INTERVIEW III

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INTERVIEWER: Michael L. Gillette

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

Tape 1 of 4, Side 1

G: Yesterday we were talking about President Kennedy and the southern members of Congress. Let me ask you to elaborate on the administration's relationship with Carl Vinson.

O: I think the relationship as it progressed with Vinson was somewhat typical of the improvement in relationship that took place involving several senior southern Democrats. George Mahon would be an [example]. The better acquainted the President and these members became, the greater the tendency was on the part of the southern Democrat to at times even seek opportunities to be helpful without violating his established record and his constituency attitudes. Vinson in a sense epitomized the courtly South, the total gentleman who was at all times courteous to you, at all times willing to listen to your point of view, at no time react negatively. He was invited, as many of them were--senior southern Democrats--to the White House in various formats. So as the months progressed, Vinson and the President really got to know each other, and it was good, because the President admired Vinson greatly.

I can recall Carl Vinson sitting in a discussion in the Speaker's office--Sam Rayburn was speaker--regarding the minimum wage bill. There was Carl Vinson, a senior member of the House, an important member of the House. His being there and participating in the discussion, trying to determine how you could amend this bill so that it could achieve passage in the House, was an indication of what was transpiring in a climate that was conducive to this kind of rapport. We made a decision regarding that bill and we lost by one vote on the House floor, and then recaptured most of this in the Senate and in conference. But I think when you had reached the point where Carl Vinson and others would become active participants in this, it was an indication of a growing attitude that "We'd like to find some areas where we can help this young guy downtown. We like him and we want to support him wherever we can."

Now, this was not in the climate of an intensive, difficult, civil rights fight.On the civil rights legislation, as we were saying earlier, I think you have to say that while civil rights was in the fore-front over an extended period of time, the reality was the improbability of actual enactment of civil rights legislation that would impact tremendously on what was perceived, at least, to be southern attitudes that had been in place for decades. That's a somewhat different climate.

You were operating in a climate where you're talking about education, setting aside any religious aspects that were involved in education struggles, where you're talking about medical research, or you're talking in terms of minimum wage or things of that nature. They were not individually and collectively proposals that were accepted with open arms by southern Democrats, certainly. They were proposals with a heavy liberal tinge to them. They did reflect the national party and the platform of the party. But [we wanted] to get these fellows involved rather than just in direct opposition, as in the old concept of the southern Democrat-Republican coalition. And now you have fellows, whether it's the [Albert] Thomases, the Mahons, the Vinsons and others--there were any number of them--with whom one way or another we're communicating and we're sharing problems. Not totally, however. They're not going to march to the House floor and stand up and wave their arms in support. But they had reached the point where they didn't want to be opposed for the sake of opposition. Rather, they didn't mind the President achieving some record of progress, and in that context and within those guidelines, let's communicate and maybe we can help.

Now, we've talked about varieties of help and it took a variety of ways, but you get Vinson, and it became widely publicized, the walk in the Rose Garden. And it was for several hours, probably twenty-four hours, a very touchy situation. Vinson had made it clear that he was in opposition to this presidential request, that he was going to be sure that it wasn't carried through. The President was extremely upset, and you had a confrontation. Now, the confrontation is taking place after a period when there's a pleasant, friendly relationship that has developed. And the Rose Garden walk was a walk undertaken by the President and Vinson with no one else. But following that there was a determination to try to resolve this problem. I don't remember the details of it, but I remember that it was "let's draft a letter." Ted Sorensen was involved in that process. Then it was determined that Ted would accompany me if there was need to discuss the language and the wording and I would visit with Carl Vinson. Really, now in retrospect, you wonder why this was so significant and overridingly important, but in any event we all thought it was at that time.

But I remember being in Vinson's office and he was the same Carl Vinson I had gotten to know, courteous and low-key. We discussed this. He had a staff man with him and it was Ted and I. And the conversation led to presenting the letter. I at least, and I think Ted shared that view, realized that the staff representative, and I can't even remember his name, who was a very key staff fellow with Vinson, was the adamant one. He was the one that was just absolutely adamant about any kind of compromise or adjustment, and even as Vinson talked, this fellow would move into the conversation in very strong protest. In fact, almost to the point where I didn't appreciate it. His views were unequivocal and there was no way of compromising it. Frankly, after a lengthy conversation, Vinson started to debate with his own staff fellow. As I recall it, the ultimate conclusion was that Vinson overruled the staff member, said that he found this acceptable and we would shake hands on it. He was pleased that this had been resolved in this manner.

So we resolved that, what could have been a very serious setback for us in terms of our relationship with Carl Vinson. But I think it was a lesson, too, because it's an example, I guess, of what you would run into occasionally. You rarely could be sure of it. Because of the scope of the activities of members of Congress--particularly in the Senate, incidentally--there is a tendency over time to have great reliance on the fellow or gal who is close to you on the staff, a great reliance. It grows as time goes on because you haven't the time to be as deeply immersed in these issues as the people on your staff. That was a good example of it. In the low-key discussion phase--now also let's reflect back--we didn't accomplish that with Vinson that meeting; obviously the President had accomplished that with Vinson in the Rose Garden. Vinson had left the Rose Garden clearly having in mind, "I'm absolutely open to try to work something out and I want to." And the staff fellow felt this was his ball game and he didn't want to see it closed out this way. It became an ego trip for him. But there you are. The relationship continued to be a warm one between the President and Vinson.

G: What did President Kennedy say to him in the Rose Garden?

O: I have no idea.

G: He never told you what they [discussed]?

O: No, we never got into it, other than he said, "Well, you know, we had a pleasant chat." But I certainly didn't get the indication from him at all that Vinson had said, "Prepare a letter and let's close this out." Not at all. What he had gotten from Vinson was a willingness to consider some proposal that he might make. It was a darn important walk.

G: There were two levels of issues on that. One was the suitability of the aircraft, I gather, whether it was any good, and the other was the prerogative of the President to advance this program rather than be directed--

O: That was the key aspect of it, and that was what was so disturbing to the President. Vinson had confronted him in terms of presidential prerogative and he was going to see to it that the President was not able to exercise his prerogative. That's a dangerous area; that's touchy, that's difficult. And in the process perhaps the quality of the plane got a little bit lost.

G: When you talked with Vinson later with the staff man there, did Vinson seem aware that the plane was not what it should be?

O: I don't recall that we really got into the quality of the plane particularly. It had gotten to the point where this is now sort of public knowledge, this will be overblown, as Carl Vinson saw it. He wasn't trying to cause personal problems for the President. He respected the presidency and the office. But it would be misconstrued and it really got to, without verbalizing it, a man sitting behind a desk who it became quite clear was prepared to [say], "Let's just get away from this, let's smooth it over and go on. I don't want to be

labeled in this way, and the President obviously is very disturbed with this matter.And my ego isn't flowing at all. Let's work it out." And to have him have to debate his own staff fellow to work it out was what I recall most vividly. I thought to myself, "God, if I were sitting with President Kennedy in a similar staff role, I'm not at all sure the President wouldn't look at me and say, "You've been around too long." It was clearly the role that this fellow had achieved with Vinson that hit me, that he could deign to keep insisting and rebutting his boss and basically refusing to acquiesce. It became a matter of Carl Vinson having to persuade his own man.

G: Do you recall whether the staff member was on Vinson's personal staff or whether he was on the committee staff?

O: I don't recall, and in fact I wouldn't be able to identify him now. I sure as the devil could have identified him for several years, though, and recall his name, but it eludes me now, because I never quite got over the role he was playing that day. Your fear was that this fellow's attitude and the position he insisted on maintaining can blow this up.

G: How common was it for staff members to exercise this kind of influence over a member?

O: Well, it was hard to identify but it was not uncommon. It was not uncommon, because we would try to identify staff people up there, committee staff people particularly, of course, as to their role and the extent of their authority and that went to their relationship with the chairman of the committee. And there were any number of very senior staff people. They were very much included in our regular contact on the Hill, and of course there would be times when you would deal directly with a staff person. It wouldn't be a common practice, but it really wasn't that uncommon for a staff person to [meet with us] if you were developing language or developing an amendment. It was generally in the context of the chairman's willingness to have it done and just work out the details. Very often this would be between the congressional relations person and others in the department or agency and the staff person.

I think it would have been a mistake to ignore the role of senior staff people on some of those committees, and we tried to avoid that. As you know, some of them are very much career people and, interestingly enough, in the minority-majority aspect, you didn't get it in the House very often. But the minority staff member could be very senior, too, and obviously very knowledgeable regarding the activities of the committee and the legislation under consideration--more knowledgeable perhaps than any member on the committee, including the chairman.

