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LAWRENCE F. O'BRIEN ORAL HISTORY, INTERVIEW VI

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Signed by Lawrence F. O'Brien on April 5, 1990.

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ACCESSION NUMBER 92-17

INTERVIEW VI

DATE: February 11, 1986

INTERVIEWEE: LAWRENCE F. O'BRIEN

INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

PLACE: Mr. O'Brien's office, New York City

Tape 1 of 4, Side 1

G: [Let me ask you about some] issues in 1963.

O: Yes. First of all, [I'll try] to summarize Kennedy and then we'll go to LBJ's style.

The Kennedy I first knew was a fellow who had decided to run for statewide office in Massachusetts. As he traveled the state to become acquainted beyond his congressional district, he had a set speech, and this came off some world traveling. He never seemed to be at ease. As time went on and he made this speech more often, he seemed to relax a little more. But from the outset you could detect that communication didn't come easy to him. Of course, he was put to the test with Henry Cabot Lodge and he became much more politically expert. But in campaigns, in the primaries, and even later he had to work hard at the backslapping, handshaking phase of politics and the one-on-one outside of plant gates. While he became more adept at it and actually became widely recognized as an extremely capable communicator, particularly when he got to the presidential press conferences, the point I want to make is that from the outset it did not come naturally. In fact, it was a difficult task for him to accommodate himself to a relaxed attitude toward the street-corner campaigning.

That reflected itself in the White House, when we were engaged in legislative struggles and had these various meetings. Jack Kennedy could not bring himself to strong-arm, members of Congress to secure their vote. He'd make his presentation and he was relaxed in that regard. He knew his subject, they liked him, and he had a great asset there. But you would finish one of these sessions with twenty or thirty members of Congress, and everything was fine except that you couldn't take a head count when they departed. There was one line you didn't cross and that was to say, "Now, let's go around this room, and where are we, and where are you?"

Now, to Lyndon Johnson. I don't know how Lyndon Johnson was in his younger days or as a member of Congress. I didn't become acquainted with him until he was on the ticket with Jack Kennedy. But I heard about his efforts as majority leader and how hard he worked at it. I remember I was particularly impressed on election night when Kennedy was elected to the Senate that one of the first out-of-Massachusetts calls was from Lyndon Johnson, lining him up to support him for majority leader. Others have to

testify to how Johnson actually functioned as majority leader. I can only assume that it was reasonably accurate to say that he worked awfully at it; he knew where the bodies were; he wheeled and dealed in terms of getting legislative enactment; and he was considered very expert at it. He had achieved a great reputation as majority leader.

Then as vice president, he of course had to adjust. He didn't have the muscle that he had as majority leader. That was made clear to him from the outset. He was in a different category and he was no longer really a member of the club. As we've discussed before, he felt that he would maintain basically the same leadership position with the Senate that he had had as majority leader. That was reflected in his early-on commitment to spend a great deal of time up in the Senate and to retain his majority leader office. In due course it became apparent that that wasn't working as he had envisioned it. So he had to adjust.

His efforts in the legislative program were intense. His involvement was as full as could be. He enlisted everybody possible. There were times in the White House when just about everybody on the staff was involved in one way or another in some legislative struggle. [They would] have assignments from him or from me to work with individual members. I remember the Texas staff people in the White House working on the Texas delegation at various times.

The leadership breakfasts would be comparable to the Kennedy period and were the same in terms of those present. Johnson's style didn't change, although there had been the vice presidential period when he had indicated to me on occasions that he didn't feel he could move people as he used to. He would try and he'd try mightily, and he'd get frustrated. But then as president, with great vigor, he moved back into the fray and started to devote a tremendous amount of his time and effort to the legislative program.

If you had a Kennedy meeting in the White House residence with the appropriate members of Congress to sell them on support of a particular legislative proposal, you have the Kennedy meeting conducted the way I described it. The Johnson meetings, however, would move to that last mile, where Johnson would make an effort to individually determine the position of members present. And that would happen in the Oval Office. He was keenly interested, on a day-to-day basis, in progress. He and I had a tremendous amount of personal involvement. It was day and night, more than I had had with Kennedy.

He would devote an inordinate amount of time to the sales pitch, and he would put it on a truly personal basis: "I'm pleading with you. You've got to help me. You can't walk away from this. Come on, you've just--" And that would get to the arm around the shoulder, the close proximity and the pitch that could be lengthy at times. A member would be pretty exhausted. And that was basically the difference in style.

Johnson had that experience as majority leader, did not have the impact he envisioned as vice president--and no vice president really does--and in the role of president

he had the kit of tools--a bigger kit of tools than as majority leader--and he used them to the fullest. Through all that, he did have a tendency to take things rather personally. If someone on the Hill who he felt should be supportive [and] wasn't, that was a personal affront. He dwelled on it. That was his nature, as he dwelled on Vietnam and personalized Vietnam to the last pilot. Did he get back safely? It was similarly the case with the legislative program.

I think probably the best example was the loyal support of Mike Mansfield for the program, and the conflict we got into with Mike Mansfield over the closing of veterans hospitals. Johnson became very disturbed with this. Those hospitals were going to be closed; the decision had been made that they were inadequate. But the pure politics of it was that one of the hospitals was in Montana, and we had a similar experience with an air base or some kind of a military installation in Montana. Johnson had White House staff busy preparing statements to be issued wherever possible, contacting press to see if you could get favorable editorial comment, all of it added up to exacerbating the situation with Mansfield.

Mansfield wasn't going to take it. He was the majority leader and this was a constituency matter. And this went on and on. It was an example of the intensity of the Johnson effort, which would be reflected in the legislative program. Here, however, was an incident that was not a legislative matter, but a confrontation with a fellow who was in a key position in terms of your legislative program, and yet there wasn't a tendency to adjust or fall back. I guess you certainly can't fault the man for that; he was on the right side of the issue. But the reality was that you probably weren't going to be a winner, and that, I recall, was the way it turned out.

Because of his nature, Johnson was not a fellow who was very well organized. He would put in hours and hours and hours, without any regard to mealtime, bedtime, or anything else. Mrs. Johnson was constantly trying to keep him reasonably in line, fearing for his health. But he would not hear of it. And that was something I observed directly, because I was with him very often, from wake-up time to bedtime.

G: Typically, how would this occur? Would Mrs. Johnson simply come in and say it's time to have lunch, it's time to take a nap, or something like that? How would she do it?

O: Yes. There was one incident which was typical of many. It was rather late in the evening, and we were in the small office off the Oval Office. I don't know what we were engaged in. She called a couple of times from the residence, urging him to come home; he hadn't eaten. Finally she came over--I remember she just had a sweater on--and said, "Now, Lyndon, you've got to break off. It's now 9:00 p.m.." It was not a normal time to be busily engaged in something, and she was really pleading with him. He'd say, "Oh, Bird." And then finally she resorted to, "Lyndon, you know Larry's got a wife at home, and I'm sure she's waiting for him and it's now well past dinner time. Why don't you let him go home and you come on?" He passed that off; that didn't end it either. And that was not unusual. If we were in the residence she'd oftentimes come in and say, "Well, guys, it's

time to [quit]." And there were occasions when I would find myself in his bedroom while he was going to bed and we were still talking. That was the intensity of the whole thing.

When you couple his total commitment to the Great Society program and what came naturally to him in terms of working with the Congress with the growing specter of Vietnam and his total concern regarding Vietnam, he had imposed upon himself a tremendous burden, without any semblance of programming.

Kennedy would go over and take a nap or take a swim in the pool, take a couple hours break during mid-day, and he was pretty well organized. But Lyndon Johnson wasn't at all, and his tendency was to deal directly with everyone whenever possible on all matters. He had a great desire to be constantly informed. In comparison, Kennedy would leave things to his confidence in whoever was handling it. You move along, keep him informed, and use his involvement whenever you felt it was essential, but be very sparing, and careful and don't do it unnecessarily.

On the other hand, you had difficulty keeping Johnson out of a lot of things that should be done on a staff level--our staff, the departments and agencies, cabinet members. The President need not be personally involved, but he would never accept that.

I found myself carefully structuring my utilization of President Kennedy in terms of the New Frontier program, and he was never reluctant to participate. But I would go to him, or I would go to Ken O'Donnell and they'd go over his schedule and allocate specific times for various meetings on the program. With Lyndon Johnson it was the reverse. He felt that I ought to be using him more, that I ought to have him more deeply involved, that I wasn't informing him on an hourly basis. I guess it was summed up one night when we had a loss in the House in the wee hours of the morning. I've told that story. But I think, again, it's like Lady Bird with the sweater. You're drifting home, you're rather depressed, it was unusual to lose, and it was an all-night session and we lost it at three or four o'clock in the morning. And I remember wending my way home and stopping in a little sandwich shop and having something to eat, just sitting there at the counter, and then going on home. I didn't need anything to eat, it was just a matter of trying to unwind. Then I waited until 6:30 or 7:00 a.m. to call the President, knowing his habit as an early riser, and I wanted to wait until he would have awakened. I remember telling the President, and having the President ask, "When did this happen?" I told him, and he said, "God, you should have called me right then and there. When you're bleeding up on that Hill, Larry, I want to bleed with you." Now that is a good example of his involvement.

There was an affection for Kennedy that grew. First of all, most members of Congress really didn't know Kennedy. He had been there only a short period of time, even though he had been in both the House and the Senate. His absentee record was well known, particularly on the House side. He never really was that interested in the House, and was anxious to move on when the opportunity presented itself. You would find people like Carl Albert, or indeed Mike Mansfield, who didn't know Kennedy intimately, had not had that kind of relationships with him. They knew Johnson intimately and they

had had years of intimate relationship with him. I think that that made a difference, particularly on the Senate side. If you had a group of senators--[Robert] Kerr or [Clinton] Anderson, fellows with a lot of seniority--for a meeting in the White House Jack Kennedy as president was very junior to those fellows and he did not have a close relationship with them. Maybe that caused him to be a little reticent in and urging and pressing and pleading and cajoling. On the other hand, with those same people Johnson had known for a lifetime and had had all kinds of dealings, he had no compunction whatsoever to try to push and shove them.

G: On that meeting in which Mrs. Johnson came in and pled with him to call it a night and come have dinner and let you go home, typically would he be discussing going over some strategy? Was it really a productive session, or was he just, do you think, holding court?

O: No, he could get wound up and it might not by that stage be productive at all. It could be a matter of reminiscences, conversation, projections, and talking about individual members, perhaps.

G: Did you have an impression that he just didn't like to be alone, that he just wanted people around him?

O: Some of it was that, I'm sure. But I think more than that, he was so involved personally. It was almost as though he didn't want to have any sleep because he'd be missing something. He was completely involved. A conversation with Kennedy in my area of involvement would ordinarily not be overly long. You'd present the facts, he would respond accordingly, and that would end it. It would stay with the business at hand. With Lyndon Johnson it could drift off in all directions in terms of the conversation.

An example again: leadership breakfasts. If you take Kennedy and then Johnson, you had the same leaders on Tuesday morning. Each president has had the same briefing from me the prior night for his night reading and then with me prior to breakfast. They would be businesslike breakfasts. You'd go over the program and projections. Now, at a Johnson breakfast--and after all, Johnson attended all the Kennedy breakfasts as vice president--it wasn't long before we were trying to come up with ideas to press the leadership harder. That got to flow charts and progress charts and memos on progress or lack of it, questioning them as to what the program would be the following week. They became more detailed, more intense. Johnson's style was to exert as much pressure as possible, while Kennedy was reluctant to go that distance.

G: How much of this was the result of Johnson's personality and his style on the one hand, as opposed to your own seasoning in the job and the fact that you were each year gaining more experience and--?

O: That was part of it. From the outset--the typical, I guess, O'Brien oversimplification--you're assigned to a job that you know nothing about, to deal with people few of whom you really know, and you are told that under the table of organization

you can have a three-or four-person staff. Well, you didn't have to be very bright to figure out from day one that you needed all the manpower you could develop. You very shortly recognized the sensitivity of what you were trying to do. That was overridingly important. You could commandeer the manpower in the departments and agencies, and you did have a power base in the White House. You could direct what people were going to do and how they were going to work with you, and that included cabinet level. Nobody was interfering with that; you had total support to do that. But by the same token, as you were making those moves and getting into these relationships with the leadership, ultimately leading to joint head counts, you were violating the concept of separation of powers, inherent and historic. And yet you had to get the job done.

Well, Johnson was part of that. He saw it unfold. He'd be at the leadership meetings, he'd be involved all the way. All memos or anything involving legislative struggles, he was privy to. I don't think Johnson ever said to me, "Develop a flow chart." As time went on and you felt more and more comfortable with your relationships on the Hill, your concern lessened about having them bust wide open some morning because John McCormack or Carl Albert or Mike Mansfield or, in the early days, [Sam] Rayburn, would say, "Hey, wait a minute. You don't belong here." That would end it; there was no appeal from that. There were a couple of murmurs from time to time that had to concern you. Well, you'd gone past that. Now you have acceptance of a procedure that nobody was reflecting on being a potential violation. It was an accepted procedure. We were comfortable in the Speaker's office, in Mike's office.

Now you have the Johnson style, and that leads you to be a little more daring. I'm not too sure that the first time we put up the flow charts that those leaders didn't sit at that breakfast and look and probably in their own minds say, "What the hell is this? Who do these people think they are?" I didn't hear any applause for the charts, but there you were, pointing to those charts, "This is what didn't happen last week that should have," and they accepted it.

Johnson loved the charts, and he felt that kind of visual aid, if you will, can have a far greater impact than verbiage. I recognized that, but I wouldn't have dared the first couple of years to attempt something like that.

As we moved along, it became more and more detailed and [there was] more and more pressure. At every cabinet meeting I would be recognized by the President to go over the legislative program. At the Johnson cabinet meetings, I'm devoting more time to going over the legislative program, and I'm getting more personal, talking about the department that doesn't seem to be moving that bill, and then the President [would] pick it up and ask that cabinet member why. All that happened when I became a member of the cabinet was that instead of sitting along the wall and then moving up to the table when it was my turn, I had a seat at the table and it was my turn.

The individual effort expended by Johnson goes to his style. That was his nature. He was reputed to be a fellow that could blow his stack, to use the vernacular, regarding a

member of his staff. Interestingly enough, in all those years I never saw it.

G: Really?

