest parents that I guess I've ever known and I would like to being able to imitate. Because without ever physically punishing us, they were able to instill what they thought were proper values to the point where Betty and I wouldn't do things, simply because we thought it might hurt our parents if they ever knew it. I was not a ... I was not a nice little angel, but there were just not a whole lot of things I wouldn't do. Because the last thing I ever wanted to do was hurt my parents. Now, never once did Mother say, if you do that it will hurt my feelings, no, no. She was a very strong character, she would never resort to that sort of pleading thing. But I knew that it would hurt her. Because...

KF But you were never spat?

HRP I don't believe I was ever spanked. Ask Betty that question. If I was she'll remember.

KF What were the things, what were some of the things you didn't do because of that?

HRP For example, the just your overall standards of conduct, behavior how they expected you to conduct yourself in life, how they expect you to deal with other people. And they were very, very open and direct with us about what they felt was proper behavior and proper conduct. They were both very concerned about other people, they had very little but they were very generous with what they had. And they taught that, all through our young life... They expected you to try to live that way. And I'm not denying ... I have an unblemished record. But they were successful in what Betty and I used to called putting the Indian sign on us. In other words, they really had the hex on us, in that we loved them so much. And they didn't create an environment where they said you've got to please me, you've got to please me. But we wanted them to be proud of us, without any pressure. Now, I was never pressed to make good grades, nobody ever said that if I didn't try harder and do better. But, they... it was obvious that it meant alot to them if we did do well in things. And they took great pride and satisfaction in anything that we accomplished. My Dad was very low key and very easy going and he and I spent a tremendous amount of time together. Because he worked September, October, November when the cotton was coming in from the fields and then have alot of free time. So he and I rode together and enjoyed horses and animals and had alot of time together that most children don't have with their father.

KF Tell me what they looked like?

HRP Oh, I'll show you pictures.

KF But that will be black and white. What color was your mother's hair, what color her eyes?

HRP Well, her eyes were blue. I mean when you look now,... they say... Margo could pass for her daughter. They say boys look for their mother in So if you looked at coloring, it's very much like Margo. Her eyes were the same color. She was smaller than Margo.

KF Blonde hair?

HRP Yes... Everybody just loved her. You could be around her for days and never hear her criticize another person. And you go over to Texarkana, someday if we have a dull day sometime it's not that far away. And sit down and talk to two or three of those older ladies that knew her because she was just genuinely good. And always thought of other people, never compl... when she was ill and sick and what have you, she'd never complained never say I feel bad, I can't do it. And she would do things when she was in her seventies that would wear out a typical forty year old. We'd go on trips together with the little children, and we'd be hiking up through Yellowstone Park and she was riding the mules down the Grand Canyon at a time when anybody her age shouldn't do that. But she had a great spirit. Now my Dad when I was still in the Navy. So I was just 26 when he died. But...

KF What did he look like?

HRP He, uh. Well there's a man here in town that looks very much like him. He was stout, he was a little taller than I am but he was quite stout. Had dark brown eyes, black... was French, you know dark hair dark brown eyes, and he was really much more French looking than any of us. But very easy going, and loved a great storyteller. If you visited with some of his old friends in Texarkana they would beguile by the hour, with stories he... And they used to play practical jokes. And they would go at great lengths to play... This was at a time see when there was no entertainment, people entertained themselves. And he, he was just, was the sort of man that everybody loved to sit down and visit with and be with.

KF And either of them play any musical instruments?

HRP No, I'm the only one in the family that ever played a musical instrument.

KF What do you play?

HRP I played the accordion when I was six, and I played the drums later on, I don't play either of them now. I've lost what skilled had.

Betty played the piano a little, but neither of my parents played a musical instrument.

KF What,... your Father was obviously successful in business but not hugely so.

HRP I would say that he was able to provide for us, sometimes at a significant sacrifice to Mother and my Mother. But they would've been horribly offended, and would be horribly offended if anybody ever referred to them as poor or... Because this goes back to pride. And, everybody, if you get back in the old stories about me, you know printed in the paper. They kind of want try to write a rags to riches story, and I say look we didn't have all that much money, but, I as a child, I'd always felt terribly rich in the things that were important to me, their important to me today. The love in our home, the feeling for one another, the things my parents taught me. These are things that are far more value than money. So Betty and I grew up in a very warm, loving, secure home.

KF They even had an automobile?

HRP Oh, yea. We had a 1929 Dodge.

KF And what year did you have it?

HRP From 1929 till 1945. And this goes back to my Dad's sense of humor. All of his friends starting kidding him about his old car. And it got to be such a topic of conversation, in our old town. That, he just felt couldn't afford to sell it and when Betty and I got old enough to drive we just hated it. Because we needed better service. And he used to tell his friends, he says well, there's no chance that they're going to have a serious accident because it just won't go that fast. So we had alot of fun in that old car. And then finally, in 1945 he bought a new car. And he drove that car until he died in 1956. So he believed in getting the full life out of a car.