That remains the case today. I had an occasion not long ago on a matter of some interest to me and to the sports world to go down to Washington. I was asked if I would visit some old friends. So I went down and I selectively, because I could [only] spend one full day, had seven or eight appointments. I obviously went on seniority on the committee. But the prior evening, I took occasion to have dinner with the senior staff person of the committee, which was very helpful in terms of getting a feel of things.So I

hadn't changed my practices.

G: One of the press accounts in 1961 stated that Vinson was absolutely the key to the administration's success in that whole session of Congress, 1961.

O: I wouldn't go that far, but I would place him right up there in the front ranks. I could count on my fingers the people that were key. I don't think you could go that far, because I don't think there was [any] one member of Congress that that should be attributed to.

G: Are there any other areas where he was essential in legislation?

O: I think, in general, on the legislation for which he was included in the leadership meetings on the Hill. And, interestingly enough, we've talked about a rather unique relationship that Mendel Rivers had with John McCormack. First of all, at that period in 1961, obviously the relationship that Vinson, et al., had with Speaker Rayburn was a very close one. If you look back on the record of McCormack's rise in the leadership--and he was very proud of this and repeated it constantly to me--his rise in the leadership up to and including the speaker's position was to a great extent due to the tremendous support he had from southern Democrats, even though John McCormack in his entire voting career had never voted against a Democratic Party proposal. But in personal terms, he had this great relationship and it was duly recorded in the support he had through the ranks as a leader.

So with Carl Vinson, you had the obvious Carl Vinson-Rayburn relationship, but you had sort of a--I shouldn't say amazing; it's not amazing. But what you wouldn't anticipate [is the] relationship that McCormack had with all these senior southern Democrats, which carried on through McCormack's speakership. I think the surprise factor was if there was a consistent liberal Democratic voting record in the entire House of Representatives over thirty years, it was McCormack's. But it didn't seem to affect his relationship at all with these people; in fact, they supported him strongly.

G: With regard to Vinson, do you think that his support of the administration was advanced somewhat by that Lockheed plant in Marietta?

O: Well, certainly it wasn't adverse to progress. I don't know as I place a great deal of credence in that. Again, it goes back to our prior discussion and the whole broad so-called area of patronage and power. Carl Vinson's position in the Congress was such that he could exercise a great amount of power. That probably is a little comparable to Al Thomas putting the space program into Houston. I don't think anybody in the White House could claim that they placed the space program in Houston.

So again it's the tendency to seek out. And I'm sure there were people in media saying, "Well, why is Carl Vinson"--particularly after the Rose Garden when everybody was just waiting for this big, total blowup--and, oh, the press in Washington would just have a glorious seven days at least out of this. I'm sure there are people saying, "Well,

why? What does Vinson owe Kennedy?" Well, he didn't owe Kennedy anything in that sense.

You have to remember one thing, and it's a statistic that I had brought to my attention on any number of occasions. I remember having dinner with Senator [Herman] Talmadge at his house one evening, just the two of us. We had a nice, pleasant evening, and with great glee he reminded me two or three times during that evening of the vote Kennedy received in Georgia in his candidacy for president re the vote in Massachusetts, and the statistic, I don't recall it now, but it seems to me he had a 60 or 62 per cent vote from Georgia as against a 58 or 59 or 60, whatever it was, in Massachusetts. You might say that was an aberration, but the fact of the matter was that he was very, very proud of that and so was Carl Vinson.

See, these Georgians, they were southern Democrats, but there was no way you could suggest that those fellows in Georgia, or the people in Georgia, had any animosity to or any ill feeling toward a Catholic Jack Kennedy. By gosh, the record showed that they strongly supported him. So that was a little different than the statistics you could cite elsewhere, you know. So you didn't have these fellows sitting in the Congress with a concern about a constituent attitude toward Kennedy. Maybe his program and policies, but not in any--

G: In discussions with President Kennedy, did he consider the Lockheed plant, though, a means of improving the relationship with Vinson?

O: I don't recall that. I don't know what he considered, frankly, but we never deluded ourselves. We might try to get a little piece of the action or that sort of thing, but you were naive if you thought you were going to a Carl Vinson and remind him of the great progress he had made in behalf of his constituency which we could have derailed or that "he could not have done it without us." Even if there was some of that, you never tried to utilize it; that would be blatant and it could very well be counterproductive. The reality of the situation was that we recognized our limitations in this area, or put it the other way, that this whipping members of Congress into line through patronage, through public works, through this, through that, was a grossly exaggerated situation.

G: Well, would it be fair to say then that the administration in the case of the Lockheed place really didn't have any discretion to put it anywhere else, that Vinson was exercising a power that he had?

O: The only discretion you could have had in a case of that nature is if someone similar to Vinson was fighting Vinson. Then conceivably there might have been a grain of effort that could have been expended on behalf of one or the other. But I think what you would have done in a case like that, if there was a big battle being waged regarding Lockheed and its location, was to keep as far away from it as you could.

G: Well, you did have another Vinson in a sense in the Senate, but he was also from Georgia,

Richard Russell. Let me ask you to describe President Kennedy's relationship with him. I'm talking about during this early period, before the civil rights [legislation].

O: Yes. Well, Russell was a giant in the Senate. There was something about his demeanor. He was different than Vinson.

G: How would you contrast them?

O: Well, I think Russell was more reserved. I would not say in any sense that he was blunt, but you didn't have the easy conversational relationship with Russell--I'm applying it to myself now--as you would have with Vinson. You had the same degree of courtesy and all the rest.

But my feeling now, looking back on Russell and the many times he was in the White House, he was a leader in the Senate and any crisis situations included Russell, his committee position. I think that President Kennedy looked upon Russell as somewhat of a giant in the Senate. I wouldn't suggest that President Kennedy was in awe of him, but I would suspect that he had the same reactions that I did, that it was easier to deal with Vinson than with Russell. I'm not too sure that if you had a similar situation and walked in the Rose Garden with Russell, that it might have worked out the same way. Russell was not an antagonist, none of them were. But Russell was sort of in a class by himself.

G: Was he less likely than Vinson to support progressive legislation?

O: Yes. Yes, that's true. I guess if you want to use the word, he was to some degree more conservative than Vinson.

G: Was he ever helpful to you in your liaison role?

O: On general legislation or specific legislation, I don't recall anything unique or unusual about his voting habits. I think, again, in the off-the-record, if you will, activities and his key role in the Senate and his key committee position in the Senate that he was not a negative force. I think if you got to the military in terms of legislation, you found that Russell was a solid fellow and was not negative or obstructionist. I think, without question, he took his role very seriously, and that was really his area. That was really what I think to a great extent absorbed Russell. So on the general day-to-day, week-to-week legislative activities, the head-count process and the rest in the Senate with Mike Mansfield, Russell was not a key factor. I mean the contact with Russell directly in all of the promotion of our program was limited.

G: Was the Vice President used for his long associations with some of these southern committee chairmen?

O: Yes. You know, we've touched on the Vice President's role, but I think it's worth considering it again, because I'm trying to be as objective as I can and I'm paying the price

of trying to recall two decades ago. I don't think you can overlook the Vice President's reaction to what was an attitude on the part of the Senate as a whole toward him as vice president at the outset of the Kennedy Administration. I have to conclude that it was disappointing to him and a setback to him. He had to be surprised, because I don't think he would have tried to travel that route if he had anticipated the attitude that would be expressed.

Then you go on from there--these are little things, but I think they go into the equation. The majority leader's office that he occupied in the Senate was a very elaborate office. He, as vice president, retained that office. I hadn't been on the Hill prior to all of this, but he not only retained that office, he spent a lot of time in it. Now, perhaps the record would show that that was phased out over a period of time, but I'm just thinking about my first neophyte reactions to all this when I went to the Hill.

Mike Mansfield, as the majority whip under Johnson, occupied the appropriate office of the majority whip. He really was, I assume, designated by Johnson as majority whip; he was very much the number-two man, accountable to the Majority Leader at all times. But then you have to go beyond that, however, to Mike Mansfield's style, his nature. Mike was a very reserved gentleman, who I admire tremendously. I hadn't met a fellow who had served in three branches of the armed services, who had joined the service when he was underage and then came back from all of that and vigorously sought an education and became a teacher. He had no ego, none. I'm recounting this because I arrive up there to get acquainted and try to determine how all of this works. I guess my first reaction was, dropping into the Vice President's office, I thought it was the vice president's office traditionally, [and] dropping into Mansfield's office, that that was the majority leader's office traditionally. After a short period of time I became aware that wasn't the case. And you would get the nuances of some of these developments as time went on.