O: Never once. I'd hear about it, and I don't know whether those stories were exaggerated or not. But it never happened in my presence. And I think there was a reason for that. I think with me, and probably other Kennedy people, Johnson wouldn't allow himself to get into that kind of a frame of mind. He would be interested in your wife and that she was included. Elva got to really love Lady Bird, and she was very much involved, which was not the case with Jackie. The situation was considerably different.

G: In summing up this aspect, would it be fair to say that the refinement of your role would not have been as complete if Kennedy had lived and stayed on as president?

O: Yes, well, I don't know whether I'd have ever gotten to flow charts. I don't recall how all this began to unfold, but I'd have to conclude that it was the Johnson participation in the legislative struggles that gave me the nerve to move into the increased pressure being exerted on the leadership, pressure being exerted on the cabinet.

The presidential effort was so extensive, and the presidential style of Johnson was such that if they weren't going to challenge him when he was pushing them around, or trying to, then maybe I could be more aggressive than I had been. It's refining the procedure as months and years went by, and obviously to a great extent it had to do with the personal attitude of the President toward the legislative program and congressional relations activities.

G: Was LBJ less secure as an individual than John Kennedy?

O: Yes.

G: How did this manifest itself?

O: Is it fair to say insecure? I think that when you live with all of this, and you have two men back to back and you're really in the same role with both of them, you're probably there analyzing or evaluating. It just flows. But Kennedy was a fellow who I don't think sought confrontation, but he sure as the devil would never walk away from it. And I rather think that when it occurred, he enjoyed it. And he handled it very, very well. It was a family trait, and we've talked about it.

With Lyndon Johnson, when the press would attack him--you'd get these negative pieces, mean [ones]--his reaction was one of great hurt. But it would reflect itself in conversation, "God, why would that fellow do that to me? I've always treated him well. I thought I was always fair to him. How could he be that unfair to me? It's just terrible." He wouldn't say it in those words, but that's the way he'd come across. He'd dwell on it and it bothered him inordinately. I guess we're all the same in that regard, we all like to be

loved. Maybe it's his outgoing nature that he'd let you know in his own way that he was personally hurt because somebody was attacking him.

Jack Kennedy, in similar attacks--and he got his share of them---his reaction was more to say, "That son of a bitch. Who's he think he is?" He would be more aggressive on the attack, and spout it out with sulfurous language. But he always had that key word that I'd always wait for: "However--what's next?" With Lyndon Johnson it could come up time after time over a period of weeks perhaps, the same, "I still can't understand why he would do that to me. It's so unfair." I don't know, is that a difference of style or just a difference in personality?

G: Do you think part of it could reflect a difference in understanding of the press, that perhaps Kennedy had a more--

O: I don't think so.

G: --realistic attitude toward the press than Johnson?

O: No, I think Johnson felt that he had been kind and considerate and socialized with these fellows, he had done a good job of establishing friendships, and then to have one of them, as he saw it, turn on him, was a terrific affront. While with Kennedy, I think he was more realistic. In his own way, believe it or not, Jack Kennedy was tougher and harder. While he would have the structured press conferences and have the little sessions in the Oval Office with selected press from time [to time], I don't think Kennedy ever considered the press other than [as] worthy adversaries that you dealt with, and you succeeded because you were expert on your side of the table.

The greatest contribution to that was Kennedy, with some reluctance, initiating that new phase of presidential press conferences, and finding from the first press conference that there was a terrific plus factor in it. It gave him confidence in dealing with the press that he was capable of engaging in what is a historic struggle and that he had a lot of confidence in his ability to succeed in it. While it wasn't that press conferences came easy to him--he was thoroughly briefed; he had a slight degree of tenseness in him--as each press conference succeeded the last one, you could see the comfort factor grow.

I don't recall Johnson being inordinately uptight about press conferences, frankly. He had a great concern about his own personal projection, public projection at press conferences, where we got into teleprompters, which set of eyeglasses looked the best, and selecting a pair of eyeglasses backstage before he went on.

G: Did you get involved in this, too?

O: Not really, no. I'll have to tell you, I saw a certain amount of humor in the whole thing. There'd be a fellow with a case of eyeglasses backstage, and it became a big decision as to which pair. No, I didn't get into that. He never discussed his mode of dress with me that I

recall.

And, of course, you work with what you have. Lyndon was a big sort of garrulous fellow and Jack was sort of neat and tidy. (Laughter) Let's face it, we've seen more and more of it since the days of Kennedy and Johnson and the advent of television, going all the way back [to] the Nixon-Kennedy debates, and the realization of that new, rapidly growing medium and what an impact it was going to have and how it would become the single most important vehicle in American politics. It sure has. Of course, it's gone the whole spectrum now; I think there's a certain amount of cynicism about a lot of this. But you have a president, as we're talking, who in that context, addressed the joint session the other night and said nothing, but said it awfully well. I sit and watch him with my wife and, after thirty minutes, my wife is really impressed. I didn't deign to suggest that maybe she and I could discuss what did he say, or what did he--(Laughter). I let that alone, because it's communication.

Tape 1 of 4, Side 2

G: You say this ability of Kennedy's to communicate was not apparent at the outset.

O: No. I think there were times in our smaller meetings, two or three hundred at a Kiwanis luncheon in Massachusetts in those early days when he was thinking of running for statewide office, that you would not have people leave and say, "Wasn't that an impressive performance?" I think that the first indication--and there again it was gut reaction on the part of Kennedy--of what this fellow was capable of was a confrontation with Henry Cabot Lodge in a debate. I remember it very well, because we never saw Henry Cabot Lodge again in the campaign and the three or four debates that were scheduled never took place.

That was Kennedy's strength, and it was his good fortune that it was never detected until after he was president. Hubert Humphrey fell into the trap in West Virginia of debating him, and Nixon fell into the trap. So you have his capacity in one on one--he had complete confidence in himself. Then you add to that his ability to handle press conferences, which were a form of debate, and that's where his strength was. Frankly, if you go back and look at some of the tapes, I'm not sure you'd say in formal speeches there was great oratory.

G: How did Johnson and Kennedy differ intellectually?

O: They came from differing environments, and yet they had really the same sincere commitments. Kennedy was probably--not necessarily, but probably--more of a student. But I didn't see, if you go back over Kennedy's life, any great indications of that. He was involved in writing a couple of books. He was involved as a young guy with the formation of the United Nations. He did travel extensively. He did go to the London School of Economics. He was an above average, but not beyond that, student.

With Lyndon Johnson I don't think you had that kind of involvement. Lyndon Johnson had a clear, total understanding of the impact of a social program on people who were in the lower level economically of society. I think that was a gut, heart feeling he had, because how many times did I listen to Lyndon Johnson talk about the New Deal period and his personal involvement.

Kennedy didn't have personal involvement in that sense, but Kennedy had sought knowledge. There was another element which was reflected in the friendships that Kennedy had. They varied, which was interesting to me. Some of them, a handful, were by way of lasting friendships from school or the service. On the social friends--I don't know whether you describe friends as social friends--of which I wasn't one, they were apt to be in that kind of Harvard style, if you will. Yet on the other hand, intimate friends who he retained for a lifetime were in some instances rough-hewn, interesting guys that I thoroughly enjoyed meeting, although I met them only fleetingly, and those were the people he was in the service with in the PT boat program. He had experienced war and he had experienced a great deal of physical setback. He had physically suffered for many years. He had contained that in terms of anybody really knowing, including me, how much pain and suffering he went through. And that creates a different guy in a lot of ways.

G: After your years working with Kennedy, would you ever be surprised by a decision that Johnson would make, or some of his reasoning or his intellectual thought processes?

O: I don't know as I'd be surprised. I think that there were times, perhaps, when I felt that his personal involvement in legislative struggles had to do with the win and loss column. But I would be brought up short if I thought that.

G: Can you give an example of being brought up short?

O: While there's a pattern of this sort of thing, probably that one instance made more of an impact. It's a little bit like Lady Bird and the sweater that night; that was not unusual but it just stayed in my mind. I've mentioned it before and I'll mention it again. It was the District of Columbia [home rule] battle to try to spring legislation from the Rules Committee. His complete involvement had to transcend win and loss columns. It was gut. It was a strong personal view he had. He wanted to move all civil rights legislation in any form, and he devoted all of his energies to those struggles.

When you got into that sort of thing, there was an added dimension to Johnson's effort. And I think it goes back to his background; he knew the Depression. The age difference was not that great between Kennedy and Johnson, but it bordered on two generations. It was, really, in a sense. All the way from birth to your experiences, your education, your involvement. After all, Kennedy was a product of the eastern prep school, Harvard, and Johnson was the product of a small college in the Southwest, an aide to a congressman, a fellow who worked for a living, and who was enamored with the political process. Both of them were. But from his perspective he came up through the chairs--he,

Johnson--the hard way.

The conversation I had with him when he named me postmaster general underscored that, as he reminisced about his efforts on the Hill. He ran an elevator and then he worked in a congressional office and he cited the comparison to what I had done. I had gone to night law school, I was not part of the Eastern Establishment, I had worked for a congressman as a young guy, I had struggled in the boondocks of politics, in the nuts and bolts of politics. I had worked arduously and I had made a contribution to the legislative program, and it was high time that the record recognize me by title. That was really his whole pitch, and I think he really felt that way, that he and I did have a lot in common, and we did. I was the son of immigrant parents. He wasn't the son of immigrant parents, but his years as a youth and the economic struggle and all was very much comparable to mine.

G: Do you think he had a inferiority complex, particularly around the well-educated Kennedys, the New Frontiersmen?

O: I don't know. It could be. But there again, I couldn't discern that because I wasn't in that category. I don't think that Lyndon Johnson ever looked at Larry O'Brien and said, "Gee, he's one of those Harvard types and comes from money and all this background, and he's had a pretty easy life of it."

G: To what extent did the Kennedy White House, perhaps not the President himself, but the others, regard Johnson as a social or an intellectual inferior?

O: There were those in the Kennedy White House who had a tendency to discuss him in a rather demeaning manner. But when I say "they," there were a couple of them and no more than that. The [Kenneth] O'Donnell-[Pierre] Salinger-O'Brien-[David] Powers White House didn't have that attitude.

G: Really?

O: Let's face it, though. There was a sensitivity to the Vice President's sensitivities.

G: Will you elaborate on that?

O: I think I have in the past. That was a reflection of the President's feeling, and I think again it was underscored by the President's anger when we had a meeting one day and the Vice President wasn't there. He inquired and found that he hadn't been notified. That's an incident, but that was the pattern. So I think you'll find there was a recognition that this big fellow was quite a sensitive guy and you wanted to be very careful not to hurt his feelings or incur his enmity.

G: Did the hostile feelings to Johnson relate to a crudeness in manner or language or--?

O: As I'm responding to you, you probably detect a certain attitude I had toward the Eastern Establishment. And it is troubling, because we did have--not in key roles, incidentally, in the White House--fellows who looked with disdain on just about everybody and everything that wasn't Eastern Establishment. And it happened that in a couple of instances they were able and prolific writers.

G: Okay. Let's go on into some of the issues in 1963. Last time you talked at length about the civil rights bill. I have just a couple more questions about it. First of all, there's an indication that you feared that the civil rights bill would cause a brawl in the Congress that would hamper other legislation. Is that right?

O: Yes. I'm repeating myself, but you can't get away from this because that was the reality of the situation. I think the experience we had at the very outset of the Kennedy Administration in bringing about a change in the House Rules [Committee] had great penetration with us. Even with that five-vote margin allowing us to have consideration of our program, we were going to be walking a tightrope for two years at least, until a midterm election. If we were going to fall off that tightrope and mangle ourselves in the interest of pleasing some people who were supporters of ours, that was a totally unrealistic approach to legislating. Consequently, as the program was pressed, we often discussed the realities of a meaningful civil rights bill and what should go into ensuring that you would have one in due course. That really came to timetables, to testing other comparatively less meaningful legislation and our successes or failures. And we particularly resented the ADA in those days. There were others, too, questioning our commitment or our courage because we were endeavoring to be realists.

It's like Medicare or anything else. We sat there in those first two years envisioning we were going to be there for another six, and envisioning that we're going to get to 1964 and knock the ball out of the park. We're going to be riding high, and we're going to get this whole job done. We're not going to get it done tomorrow or in the next few months. But we've got to establish a record of progress and a batting average that shows we're good at the plate. And if we're going to strike out half a dozen times on major issues right out front, then we might as well pack up our bags and go home.

So I think the resentment went to these fair-weather friends who had no understanding of the process, couldn't care less, and are still doing the same thing and always have: issue their curbstone proclamations and demands. It's the difference between the viewers and the doers.

So that was inherent in what we were attempting to do, and if you look at the timetable and if you look at the efforts expended up to 1963 and then later, we did it the right way.

G: What was Robert Kennedy's role in the 1963 civil rights bill? Do you recall his confrontation with John Lindsay and--?

O: I don't recall that, no. He had a great involvement, but I can't really come up with specifics on it. His involvement was total, which I guess is the only way you could describe it. And remember, just as a sidebar, Bobby was not as patient as his brother Jack at times.

G: Did he anger members of Congress, do you recall?

O: I don't recall him angering members of Congress, but I do recall conversations with Bobby where he felt the Congress should react favorably more quickly than they were, in a number of areas. He found it difficult to hold, not his temper, but himself in in terms of the legislative struggle. He also found it difficult that you had to keep moving inch by inch and that you had all this opposition. It was such a task when right was on our side.

G: Okay. Let's talk about the area redevelopment bill. Do you recall that? This was really transformed from one that was designed for the rural areas to one for urban areas. Do you recall that?

O: Not specifically.

G: Nothing on the area redevelopment?

O: No, I'd have to go back and review that before I could discuss it.

G: Okay, let's talk about foreign aid. You've talked about the opposition of Otto Passman in the previous years. Here you had a 34 per cent cut, the largest in a long time. President Kennedy had appointed a ten-man committee headed by Lucius Clay to advise him on foreign aid, the economic and military programs.

O: The 1963 foreign aid?

G: Yes, I've got some notes on it on pages 9 and 10 there. This was evidently tied in particularly with the Export-Import Bank and the wheat sale to Russia.

O: Yes. Actually, when you look over the discussion of foreign aid that led to this big cut, it follows a pattern. While it goes into differing areas where a cut could be accomplished, the fact remains that foreign aid was something a lot of people wanted to take a meat ax to. And as I've said before, the two legislative proposals that basically had no sex appeal were the debt ceiling and foreign aid. There were no political pluses for members and it was fair game. Public interest in it, if any, was negative. Yet you had a responsibility to continue these programs. I think [with] this particular battle you can underscore the problem by the appeal that Kennedy made to Eisenhower. Eisenhower had lived with foreign aid, too. He had faced up to the same responsibility, only in his day it was the Democrats for the most part leading the fight. So my guess is that Bryce Harlow was involved in communicating with Eisenhower in this area, and it did some additional support.