KF OK, what age did you start going to school?

Who

HRP Six years, old. Went to the public schools, and then wanted to go the Naval Academy. There was a young man, not too young now, man in Texarkana, that was several years older that I admired as a child that went to the Naval Academy. So he came home and told me all about it, and from that point on, I just knew that's what I wanted to do. I'd never a ship, never seen the ocean, never seen the Naval Academy, but I couldn't get an appointment. So, I went through two years of a Junior College. I started to work when I was twelve, that's another little piece of xxxxx thing. And, I worked pretty much steadily all through Junior College, and I finally got an appointment to the Naval Academy in 1949. I think in my terms of my business success, the work experience I had as a child, was a key factor in my life.

KF Yea, we're getting ahead now. There are all these here. When he was six Perot went to work for his Father breaking horses with a saddle for a dollar or two apiece, his nose stills xxxxx through results of the falls.

HRP Now, that's true. Now, I don't know what you're reading from but, see there's alot of stuff written about me that's not truc. That's true.

KF But, his real talent is for selling?

HRP Well, it's six and nobody knew that and certainly I didn't. I had denied twelve, you've got to see the first glimmer, because I wanted a paper route, and paper routes were hard to get at that time, because there were alot of people out of work. And, I was too small, everybody said, well come back when you're older. And, I kept going back and they finally said, look would like to start a paper route? I said sure, I started the paper route. So they gave me the Black area of Texarkana, these were people who lived in basically shacks. Most of them have no education and this was kind of a joke with the paper, because why would you buy paper, if you don't have the money and can't read, you see. So I went to the Black neighborhood going from house to house asking if they'd like to take the paper.

KF And this was the Saturday Evening Post?

HRP No, no. This is the Texarkana Gazette. I sold the Saturday Evening Post when I was seven or eight, but that was mine. I was basically, selling that to my parents' friends. That was an easy sale. But that was first selling job, I used to sell Christmas cards, I used to sell seeds, but these were little things. My first really tough job, was to go down to the Black neighborhood, and start this paper route.

KF Is it true they offered you 70 percent rather than the 30 percent?

HRP Yes, that's true. At that point, you paid 25 cents a week, each customer pays for the newspaper. Normally, the paper got 17 and a half cents the newsboy got seven and a half. But, because I was going into this bad area, had to use a horse, would have unusual expenses. I negotiated, they didn't offer this. I said alright I'll do it but lets reverse the rate. Because it's going to be very expensive, it's going to be tough to do. Since nobody thought I could it anyhow, that's why they agreed to it. In other words, I was going to get seventy percent of nothing, you see. So, I started that and the paper route was a roaring success.

KF Is it true, you got up at 3:30 and did it on horseback? Twenty miles before school each day.

HRP Yes, roughly twen..., we'd have measure that. But that's close. That's close. It was a long ride.

KF And soon, you were making \$40 a week?

HRP That's right. And the typical, paperboy is making \$5. And, then they decided to reverse the rate. And at the tender age of 13, I went right in to see the publisher of the paper. And told him that in my book, a deal was a deal. Now that's what my parents always taught me. That you know, you make a commitment you keep it. Well he was an elderly man with alot of money, knew nothing about this whole thing.

KF How did you xxxx with it?

HRP Well, chance plays a huge part in anyone's life. Several weeks before this happened, I was the only person in the newspaper, and he had locked himself in his office. And, it was noon, everybody was gone to lunch and he was banging on the door. I walked over and said, Mr. Palmer what's wrong? He said "I'm locked in the office." I got him out. He says "Who are you?" and I told him. He said "Thanks for getting me out". And so a few weeks later when I went back to see him, I was the kid who got him out of the office. And so, he saw me and I explained this to him. And he said "Son, you're right, if we made that deal we'll keep it." And so he kept it, and I kept the paper route. And the most, really the nicest memory that I have of that paper, my Dad got sick and we had to take him to Shreveport to have a kidney removed. And this was a radical operation at that time. And everybody else was afraid to go in this area to throw the papers. For reasons, I can explain to you. But, nobody would throw the route while I was gone. So I went around to all my customers explain to them that I had to be gone for nearly a week, that they would not get a paper, so they wouldn't be charged for a paper, and my Dad was being operated on.