While we are talking about Mike Mansfield, [I remember] I had occasion to go out to Montana with the President. I don't recall just what the purpose of the visit was; it was part of some trip. But that gave me the opportunity to meet, I recall, a brother of Mike Mansfield's, who I believe was a fireman in the town. The very modest lifestyle that was his background, the serious economic problems of the whole mining industry, all of this unfamiliar to me. You had to be impressed. And I was also dependent upon him for support and guidance, direction. I received that to the fullest and we achieved a very warm friendship.

When we would get to a serious discussion regarding pending legislation, initially we would be meeting in Mike's inner office and we would always make the point of ensuring the presence of the Vice President. It was touchy. You would meet in the Majority Leader's office and then you'd advise the Vice President that this meeting was going to take place, it was going to include the following, and if his schedule allowed, would he join us? And he did. We would sit there; it would be probably Bobby Baker and a couple of other senators [concerned with] whatever the subject was at the moment.

We'd discuss strategy and then go through a head count. I can remember there were those occasions. And the Vice President would participate, but certainly did not at any time take over any leadership role of the meeting. He made no attempt to do that. He would defer to Mike. In other words, he was participating like a key senator that had come into the office to discuss the specific legislation. I think it was fortunate, with the potential sensitivities that could have existed between the two men, that nothing like that ever occurred, because you didn't have a Mike Mansfield who really gave a darn where his office was or what kind of chairs he might have or anything else. It obviously meant nothing to him.

But I think there had to be some feeling on the part of Lyndon Johnson of some degree of discomfort. I don't know. I obviously had no discussion with him and what I received any time I requested it from him was every effort he could expend, and that included conferring with former colleagues on important matters legislatively.So as a participant, whether it was [at] the leadership breakfast downtown or whether it was in the cabinet meetings--where of course at all times the legislative program and its progress or lack of it was a major item of discussion and always on the agenda--he was there and involved. I probably shouldn't dwell on this as much as I am because, frankly, I didn't consider any of that my business. I was not acquainted with the history and the personalities in the Senate. All I was aware of was that there had been some disturbance on the part of some people up there regarding what they perceived to be Johnson's idea of what his continuing role should be.

I guess I've referred to it before in these early stages. I don't have the date, but I spent an evening with him at the home he had recently acquired.

G: The Elms.

O: And Bobby Baker was there with his wife, my wife and I, and a Texas congressman--Brooks.

G: Jack Brooks?

O: Jack Brooks and his wife. We spent the entire evening discussing strategies and how to go about congressional relations in a very pleasant session that extended into a very late evening. Clearly we were invited, along with Baker and Jack Brooks, who was an old friend of his, so the Vice President could give me a feel of things and an opportunity for briefings from a fellow who obviously knew the Senate intimately, Bobby Baker.But I'm not at all sure that the Vice President's comfort level was as high as it should be from that early stage of the changeover on.

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G: In your papers there are reports from Mike Mansfield's office, I think from Frank Valeo, of these key meetings with Senate leaders to really thrash out divergent views on

legislation. I was impressed with simply the fact that you obtained those, that you were privy to all of that information.

O: That's another indication of the relationship that was established between the White House and both branches. That's a good example of it. I can't envision something like that taking place in earlier administrations. It wouldn't take place because nobody would conceive of the meeting notes in the Majority Leader's office being transmitted to the White House. It was unprecedented.

But the fact is that Valeo, when he took over from Baker, conceived his role to be a bridge between the Majority Leader's office and the White House Congressional Relations office. There was constant communication. Mike Manatos would spend time with Valeo regularly, but you can be sure that those notes were not sent to the White House without the approval of his boss. Mike Mansfield just became intimately involved in the whole procedure. We had a share in--you know, this was one ball game. Mike had an approach to all of this that was interesting, and there may have been times when this kind of set me back a little bit because his approach was manifested--I don't know whether these notes reveal any of this or not--by Mike instructing Valeo to go out on the floor and bring in Senator X, Y and Z. And then [he would say], "Larry, you talk to him directly," and Mike would sit there. But he would leave it to me; it was my responsibility to carry the ball.

That would be extended on occasions where there'd be greater significance attached to whatever we were engaged in. And I'm sure on more than one occasion Mike would say, "Here's what I'll do. Tomorrow I'll get all these fellows"--and we put together a list--for lunch in his office. I don't remember what the subject was, and it might have been the first occasion this occurred because I must say that I was a little nervous about the whole procedure. Here's a guy that's on a staff down at the White House and all of a sudden there are twelve or sixteen senators at this long table having lunch; Mike is on one end of the table and he places me on the other. We'd have one of those very mediocre quick lunches and Mike would say, "Now, you know what the subject is," or "We asked you to come in, and now I'm going to turn it over to Larry. Larry, you go ahead now." My preference, I guess, would have been for Mike to go ahead and I could chip in here and there. But that was his style. People might say he did it by committee, sort of, but everybody was included. There was no gossip, no secret, behind-the-wall stuff. You have a pitch to make, you're trying to get these votes, you're trying to get some unity, or trying to get this amendment adopted, or you're trying to get the feel. "Let's get them in here. Let's sit them down. Now you go ahead and talk to them and ask them."

G: Did these luncheon meetings take place fairly often or was it--?

O: That would be when it got to the point where the people that Mike felt should be involved in the discussion would be ten, twelve or sixteen senators. Most often [it was less]. I remember that little corner of his inner office, which was a large room. This fellow would serve coffee, and it was [at] a round table in sort of an alcove that would accommodate up

to--there'd be Mike and I and three, four, maybe up to five or six senators as you spread the circle a little bit.

The luncheon was not a normal procedure, but that was when you've got to communicate with twelve to sixteen members and you might as well get them all in. "Now, I'll get them in for you and have them sit down. I'm in accord with what you're trying to do and I will so state, but you've got to speak on behalf of the President." It kind of put me to the test a little bit, and I must say that I was a little tense about that sort of thing in the earlier days. And there was the basic problem that you could inadvertently or indeed stupidly cross that line one inch and not be suitably deferential and all the rest, and all of a sudden there might be some fellow saying, "Wait a minute, what is this?What's going on here?"

G: Did that happen to you?

O: No.

G: Did President Kennedy believe that Mansfield was too pessimistic on legislative matters, too cautious?

O: He knew he was cautious. Mike was a fellow that wanted to have things in place and have a total understanding they were in place before you took the next step. But I don't recall that President Kennedy considered that a negative at all. That again was part of his style. What he had in Mike wasn't an overly verbose fellow. With his pipe particularly, he might respond in rather clipped sentences. But he was a very direct fellow. You need not be concerned about Mike's attitude or position. If you asked what he thought the status or the hope or expectancy was, he would tell you. Now, there were times when that wasn't what you wanted to hear, and I think that you could construe that as meaning he's a pessimist by nature and he doesn't wage battle as aggressively or in the style that we'd like to see. I think what you would do anyway with a fellow like that is accommodate to his style and act accordingly, because you never had any question in your mind about his dedication and commitment. That was his style, and let's face it, the record we had on the Senate side would indicate that there was nothing wrong with his style.

But his sensitivity, and we'll get to it later, regarding the White House role, mine specifically, was that I was totally accepted by Mike Mansfield.Whatever hour of the day or night I was in or out of his office, Mike was available and we'd chat, even if it was just discussing the weather or some sporting event, have a cup of coffee and chat. But I didn't realize until the situation occurred with the trade bill that Mike wasn't about to have his office overrun or the corridors overrun with White House or executive branch people charging around the place. That turned out to be a sensitive matter at one point.

G: On the trade bill, is that right?

O: Yes. Mike directed me to order our private-sector citizen trade people to remove

themselves from proximity of the Senate Chamber, and [he] was not going to allow them to have the use of his inner office for discussions, as I had that use. I dutifully calmed all that down. There was nothing these fellows were doing wrong. They were all gung ho and aggressive and they were inadvertently making their presence too widely known, and their efforts were just too obvious and in too close proximity. It was all right for me to have the access I had, but I had to under- stand that just didn't include some army. Obviously I attended to that as diplomatically as I could, as quickly as I could. There was no further reference to it. But that is just an indication of the fellow's style.

G: After LBJ became vice president, how important was Bobby Baker to the Senate operation?

O: Well, first, Bobby Baker was known to the President-elect. Bobby Baker had, as I guess the record will show, a very unique role in the Senate. If you needed a head count, Bobby Baker would have a head count for you in a matter of hours. If you needed a projected attendance count for next Thursday, Bobby Baker would be able within an hour to tell you who's going to be present, who wouldn't be and why.

G: Did this involve an extraordinary talent in itself? Was it simply a mechanical operation?