But my recollections of foreign aid are all negative. I told you that at some stage we decided to break down foreign aid dollar for dollar and see what application could be made, district by district, to try to build friendly member support on a personal basis and give him something that he could use by way of a press release back home to justify his support. You had an impossible situation with it--I assume that was the Eisenhower record on foreign aid and it was the Kennedy record. Both had [Howard] Cannon and Passman. Until such time as you could break that logjam, you were doomed to using all the muscle and all the leadership involvement you could muster, and still, after the smoke settled, your reaction was never one of saying, "Now, we've passed a foreign aid bill." It was more, "My God, we'll get rid of that problem and think about some other things."

I don't think we settled into a position of comfort until Cannon was gone and [George] Mahon replaced him. Mahon wouldn't play Passman's game. But, boy, you had a mess. I can remember, I think it was [Everett] Dirksen, when we had a bipartisan meeting at one stage in the White House, saying, when it ended, "This is a repeat of meetings I attended when Eisenhower was president. The very same thing, word for word almost, and the same name comes up constantly: Otto Passman. We had a meeting that Eisenhower called on this subject. The last thing he said to me was, 'Never, never will I allow Otto Passman to sit and talk to me again. I don't want to ever see him again, and I'm telling you, regardless of whatever happens to foreign aid in the future, I'm not going to go through this with that man.'" And we were exactly in the very same position, and that's why Eisenhower was willing to be of some help. But I was not directly involved in eliciting the Eisenhower help. Maybe this was the one year we did; maybe there was more than one year. But that really should never have been a matter of partisan debate. It deteriorated to a great extent because of one man who chaired the subcommittee and who had one goal in mind: destroy it.

It was a nightmare. Even a John McCormack finally threw up his hands. I remember John saying one day that "This man has lied to me. I can tolerate anything. I've been in this House all my life. But a man abides by his word, and that's the tradition of the House. This man has lied to me." I remember John McCormack being so upset. He'd tolerate anything, but don't lie to him, don't make a commitment, which went to the numbers that were going to be agreed to, if you can't keep it. And Passman turned around and double-crossed him.

It was terrible, frankly, to be dealing with foreign aid and the debt ceiling, because they were so time-consuming. You knew the debt ceiling was going to be raised, but you also had to fight the battle of significant cuts in foreign aid. The debt ceiling would be raised sometime, somewhere, somehow, because the government couldn't function otherwise. Yet you had to go through hell with the opposition to raise the debt ceiling. You devote so much time and effort to something that was inevitable. On the foreign aid side, a man was devastating the program, and what comfort did you get out of passing a foreign aid bill with a 34 per cent cut? It came perilously close to dissolving the program.

I don't think there was a better example of the influence and impact of one member of the House of Representatives at any time I can recall comparable to the Passman influence on foreign aid. You were dealing with an impossible person, a person who intensely disliked the program and, probably just as importantly, had no basic understanding or knowledge of what the program meant or what an effect it had. You were dealing with a person as described by John McCormack, and you're dealing in an area where you have, really, no meaningful constituency.

G: Was there any attempt to remove Passman from a position in which he could--

O: No.

G: --frustrate the administration?

O: No. Seniority was deeply embedded in the House in those days. That would have been a leadership effort. I don't recall any attempt to remove him.

G: Okay. Anything on the test ban treaty, any recollections of that, your involvement with it?

O: No, I wasn't involved in all the effort that brought about the agreement--[Averell] Harriman-[Andrei] Gromyko activities--until it got to the Senate. This was really not a legislative process as you would normally have. By the same token, interestingly enough, it was one of Kennedy's finest hours. He had made a couple of widely noted speeches in this area, and I think the Senate action that followed bordered on unanimity.

G: Yes. Do you think that was partially the result of the effectiveness of the speeches?

O: I think it led up to presentation to the Senate in great shape with a heavy emphasis on presidential leadership.

G: I notice in the case of the civil rights bill in 1963 you were bringing to the President feedback of his speech on the constituents of members of Congress. Did you also do that on the test ban treaty?

O: I think there were, to the best of my recollection, little or no overt, if you will, congressional reactions that were worthwhile. This was almost in a different area. It was followed avidly, but I think that the Senate simply stamped approval of a job well done in presidential leadership and I don't recall any negatives. The civil rights survey was entirely different.

G: How characteristic was that, though, in terms of your monitoring the constituents' reaction to a presidential address?

O: This would be unique.

G: Really?

O: Yes. Normally, when it was going right, anything that the President spoke publicly about that affected domestic programs we would make an effort to monitor and to elicit reactions. In this area, this was really foreign policy and almost non-legislative.

G: Okay, let's talk about the education legislation. This year the administration used a new strategy of submitting an omnibus bill with twenty-five education proposals in one bill. How did this evolve?

O: Well, we found ourselves wallowing to a great extent in the field of education, sort of taking a bite here or there. If you were going to have public support or lobbying support, rather than playing one off against the other, if you could get an omnibus bill where you could bring together the various private sector groups, you'd ensure that each entity had some pluses in the bill. If you could avoid separations, you could have reluctant support for portions of the bill and enthusiastic support for others. And you'd have a reasonably united private sector effort.

You were spread awfully thin in education, approaching it on a piecemeal basis, and how could you get to some sort of consensus on education legislation with the conflicts that existed, i.e., the NEA [National Education Association], the National Catholic Welfare Conference and other various groups. That'd be at least in part a motivating factor.

G: Do you recall who originated the idea in this case to bring it in one bill?

O: If there was one individual that originated the idea, it eludes me. I think it was a consensus that this was good judgment and common sense.

G: [Adam Clayton] Powell introduced the measure in the House but later said publicly that he thought it had only a slim chance of passage.

O: That was our Adam. Adam could say that one day on the spur of the moment, and he might be a different Adam a week or two later.

G: What led you to abandon the omnibus approach and support separate measures?

O: The real world.

G: Really?

O: Yes. It wasn't going to fly. We had given it a whirl, but we were going to have to break it up. They weren't buying.

Tape 2 of 4, Side 1

G: Okay, eventually, though, five major bills were enacted, education bills. Let's talk about the college construction aid bill first. The big issue here was whether or not you would have aid to private institutions as well as public ones, isn't it?

O: Yes.

G: There seems to have been not only disagreement over that, but disagreement over whether or not to allow individuals and institutions to sue to test the constitutionality of it.

O: Well, no matter how you tried, you just couldn't avoid this kind of conflict. It reared its head with regularity, and it's of interest that at least the NEA withdrew its opposition, but only if there was an agreement to a court test. I don't know whether that was progress or not, but I think it's an example in this college construction of the difficulties.

G: There's also an indication that the Senate conferees held up the Senate consideration of the bill because they disagreed with the House conferees on the vocational bill, which was also under consideration, and LBJ was reportedly involved in securing a compromise here. Do you recall that?

O: Well, I recall that we had an inordinate amount of discussion in this whole area, and this was an area of great interest to him.

G: Was it?

O: Yes.

G: How so?

O: I think education generally, and vocational education appealed to him, too. Go back to his background and his own experiences. I found that there were areas of Johnson's interest as vice president. But I found as vice president and president that his interest in the whole field of education was very strong. He was a firm believer that there was a governmental responsibility at the federal level to provide opportunity for education to the fullest degree to every American. The fact is that he was a total believer.

Interestingly enough, and probably for the same reasons, I also felt very strongly about education. I would get caught up emotionally. Obviously you would in civil rights; obviously you would in Medicare. But with civil rights, Medicare, and the general field of education, that's where it extended far beyond a job, as far as I was concerned, or trying to achieve legislative success. As a youth the limit of educational possibilities was so great I had concluded before I ever got to the White House that those opportunities would not be opened without federal involvement and not limited to the state or local level or private sector. It was a little like Medicare. In my family we had actually experienced what the lack of Medicare would do to a family economically. You experience that and the time

comes when you can possibly add a grain of sand, you're motivated even beyond your commitment to a program.

Lyndon Johnson and I had any number of conversations regarding education. With his experience in acquiring an education, my experience in night law school acquiring an education and seeing the effect of lack of education which is still the story today, I think you're apt to be involved beyond the norm. I know I would not have achieved the level of education that I did achieve if there hadn't been a little school on the second floor of the YMCA in Springfield, Massachusetts, where I could go nights and work days.

Let's face it, as you read the stories of the city of New York and see the dropout rate at the high school level, you realize that millions of these kids will never have a chance. It all goes to education. Because of my religion and the sensitivity of people regarding any private or parochial school involvement in these federal programs, I didn't resent it, I understood it. But I was constantly trying to find people who could come up creatively with ideas, forget the religious aspect. Close it out as fully as you possibly can but don't close out every kid in America on religious grounds. There must be some way of providing opportunity in education and not violate the constitution. So that was always in this mix.

We ultimately got to a united effort in the field of education. That was one of the great moments I experienced, sitting in my office doing a head count with the NEA and the representatives of the Catholic Welfare Conference in the same room, working on the same head count.

G: Was this on ESEA [Elementary and Secondary Education Act] or [the] Higher Education [Act]? Which one?

O: It was in lending the textbooks. That was the [Hugh] Carey proposal. It reared its head--the religious aspect of this--at every level. So it didn't make much difference whether you're talking bricks and mortar or you're talking about lending textbooks. Well-meaning people worked arduously on both sides of this issue, and not-so-well-meaning people, of course, opposed you consistently along the route. But I do think in the final analysis we got into a posture, ultimately, of providing some meaningful educational benefits that blurred those lines and didn't cause a constitutional breakdown.

G: On this vocational bill, there was a disagreement between the House and Senate conferees, as I noted, and the House evidently favored a distribution of funds on the basis of population, whereas the Senate wanted to use the per capita income basis. The other difference was evidently in the amount of money to be appropriated. The Senate wanted to appropriate more than the House. Do you recall these differences being adjudicated?

O: Yes, they were compromised. I think it's fair to say that this was an area of involvement on the part of the Vice President. It stems from the conversations I recall he and I had in

the general area and his particular [interest in] vocational education. If you haven't worked with your hands, you've known people that did, in order to have some feel for vocational education. I really think it comes to that; there's nothing esoteric about all of that.

G: I think this was something that LBJ pushed after the assassination. I think he was in the White House at the [time].

O: Yes, I think you're right.

G: I was just trying to remind you of any discussions you may have had with him on this, in arriving at that compromise.

O: No, I don't recall specific discussions. It's rather crass to put it this way, but I recall that efforts were made in a number of areas to get legislative movement in the climate following the assassination. It sounds crass, but I think a somewhat isolated item that had been pending for some time was the [cultural] center in Washington. We were not getting anywhere and yet there was a Kennedy commitment to this. It was a strong one, and he had committees working on it. I remember coming to the conclusion that we ought to name it the Kennedy Center, and that was what was advocated, and it went through the Congress. I don't think that the center would ever have been built otherwise. I felt if he were sitting there, he would have been in total accord. It was a practical, realistic approach.

I cite that as an example of a climate. There was a little more feeling of accommodation, particularly for programs that were in process or were in advocacy.

G: How did you implement this idea of naming it after President Kennedy?

O: It was formalized that we were, effective immediately, advocating a center for the District of Columbia to be named after John F. Kennedy. We'd picked up on the pending proposal and just named it by presidential directive. Now you were dealing with a legislative item with the name Kennedy on it.

G: Did you talk to the family about that at all?

O: No.

G: It does seem like an appropriate memorial.

O: The fact is that it was an eminent fit. It was absolutely appropriate. But the cold reality is that's what assured success which otherwise probably would never have occurred, or if it had it would have been years later.

G: We have the Manpower Training and Development Act for the training of hard-core

unemployed. The Republicans were attempting to reduce the funding for this program, and Sam Gibbons introduced an amendment that would cut the appropriation the same amount but actually very little over the following fiscal year and reserve the cuts farther into the future so that they could be amended later on.

O: Yes.

G: Was this done in concert with the administration, too?

O: Yes, that's right. Actually that's one example of compromise, but sensible compromise. You're right that the motivation for the Gibbons amendment was that we could assure ourselves of first-year funding and that we could always come back. And that blunted the opposition to some extent.

G: Was this a fairly common strategy?

O: Yes. There were all kinds of variations, but that would be a good example of what I like to call the art of compromise.

G: The Gibbons amendment was accepted by a teller vote, about a sixteen-vote margin. This was after it had failed on a standing vote by a very narrow--I think three votes. Do you recall that and how you were able to--?

O: I remember I was up there. There was a lot of movement back and forth from the floor to the Speaker's office during that activity. That was not unusual, but in this instance this was ideal, because you were dealing with standing and teller votes and you could make those moves back and forth across that short hallway to the Speaker's office and prevail on people and talk to them, the Speaker, the leadership, Gibbons, and everyone else. And I believe that is a good example of making the difference.

G: In this case, what would be the difference between a standing vote and a teller vote in terms of putting a majority together?

O: If you fail on standing, you go teller.

G: What is the difference? I mean, they're both unrecorded votes, aren't they? Or was the standing vote a recorded vote in some way?

O: No, the Speaker could declare from the chair.

G: Oh, I see.

O: But if it's overwhelming, you've got a problem. Then there's always an appeal from the floor. And what's interesting to me on all of this is it never went to roll call, in my recollection. It's just normal; the opposition is ultimately going to carry this to roll call. I

was watching one the other day on the floor of the House, and it was clear that they were losers. When they got to roll call they were going to be more significant losers. But they wanted to build a record so they take it to roll call and absorb a lot of time in a losing cause.

In that teller vote, you do have an actual count. You have go to the well, and there is somebody up there with a gavel making a judgment, counting around and saying, "Yep!"

G: But there must have been an actual count on the standing vote, too, wasn't there, or how--?

O: Yes, but you're counting from the podium.

G: I see. It's not as precise as having--?

(Laughter)

O: Yes. And you make your ruling. When you ask for a teller vote, well, you file down and you count it.

G: Is a teller vote more anonymous in that it's harder to tell how a member votes?

O: Yes. It's harder than what, a roll call?

G: Yes. Or how about a standing vote?