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HRP And when I came back, I'd hope they'd still keep taking the paper. Nearly, everyone of these, terribly poor Black people, said just save the papers and when you get back, bring them all to us at once, because if your Dad's sick, you'll need the money. And I said no, really... they said no, just save the paper and when you bring them back... I had to get a buggy, see I had five or six days of papers. And, with a few exceptions. But nearly everyone of those customers said bring them back. So, if I'd been thrown in a White affluent neighborhood, there wouldn't have been an option. So that's my principal memory of that route. That, and I mentioned earlier Sunday mornings, see alot of these people, the only time they would have any morning is they'd get paid on Saturday, and they would pay me on Sunday morning. They'd leave the money and hide it in different places, and I'd get off my horse and go get the quarter. And, by the time I'd be half way through the route, I'd have a pocketful of money. And these were not bad people, but they were poor people, and there was always somebody who would get drunk Saturday night and while he was semi-disoriented figure out that he could make some money by robbing me. But the advantage I had, was my horse. And, somewhere along the route, every Sunday, someone would make a poorly conceived effort and typically, only a halfhearted effort you know to grab the horses reigns and what have you. And, I knew every Sunday it was going to happen. But I never lost a penny because of the horse. The horse would react and jump, I just had to be sure to hang on to the horse. And... that's the worst thing that ever happened to me.

KF Weren't you scared?

HRP Uh, yes. Sure I was scared. No... I've always felt... I've never said this to you but I've always felt lucky. And, I don't know why but, and I haven't always been like this. But, I think it helps to go into things with an optimistic outlook, which I'm sure I got from my Mother and my Dad, but principally my Mother. If you just, if... the song I think that we... we have a, we restored a theatre in Texarkana in her memory. And, a in the dedication I mentioned, I said I think that if... there is

one song we should play here tonight it would be from "Annie", The Sun Will Come Up Tomorrow. Because, that was her outlook, things will be better, and typically they were. But she was very positive, very optimistic and I'm sure a little bit of that rubbed off, I wouldn't claim to be nearly what she is, but a little bit of it rubbed off. So I had a paper route, and then I collected classified ads, that was my business venture.

KF But, you... you said you felt lucky, but you didn't feel that you or the family needed this money, you knew it was dangerous.

HRP But, I felt see... I was taught to work from the time I was a small child.

KF But you were working in school.

HRP But I mean worked at something else. I was always encouraged to go out and do something. And my parents particularly liked me to do something that was not on salary, that was on incentive. Sell Christmas Cards, you don't make anything unless you sell Christmas Cards. You don't make anything unless you sold something.

KF Now, why do you think they felt that way? Why did they like it?

HRP I think they felt that was good training for me. But see, if you look at my Dad, all he did was love me and encourage me, and leave me alone. Never pushed me, my Mother never pushed me. But, it was obvious that if I did something well, it meant a lot to them. It was very subtle, I can't even communicate it that well.

KF Oh well, I can understand that.

HRP It was really, really the ideal way to capture a little kid's mind and heart and have him march generally in the direction that he wanted to go.

KF It's certainly the ideal way, it's whether, whether you can do it. That's the question.

HRP That's true. That's true.

KF As a Boy Scout, Boy Scout Perot rose to the rank of Eagle Scout. In school he was a mediocre student until the 11th grade. Is this true?

HRP Uhuh.

KF When the teacher told him he was not bright as his classmates, and thus prodded him into earning straight A's.

HRP No, this... this was a great lady whose name my Mrs. Duck.

KF Duck?

HRP Duck. And she's dead now, of course. I'd love for you to meet her, because she'd enjoy you and you would enjoy her. She was just so smart and so bright. And, she one day, she looks at me and said, "Ross, it's a shame that you're not smart as your friends." I said, Mrs. Duck, I'm as smart as my friends. She said "Well, why do they make better grades than you do?" I said because they're interested in school and I'm not. And said, basically, "Ross, you'll be judged the rest of your life, by deeds not words." And she says, "Anybody can stand here and tell me that they could something," I said, that comes out easy. She says, "But let's look at the record, your friends can do it and you can't." I said Mrs. Duck, I'll make straight A's the next six weeks. We got our report cards every six weeks. And she says, "Well, I will be surprised, if you can." So I just started studying that night and made straight A's from that point on.

KF For six weeks? Or..?