O: No, I think it had a significant degree of talent in there. Obviously I didn't know Bobby Baker at all until I was introduced to him. But his role, which I did assume was the role he had under Johnson, was an interesting role. I was very interested in this fellow and these titles in the Senate, staff titles, although at first they meant nothing to me. You pick up a little bit each day and you try to keep as quiet as you can and be as observant as you can and try to put the cast in place. There wasn't any briefing session for me in all of this sort of thing; you had to pick it up as you went along. But the Baker role, for example, with Mansfield, that's when I met Baker, obviously. Baker was a fellow still doing what he always did. Mike would say, "We have a partial roll call; we have ten members who we have no idea where they stand on this," and Baker would be assigned to check them out during the day and come back with whatever intelligence he could to determine our follow-ups. And that was an integral part of the activity. I don't remember in the time frame when Baker departed and Valeo came aboard. You might jog my memory on that, but I don't know--

G: 1963, I think, was when he left.

O: Was it that late?

G: Yes, I believe that's right.

O: Because Baker got into all the problems he had and a change took place. I think it was Mike Mansfield's nature, too, that if he took over a post, took over as majority leader, that he took over staff accordingly and there weren't any decisive changes.

Incidentally--the comparison between the two--Valeo carried on in basically the same task, but Valeo was, if you can put it this way, more of a student of the legislation, had a keen interest in the substance. I don't know what his background was, but he came across to you as a fellow that was quite knowledgeable regarding the legislative program in detail, while Bobby Baker was not that way. Bobby was more interested in the game, the way it was played, the ebb and flow and the give and take of votes and amendments rather than any great involvement in the substance per se.

G: Did you have any opportunity to observe some of his extralegal activities, practicing law, or misuses of office while he was--?

O: No. I don't recall--I'm sure I met Baker's wife on a few occasions.

G: Dorothy, I think it was.

O: Yes. But we didn't have any social contacts. Beyond his role and my role, I have no recollection of ever having dinner with Baker or having a drink with Baker off the Hill.I had no idea what Baker's extracurricular activities would be, if any, I'm sure during that period. I think as I discuss Bobby now, I do recall that he had a very close relationship, I'm not saying confined to one senator, but certainly with Bob Kerr. I remember it came across very quickly to me that his relation with Kerr and I'm sure others--and I don't know why I cite Bob Kerr but I think probably that's accurate--that while he had this relationship with a number of senators with his ability to communicate with them, that the relationship with Kerr seemed to be much more intimate than with the others. And let's face it, in dealing with the Senate, Kerr was a powerhouse up there.

G: Why was he a powerhouse?

O: I think through his own personality, frankly. He was very aggressive, somewhat dictatorial, demanding--not that he demanded anything of me--but all of this came through in terms of the personality of the guy. We made efforts to establish a relationship with him as we did with every- one else. I think it was more difficult; we were more uncertain. It wasn't to convert him to a liberal Democrat, but you just didn't get to the intimacy or the relaxed atmosphere that we did with many of the conservative Senate Democrats.

I was not with the President when he visited Kerr's ranch on some occasion, but I remember Ken O'Donnell telling me--I think he and Dave Powers accompanied the President. I'm sure it was part of some trip. I would normally be on a trip involving congressmen or senators, but what- ever occurred, I wasn't there. But apparently Senator Kerr pointed out to them that he owned everything looking to the horizon and as far as the eye could see. Then the concern of Ken and Dave--I guess they probably stayed overnight--was that there would not be a drink available. I'm not too sure that one or both of them didn't sneak a little drink in with them in the anticipation that they wouldn't have a chance to have a cocktail. But Kerr was known to be a total abstainer. I guess he was probably a Baptist; I don't know, but followed rigidly the precepts of whatever his

religious convictions were.

All of that was in it, so I can't suggest to you that I established a high comfort factor with Bob Kerr. I tried. There was nothing negative, but I didn't have that feeling. I could deal with a lot of other senators much more easily than I could with Bob Kerr. But I guess Kerr's name came into this discussion because of Bobby Baker's relationship with him.

G: Yes. Kerr seems to have been quite close to the financial institutions and also the oil interests. Of course, he himself was an oilman.

O: I'm sure it's Kerr I'm talking about. I can remember a conversation with him and his describing his earliest stages as a lawyer and how he acquired his obviously significant wealth. As a young lawyer, in these early explorations, he became a recognized expert on the legal documents necessary to acquisition of these potential oil sites. But the key to it was that a lot of these--what they call them, wildcatters?--needed to have this legal work done and in most instances didn't have money to pay for it. So Kerr established early on this procedure that he would do probably hundreds of these agreements, and in lieu of a fee take a percentage of the action. And the law of averages played out over a period of years. It was quite interesting, and he was very proud of his approach to the practice of law and how he was thinking way ahead though he, too, didn't have any financial resources.

G: One more question about JFK and the southerners: in terms of appealing to the South, the Democrats in Congress, he did increase price supports for cotton and rice and tobacco and some of these products. Was this a factor? How did this come into play in enlisting their support?

O: Well, it was helpful. The record of the White House regarding southern senator interests was a pretty good one. We went along; we were sensitive to their interests. We worked with them and we achieved some pluses. I could not say we had a specific plus that resulted in a specific vote, but it helped in a general climate.

But, you know, it's interesting. You're talking about Kerr and talking about Dick Russell, but you could talk about a number of others who by dint of seniority had achieved significant positions in the Senate. Envision the living quarters in the White House as part of our practice of having a group of senators invited in, perhaps ten or a dozen, carefully selected because of what might be pending. Obviously included, if it were ten or a dozen sitting in a semicircle in one of the living rooms of the quarters with the President sitting in a rocking chair, would be the Dick Russells, generally, the Bob Kerrs, sometimes bipartisanly there'd be the Ev Dirksens along with them. And there's going to be hopefully a sales pitch, because there was a purpose in having this meeting. You can socialize just so long and then get to the subject at hand, because these meetings probably wouldn't last more than an hour or an hour and a half in the late afternoon.

The President would state his views. Now, here's a president of the United States sitting there who was, indeed, a neophyte in the Senate, very much junior, not in the power structure of the Senate. And here are all these fellows that he knows, but not intimately. It created a climate. At least in his mind he found it, I think, difficult. He would espouse his views and he could always articulate his views well, present his case, exchange some comments around the circle, but the bottom line to even informally head-count them, you wouldn't reach that point. He probably would have been more comfortable if he had never known them. I think that's natural. There was a slight reticence. I'm mentally pushing him because I want out of it all I can get, in terms of doing a little more head-counting tomorrow. But he would not attempt to put them on the hook.

G: Did Mrs. Kennedy play a role in building bridges, ties to these senior members of Congress?

O: No, not any individual effort in that regard. She followed the basic first lady procedure. She visited the Hill on rare occasions. I know she paid a couple of visits to the Senate. What do they call that, where they all get together and sew or whatever they did? There were carefully orchestrated invitations to White House functions, and she was always briefed as to the attention that should be paid. She did that extremely well with these members of Congress and their wives and would devote a good deal of attention to them. But on an individual basis, to seek or maintain contact, unlike Lady Bird, there wasn't that to any great degree. There again, she just didn't know these people, didn't know most of them at all, while of course Lady Bird knew them all intimately. But her role was basically confined to the traditional first lady role and there wasn't anything in terms of my end of the business that was unique or unusual, other than in the social concepts.

For example, these meetings I'm talking about in the living quarters, you'd always make a point that she would be knowledgeable as to who was going to be there, and at some point generally [she would] come in briefly to say hello and shake hands with everyone and welcome them, but not participate in the discussions. There wasn't any time in my organized legislative relations efforts that I put her specifically into the equation.

For example, I just thought about it, we were talking early on about the involvement of Mrs. Johnson, not only in beautification but her general considerable interest in the legislative program and its progress. It was not at all unusual for me to be chatting with her about matters at the moment which interested her a great deal, even little personality clashes, that sort of thing, a little scuttlebutt regarding the legislative progress. And it was not unusual for her to call me when she would be noting something transpiring and ask me what I thought or how was it going or was that factual that she had just read, something of that nature. I don't recall Jackie Kennedy engaged in that kind of activity.

G: I suppose the tradition of first ladies was really more like Jacqueline Kennedy than Lady Bird Johnson.

O: Yes, I would think so. And, of course, you go to Jackie Kennedy's interests: the arts, refurbishing the White House was a great interest to her. Her background and her areas of interest were such that they really didn't get to what she might have construed a little bit mundane, things such as head counts. (Laughter)

G: You've discussed that minimum wage bill and have written about that in your book as well, so I won't ask you to repeat that, but--

O: I'm not going to repeat any of it other than just to underscore once more that I think I used it often. I used it in the book and we've discussed it in great detail, because it contained just about all the elements in a legislative struggle, including a one-vote loss after all of the manipulation and maneuvering. I think it's a microcosm of efforts we undertook. It had all the elements in it.