O: Yes. With a standing vote, you're not going to be able to tell; it happens too fast. But on a teller vote, in a situation like that, there'd be at least two staff members in the gallery--my staff. And you're going to know. A fellow isn't going to be able to tell you afterwards that he voted for you if he had voted against you in a teller vote, because we were by that time accomplished enough.

G: Now, another difference in this standing vote and the teller vote was the number of people voting was significantly more. What, almost fifty more members?

O: Yes, because you were getting them out of their offices.

G: I see.

O: Sure. Now, in the normal vote, the presiding officer called for a division or a show of hands, really, or a voice vote. You could have forty or fifty people in the chamber. But in those days, it's not like today. The roll call could extend over forty-five minutes and you could hustle in those who hadn't voted, calling their offices. Now, of course, its the electronic procedure, which takes a roll call about fifteen minutes as against forty-five

minutes.

G: Okay, next we have the proposal for a national service corps, a domestic peace corps proposal, and the provision passed narrowly in the Senate but was apparently not brought to the floor, or at least even to the full committee in the House, for fear because of the narrowness of the Senate vote it wouldn't pass. Is this correct; is this the reason, that it wouldn't pass?

O: I don't know if that's correct. It could be. I don't recall it specifically, but that would be a judgment call. The best you've been able to do is move it to the subcommittee level, and you've got a long way to go in the House. Are you going to be able to expend that effort over a period of time or do you move on? That would be a judgment call.

G: But how often did the vote in one house influence what you did in the other house?

O: Not often. It was very unusual. Again, there must have been a hard Senate count to come to this conclusion. And as I say, I don't recall the conclusion, but if that were the case, that would be very unusual. There had to be other aspects to this that elude me at the moment as we review it, because a close Senate vote would not deter us from making a major effort in the House. There's something missing in this.

G: Two Republican senators, [Jacob] Javits and John Tower of Texas, sponsored an antisegregation rider to this provision. Do you recall their motivation for doing so?

O: It would be differing motivation. Jack Javits was unique in the Senate. He had been a Republican House member and Republican senator, because he originally went into politics [by] seizing a Republican nomination that was open in New York and was elected to the House. He was a nominal Republican with an "R" next to his name through his whole career in the Congress, but in reality he was a liberal. And that cost him in terms of influence in the Senate. He was not looked upon with favor by his Republican colleagues, and he was not considered really part of the Democratic liberal wing because he had the "R" next to his name.

Now, in this instance, the Javits amendment would be from the heart. I think that John Tower would be realistic about it and understand how adverse an impact it could make if enacted on final passage.

G: He thought it might kill the bill, if they could get it.

O: Sure. So that was a strange duet in that instance.

G: Aid to medical schools: here the administration substituted a provision for scholarships with a loan program. Do you remember that?

O: I remember it was a feeling that would fly better, because there had been some indication

on the House side in committee that there might be potential for stronger advocacy on a loan program than scholarship. It's the idea that you're going to get the money back someday. However, the record doesn't quite show that. In the field of education, loans have been a troublesome aspect. Yet you can see that in terms of trying to legislate, it's conceivably more palatable to be saying, "Well, we're not just handing dollars to people under a scholarship, but we are simply loaning them the money and we have the legal right to have it returned.

G: Initially the Rules Committee blocked action on the bill with a tie vote.

O: When you have a member absent. The Rules Committee was never one that we didn't have to keep a close eye on, even after we had expanded it.

G: [Howard] Smith and [William] Colmer voted with the Republicans against the bill and--

O: They voted against just about everything, and we just had the eight-to-seven margin. You had to have eight bodies present at all times to--

G: President Kennedy commented that the seven Democrats voted yes.

(Laughter)

Do you recall that statement that he made?

O: Yes. That statement was widely publicized, and it was quite accurate.

G: Was there any reaction to it on the Hill?

O: No, not really, because, you could make a statement like that without fear of adverse reaction. The record was very clear.

This reminds me of a senator that I hadn't thought about for a long time--Lister Hill. He was a committed fellow for whom we had great admiration. I say that because taking some of the positions that he did, particularly in this field, weren't necessarily reflective of his constituency. It's interesting because while some names come readily to memory, there are others that don't. Seeing the name Lister Hill just jogged my memory. You know, the guy was a big help at times and he was a statesman.

G: Here you also had the question of whether or not to separate this measure from the other educational provisions, and some of your supporters objected to it, presumably because it wouldn't help the other ones pass if it were not part of the same package.

O: In the ebb and flow of the legislative process, that's the way it worked. You go back to the beginning and you're talking omnibus. Then you're ultimately talking about splits, but what you're really talking about is the art of the possible. Those are judgment factors, and

those judgments are made as the story unfolds. If you had stayed wedded, you would have gone with an omnibus bill and gone down to defeat and said, "Okay, that's that. We'll try again." But if you're on the salvaging side, you look over the elements that were enacted. You have pretty good progress there, even though your initial idea was to have it omnibus. Yet that didn't work.

G: Okay. Medicare. You wrote in your book that just before the assassination Henry Hall Wilson reported that an accommodation had been reached with Wilbur Mills, thereby allowing the Medicare bill to go forward. Do you recall that in more detail? Can you--?

O: That's about as detailed as I can make it because Henry, as we had planned as part of our continuing effort, had this scheduled meeting. He told me after the fact that he had endeavored to contact me and then failed, obviously, to give me the good news so I could relay it. But contact wasn't made at that time.

G: Was it the same formula that later allowed the bill to pass?

O: Yes, basically. It was a significant turn. When he initiated that call, I'm sure Henry was beside himself with joy. It unfolded basically that way, but the coincidence stayed in my mind and Henry's mind.

G: Did you feel during the course of that year that Mills was flexible or that there was a possibility--?

O: It was hard to tell with Wilbur. I think if--and this is a big if, obviously--you had not had to cope with [the] Kerr-Mills [Act], it probably would have been an easier road. But having Kerr-Mills in place, the pride of authorship created additional difficulties. We've discussed before Clint Anderson's and others' efforts to try to resolve this in conference at one time. You had to almost get to the point of Mills concluding that Kerr-Mills wasn't effective.

And you're asking a lot. You have the early-on power of the American Medical Association. You had Kerr-Mills as a stopgap effort to divert a major national effort. That was the motivation of Kerr-Mills. But when we had become acquainted with Mills--let's put it that way--and as time went on, we had quite a road to travel to get Mills to the position he had taken with Henry that day. But I always recall that--and this was consistent throughout in our dealings with Wilbur Mills--he would not allow a bill to go to the Rules Committee and the floor without being totally assured of passage. And our head-counting on Ways and Means legislation was as intensive as any head-counting, because it was subject to very careful scrutiny by Mills.

There were two problems with Mills: one, to change his mind, and two, to assure him of adoption. But the other side of that coin was we always respected and understood, too, that you had assurance of passage with Mills as the floor leader. He invariably would have a closed rule. Thus, the major effort took place prior to floor action on a Mills bill,

or a Ways and Means bill.

Now the first and obviously major step was to motivate Mills to develop a growing interest in the legislation. Wilbur Mills was not about to allow anybody else to lead the parade if there was going to be one. I respected all of that. Mills was as bright a fellow as there was in the House, as knowledgeable as any committee chairman in the House on legislation in his domain, and as hard-working a chairman as there was in the House. So he was among a handful of members of the House who it was absolutely essential to have in your corner. However, don't sit around dreaming that you're going to run over Wilbur Mills. That was totally understood by presidents and staff.

When we were talking about educational legislation and the religious problem, it was conceivable that you could go on and on and not have meaningful educational legislation because of that problem. It isn't inevitable that you're going to resolve it to the extent that you have something meaningful. In Medicare it was different. We had felt for a long time that it was inevitable, and that the AMA did not have the muscle or the strength to block Medicare. Whether it was next month or next year, it ultimately was going to happen. That included Mills, being the practical, realistic guy he was. The time would come when he would have it our way.

G: Alluding back to the pride of authorship, did Senator Kerr's death that year affect the legislation?

O: I don't know that it did. You mean did it affect Mills' attitude?

G: No, the chances of passage in the Senate, let's say.

O: It's like civil rights. We felt in the final analysis that the chance of passage in the Senate would be greatly enhanced by first having passage in the House, and once you had that you were going to achieve ultimate success. With Mills aboard and House passage, Kerr was not going to stop the ultimate victory in this.

Much has been written about Mills, some of it negative because of Mills' activities of a later date. From time to time Wilbur and I have a chance to say hello; it's on rare occasions now. But he was one of the most unusual members of Congress who I was ever exposed to. He had an impact on the Congress to a degree far extending beyond being chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. That was to change with his successor. His successor didn't control or [have the] hold on that committee and on the House of Representatives that Mills had. Wilbur is still practicing law in Washington.

G: Oh, is he?

O: Yes. Still admired greatly in the Congress, in the Treasury Department. And as you know, once he got over his personal problem, he has devoted the last number of years, on a voluntary basis, to trying to be helpful to people who have a similar problem. He travels

the country speaking with no fees trying to help.

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G: --and we have the Hill-Harris bill, and a five-year program of matching grants for construction and staffing of community mental health centers. Here the staffing issue was a hurdle. Do you recall that?

O: I thought it might have been related to the Senate action, the Javits amendment denying funds for segregated facilities, but I don't think it probably had any relationship to that. I really don't know what the staffing problem was.

G: How about the Reorganization Act?

O: That aroused concern to some extent from the previous action involving Bob Weaver.

G: Did you have a sense on the Hill that this was an obstacle?

O: Yes. The way the President announced who would fill the role really positioned a lot of people. And I think there was fallout that was somewhat lasting, and there were certain resentments. Of course, it was a sensitive area and continued to be, even when we're talking about the Javits amendment. You know, you have amendments constantly being defeated that would try to eliminate segregation but you hadn't reached that point yet.

You want to create a new department, and then [when] you advise people who will be appointed to head that department, you get into a racial situation. Bob Weaver was carefully selected; no one could attack him on competency. So you get into a basic reorganization, and you get into conflict. And [it] came back to haunt you in a sense; I guess that's the only way to describe it. So you didn't get very far with it.

G: How about the mass transit bill?

O: I think actually, as is pointed out, the [Wayne] Morse amendment was very interesting, and I think it was interesting that it passed, under the circumstances. In any event, you had Senate enactment, and while you could press the House leadership to put a bill on the calendar, you could press them just so much. If there was a leadership feeling that the bill couldn't fly and you didn't have proof positive to the contrary, then there were times when you'd accept the leadership's decision. In this case, their decision was accepted. There must have been some overriding reasons for it, otherwise the leadership would have moved with the bill anyway. It wasn't a matter of reluctant leadership, it was a matter in this case of a leadership decision that was based on reality. But that was it; that was the end of the road for that battle at that time.

G: Okay, the settlement of the rail dispute, do you remember that?

O: Yes, there were efforts made with labor to try to set this aside for a while. There were efforts to get a concurrence on arbitration, and what it amounted to was that you were trying non-legislatively to bring about a resolution of this. You know, Wayne Morse played a key role in this.

G: This was the first time that Congress imposed compulsory arbitration to settle a dispute in peacetime. What did Morse do, do you recall?

O: I'm trying to recall why Morse was so opposed. There was a lot of contact with Morse during that period and I don't have the handle on what the motivation was, other than Wayne Morse not needing a lot of motivation at times to be involved. The name Wayne Morse just permeated the atmosphere through this whole process. In any event, the effort succeeded, and it was strange to have two votes in opposition: Tower and Morse.

G: Yes. It's an odd match.

O: There were times when Wayne could get pretty far afield, but there was no question about it, he was an aggressive, articulate member of that Senate. That didn't make him a powerful member of the Senate, however. He marched to his own drummer, and we never felt we had a real handle on Wayne Morse. If it happened to coincide that he favored something that we favored, then you had a staunch advocate and probably at times too much advocacy. When he opposed you, he was a staunch opponent, and generally over the long haul you would find that he overplayed that hand, too. He didn't seem to be able to deliver on his positions, and it could be aggravating.

In this instance, whether it was in principle or whether there was some other motivating factor, I don't recall. But I do recall that Morse was very much in the forefront of this whole struggle and debate. He became very much a minority in opposition, as the roll call shows.

G: How did Morse's relationship with President Kennedy differ from his relationship with LBJ after the assassination?

O: I don't recall that it differed. Morse was insistent and persistent actually, in being out front in any legislative matter of interest to him. There might be times when it would coincide with our position and there were times when it didn't. But Wayne was a victim of his own style. I did reflect in detail on his problems with Congressman [Michael] Kirwan regarding projects in Oregon and the price that Morse had to pay. But in the final analysis we had to pay, in order to resolve the situation, when we became mediators between a senator and a powerful congressman.

Wayne at another time was interested in becoming president and ran in the Maryland primary, supported by the Teamsters.

G: Did he and Johnson get along well?

O: I don't recall anything unique about their relationship.

G: They had served together in the Senate.

O: That wouldn't impact on Wayne Morse. He had his own views, his own ambitions, and his own view of his role. Basically, Wayne Morse was a liberal who under most circumstances would be supportive of your programs. And when you got into something like this, he was a problem.

G: Johnson seems to have been less irritated by Morse's defections than those of other senators. Is this true or--?

O: He'd be accustomed to them.

G: Really? Because they happened more often or--?

O: No, I think that prevailing upon Wayne on a personal, one-on-one basis would not be similar to trying to prevail upon most members of the Senate. Wayne was a different breed of cat and the usual efforts of persuasion would not be effective with Morse. Obviously Johnson understood Morse very well and realized that you had to take him as he came.

G: Did you have any strategy for appealing to Morse yourself, or working with him?

O: No, we've run into that one situation which I thought would have brought Wayne Morse onto the train for the duration. But that was just wishful thinking. In that situation you had Morse directly pleading with the President to intervene, to resolve a problem he had created himself. We did intervene, and in actuality Mike Kirwan never would have changed his view without us, because his affection for Jack Kennedy was tremendous and our relationship with him was a very warm one. He had his eccentricities, but he was a team player. But he also was very proud of his role as an important member of Congress, and no senator was going to impose upon him. I think once the problem had been resolved, Wayne went about being Wayne Morse as usual.

G: You also had the extension of the temporary feed grain program. The bill passed in the House by a vote of 208 to 94 with all of the Republicans opposed, and in the Senate by a ten-vote margin after the Republicans attempted to amend it. Norris Cotton tried to filibuster it but could only get three senators to support him. Do you recall the give and take here?