HRP No, from then on. Forever in school. She changed me just by challenge. Then I hadn't particularly been weak in English, but by the time I got by the eleventh and twelfth grade, and she had me both years. Then I went to Junior College, then when I went to the Naval Academy the first course we had in English was English Grammar. And I finished first in the class of nine hundred some odd. I was the top student in that course. Which was like taking a jackass and turning him into a race horse or something. So then, when I got that, I felt really good about that. I said, you know I'm going to write Mrs. Duck and I said no, if I do she'll find something wrong in the letter. And, she told the story the rest of her life, so I waited until the next time I was at home. And, I went over to see her. And, I said, you certainly deserve all the credit and I want you to know that you have a student that really appreciates the beatings, the verbal beatings, that ... and the harrassment that I had to endure as your student. And, then I told her that I started to write her a letter, but I was afraid that I would get it back circled in red. And, what she would do if I ever made a mistake, she would circle it and make me redo the whole paper. So, if I left out one comma and it was a 500 word theme, for me, not for everybody, I had to redo the whole thing. And, oh, I used to have some dark thoughts about Mrs. Duck. And, I had a great math teach who's still alive, in Texarkana. He's an old man, now. And then people often said you know where did you get your great interest in the country and your great love for the country, and what have you. First, my parents. But secondly, my high school Civics teacher. Who made us memorize it. And, she's still alive, she's very, very old lady. But you can study the Constitution, you can memorize the Constitution. In one time in my life I could just sit here and recite the whole Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and a, you know anything less than that, she would give you a bad grade. And out of all that wrotelike memorization, then she would inject into that a deep understanding of the three branches of government and how they work, and so on and so forth. And, then of course, all that love of country was really, really reinforced at the Naval Academy. But...

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KF Were your parents, very patriotic?

HRP Oh yea. Everybody was. Everybody was. And I mean... You know it was great to be an American and to be a Texan and an American, was everything you could ever hope to be. No, now that... I had Texas History three times before I graduated from highschool. No wonder people love Texas!

KF What do you mean you had it three times?

HRP I had it in grade school, it was the law, grade school, junior high and highschool. I mean, in priorities, you were a Texan first, and you know, and by the way an American citizen. But you were really taught to be proud of being a Texan. Which overall, I think is healthy. Teach children to love their state, and love their country, and what have you.

KF OK, after highschool, you said you wanted to go to the Naval Academy, but you couldn't get...

HRP An appointment

KF An appointment.

HRP You have to get an appointment from a Senator or Congressman.

KF What does that mean, an appointment?

HRP It's a political xxxxx.

KF Oh

HRP Patrons you'd call it, and we didn't have any contacts.

KF Oh, so you went to Texarkana Junior College.

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HRP It's the only place I could afford to go. I could keep working and go to college.

KF How did you finally get the appointment, in 1949?

HRP Well, I never knew until years later. It was a senator who was leaving Washington, he was at the end of his term, who would not run again. He was cleaning out his desk. And one of his aides said, "Senator, we have an unfilled appointment to the Naval Academy." And the Senator said, "Does anybody want it?" And he says, "Well we've got this boy from Texarkana, that's been trying to get one for several years." And the Senator says "Give it to him" and they never mentioned my name. And the aide told me that story years later after EDS had been successful. The senator's dead. That's how I got to the Naval Academy.

KF Do you remember the senator's name?

HRP Senator O'Daniel. W. Lee O'Daniel. Sure I did. One day out of the blue we got a wire and I remember how excited I was. I went down to where my Mother was working, showed it to her, then went out to my Dad's office showed it to him. And, we were all very excited, because this opened a huge door of opportunity. To have an education of that quality. And, then we were concerned, that I wouldn't do well at the Naval Academy. Because there was nothing in my background to prepare me for military life. Nothing. It was reversed, see I had a life of almost total freedom as a child. And, we had it work, everything worked well there so it all worked out.

KF You graduated 454th in a class of 925, and you were both the best all around midship man.

HRP No, no now that's...

KF Is that true?

HRP No, no. There's no such thing. Where that came from, I can't get rid of it. Here, several of the guys in my class needle me about that.

KF And life president of the class?

HRP Yes. Now I was. See here.

KF Well, that's true.

HRP That's true. I was president of my class in my junior and senior year and elected life time president of my class. Was chairman of the honor committee, Italian Commander, and received a number of honors and recognition like that. But there's nothing like the best all around midshipman. So I, tell... All my friends at the Naval Academy really needle me about that. I said well what I've been taught was that I was voted most handsome, and they just got it confused. Of course, there's nothing like best all around, most handsome, and all that garbage. But, so alot of fellow have had alot of fun with that, and I have no idea where it came from.

KF So you were commissioned Ensign Perot?

HRP Right, got on a ship. Here, this has nothing to do with anything except it's interesting. I was sworn in to the Naval Academy on my 19th birthday. An event beyond my control. I entered my first foreign port in Kingston, Jamaica on my 20th birthday, beyond my control. 21st birthday, now. 22nd birthday, I entered my first European port, Bergen, Norway. 23rd birthday, I reported aboard my first ship and got underway for a trip around the world. And it was my first ship, went aboard at 2 o'clock in the morning, 7 o'clock in morning got underway, came back nine months later been around the world. The Naval Academy education plus that experience of seeing the world, was just an incredible experience for me. Just unbelievable.

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KF Before you went to the Naval Academy, how far had you ever been from Texarkana?

HRP To Dallas, 180 miles.

KF That's the furthest you'd been.

HRP The furthest I'd ever been away from home.

END OF TAPE