G: The Republicans charged that three of the Democratic conferees, [William] Ayres, Adam Clayton Powell and James Roosevelt, who had supported the administration bill, failed to fight for the House version. Do you recall that and what the problem was there?

O: No, I don't recall specifics on that. That was the accusation and what was the ground for it? Was there a suggestion that they had some reason to drag their feet? I really don't know.

G: I was going to ask you what the reason might have been.

O: Yes. I just don't know.

G: The bill in its final version did exempt federal workers, but I noticed that Kennedy included federal workers under an executive order. Do you recall that?

O: In the various phases of compromise, exclusions became part of com- promise. Clearly one of the most difficult areas of exclusion that we were forced to accept were laundry workers. I don't recall specifics on federal employees other than the recognition that you could do a give-up in that area because you had a way of compensating for it. So that wasn't too tough. Or the persuasion on the part of friendly people trying to help us enact legislation that if we would accept that, it would be helpful in moving the legislation.We did have a recognition during the course of this that there was a way to resolve it. That was probably a little easier to give up than the laundry workers.

G: Yes.

O: Actually, when the bill was completed we probably had a half a loaf, maybe a little better than a half a loaf, but that was the philosophy we followed. We're not walking down from the Hill without taking a half-loaf, with the total commitment in our minds we'll be back for the rest of it.

G: Was this strategy of using an executive order to get what you couldn't achieve in legislation fairly typical of President Kennedy?

O: If the opportunity presented itself, there was a distinct awareness of it and no reluctance to utilize it. That was our view, and I'm sure that view was implemented on occasions. But we all had a pretty clear understanding of that. You might be stymied in a lot of ways and this great power of the presidency wasn't quite what observers thought it was. It can be awfully frustrating, but if you have this procedure available to you, you're going to utilize it without hesitancy. That was our attitude, and the actual implementation I haven't any great recollection. But I do have a distinct recollection of not only our awareness of it, but our desire to utilize it.

G: Did members of Congress object to this?

O: Oh, yes, that's one area where they'd give you a little bit of heat. But that was an area where we weren't going to listen particularly.

G: Did they have any recourse?

O: Well, I suppose long range in a variety of ways they could have some recourse, but that was the gamble you took. There was always a tendency of, sure, listen, if you've tweaked somebody individually or collectively or put their nose a little bit out of joint and they're not pleased with what you've done, a) they have to recognize you have the authority to do it. Secondly, to get even in any form is an indirect procedure that might manifest itself in some way somewhere down the road. But your expectancy was that--really in any important way--that would not occur, because there's always tomorrow and there's another subject to discuss.

G: Richard Russell seems to have been one of those who was especially sensitive about government-created things that were not a result of legislation.

O: Well, that's part of the Russell I was trying to describe. You have to remember that Russell was not unique in the sense that he did feel that, indeed, he was very well qualified to be president of the United States. I think the record shows that he had that feeling early on. But I think that is played out on the part of some senators by being inordinately sensitive to the executive branch activities, retaining, at least in their mind, the power of the Congress, the authority of the Senate, and the need to achieve advice and consent, approbation and approval in just about every instance. The presidential powers were limited to a greater degree than actuality in the minds of some of them. That's by the very nature of their seniority and their position in the Senate, and perhaps a little bit of feeling that they'd do a better job if they were there.

G: One of the criticisms of using this form of action, executive order rather than legislation, is that it does not achieve for the measure the same status that an act of Congress would.

O: Well, it's sure as the devil better than nothing. It might not achieve the same status, but there's a real probability it will achieve the same goal.

G: Two other examples: one, the Peace Corps was established initially through executive order. Why was that?

O: The Peace Corps bordered on the revolutionary in concept and initial reaction to that concept. If you think back on the Peace Corps, that was a little bit far out to a lot of people. If the opportunity presented itself to put it in place, you were going to seize that opportunity, because I think extended discussion on that proposal in legislative terms could have doomed it or severely restricted it. If you had a starting point, you could get into a position of saying, "Listen, here it is. Now let's talk about implementation and procedures" Even in terms of very liberal New Frontier legislative program, this would have to be termed unique.

G: But once it was set up and once you did have the legislation, it was not apparently that controversial. I mean it passed easily enough.

O: Amazingly so. It wasn't [controversial]. I'll give you my own reaction. I was surprised at the broad acceptance of it once it was in place. I felt it would be subject to conservative opposition and controversy. I think the early reporting of Peace Corps activities was very upbeat. I think it really extended beyond somebody saying, "Well, I'm a conservative," or a liberal. The uniqueness of it and, as far as I'm concerned, its progress and its record were surprising to me and very pleasing. But I must say there was some trepidation when we were first at the concept stage.

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O: I don't know the current status [of the Peace Corps], whether it's at the level of involvement and intensity that existed during those early years or just where it is now. Do you? I don't know.

G: No. Your papers reflect almost a struggle within the administration on the Peace Corps in behalf of its advocates to get it considered among the top priority programs to be enacted and an attempt to get the President to embrace the Peace Corps as really a top priority.

O: Yes, that's true.

G: Do you recall this issue and how it--?

O: That's true. It wasn't a split with the administration in terms of whether or not there should be a Peace Corps or whether the proposal had great merit. It went to those that like to describe themselves as realists--that would include me--and those that we construed to be a little bit dreamers, and that would include a number of my colleagues. The problem with the Peace Corps within the administration was to upgrade it or have it

at the level that the staunch, enthusiastic advocates wanted it and the level that we envisioned in terms of how many battles can you wage. There was certainly a difference in the temperature on the part of many of us, and I must say that I think I probably fitted in the category of the fellow saying, "Hey, I think it's great. It's just as impressive as the devil. Marvelous idea. But now, how do you get it into formulation?" And what are the priorities here? How many battles can you take on? I can remember Ken O'Donnell and I discussing this, because we were both practical; hard-bitten perhaps a little, saying, "You wouldn't quarrel with anyone about the merits of something like this but, gee whiz. . . ."

So that was resolved by the procedure that was followed putting it in place. And I must say there was total accord on the part of all of us, no matter what our concerns were about putting it in place at the outset or the form of putting it in place. Indeed, it was a shining star in the firmament of our accomplishments.

G: There was the issue of whether or not to include it as a part of AID or within the State Department or to establish it as a separate agency. Do you recall this?

O: Yes, I recall discussions concerning it, but I don't recall specifics. I'm not persuaded even now that there was a great weight placed on putting it in the State Department. I think there was a feeling of independent status pretty much from the outset even in general discussions of the pros and cons.

G: I have a note that Mike Manatos had been quoted as saying that LBJ had not helped to advance that legislation and that was very disturbing to Johnson, and he even called Manatos and called Bill Moyers. Do you recall that?

O: No.

G: Was he helpful on it?

O: My recollection is he was. I have no recollection that Johnson didn't share the general view regarding it. It's conceivable that Johnson might have shared my view that this was a difficult task. But I would wonder about the supposed Mike Manatos statement.

But when you think of the Great Society programs and the general attitude that Lyndon Johnson had toward matters of this nature, there's no question in my mind that he was in total accord with the concept and pleased with the results. But if he had stated that we might have some difficulties with some people, I could have been quoted accordingly.

G: One of your memoranda indicates that [Sargent] Shriver and Moyers were practically living on the Hill, lobbying for--

O: That's true. I've said this before, and I think it's worthy of [repeating].

G: You've talked about Shriver, I think, yes.

O: Yes. Shriver and Moyers made a great team in this effort. My view [is] that these are two men of exceptional abilities. Shriver was the leader. What was so pleasing was you had two men that were extremely aggressive in promoting their views. You can have people that are wedded and dedicated, but then do you have this aggressive promotion and ability to communicate that can be so important in moving something in the Congress? And Sarge Shriver, I don't think I ever have a conversation with Sarge that I don't walk away renewing my admiration in his enthusiasm for whatever he's involved in.As you know, I give him high marks. And when you talk about Bill and Sarge on the Hill, I'm sure they wore out a couple of pairs of shoes in the process.

G: A note indicates that they even made some progress with Otto Passman. Do you recall that?

O: I would suspect the record probably doesn't indicate that, but then I'm saying that off the top of my head. But I'll give them high marks for trying.

(Laughter)

But if they made more progress with Passman than we did in foreign aid--well, any progress they made with Passman would be more than we made with foreign aid. But you know, it's worth commenting on that. That's an example of the activities of those two fellows. You'd have difficulty finding a couple of fellows in Washington, knowing Otto Passman and knowing his record and background and his attitude, that would deign to make the effort. And they made the effort, obviously, but maybe I'm being a little cynical and maybe the record shows otherwise, but if they persuaded Otto Passman in this area, I should have been back to Sarge and Bill Moyers to take over the foreign aid effort, too. They were a good team, those two fellows.