O: Other than Dirksen's role, to shut off debate. Javits once again, you'll note, contemplated an amendment, a civil rights amendment, which had become a pattern with Javits over this period. He either made such a motion or contemplated making such a motion on a number of legislative proposals. He had established that to draw attention to segregation

at every opportunity. In this instance he refrained from presenting the motion, as the record shows, because of the nature of the legislative proposal. I think the most interesting aspect that was the farmers rejected it by referendum after all that effort. (Laughter) This was the first time, I guess, historically, that [had happened].

G: Really?

O: Yes. We had gone through the effort and the farmers rejected it.

G: The first major House action after the assassination was on the cotton subsidy bill--

O: Yes.

G: --and McCormack, who reportedly pressured urban Democrats to show support for the President.

O: Now--I had referred to it before--you're in the post-assassination period, and this reflects it. Even the passage in the House and the way it was handled in moving it to the floor reflects the leadership position that there was some value in urging support for the new President, and it was shown in the roll call. But by the same token, the Senate took no action other than routine hearings.

G: Okay, let's talk about some appointments. Any insights you have on these: first, John Gronouski replacing Edward Day as postmaster general. Do you recall why Gronouski was selected?

O: There were two aspects of this. I think I had made reference to the problems with Edward Day not understanding team role of a cabinet member. Ed came out of the business community--he was an officer of a major insurance company, an early supporter of Jack Kennedy and a long-time friend of Adlai Stevenson, which made his support of Kennedy all the more impressive at Chicago--and it was our desire to have a business-type member of the cabinet.

This was either the last or near the last appointment made to the cabinet, and there was a lot of scurrying around to secure that appointment. I became awfully concerned about some people who were being urged upon Kennedy as postmaster general. I believe it was a state senator in California who was in the forefront, and it was anticipated that he would be named postmaster general. This would take care of a geographical balance. In fact the governor, Pat [Edmund] Brown, had actually prematurely announced the appointment of this man.

It was my view, shared by Ken O'Donnell, that this was not an appropriate appointment. I think it fell back to Ed Day on the basis of our conversations and going to the President at the last moment and saying, "We have a Californian who is a business type, who was an early supporter, and this fellow fits the requirements." A call was placed

to Ed Day, who had no knowledge of any of this and was not a candidate. He was asked to get on the first plane he could, as the President-elect wanted to talk to him. The result was that Ed Day came to Washington, was offered the postmaster general position and accepted it. That satisfied me because I felt it was, whatever my motivations, a more rational approach to finalizing the cabinet appointments.

It wasn't long before Ed Day felt there was an inordinate amount of White House involvement in the activities of the Post Office Department. I think he was taken aback when he was advised that certain people would be named as assistant postmasters general. He was taken aback when he was advised there would be a basketball stamp that I urged upon him.

G: Was he seriously--?

O: Yes, because he couldn't see any justification for it. But he was advised that we would have a basketball stamp. In fairness to Ed Day, he had not been exposed to this sort of thing. He was not a politician and he had little understanding of how the game is played. He became disenchanted. I don't know how long he served, but it was not a long period. In fact, you have 1963, September, that Gronouski was confirmed. He was appointed, certainly, well prior to that, which brings you to the length of time that Ed Day [served]--a couple of years. He became disenchanted and laid down the gauntlet that either he was going to run the Post Office Department without anybody involved or he wasn't going to stay. And that was his decision.

So it came to, again, the political factors. A Polish-American was not highly visible in the administration. John Gronouski had achieved a considerable degree of recognition in Wisconsin. He checked out very well, he became high on the list rather quickly, and we were unanimous about him. And John became postmaster general on two counts: one, he was a highly respected and highly regarded fellow, and, second, he had a Polish name which we felt was politically helpful. So putting them both together, it seemed to be a very easy appointment to make, noncontroversial, and that's what it turned out to be.

G: How about Henry Cabot Lodge as ambassador to South Vietnam?

O: Well--

G: An old adversary.

O: Yes. Vietnam, even at that stage, was troublesome. It was growing in concern with the President and the White House, and this [appointment] was the President's idea. He thought back to Henry Cabot Lodge, and the President thought it would be good to have a highly visible Republican as ambassador. He mentioned it to me, and we concluded it was a great idea but that Henry Cabot Lodge would not accept it. In any event, the President called him in and to the President's surprise, Lodge accepted. Lodge was a very

decent fellow who had a sense of public service and obviously reacted to Vietnam as a challenge and an opportunity. Our prior judgment was that the fellow would not allow himself to be dragged into this mess, but he did, and he became ambassador.

He wasn't there very long when he decided that the election process should be undertaken in a very democratic manner and you should work on stabilizing the government, I received a call saying that Lodge had, through the State Department, initiated a request that I be assigned to join him in Vietnam. I received this call, I remember, on a Sunday morning; it was either Averell Harriman or Dean Rusk. Dean Rusk, of course, was knowledgeable regarding it, and it was agreed that we would put a quietus on that in a hurry, that that [request] made no sense. I wasn't about to follow Henry Cabot Lodge to Vietnam to organize the political process.

G: Did he want you in order to organize a campaign or to oversee an election or--?

O: Yes, all of that. As it turned out, Lodge had become impressed with my abilities in those areas, and he thought it would be ideal if I would be working with him in this great effort. But it died aborning and the President never made reference to it with me.

G: When the President was discussing the possibility of appointing Lodge, did he weigh also the merits of the appointment in terms of Lodge's abilities, or was it--?

O: Yes, he was comfortable with Lodge and his experience in government. The most intriguing aspect of it was that Lodge was a Republican and a highly visible one. No one would suggest, "How could you ever come up with the idea of sending Henry Cabot Lodge to Vietnam?" People would say, "He's a respected public figure, he's known to be a Republican moderate, he achieved a good record of public service--." That was our problem, incidentally, in running against him in the first instance. It was hard to attack Lodge on his record, because his record reflected Massachusetts in those days. He had been defeated by Kennedy for the Senate, but he had also been the candidate for vice president. I don't know of anyone else that would have been superior to him on the record.

But that's how it came about, and the only surprise factor is that he would accept it, because it was a difficult assignment, if not bordering on the impossible.

G: How did you derail his request to have you go out there?

O: It ended with that phone call--it might have been two calls; it might have been both Rusk and Harriman. But one or the other or both were kind enough to alert me that this request had been made, and if it had gone any further I would have declined. But it never did come to any point of discussion and it was just dropped out of hand.

G: Anything on Homer Thornberry's appointment to a judgeship?

O: Other than the combination of Homer's very close friendship with Lyndon Johnson that went back for a long time, coupled with his general interest in leaving Congress and going on the bench. Homer was a very thoughtful member of the House. I found him a very pleasant person to deal with, and there were any number of occasions when he was helpful to us. I knew that Lyndon Johnson thought very, very highly of him and they were very close.

Incidentally, he was selected to swear me in as postmaster general, which he did, on the basis of Johnson's friendship with him and also my friendship with him.

G: Why did he want to leave Congress?

O: I don't know. That's not unusual, to leave Congress to go on the federal bench. I think you'll find there's a record of a number of those appointments over many administrations. I think if you have an inclination to leave and try something else, either go back and seek higher office or go to the federal bench, if you're still interested in the public service aspect.

G: Was it normally, do you think, tied to desire not to seek re-election, or if someone thought they were going to have a difficult race, that this was a way to continue to serve without going through those elections?

O: It could be that. I remember a fellow, [Abner] Mikva, in more recent times who became a member of the federal bench. He was a congressman from Illinois. He was very much interested in public service, a very bright and able fellow. If the opportunity presented itself, he'd rather serve on the bench than serve in the Congress. Now, there could be a question of a close election, and there have been times, I can't point to one right now, when former members of Congress have been appointed to the bench. Let's face it, it's basically a patronage situation, and it's a high level of the judiciary. It's rather an interesting area of lifetime service and you don't have to be concerned about campaigns.

G: How about the ambassadorships? You had Carl Rowan appointed ambassador to Finland.

O: All I can say about Carl Rowan is that he had a long-time relationship with Lyndon Johnson, long before Johnson was in the White House or vice president, as I remember. I didn't know Rowan well. But I did know that the Vice President held him in high regard. In fact, I believe Carl Rowan did some work over the years in speech writing and assignments on commissions. But he was a fellow who everyone agreed was eminently qualified for this post. I don't recall any controversy at all about that.

G: George McGhee, to West Germany?

O: I'm not familiar with that.

G: How about Chester Bowles replacing Ken Galbraith?

O: Chester Bowles was a highly regarded elder statesman who had the financial resources and the desire to continue in public service and was ideal for that kind of a role. It wasn't political debt, it was just a man who would be widely accepted in that role.

G: FDR, Jr., [as] under secretary of commerce?

O: We owed him. Not to go through the whole West Virginia primary again, the fact was that he was a great asset to us in West Virginia. We were, as I've said before, very alert to and sensitive to the affection and respect for the Roosevelt name throughout West Virginia. You could hardly go into a store or a home or an office without seeing a picture of FDR. FDR, Jr., joined us early on in the difficult period of that primary, and if he was interested we'd like to recognize his contribution in some form.

G: Okay, you had some military positions. George Anderson was not reappointed as chief of naval operations, and Curtis LeMay was reappointed as chief of staff of the air force for one year rather than the customary two, and both of these men had disagreed with Secretary [Robert] McNamara in congressional hearings. Was this a case of disciplining two military figures who had been outspoken against the administration?

O: It was a case of accommodating the Secretary of Defense.

G: Really?

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O: We were realistic enough to understand that the military was not going to conform totally with the views of the president. They had the same attitude you found to a great extent in the federal service, that presidents come and go. It would be disturbing to the secretary of defense to have someone go to the Hill and disagree with the secretary. That was our code. You could disagree with the secretary in the privacy of the secretary's office, but what we applied to civilians we didn't attempt to apply to the military. However, our code was that if you were in disagreement with the President, and his positions are overridingly contra to your views, you had no problem. You resigned.

But in the military it's somewhat different, obviously. But that did not mean a person in the military was totally forgiven. That really was a reflection on the White House and, as we saw it, his loyalty to the commander in chief. Obviously I was aware of that and aware of the feelings that existed in the White House and the Defense Department. So this was a form of chastisement.

G: Did these two men have support on Capitol Hill? Did you catch any flak on the Hill or get any opinions from--?

O: I don't remember any great flak on the Hill, because it's not a usual situation for civilians in

the political world to extend themselves inordinately in support of military people. You don't have the same zest for fray that you would if this were some political figure who was being affected. And, of course, we know about Curtis LeMay in another context at a later date.

G: Let me ask you about the TFX investigation. Here the Government Operations Permanent Investigating Committee in the Senate had been looking into this for most of the year. Did you have any insights on the awarding of that contract and pressures?

O: Not on the awarding of it. I was familiar with the controversy and the whole [Roswell] Gilpatric-Fred Korth aspects of it. They were, I always felt, somewhat victims of that in terms of a very exaggerated effort to claim conflict and to muddy the waters. And there were conversations about the two of them, involving people on the Hill; I was not directly involved. That was really a battle between titans.

It's worth noting, though. I bracketed Gilpatric and Korth, and my memory's been jogged. The accusations regarding Korth were of a much more serious nature, much more serious than Gilpatric. And of course the aftermath of it is that Fred Korth resigned.

G: Anything on Lyndon Johnson in this connection?

O: No, not that I recall.

G: Let's talk about the Bobby Baker investigation. Here you had someone that had been in the employment of the Senate for a long time.

O: Yes.

G: Did you have the feeling when you were working with the leadership in those years that Bobby Baker was misusing his position?

O: Let me track the Bobby Baker situation as I saw it. When I first became acquainted with the Senate, Bobby was front and center. He had continued the same role with Mansfield that he had with Johnson. He was reputed to be the most knowledgeable person regarding the Senate, its makeup and the characteristics of each of the members. He was a fountain of information, and he conducted head counts, jointly with us. I think the role of Baker would be underscored when, as I recounted, having dinner at the Vice President's home one night with Baker and his wife along with Jack Brooks and his wife, and the evening's discussion indicated clearly to me how key Bobby Baker was in the Senate.

You'd be in the Majority Leader's inner office discussing a legislative proposal, head counting, possible amendments, scheduling, anticipating absentees and Baker was very much involved. I recall vaguely that Bobby, to maintain his relationships, would have all kinds of contact with senators in all kinds of ways. I recall that Bobby invited me to participate in a Sunday picnic, but for whatever reasons, I didn't attend. And that was the

closest to having any involvement with Bobby Baker off the Hill.

The time came when the Baker situation was percolating. The initial stories were causing concern regarding Bobby. I was not aware at the time of what motivated the President, but at some point in a conversation I was having with the President, he started to question me regarding Bobby Baker, whom he also knew, obviously.

G: This is President Kennedy?

O: Yes. It was a discussion that led to, "Well, how often do you see him off of the Hill?" "Not at all." I was a little bit apologetic about one event that Bobby put on that I had neglected to participate in, because that would have been part of congressional relations. I didn't think much of it one way or another. All I thought was that the President was reflecting a keen interest in Bobby Baker, motivated more by curiosity than anything else.

At a later date the President mentioned it to me again, and then told me about a fellow who had come to him to suggest to him--he was a journalist--that I had a relationship with Bobby Baker that should be looked into. The journalist was a friend of Kennedy's, and I thought a friend of mine, but whatever his motivation was, clearly it was to reflect on me without any evidence to sustain it. So it wasn't a matter of having to explain anything or apologize for anything and the whole matter was dropped. But I think the President felt that after he had had that first conversation with me he owed me an explanation. It wasn't that significant, but it was disturbing after the President revealed to me why he had questioned me.

Bobby ultimately paid the price, and wrote a book in the process. If I had been associated with Bobby Baker for six or eight years rather than a relatively brief period of time, I probably would have gotten to know him much better than I really did know him. It would have been a very natural evolvement to have social contact, but it just hadn't happened.

He was a very unusual fellow. He had built a strong base in the Senate. He was a caretaker of senators, which is part of the role. He was very sensitive to their travel needs, their habits and attendance or lack of it. They would oftentimes go to Baker and say, "Maybe we don't have to have the vote on Tuesday on this because I have to be in Cleveland." Then adjustments would be made, and protection of their record in the Senate. It was quite a role, and a role that had evolved, I assume, over the years, and it's interesting because his successor was a professional. He was a fellow who actually did the job as the job is outlined in the job description, and without any extracurricular involvement.

G: Baker evidently used a little more imagination in the job.

O: Yes.