G: Moyers was terribly young at the time.

O: Oh, God, and I don't think--and there are exceptions to this--but that is drudgery, what I was engaged in. There were even attempts somehow that I've read or heard over those years to glamorize what I was engaged in. I was engaged in gut, hard work that hardly allowed you to ever sleep. You know, I loved it; I loved every minute of it. But if it were not an effort expended in the promotion of the New Frontier and Great Society programs, and you put it into another context and suggest to me I make a similar effort, there's no effort I can imagine in life that would have intrigued me to do what I did during those years. I lived and breathed it. You had setbacks and pitfalls constantly. You sweated out every darn vote on the Hill. It was endless. One struggle of that nature in a year would have been enough, but yet you were back to it day after day after day. And when Bill and Sarge were up doing what they did, that represented total dedication. That represented a complete commitment. To recognize that if you could only get the darn thing done and get a presidential signature on it, it was going to make a contribution to progress affecting a lot of people. My gosh, for any other reason, you'd say, "You've got to be crazy. I can

find a better job than this."

G: Let's move to the Area Redevelopment Bill. This has always been described as a fulfillment of a campaign pledge that President Kennedy made in the [1960] campaign.

O: I'm sure it was one of a number of pledges that were made; a recognition of the problems that ought to be attended to in these areas.

G: I was going to say, did it come out of that West Virginia primary?

O: I can tell you that his commitment to West Virginia was total. Come hell or high water, he was going to repay the people of West Virginia a debt he owed to them because of the support they had given him, the confidence they had expressed in him. It was a topic of conversation on the part of the President constantly.

G: Really?

O: I don't think I can exaggerate his depth of commitment, and that there was going to be area redevelopment. There was going to be a focus on West Virginia. He would have the record show that he was responsive and recognized their problems. But the element of appreciation of their support for him was very much a significant part of all this.

Of course, while you focused on West Virginia, you took it as extending through a whole region, and to other regions that equally merited some special attention.

G: Paul Douglas was, I guess, the chief sponsor of the bill and the head of a task force to resolve this. Do you recall working with Douglas on this?

O: Yes. I recall working with Douglas on this and on a variety of other matters, I think probably truth-in-packaging, truth-in-lending and other matters of that nature. I want to say that I've just described the drudgery of the job, but if you wanted to point to a significant element of pleasure in the job, becoming acquainted with Paul Douglas and working with him was one of the highlights of my experience in congressional relations. We've talked about unique and unusual people and I guess you would anticipate that in an entity called the Congress of the United States you're going to run into more than the normal number of unique and unusual people. That's how a lot of them got there. But Paul Douglas is a stick-out.

There was one problem he had in the Senate, incidentally, and we might as well talk about it. It was a little bit perhaps the problem that Hubert Humphrey had in politics. Paul Douglas was construed by some people to be too soft because he was so nice and so decent and so honorable. And maybe that lessened his impact. He was not a wheeler-dealer. I might have discussions with other members of the Senate I wouldn't have with Paul Douglas on things we might do to bring certain things about, not of a devious nature but more the give and take of the political arena. But Paul Douglas was a

man that rightly was on a pedestal as a human being. He was a marvelous human being and it was an absolute pleasure to go into Paul Douglas' office, whatever the circumstances were, to visit with him, to meet with him, to discuss the business at hand with him. It was an absolute pleasure. And if I had to sit down and list people that left a lasting impression, he'd certainly be on that list.

G: On the Area Redevelopment Bill, there were several issues. One was whether the administrator would be directly responsible to the president or under the secretary of commerce. And Douglas did agree to accept the latter arrangement. Do you recall that?

O: Not specifically. My best recollection is that initially you had a decided preference in that area. Now, if that was going to be compromised away in some form remained to be seen. But I don't recall Douglas--it might have been the case--objecting particularly to that. You put it in the context that he accepted. I don't know whether Douglas had a preference, but I don't recall Douglas having any serious objections.

G: Now, the other controversy surrounding the bill was a question of back-door spending, direct Treasury financing rather than congressional appropriation. Here it seems that President Kennedy reversed himself in initially going along with the congressional appropriation and then seeking a direct financing. Do you recall that?

O: I recall that there was a reversal, and the motivation for it or what was entailed in bringing it about, I don't recall. But that's correct, that the initial approach was--

G: Do you think he felt he could get more money if he didn't have to--?

O: I don't know. You could make some assumptions, but I don't recall it well enough. I think that you probably would have a preference to go in that direction anyway. And why he initially didn't attempt it and then reversed himself, I don't know. It's a little cleaner from the executive branch point of view anyway.

G: One press account indicates that the success of this legislation was due to the way the southerners were handled.

O: Well, I don't know that the way they were handled would differ particularly from the way we attempted to handle them generally in legislation. I think that you have an element here, though, that differs probably rather significantly from some of the other proposals where we attempted to work with the southerners. I think you had a lessened degree of concern; there was some, but a lessened degree regarding the fallout from implementing this legislation in terms of equal rights, civil rights and the rest. It was a different dimension, a different category. It really went to regions; it went to need, it went to programs. Regardless of what your views might be on some social legislation, you certainly would have a common interest in the need for federal involvement in areas like West Virginia, for example. My recollection was that this was a more comfortable battle for us than some of the others.

G: Another legislative issue that I wanted to ask you about was the temporary unemployment compensation fight. Here you had the principle of pooling or sharing the resources among the states and then using the funds where they were most needed for unemployment situations. This was a real close battle; I think you won by two votes in defeating the [Harry] Byrd amendment to throw out the pooling principle.

O: Well, that was the heart of it. You know, if Byrd had prevailed, what have you got? You've got a shell.

G: That's right.

O: Sure. And you know it isn't human nature to share. (Laughter) You have to get over that little hurdle. But without that pooling principle, really, what did you have?

G: Describe what you recall of that battle.

O: I think I just did, perhaps to the best of my recollection, because the battle really was focused on how do you convince people they ought to share. It's a basic human attitude that has to be overcome. And what are you faced with? It was a pretty simple process: listen, if you don't have pooling, we had nothing. We probably wouldn't be interested in the shell, because the implementation would be nonexistent or the possibilities of implementation. And Byrd was going to kill that bill. I don't know how you would describe it, but Byrd didn't envision anything particularly of interest [in it] to him and the state of Virginia. And Byrd would gravitate in that direction philosophically. I'm not talking about the sharing side or the pooling, but even though I've said it's a different climate, you're really not into social problems directly. You're talking about regions. You have a lot of automatic support from places that you wouldn't get support for other legislation.

So you're starting to add that up and weighing it, and so it made it a little tough. It was more than a little tough. But the possibility of succeeding--you look at that roll call and you'll find it a very strange one, odd, for obvious reasons. You had people on this program that probably weren't working on anything else that you engaged in. And for the obvious reasons. Once you get into area or regional programs, then you quickly in your head count, just put them down right. Even though if you went back to the same fellow the next day, he might not even talk to you. (Laughter)

G: The note I have indicates that there was considerable administration pressure to get this.

O: You bet. As I told you early on, there was presidential motivation that extended beyond the ordinary.

G: Labor Department estimates showed that nine states would really benefit from this, and these included Alaska, Kentucky, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon,

Pennsylvania and West Virginia. Is this where you focused your efforts to get the--?

O: You bet. And you'll note in that list we would have liked to have had a few more large states, but we had some pretty large delegations in that list.

G: Well, you got [Jacob] Javits and [Kenneth] Keating and [Hugh] Scott and [Clifford] Case and [Thomas] Kuchel.

O: Yes. That, coupled with our established friends, squeezed it out. That's about what it amounted to, but even with those you list, however, we shouldn't let the record suggest that Javits and Kuchel and Case didn't vote with us on other occasions. But you take a thing like that. If you could have made the case that dire need would relate to nineteen states, you would feel that this wasn't any big battle; you could get this accomplished. But it was a close one.

G: But you did get thirty-nine Democrats on that bill, and that's, I would say, a fairly high--

O: That was probably a high-water mark. Not necessarily true, but when you consider the opposition and the closeness of the Byrd amendment, obviously you needed them all plus a few that joined the team briefly.

G: Did you have much contact with Byrd?

O: Yes. A fair amount of contact, pleasant and nonproductive.

(Laughter)

The contact extended to flying with the President in a helicopter down to his apple orchards or whatever it was and everything else imaginable. (Laughter) But not productive.

By the time Johnson was dealing with him and we got him positioned on Medicare, that was probably the highlight. And the President positioned him very beautifully. Harry wasn't sure just what direction he was going or what had happened to him, but--

G: This was when LBJ had the press conference and--?