G: Do you think the administration was aware of Baker's activities before the roof caved in on him?

O: You mean the Kennedy Administration?

G: Yes.

O: No. First of all, Kennedy as a member of the Senate never became that well acquainted with Baker. He wouldn't be in Baker's province, in that sense. Baker played the strength of the Senate, the power structure, so Kennedy would know Baker, obviously. He might have contacted him to say, "I'm going to be absent. Could we vote some other [time]?" But he didn't know him intimately and had no preconceptions about him any more than any of us did. On the Kennedy side, none of us had had any involvement with Bobby. Obviously, in the campaign we had no involvement with him because he was one of Lyndon Johnson's field men. So we really didn't know him.

G: There apparently was some degree of investigation and information from the Justice Department and the FBI regarding Baker's supplying senators with hideaways for their mistresses, and things like that in the Senate. Did this come to your attention or the administration's?

O: No. It seems to me if that information was available to the Attorney General prior to all the public disclosures on Bobby, it either would have been made known to me or it damned well should have been made known to me. In any event, I never heard of anything. My guess is that whatever the Justice Department learned was all part of the investigation that broke early on with a connection with some company. I think, also, there would have been a responsibility on the part of the Justice Department to advise the Majority Leader if they had had any knowledge.

G: Well, I think perhaps they did discuss it with Mansfield--

O: They might have.

G: --but I don't know.

O: I don't know at what stage they would have.

G: You know, there's a theory, particularly among Johnson supporters, that Baker hadn't really gotten into a lot of this trouble when Johnson was still majority leader because he was kept so busy by Johnson that he didn't have time to do all the extracurricular stuff. That Mansfield had a more passive, less aggressive style of leadership and therefore Baker had more free time to use this imagination of his. Do you think there's any validity to that?

O: That could have been, I suppose. I can see that Mansfield's style differed from Johnson's

style as majority leader, and that might have afforded Baker some spare time. But I don't know, because if there was ever a straight arrow, it was Mike Mansfield. I can testify to that in all my dealings with him. I think that Mansfield inherited Baker passively. Baker had the job and he wouldn't throw him out any more than he would demand the majority leader's office and ask that the Vice President remove himself from it.

G: How about Baker's law practice? Did you ever get any sense that he was using his private practice--?

O: I'm not sure I was even aware he had one.

G: Really?

O: I have no recollection. Did he have a private practice?

G: He had a law office, apparently. But you didn't see any conflict of [interest]?

O: Supposedly the position he held in the Senate was full time. I assumed that was the case, and if he had a law office I wasn't aware of it.

G: Getting back to his association with Senator Kerr and also his handling of campaign funds, political funds, there's some evidence that that money that he had, a hundred thousand, three hundred thousand [dollars], whatever it was, that it was actually campaign funds that he was distributing to various senators. Is this plausible, do you think?

O: I don't know; I don't even recall that, frankly. I was trying, when you posed the question, to recall who the chairman was of the Senate Democratic Campaign Committee at that time. I don't even remember that. Do you?

G: Was it still Earle Clements, do you think? Or was this after Clements?

O: No, I think it was after Clements. Russell Long?

G: Maybe so.

O: Russell Long was chairman at one point. What his role was with the fund-raising aspect of the Senate Campaign Committee and how money was raised and distributed, I have no knowledge.

G: Did the administration see the Bobby Baker scandal as making Lyndon Johnson vulnerable in terms of the ticket?

O: I don't think so. I think the Bobby Baker scandal, as it was so-called, had no adverse impact as we saw it on Lyndon Johnson. It certainly didn't impact on us.

G: There were discussions that fall with regard to the 1964 campaign, and you participated in a meeting on November 13, 1963, with the campaign group. I think Steve Smith was there, and RFK, and [Theodore] Sorensen, O'Donnell, [John] Bailey, [Richard] Maguire, and [Richard] Scammon, to discuss the 1964 campaign. Do you recall that and what--?

O: Yes. Sure.

G: Let me ask you to talk about that meeting and what you remember about it.

O: We met informally to discuss the possible timetable to start seriously considering the 1964 election. The time had come and we would be carrying on the same campaign in 1964 as we did in 1960 with the same cast. Scammon would be there because of his expertise on polling and registration. I don't recall it as an intense meeting or a meeting with an agenda, for if there had been an agenda it would have been my job to produce it. It was a reasonably relaxed situation. Things were looking fine, the polls looked good, but we as always would not take anything for granted, and it would be necessary by the first of the year to start implementing our campaign re-election organization. We would get to that over the holidays.

That was basically what the meeting was about. If it were any more than that I would be as sensitive, if not more sensitive, than anybody in the room as to the subject matter and the requirements for the future. It was construed by some, as an organizational meeting. It was construed by me as conversation of a general nature, and we would in rapid order be getting into the nuts and bolts of putting a campaign together.

G: Were there any decisions about the 1964 convention itself, where it would be held or anything like that?

O: I don't recall.

G: Was it decided that Steve Smith would head the campaign or actually run things?

O: I don't know about formalization. Steve's role in the prior campaign had been basically a fund-raising role. Steve monitored expenditures, monitored the fund-raising aspects of the campaign, and became involved directly in expenditures in terms of purchasing television time. That role would probably have been formalized in 1964 by Steve being designated chairman, because my best recollection is that Steve at that point had left the administration.

G: Yes.

O: He would be the obvious person in the room who could be designated in the campaign context, who was not involved in the administration and, therefore, who would not stand accused of participating in a campaign while on the federal payroll sort of thing.

G: Was there any discussion at that meeting of changing the ticket for 1964 and not having Lyndon Johnson as a running mate?

O: No. If anybody mentioned that I don't recall it, and if anyone did, I would have thought they were a little bit off the wall. I never had any doubt in my mind about what the ticket would be in 1964. There were others who claim otherwise and have written otherwise, but it's just not factual.

G: Did you ever hear any substantive discussion to the effect that Johnson wouldn't be on the ticket or shouldn't be on the ticket, by the White House?

O: No.

G: Did you on the other hand hear discussion that he would be on the ticket?

O: I don't think I heard either way. That meeting was the first to focus on a 1964 campaign. There were people who were not keen about Lyndon Johnson and were not very realistic in political terms, who were part of the administration, as I've indicated before. Those people weren't in that room.

G: Did you have any indication that Johnson might not want to run again in 1964?

O: No.

G: That he might want to retire?

O: No. I don't know how disenchanted Lyndon Johnson was with the office of vice president. I say disenchanted because I can't envision a vice president not being somewhat disenchanted. Hubert Humphrey was to some degree. I'll bet every fellow who's ever held the post has found it a rather difficult area to function in, but how deep that was in the then-Vice President's thought process I have no idea. He certainly never indicated anything to me along those lines.

G: Anything on the indictment of Jimmy Hoffa that year, in June?

O: No, that was out of my area. All I knew on the Jimmy Hoffa situation went back to the antagonism between Hoffa and Bobby, back to the [John] McClellan Committee, back to Bobby's activities as attorney general, and the role of Edward Bennett Williams representing Hoffa. But the Hoffa matter and Bobby's role in it did not relate to the legislative process at all and never became entangled with it or had any impact on it.

(Interruption)

G: Let me ask you a little bit about South Vietnam in the fall of 1963. You had in November the assassination of [Ngo Dinh] Diem and his [brother]. Do you recall that and the

reaction to it on the Hill and in the White House?

O: Yes. By that time, and the assassination underscored it--that's why I hope I'm reasonably accurate in my recollections--contrary to the prevailing view historically, there was a rapidly growing concern regarding Vietnam in the White House. It was not, as I recall, reflected particularly on the Hill. There weren't any great demands being made or expressions of deep concern. That came much later.

There had been a growing involvement in Vietnam on the part of the Kennedy Administration. It was reflected a little, I think, in increased troop strength. There was a feeling of uneasiness on the part of those directly involved, and this continued right on to the end of the Kennedy period. It's not therefore accurate to suggest that Kennedy had made a decision to extricate himself from Vietnam, nor had he made a decision to escalate. But clearly there was concern, because somehow things weren't working out as anticipated even then.

That was internal in the administration, and I don't recall any increasing concern or expressions of serious concern on the part of the Congress. That was the climate at that point. I think the significant part of Kennedy's motivation in getting Lodge to Vietnam was the way I described it--he was concerned about retaining bipartisan support, he was concerned that bipartisan support be highly visible. It is something that I can't carry on beyond that because it was having, at least in my recollection, no effect on my activities in terms of the Congress and the domestic program. It didn't relate.

McGeorge Bundy was down in the White House basement, Dean Rusk was over in the State Department, Bob McNamara was over at Defense and the others in the foreign policy end who were involved directly in Vietnam, and they were all about their business. I did not have any direct involvement. What I'm stating is what I perceived to be the attitude and the concerns at that time, and I paid little attention to it, other than a citizen's concern of where this is heading and what we are going to do. Then you have the assassination.

It's not in defense of Lyndon Johnson but this slowly evolving policy had a continuity to it. Of course it escalated and escalated and escalated. But when you suggest the President had reached a decision that right after re-election you pull the plug on Vietnam--he could have reached that decision unknown to me. I didn't discern such contemplation at that time.

G: What was Kennedy's attitude toward Vietnam? What did he say about it?

O: Not much to me, obviously. Probably as close as I came to any direct involvement was the Henry Cabot Lodge appointment. In cabinet meetings it was touched upon, but it was not the overriding item in cabinet meetings. It was much more than a burr in the saddle. I know Kennedy reflected on Vietnam a good deal, but all I'm saying is that whatever he might or might not have done if he were re-elected none of us will know. In terms of

history and accuracy, I have always felt a little uneasy when I hear these former colleagues' assumptions and statements and flat pronouncements that a game plan was in place to extricate ourselves totally and pull the plug on Vietnam at a given date right after the election.

G: This is a what-might-have-been question, but in your own mind--and I'm sure you've wrestled with it--what do you think Kennedy would have done if he had lived?

O: I really think that if it played out the way it did, over the succeeding couple of years, he would have found a way out. I think he would have found a way of disengaging before it became all-out. I really do. But that's only the nature of the guy, that he would have come to the conclusion at an early date that it was a lost cause. By the same token, that would mean that he didn't succumb to the blandishments of the military, as he succumbed to the blandishments of the military at the Bay of Pigs.

As this was played out by Lyndon Johnson, he was a victim of a situation. I don't know what I'd do if I were sitting in that office. You keep having the [William] Westmorelands of this world, the acknowledged experts, the CIA, and your Defense Department with a game plan that isn't succeeding and claiming there's a need to add additional troops, but there's no question about the end result. Now you're getting that from your own people day in and day out. This became obviously the major topic of discussion at cabinet meetings, and I'd listen to the Secretary of Defense.

In human terms, Lyndon Johnson was not looking for a fight; he wasn't looking to kill people. It was eating him up personally, but the fact remains that it was an utter failure. It was brought about by destruction of public support, and a massive job was done in that regard. Was it justified or did it border on the unpatriotic? I don't know. The fact is that the American people lost faith and lost heart. Beyond that, you have to have serious doubts that it would have ever succeeded even with the support of the American people, and I think that's the tragedy.

Tape 3 of 4, Side 2

O: To state as a fact that Kennedy would have extricated himself from Vietnam the day after re-election is not valid. To say that Kennedy might at some stage of escalation decide that enough's enough, that's very possible, indeed it could be probable, knowing the fellow as I knew him. To say that Lyndon Johnson allowed it to escalate too far and it fell of its own weight, that's a statement of fact. But what motivated him to do it? What motivated him is what any man sitting in that Oval Office had to depend upon: advice and counsel of trusted advisers. And I don't think you can say, "Despite the unanimity of opinion at certain stages of this involvement of your advisers and counselors and experts, you should not have moved forward." You know, that's a hang of an indictment and I think it has a significant element of unfairness in it. That's all I'm saying.

G: Were the cabinet meetings under Kennedy in late 1963 the same upbeat discussions of

Vietnam that you just recounted under Johnson?

O: There were limited discussions. It was not considered an overriding element of discussion in the mixed group called the cabinet.

G: But you talked about knowing Kennedy as you do and what you regard as his instincts, perhaps, that would have caused him if he had lived, to, at an appropriate time, if the situation deteriorated, find a way to get out. And yet earlier you described a confrontational tendency that he had to really face a problem head on. Can you elaborate on this instinct or whatever it was?

O: All it would be is instinct. I wouldn't be able to get into his head then or now in terms of what he ultimately might have done. But I think when you relate this to his actions on the Bay of Pigs on the one hand and the Cuban Missile Crisis on the other, it is probable that something dramatic and decisive would have taken place, even though his natural tendency was to not only enter the fray, but see the battle through.

G: I wonder if the projection can be related to a difference between his [and Lyndon Johnson's] association or relationship with the right wing or the more conservative elements that would have reacted differently, or would have reacted, to a pullout. Do you think that he had less apprehension of a conservative reaction to a pullout than Johnson would?

O: Kennedy? I can't believe his thought process had gotten to that point. The fact is that during that period Kennedy was having little problem with public perception of Vietnam. I don't think he was under great pressures from the right to escalate beyond what he was doing, and he was not, as I recall it, under any great pressures from the left or the center to refrain from what he was doing. It was not the overriding problem that it became with Lyndon Johnson.

G: Did Johnson later feel specifically that a pullout might encourage a new round of McCarthyism, such as losing China, a parallel, losing Vietnam?

O: Johnson had a sensitivity to the degree of congressional support he had for his policies; which was reflected in the [Gulf of Tonkin] Resolution. They claimed afterwards that this was a charade and, of course, Johnson continued almost hourly to reflect on the vote in the Senate. What was it, two votes in opposition?

G: Yes, Morse and [Ernest] Gruening.

O: Yes. Sensitivity would go to any loss of that supposed support which was reflected in this overwhelming vote. He would constantly refer to the vote, finally to the point where it became less and less acceptable or less effective, not only to the public generally but to the members of Congress who were scurrying away and hiding in the woodwork.

G: Was he implying more to the vote in terms of significance than was actually--?

O: I think the constant repetition reached the point where it was counterproductive.

G: Do you have any insights on the administration's knowledge of and approval of the assassination of Diem or the CIA's role in that?

O: No, I don't have any.

G: Never talked to Kennedy about that?

O: No.

G: What was Kennedy's reaction to the coup?

O: I don't recall.

G: How about the Hill's reaction to it, do you recall any?

O: If there was a great uproar I would recall it.