O: Yes, yes. Which had to be one of the most pleasant experiences I ever had.

G: What did he do?

O: Well, he just put the words in his mouth and left him on the record. And we chuckled for a good while after the fact. No, I don't think that [Harry Byrd] Sr.--I don't recall that he ever relented. Harry Byrd, Jr. was a carbon copy of his dad, with the additional factor that he was a little more with this century. But his personality was somewhat the same. Harry

Byrd could be as pleasant a fellow as you'd ever want to meet, and he had fine apples, but he was in another world. You talk about conservatism. You have the epitome of it with a facade of pleasantness and courteousness.

G: I wonder by the time of the Kennedy Administration how much he controlled that committee, his committee.

O: Well, there was slippage.

G: Who did you rely on in the Finance Committee?

O: I don't recall anybody as a stick-out. I think that we combed that committee frequently. It was one-on-one almost across the board, because we were never naive enough to anticipate that there would be the slightest movement on the part of Byrd. So you had to go around him. That was a committee where you made no attempt to hide the fact you were trying to go around him.

Now, there were other occasions where you tried to be very diplomatic and very careful because you didn't want fellows back-stepping any more than it was. That sort of thing was awfully hard to weigh at times. But with Byrd, as pleasant a fellow as he was, we had no illusions at all, and we knew that to work with that committee you had to work around Byrd to put together committee views that were difficult, because in almost every instance you were trying to convince members of that committee to override their chairman. And to a far greater extent than I think exists today, that was an awfully, awfully difficult thing to do.

You're always faced with that dilemma. Knowing all that, recognizing all that, not being naive, you never allowed yourself to pass up an opportunity. You didn't say, "My God, why spend a whole Sunday after- noon down on that darn farm of his?" You know it isn't going to do a thing for you. But yet you say, "Well, if you don't come out, the day might come when you'll wish you had." I guess you just never foreclosed anything, but that was way out. Give you a basket of apples and that was about it. Or what was it, apples we were eating? Apples, and it seems to me we were eating strawberries or something, too. I don't know. I think probably the visit was worth it. I may have gone down there a couple of times, but I remember being there and leaving saying, "Now I've just been in another world. This is just beyond my comprehension and never the twain shall meet."

(Interruption)

G: Okay, I have two pieces of legislation here, the Juvenile Delinquency Act and the Youth Training Bill, which included the youth conservation corps that Humphrey was so enthusiastic about. Do you recall those measures?

O: I don't recall them in any great detail. Those are measures that really were, to some

extent, a carryover from the Democratic Party traditional position that almost goes back to New Deal concepts. I don't recall them in the context of the legislative struggle. They were in there, obviously. They had some priorities, but they were on a list of several measures that we were working on and it did reflect a particular point of view of Hubert. He was a very strong advocate and very much involved. But in the nitty-gritty of the legislative struggle, I have very little recollection.

G: Okay. In the case of the Juvenile Delinquency Act, Robert Griffin, the Republican, wanted to limit the project to a pilot program in Washing- ton, D.C. His amendment was first accepted on a teller vote and then defeated on a roll call, a much larger vote; you had practically double the number of members voting. Do you recall bringing in the additional members?

O: I don't recall the specifics, but it would fall in a normal procedure. The teller vote generally reflected just what that reflects, and if you lost a teller vote, you obviously had a prior head count. Teller votes were very, very troublesome to us always. It was always the problem of getting people involved. The member back in his office just was not going to react to anything other than the bells for a roll call, and even then you'd have to sweat out whether or not he broke off that constituent meeting in time to dash over and be recorded. I would say on that that the defeat--I'm sure there were other incidents of that nature--on the teller vote would not have shook us, that we had done our job in advance in terms of a roll call, that we had assurances, that we had the votes and that it would come to efforts that we did undertake--and they were very difficult--to check out absenteeism as quickly as possible, even right in the Speaker's office.And it was not unusual for people to jump on the telephones and call offices and all this sort of thing.

But it was a tough one, to cover that whole army quickly in a matter of a forty-five-minute period. And I remember the forty-five minutes because we used to time some of these roll calls and they averaged about forty-five minutes. And that's all the working time you had on absenteeism or vote change. So rushing off the floor and having somebody grab a member and shoot him into the Speaker's office and try to convert him, you were up against a very difficult time frame. So on the vote side of it, I have no recollection of the vote. But, as you mentioned, the teller vote and the size of the ultimate roll call and the margin of the ultimate roll call, that would not have been an unusual occurrence.

G: How did you know how a member had voted on a teller vote?

O: Really didn't, except observation. You always had staff people in the balcony. We didn't have computers; you'd have a fellow with a pad, or more than one at a key moment. Observation and quick notes and dash down the stairs and into the office off the floor and do a recap, and try to come up with as much intelligence as we could. Hit or miss I guess is the answer to it, but you did the best you could and we never came up with a more sophisticated way of handling it. A teller vote, that was the toughest of all.

G: Another measure passed by both the House and Senate was aid for dependent children. This was an emergency anti-recession measure proposed by Kennedy to make families of unemployed workers with dependent children temporarily eligible for public assistance. Did the administration, while billing this as a temporary anti-recession measure, view it in terms of a possible long-term, permanent reaction to--?

O: Not that I recall. No, it was a reaction to the circumstances of the moment. In fact, my recollection would be pretty clear in that regard. I recall that measure and I have no recollection that it was envisioned as a foot in the door.

G: Really?

O: There might have been some people that envisioned it, but I didn't.

G: Anything on the give and take of getting that through? Social Security benefits were broadened as well, and the reduction in the retirement age [enacted]. Do you recall that struggle?

O: Well, I'd place that in the category--in terms of the breadth of the effort expended--that was major. That did go to short-term and long-range and had all the elements of a major effort. My recollection is this included a heavy involvement with Wilbur Cohen and his people. I think I'm accurate on that. But it was a broad-based effort with involvement to some degree of department and agency people that were not directly involved in the legislation. This was one where you broadened your base of operation as much as possible in terms of member contact. A lot of planning, a lot of thought went into that one. It was pretty far-reaching.

G: Anything on the key to its passage?

O: No, I don't think there was any magic there. I think it was launching as major an effort as you could, but I don't recall anything magic.

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O: I know I'm accurate in this regard. Not because of your commitment but because of the realities of the situation, you couldn't put into play a massive effort every time. You had to weigh that somewhat. There were times when you carried out your effort as a team effort, and you did not call on people that normally wouldn't be in the process. Having said that, you feel, well, you had a lessened effort in some instances than others. I think it was just the reality of how much you could get done and how best you could do it. Also you weighed it on the basis of the opposition, actual or anticipated; the difficulties in the committee, the delay in getting a rule, all of those things went into it.

So you would find times when you would have a legislative proposal that seemed to grow in urgency and attention through the span of the struggle, because the struggle

itself engendered more effort and broadened your activities, and it became more intense. But sliding between the cracks from time to time were proposals of merit--obviously we considered all of them of merit--that missed at some step of the process and got lost in the shuffle, because of the very fact that you just couldn't cope with it all.

See, our problem--and we keep talking about the House and rightly so. There was never an easy struggle. There wasn't when it came to the Great Society where you had some elbowroom and you had this massive program. There were some things that sort of just took care of themselves. And then you had the support side on the Hill that was greater than probably in the Kennedy period. And what we were faced with is, if you had fifty or sixty proposals, the chances were good that none of them, none of them, for a variety of reasons were going to walk through. So there is no such thing as an easy battle. There's no such thing other than a tough battle that will be decided on the House side by a paper-thin margin, that your only elbowroom or moment of relaxation would be in handling it in the Senate or in conference.

So to suggest that what we tried to put in place--the utilization of manpower that I talked about originally--was effective to the fullest and it was maximized to the greatest possible level in every instance would be just gilding the lily.That wasn't the case. We just had one hang of a problem keeping up with all of this and finding ourselves sometimes trying to juggle four, five or six balls in the air. And when you're in that kind of a situation, you just sweat out every single darn thing. You're not nearly as effective as you'd like to be. That's why that Congress, even though the margin wasn't as great in the off-year election, all we did was get out of it even in terms of past statistics. In that Congress, under those circumstances it was just a major struggle in the House, and [even] with all the problems that we had in the Senate, in retrospect it was a smoother road for us.

So it sounds cynical to suggest that if you're talking about a youth training program or whatever you're talking about, it's obviously meaningful or you wouldn't undertake it in the first instance. You're vitally interested in succeeding, but to suggest that it was subject to the same degree of effort and intensity as, say Social Security, is not an accurate reflection on what actually occurred. And really, to pinpoint specific meetings, specific negotiations, one-on-one contacts, and the ebb and flow of all this two decades later, without the benefit of all kinds of documentation is tough to do.