G: Did you ever have the impression that Johnson was more supportive of Diem than Kennedy, or thought that--?

O: No.

G: Really? Okay.

Now, you have written about the assassination itself in your book, and we've talked about the events that led Kennedy to Texas, the Albert Thomas commitment and things of this nature. But is there anything else that you want to add about the events themselves?

O: I don't believe so. While I treated the assassination and the events surrounding it rather briefly in my book, that was a reflection of a problem I had in writing about it and I reached the conclusion that I should be as brief and as factual and specific as I could be. I have reviewed it and I concluded that there was really nothing I would add to it. Anything I could add now would be really peripheral, have no importance, and would be very incidental.

G: Let's pick up at Love Field when you were returning from Dallas to Washington. You did cite in your book the instances that led to a lot of friction between the Kennedy staff and the Johnson staff, particularly one decision: the decision to take ***Air Force One*** instead of ***Air Force Two***. You indicated that both planes were identically equipped. Do you have any explanation for why Johnson decided to take the plane that he did?

O: No, I don't, and at that time I don't think I reflected on it. I recall all of that period vividly. I did not react adversely to ***Air Force One***. In fact, I don't think that ***Air Force One*** and Johnson's presence on it impacted on me particularly, due to our situation in the corridor in the hospital bringing the body onto the plane. Someone had taken the necessary step of removing seats opposite where Jackie, General [Godfrey] McHugh, Dave Powers, Ken O'Donnell and I were to sit, so that the coffin could be strapped onto the floor of the plane. Mr. and Mrs. Johnson on the plane had an element of surprise, in the sense we hadn't even thought about the successor. Our concentration was totally on what was transpiring at the moment. So there was an element of surprise.

I am sure my surprise was not in a negative context: why isn't he over on ***Air Force Two***. I'm sure ***Air Force Two*** wasn't in my thoughts at that moment.

G: How about the decision to have the oath administered there, to wait for Judge Sarah Hughes and have it administered on the ground in Dallas instead of in Washington?

O: First of all there was no need for an oath, under the Constitution. No one was thinking of that at the time, but that is the reality of it. Lyndon Johnson was president. Secondly, it was not a suggestion made by any of the Kennedy people that the oath be administered on the plane. That emanated solely from the Johnson people. They were in one part of the plane, I was in another for several minutes. The question was therefore not whether the oath need be administered. The question came to the specific language of the oath, and that was garnered from the Justice Department and transmitted. Then the decision to administer the oath before the plane took off caused the problems between the Kennedy and Johnson people.

I don't recall any yelling or screaming. There was a feeling that "let's get out of here as rapidly as we can," and that feeling was based on the unknown. None of us obviously had any idea whether this was a conspiracy, whether Johnson was the next victim. That's why the plane was in an isolated part of Love Field. And now we've got the body on, let's get out of here. That was the overriding feeling.

Johnson was adamant that the oath be administered by Judge Hughes.

G: Why did he want Judge Hughes?

O: I have no idea. I didn't know Judge Hughes from a hole in the wall. That caused delay, getting Judge Hughes to the airport, and that delay caused concern expressed by some, but I don't recall direct discussions. During that period is when I checked on Jackie, who was in the bathroom, to determine how she was coming along. When I went to check on her, in the bedroom there was a Bible that I picked up. People have said to me ever since, "Why did you--?" I don't know why I did it. There's such a thing as being out of it and not realizing what you're doing or why you're doing it. I've never had an experience comparable to that.

G: You picked it up and took it out to Johnson, is that--?

O: Jackie said that she wanted to come out and join the group.

G: Was this in response to a request that she come out there?

O: Yes. I asked her first how was she feeling. She said, "I'm all right," or something to that effect. I said, "Do you want to step out here? Would you?" She said, "I'll come out." By that time I guess enough minutes had elapsed so that you're approaching the moment that the Judge has or momentarily does arrive, and this happens quickly because there's the card with the oath, and I simply handed the Judge the Bible. I never opened it or never knew whether it was a Bible or a missal. It had a cross on the cover.

G: It was a Catholic missal.

O: Yes. She took it, and he put his hand on it, and the oath was administered. I don't know how many minutes elapsed from the time it was determined that an oath was going to be administered and [the time] the oath was actually administered and we did take off. I'm sure there's a record of how long a period, but I never checked it.

G: When you said that Johnson was adamant about having the oath administered by Judge Hughes in Dallas before you left, did you approach him about leaving right away, and did you try to get him to--?

O: The subject of "let's get out of here," I don't know as I initiated it. I was part of it; I was standing there. Then there was a reluctance to leave, there was adamancy. It became clear that the oath was going to be administered on the ground. It seems to me that General McHugh was involved in some aspect of getting off. The crew was extremely anxious to leave and it would have been his responsibility to notify the crew. He was the military aide aboard.

G: Did you speculate with LBJ on the possibilities of a conspiracy or an international thing on the way back or--?

O: No. I don't recall that I did.

G: What was your own thought? At the time, did you feel like it might be a wider--?

O: I shared the anxiety of many of us to get out of there. It certainly made eminent good sense to be airborne as quickly as possible. After all we had gone through, a hassle in removing the body from the hospital in the first instance; we had gone through some horrible experiences and you were completely beside yourself. You had no knowledge of how this happened, who, where or what. We were in a state in which Ken O'Donnell and I knew the President was dead probably a half hour before we allowed the announcement

to be made to the world. We just stood there, refusing to believe it. So you can't be held accountable under those circumstances. Then to have a coroner decide the body can't be removed from that hospital until he okays it was just too much. So he was shunted aside physically, and we moved the body out of the hospital, into the hearse, jumped into a car and off we went to the plane.

G: What was Johnson's demeanor, aside from the adamancy about getting the oath administered?

O: I had a couple of conversations with him during the flight. I had a conversation in the corridor of the plane with Bill Moyers who acted, as you would anticipate, in a very responsible manner. Bill expressed his concern for Mrs. Kennedy and those of us in the rear of the plane and wondered what could be done or what he could do to be helpful. Bill tells me that my response was that our concern should be solely what is best for the country, that's our responsibility. Bill mentioned that in a public appearance; it took me aback one night while I was sitting in the audience.

I was asked if I would come up and talk to the President on at least a couple of occasions. The conversations were general expressions of sympathy, regret and concern. Mrs. Johnson had a brief conversation with Jackie, at least one conversation as part of the swearing-in, and probably at one other time during the flight.

Ultimately the flight settled down to those of us with Jackie sitting with her for the remainder of the trip, and Jackie expressing her concern about us, which was amazing to me. I think I mentioned that, because I'll never forget it. I couldn't believe that under those circumstances she would say, "You were the closest to him. What's going to happen to you?" What do you say?

G: Were there any important decisions that were made during the flight that you participated in?

O: Not that I recall.

G: Johnson's statement at the airport or anything like that?

O: From our perspective: you land, get the coffin off the plane, get it to Bethesda Naval Hospital. As soon as the plane landed, of course, the rear door was opened, and what was not available in Dallas was available there, and that was a fork lift. Bobby came charging through the plane, and the Secret Service put the body into the hearse, and off we went.

G: Did you go with the hearse or did you--?

O: Yes.

G: Did you? You went to Bethesda?

O: Yes.

G: Were there any other ingredients during the trip back or when the plane landed that exacerbated, say, the friction between LBJ and RFK?

O: That resulted in exacerbating after the fact?

G: Yes.

O: I don't recall. The one action that was reflected upon by Bobby subsequently and did exacerbate it was Bobby learning of Johnson's insistence that despite the desire of the widow that we depart immediately, his insistence on staying to be sworn in on the ground, which was unnecessary. That bothered them a great deal. It seemed to Bobby, and to some others, to be rather callous and unfeeling. I don't recall talking to Bobby specifically, but it bothered him, and probably in his mind caused him to have a very strong feeling about the new President.

On the flight back, which I assume was a couple of hours, you really had two groups. You had the group up front beyond the President's quarters, who were members of Congress and staff and others who were Johnson people, and you had this little group in the rear with the widow.

G: Did Johnson come back to be with you at times?

O: No.

G: You were asked to come forward.

O: Yes. I think Lady Bird came back; I'm pretty sure, as I recall it.

G: There have been some recollections that Johnson's reference to Mrs. Kennedy as "Honey" was something that irritated some of the Kennedy staffers. Do you recall that?

O: Probably. They didn't voice it, but it probably did, because that would be an irritant. That's not a word that they use.

G: Yes. Did that bother you, or did you hear him use it?

O: I don't remember hearing him use it. The expression of concern and sympathy and understanding was really from Mrs. Johnson, woman to woman.

I think it was a gut reaction to be negative toward or antagonistic to Lyndon Johnson under those circumstances on the part of some Kennedy people. This terrible thing, this man has replaced him, and there's something awfully unfair about what

happened. This man has been killed. I don't think you probably dwell on the Constitution. The mere fact that he succeeded Jack Kennedy was an irritant to some Kennedy people from then on. Somehow or other there was some degree of responsibility on Johnson's part, as irrational as that might seem.

I think that you're faced with abnormality in terms of human reactions. When I noted that the handles on one side of the coffin had been broken or bent, and you're in a hospital for several hours and an autopsy is being conducted, what would motivate you to say to Ken and Dave Powers, "God, we have to have a proper casket," and proceed to contact the Gawler's Funeral Home, get into a car and go down there, walk in and say to a man, "I want you to take us to your display room. I want you to take us to the middle-priced caskets in your display room." You get on the elevator and go up. "Now, show us the most modest, in terms of appearance, casket among these middle-priced caskets. The least--" What are you doing? Then you select it and say, "Have this delivered to the hospital immediately." And that's the casket he was buried in; that's the casket we got a bill for later on.

People say, "Why did it come to your mind to say middle-priced, not the lowest-priced or the highest-priced, but the middle-priced?" I think what you were grasping for in your mind was he was one of the people; he was America. He was sort of typical of America, an average American.

Then you get to the East Room, and Bobby is saying, "I'll leave it"--this is to Ken and I--"up to you whether it's an open coffin." So you walk into the East Room; you never open the coffin. You can't get yourself to do it. All of those things occurred, but are you dealing rationally under any normal [circumstances]? Of course not.

G: Did Ken agree with you?

O: Yes, we just walked away from it. Yes.

So the handling of Mrs. Kennedy throughout this period in the living quarters and the Oval Office all played out, and there were those who felt rather strongly that it was mishandled by Johnson. I don't remember the details, but something about the furniture was removed too quickly from the Oval Office, despite the President's statements that she should stay as long as she pleased and there was no hurry. My guess is that at a minimum they were matters of perception. I think there again, you go through a situation where perhaps you had thoughts of that nature and didn't express them, and later in the light of dawn dismissed them because they weren't valid.

But the situation existed and continued. On the staff level Lyndon Johnson made all kinds of efforts to try to meld a staff and to ensure the Kennedy people of his interest in them, and his total desire not to do anything that could be construed as unfair or unseemly. He went through that process to the best of his ability. But there was no way he was going to go through that process without people either privately or perhaps

publicly concluding otherwise.

G: It was inevitable.

O: Yes.

G: Did you handle any of the liaison work between the Kennedy family and LBJ during that period in terms of the stay in the [White House]?

O: No. What happened was that when we had the mass in the room near the East Room, at some point Mrs. Kennedy asked Ken and I if we would stay in the White House. Of course we immediately agreed, and we stayed through the funeral, at her request.

G: Yes. Did your family come as well, or did you just stay?

O: No, just Ken and I.

G: Let me ask you about the conspiracy theories that have evolved around the assassination. They range from all kinds of theories. Are there any that you feel are plausible or have any--?

O: No. I've never felt that it was plausible to contend there was a conspiracy. You can discuss the background of the assassin, his contacts and connections in his past, and you can discuss his motivation. That's all subject to all kinds of discussion, always will be, I suppose. But as to the act itself, I have always firmly believed it was the act of a single person, a single individual, who was clearly a marksman and did the job effectively. All the other theories notwithstanding, I've had no evidence ever remotely submitted to me that merits changing my view.

Tape 4 of 4, Side 1

G: The recent one in particular puts forward the notion that the pathological evidence was altered during the autopsy at Bethesda. Anything on that?

O: No. Our problem with an autopsy in Dallas was obvious. There was no way we were going to tolerate staying there one moment longer than was necessary, and that went to the swearing-in aspects. Our thought was overridingly, "Let's get out of here. Let's get our leader out of here." In that instance that was a normal human reaction. To have someone interfering with it was not acceptable, when you had a woman who had blood all over her suit, who had just lost her husband, and you're demanding that she sit in a chair somewhere. They said they wanted to get to some military installation where they could control the autopsy. My God, what difference did it make at that point? What were you trying to do?

G: There's some speculation, of course, that the assassination was a retaliation for attempts

on Castro's life. Do you have any thoughts on that?

O: No. You can debate the background of the assassin and his prior involvements and contacts until hell freezes over in support of that theory. I have no knowledge or evidence of that. That's my own personal conclusion--this was the act of a single individual.

G: Did you ever talk to Johnson about that, the relationship between--

O: No.

G: --the Cuban operations and [the assassination]? Okay.

When did LBJ ask you to stay on?

O: On the plane.

G: On the way back.

O: It wasn't in that context. It was in the context, you know that I really need you and the country needs [you], which was an exaggeration. But it was very strongly presented to me that "we just have to go through this transition, you've got to be with me throughout this and we've got to fulfill our responsibilities. I have mine now, with the oath of office, but you have yours." My comment that I can recall was, "We can talk about all that later, or some other time."

G: When did you decide to stay on board?

O: I don't think that it was a matter of decision. It was a matter of going through a funeral and a burial, and recognizing that the following day there was pending legislation in the Congress, and I had the responsibility to monitor it. I came back from the service and took off the striped pants and the suit and got into a business suit and I made a real effort to apply myself immediately, not with any question of a long-term or anything else, but to apply myself. And Hubert Humphrey and Mike Mansfield, because it was a Senate matter, reacted the same way.

As the weeks went on, along with Ken and Dave Powers, we devoted a lot of time and attention to Jackie, visited with her every evening over at the Harriman house. There was no help we could render other than companionship, which she seemed to appreciate and urged that we come by as often as possible. And we did, and that was daily until she was able to secure another home, and then we helped her with that and continued to see her regularly.

I had a full understanding that you should fulfill your responsibilities. After all, you were still in the New Frontier program, and the appropriate time for decision, which the President could make or you could make or jointly make, would be when he was, as

we used to say, on his own, elected president of the United States on his own. Then it's his total ball game, this interim period is closed out. And that's when Ken and Dave Powers and I decided to submit our resignations.

The result was that Dave was offered the position at the [Kennedy] Library, Ken decided to go back to Massachusetts and seek the governorship, and Johnson basically said, "I refuse to accept your resignation." He and I had several discussions and came to the agreement that I have recounted: that I would stay through one more session of Congress. This was on the basis of his urgent request, coupled with his argumentation that with the opportunity presented by the election and the additional seats in the House, we could now complete the New Frontier program and go on to his program.

On reflection, and even when I committed this to writing I thought how arrogant I was, because he was the president of the United States and I said to him, "Under two conditions. One, that it is publicly known that I submitted my resignation. That's important to me, that in good spirit and with a handshake we'll close the book. And two, that it must be stated up front that I have agreed to stay for one session, the next session of Congress, and you and I have an understanding that we will not discuss any extension when the session ends, and there'll be no further conversation regarding the stay." And he agreed.

It wasn't a pitch he was giving me that convinced me. I did see the opportunity to make a contribution to the completion of the Kennedy program, and it meant a lot to me. I really was convinced that I could make a contribution. That wasn't arrogance, it was trying to evaluate, after the experiences of the past years, dealing with the new Congress. Clearly he was right. I was in a position to play a role.

By the same token, as I told him, "It's essential, as I see it, Mr. President, to put your team in place, to get past this band-aid Kennedy-Johnson staff and have a Johnson team that fits your needs, that's totally yours and is not a hangover from a prior period." And I think he agreed with that, but in my case for his own reasons he felt that he wanted me to stay, and it was clear he was anxious that I stay. It was also clear that I could make a contribution if I stayed. It was the appropriate time for the Kennedy people to leave, and leave with a good feeling all around, which I was fully prepared to do. This man had treated me eminently fair through that intervening year, and I found it easy to work with him and I found him very responsive to all aspects of the pursuit of the domestic program. I did feel very strongly and it made good sense to appropriately depart at an obvious time. There had been an obvious time after the assassination. But this most obvious time would not be subject to any second-guessing or wherefores, it was just an obvious step to take. It never entered my mind that it would result in my staying for any further period of time.

I thought it was fair and my responsibility to him to state it. I went in to see him immediately upon his return from Texas. He talked to me on occasions on election night. I had toured the country, which we'll get to later. And we had discussed the election

returns three or four times during the evening of election. I didn't bring up the subject, obviously; it was simply, "I'll see you soon." And he was back soon, and I took the first available moment to meet with him.

G: You said the discussions took place over several meetings. Did it take him that long to persuade you to stay? Did you initially--?

O: No, I didn't say over several meetings, but there was more than one meeting. The discussion I just reviewed was the basic discussion. It was more than one meeting but it wasn't a lengthy period of time. The several meetings and lengthy period of time occurred a year later, at the end of that session. (Laughter) Or toward the end of that session, when he came up with an approach that did not violate the gentlemen's agreement we had reached with the handshake, because he never did discuss "now you've got to stay longer in congressional relations." This was a matter he decided during the course of that summer in anticipation of the end of the session, another dimension, as he saw it, a different area of discussion. Of course, afterwards, he reminded me that that also entailed staying with congressional relations. But that was later on.

G: You described these daily visits with Mrs. Kennedy in the post-assassination period. What would you talk about? Would you reminisce about Jack Kennedy while you were there?

O: Yes, some, but small talk.

G: It must have been terribly difficult.

O: Yes. She was great; she contained herself well. It was clear to us that right from the time we were on the plane, with Jack's body and through this, she truly wanted our companionship, and frankly, her comments on the plane as to her feeling toward us and how much we meant to Jack was a conversation that had never taken place at any other time. Her feeling was strong in that regard, and it continued until she moved to New York.

Actually, it was my doing that communication lapsed. I remember being with my wife in New York on different occasions after she had moved here, and Elva would urge me to give her a ring. Meanwhile I had read about her effort to get out and around to the theater and what have you, different people escorting her, and I felt I would be intruding. I was wrong, as in later years I learned it was a little thickness on my part. I just didn't feel that she would want to be bothered, or [I felt] I'd be bothering her. I was very sensitive to the whole thing. Then the months and years rolled by, and we had a reunion at Ken O'Donnell's funeral.

During that period we're talking about, Lee Radziwill, her sister, was with her at the Harriman house. I remember being with her one evening when a Johnson daughter came to the door with some gifts.

G: Christmas presents.

O: Yes, they were Christmas presents.

G: Anything on the renaming of Cape Canaveral to Cape Kennedy? Was this a personal wish of hers?

O: I don't recall. I don't know how that came about.

G: Did she have any requests of the new President during this period?

O: Not that I'm aware of. She was remarkably thoughtful and concerned about others. If anything stayed with me through all these years, it's been that aspect of Jackie Kennedy, because I went with her to Arlington to visit the grave.

G: It was shortly after the burial?

O: Yes. Within two or three days, I guess. I went with her to visit the grave, and then she gave me a set of the American and presidential flags that were on standards at the time of his death. I guess with the various locations of the flags there were probably six sets of them. She gave a set to me, to Dave Powers, to Ken O'Donnell, retained sets for her two children, and I think there were maybe one or two other sets. I have those, and I thought that it was extremely thoughtful of her. That's the way she was; that's the way she reacted to all of this.

I had limited social involvement with them over the years. There were a number of occasions, but it wasn't a regular sort of thing. I became acquainted with her before she married Jack, and Elva and I liked her very much. We were at the wedding, and we were with her when she got her engagement ring, and we stayed with them on occasions at their home in Georgetown when we'd go down to Washington. There was another world of social activity that I not only wasn't part of, I had no interest in, and so I think I was a little taken aback with the intensity of her reaction to me, along with Ken and David after the assassination. And [we] obviously felt the same in turn. As difficult as it might be conducting a conversation, it certainly was no chore to visit her evenings. I was anxious to do it.

G: On the matter of staying on at the White House, did your decision to do so earn resentment from some of the Kennedy crowd?

O: Yes, it did, as a matter of fact. There were three or four people who had some involvement in the administration and had been Kennedy loyalists over a long period of time from Massachusetts. It took the form of berating my administrative assistant. I was never confronted, but it was clearly there.

G: Berating your administrative assistant?

O: Yes. I remember one incident. His name was Claude Desautels, and he was with me for years. He was in Duke Zeibert's restaurant having lunch, and probably in the general climate of a couple of cocktails at lunch, they told him what they thought of him and me in terms of staying with Johnson. Claude was very distressed when he came back and told me. That indicated that this was a subject of conversation, and there was all of a sudden a lack of contact from these old friends. It became a matter that troubled them considerably, because Bobby came to me and said he had heard or knew about some adverse comments being made. I respected Bobby greatly for it. He said he wanted to come by and see me, and he did. He said, "You have done absolutely the right thing and I would have thought little of you if you had done otherwise. I just want you to know my strong feelings on this. You're the custodian of the New Frontier program." It was appreciated.

G: Was this while he was still attorney general?

O: Yes. When O'Donnell was leaving, and there was a party for him at Duke Zeibert's. Bobby came by again and asked me if I'd join him and go to the party, which I did.

What happens in life is interesting. Invariably that sort of thing occupies those on the periphery or who are not directly involved, because Ken O'Donnell and I had a continuing relationship. I was interested in his campaign, met with him on occasions, was a contributor to it. While we weren't the bosom buddies we had been for a lot of years, we had gone our own way and he never gave any indication of any disturbance. After all, he had chosen to seek office and I had chosen to stay. I think when anything like that occurs, it becomes a matter that seems to involve those who are not direct participants. The principals can generally handle matters of that nature while others seem to have difficulty. That's exactly what happened in that instance.

Years went by and out of the four of these same people, three of them spent an evening at my home at Cape Cod.

So it's no big deal. If your conscience is clear and you've done the right thing and you have not hurt anybody in the process and you wish everybody well, that's all you can do. I did wish Ken well and I did carry on. Reaction was part of the anti-Johnson feeling which had developed among some of the Kennedy supporters and stayed with them. I became part of that by virtue of just being there. It had no adverse effect on me, nor did it become some big confrontation. The only time it even came indirectly into focus was when they chose to take on poor Claude Desautels. If they felt that strongly about it, they had ample opportunity to take me on, but they never got around to it.

G: How would you assess the performance of the Kennedy White House personnel after the assassination?

O: Under the circumstances it went quite well. I had the easiest adjustment. There was a

task to do. It was ongoing, it was an unfinished agenda. And you were dealing with the Congress. In some roles, where you would be dealing almost exclusively with the President, great difficulty obviously would occur. A good example was the role of Ken O'Donnell, who was the appointments secretary just outside the door of the Oval Office, and you had Walter Jenkins, Jack Valenti. It was sort of a dual staff. At my end there was none of that. The Johnson people and the President just moved heaven and earth to make themselves available and be as helpful as they could. That was true of any number of Johnson people in the White House.

It didn't pose a difficult personal problem at all. It just evolved and went on. But with Ken, Dave Powers--whose roles involved spending a lot of time with the President--it could not go on. And it made no sense. That's why I went in to him, when he was elected. (Laughter) I said, "Now it's all yours, your staff in place. It was just great, and the best to you." And frankly, it made all the sense in the world, and there wasn't anybody trying to hang on. There had been resignations prior to his election. There were departures from time to time. It was a matter of adjustment to a full-fledged Johnson staff, ultimately.

It was a difficult period, and I think it was particularly difficult for Ken, because I know the President was concerned about him. He talked to me because Ken and I were very close, and I talked to Ken, and Ken found that at times it was very difficult. The President went as far as he could to try to keep this on an even keel.

I remember he had a cold. He called me to the living quarters and said he was altering my salary. You could see a little humor in this, particularly the salaries in those days. He said, "I've made up my mind, you should be the highest salaried person on the staff. Now you're going to receive $29,500 a year, and the next one to you on the staff is at $27,500." I recognized that he was trying to further emphasize his acceptance of your work and his desire to have you continue it. I remember that on my desk at Christmas, that Christmas after the assassination, was a beautiful watch inscribed to me from him. And the $29,500, I think that's what it was, had its element of humor to it, because then he promoted me further to the cabinet at $35,000.

(Laughter)

By the same token, when I went into the White House with Jack Kennedy, the top staff salary was $21,000. If you were there because of salary, you were a pretty sad character. That never was a matter of discussion or review. But I cite those instances as examples of the effort, and he was probably making efforts to keep other Kennedy people comfortable. There were various social events that you attended--White House dinners--but that was not unusual. I had to attend--I say "had" because it became a bore to attend those over the years.

G: How did Salinger make the transition from Kennedy to Johnson?

O: I was trying to recall, I think there's a missing element in my recollection on Pierre. Pierre became a United States senator for a brief period of time. He was appointed to the Senate by Pat [Edmund] Brown. He then served in the Senate for whatever period of time it was until he sought election on his own in California, and he won the nomination and then was defeated. I imagine that's where the trail ends as far as the White House is concerned.

G: But in terms of being press secretary initially for Johnson after the--?

O: When did he go into the Senate?

G: Let's see. I believe it was 1964, wasn't it?

O: I guess it was, yes.

G: I can check. 1964 or 1965.

O: Yes. It was 1964. Pierre was there just a matter of months, and I don't recall Pierre's problems, if any, of adjustment. Who did the President bring in?

G: George Reedy.

O: George Reedy. Then at a later stage Bill Moyers. George Reedy as press secretary, I suppose, coincided with Pierre's departure to the Senate.

G: How about McGeorge Bundy?

O: I have a vague recollection there, too, how long Mac stayed and when he departed. I recall Ted Sorensen departing, and Arthur Schlesinger left quickly. His role would not relate to Johnson activity anyway. On Mac Bundy, I simply don't recall.

G: How about [Myer "Mike"] Feldman?

O: I don't recall. He was under Ted Sorensen. Lee White stayed, and I think stayed throughout the Johnson Administration. Mike departed at some point; I just lost track of it. It was Ted and Mike and Lee; that was their department. Joe Califano arrived replacing Sorensen; I don't remember the time sequence. But he was there through the heady days of the Great [Society] program. I left in April of 1968.

G: Anything else on the transition?

O: I guess I repeat this ad nauseam, but I'm so firmly persuaded that the human element is so vital in all activities. You always hear of tables of organization and structures and they can range all the way from small entities to massive entities, but the White House is unique. It's a relatively small group in a small building, working intimately with the president, and it's limited to a handful of top staff. Our top title was special assistant. If

you look at the Kennedy White House, or the Johnson White House, and place different people in position, you're talking about the Mac Bundy role, the Ted Sorensen role, the Ken O'Donnell role, the Pierre Salinger role, the Larry O'Brien role. That's about it. You're working together intimately; consequently you have flowing from the president not only a lot of responsibility but a lot of authority--and it's highly personal, unavoidably so.

The building lends itself to it. When you think of the awesome size of the federal government and the departments and agencies, I thought of that when I became postmaster general. There you have thirty-six hundred people on your staff, in addition to the seven hundred thousand people who work in the Department, and I don't know how many assistant postmasters general. That's all one department. Multiply that by the departments and agencies of government. Yet when everything is said and done, the thrust and the force and the heart of government emanates from that little building, and those who have the privilege of being associated with the president on a daily basis are truly privileged.

With it, of course, comes tremendous responsibility.

People say to me, "Well, you've had an opportunity to participate in various activities, not only in politics and government, but in sports. What really was the most meaningful role?" There's no question about it, it was as special assistant to the president, Kennedy and Johnson.

Tape 4 of 4, Side 2

G: [The Johnsons lived at their home] for a period of days while Mrs. Kennedy remained at the White House. Did you go out to The Elms any during that period?

O: No, I don't recall that I did. Incidentally, it should be mentioned, too, that I never, in the time I spent with Jackie Kennedy, noted any indication she was distressed about what you heard rumbled all over Washington--that supposedly she was pushed out or she was mistreated. Frankly, journalists participated in this, too. The adjustment for some journalists was difficult. A number of reporters and columnists in Washington had become intimately acquainted with Jack Kennedy and Jackie Kennedy, socially involved and very friendly toward them and very resentful that this change had taken place. I think some of them took it out on Lyndon Johnson. So the effect, the ripple from that probably was more widespread than I realized.

No, I don't recall being at the Elms; I don't think I was during that interim period.

End of Tape 4 of 4 and Interview VI