I think what we are overlooking, too, is something like a trade bill, where you formalize the citizen effort. In reaching out for support throughout all this, we were constantly reaching beyond the administration, whether it was with the AFL-CIO or the National Education Association or various organizations around the country that had lobbying entities in Washington. We never overlooked that factor. Depending on the circumstances, the item of the moment was very detailed. There's nothing unusual about that, I'm sure. It was unique in the sense that we tried to do more than probably our predecessors had done in that regard.

And you adjust to the circumstances. When we get to the trade bill, for example, obviously your citizen effort has dimensions that wouldn't exist in most of the other legislation you were advocating. That was an entirely different team. There were individuals that were involved directly in that activity that you would probably never see again or had not worked with at a prior time. There's nothing very glamorous in all of this, or very exciting.

G: Let me ask you about Medicare. That was brought up in 1961, and there's some indication that one of the reasons that Medicare did not advance farther was because the Ways and Means Committee was taking up other pieces of legislation. Is this [accurate]?

O: Yes. That's right. They had a pretty full plate. They generally do, so that wasn't unusual. But from day one on Medicare, never did I envision ultimate, final failure.It was only a matter of time.

G: Really?

O: Because the guts of it, the substance of it demanded favorable action. It was inevitable, and the AMA could scream until hell froze over about creating a socialist state and this sort of stuff, but let's face it, you were getting to ultimately confronting Medicare. Off what? Not off a recently developed thought process that brought about area redevelopment and a number of other things. This was a carryover of three decades. There's nothing new about this, and it had taken three decades, as it did with Social Security before it was enacted. And under our process that occurs. Some of the most demanding areas of challenge at the federal level can be areas that take the longest to attend to.

Then the other part of Medicare--you had Kerr-Mills, and you had the pride of authorship with Kerr and Mills. Bob Kerr had no interest in Medicare, and Mills would not have any interest in Medicare until we had the full-court press and he had the head count to show that it would be enacted. And that would be down that road. Meanwhile, Wilbur Mills wasn't making any admission that Kerr-Mills wasn't getting the job done or that it wasn't progressive legislation. So it wasn't that there was a nonexistent program and you're trying to fill a tremendous void. You had these other elements. You talk about the AMA. If we could overcome lobbying efforts in other areas, which we did, then the AMA certainly wasn't going to stop us over the long haul.

So I don't feel that the agenda of the Ways and Means Committee at that time necessarily contributed to a delay in Medicare, because it was going to take time and effort and it would be prolonged. And we knew that, before you would get to D-day on Medicare in any event. So if there was an excuse that because of the heavy agenda of the Ways and Means Committee we hadn't gotten to Medicare, that would not be the reality of the situation.

G: I saw some reference to the point that President Kennedy was even more eager to press

Medicare after realizing how much his own father's medical treatment had cost after that stroke, and thinking that people of more modest means would be literally wiped out by it.

O: Yes, that impacted on him.

G: Do you recall your discussion with him on it?

O: I recall a general discussion, because I had a discussion with him involving my father. I could relate to it even more than he could. But it happened in my family that my father had a prolonged illness extending over a period of some years, which financially devastated our family. It took all our resources. But we lived through that, continued our little business, and all the resources that we had ultimately went into my father's care. It was an experience that I had gone through, my family had gone through. So what more do you need to have it indelibly impressed upon you that this [is needed]? Because I could [relate to it]. Everything is relative, and Kennedy could, at his economic level, say, "People at a lower economic level must have a terrible time." At our economic level, there were any number of millions of people below our economic level that couldn't do what we did. It was impossible and it was destructive in terms of the family and, oh, it just was a devastating thing.

It happened with Jack in his own family, and to his credit he was very sensitive to this. With Jack, it wasn't that "It cost the Kennedy family a great deal of money to take care of Joseph Kennedy over a number of years." No, his reaction was, "My God, it isn't going to financially devastate us, but what do other people do if they have a similar problem?"

You know, there are things you get caught up in, and nothing impacted on me more in terms of my total involvement in it than Medicare. As a generalization, I was always vitally interested in education legislation for the basic reasons that I have described before, but Medicare was highly personalized with me and certainly personalized with the President.

G: You've mentioned the AMA and their lobbying effort. Anything specifically that they did to--?

O: Yes, the name eludes me, but there was a doctor in the AMA and I wish I could come up with his name. He was the point man and he became nationally known. He was an extremely articulate, persuasive super-salesman. He was constantly on radio and television and in the press carrying on the role of the opposition. He had a lot of impact. He got a lot of ink. I remember that specifically because it was an extreme aggravation to me.

G: Really?

O: Well, I never met the man, but he would cause me fits when I would read his views and

philosophy, because not only was it totally contra to my beliefs, it was contra to the real world. It made no sense. So he got to me. Probably motivated me even more.

G: When you would talk to members of Congress about Medicare during this period, did you feel like that they were under pressure from the AMA to--?

O: Yes. The AMA was well organized. I think that if they put their mind to it, the medical profession can do an effective lobbying job. There's a relationship, a patient-doctor relationship, that's sort of traditional, and respect for the profession, maybe not to the degree today that there was then. A doctor was, at least when I was a kid, an eminently respected member of the community; you looked to him for help and assistance. And I think to put together, in the context of the AMA, a national effort that was a heavily financed, in those days certainly heavily financed, with an articulate spokesman along with all their regional and local activities, was very--they were tough adversaries.

They didn't, however, have the capacity to expand to any degree beyond their own entity. I mean, as far as mass public reaction or mass support of the AMA position, that wasn't happening.

But I think you'd have to say that at this stage of our discussion of Medicare, we're talking about the Ways and Means Committee agenda. And having stated our [position], there couldn't have been a greater commitment in our legislative program than our commitment to Medicare. Nevertheless, at that stage we had a long road ahead of us and we knew it. And it wasn't the AMA position, it was the fact that prior to our arrival, the Congress had made an effort to attend to this problem in some form that resulted in Kerr-Mills. You have Kerr-Mills in place and you have the very people that you're going to have to convert to Medicare that have their names on a program and pride in authorship. Even in a defensive context, you're selling a program, or trying to, where in a sense you're saying to them, "You failed." And I don't suggest that they were motivated in Kerr-Mills, frankly, because they felt it was a fair and equitable measure to attend to a major social problem. I think it was rather an attempt to divert. You often heard, "You've got to give it more time to prove itself."

Well, that's an additional roadblock and a significant one. So forget the AMA but concentrate on the Congress and how you were going to overcome these roadblocks; it was a difficult path. Regardless of Wilbur and Kerr and the AMA, somehow, some way this was going to happen. It was inevitable. And I guess I used that phrase at that time, "as inevitable as tomorrow morning's sunrise."

G: You mentioned the opposition lobby for the AMA. Who lobbied in behalf of the bill?

O: Well, there was a group. There was the labor lobby, the liberal lobby and the various elements of it, the senior citizen lobby. It wasn't an army that had to be developed. You were able to edge it on to further activity, but it was in place. So on the lobbying side, the AMA was outnumbered from day one.

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G: Yes. Did you coordinate this whole lobby?

O: Yes. And if we're getting to Medicare, we'll get to our attempt in the private or public sector, whatever you want to call it, to exert pres- sure on the Congress, which was a failure.

G: Let me ask you to go into that. This was the speech at Madison Square Garden?

O: There were several people in the administration who became involved. It was discussed, obviously, with the senior citizen groups, who are well organized. And despite my saying that it was inevitable that this would be enacted, they were suggesting to us that we weren't moving aggressively. We were getting little favorable reaction from Wilbur Mills, and certainly no favorable reaction from Kerr. There's an army out there; there's a constituency that's broad-based and national in scope. And we're not talking, again, about programs that might have civil rights sensitivity. This is in another framework.

So there were those among us, some of them colleagues of mine, who became persuaded that you had to have this grass-roots, highly visible, figurative march on Washington. And, by gosh, Wilbur Mills or none of the rest of these people could resist that, and we'd just sort of roll over them. I was not one of that persuasion, but there was a strong view, and finally it came to actually formalizing a program that would entail a number of mass meetings across the country.

I remained concerned about its effectiveness in terms of the people that we had to convert. And if you looked at the states these people represented and the districts they represented, this massive effort could conceivably not shake them at all and might harden their resistance. You might build a resentment toward this rather blatant effort to push them around. It was rather overwhelming within the administration. More and more, the people that were not engaged in congressional relations were of this mind. And there was enthusiasm for it among the groups that would be involved. Ultimately we signed off on it, and I did not register formal opposition to signing off on it. I had reservations, but no formal opposition. And I must say that I had to be impressed with what supposedly was in place and the organizational effort, which was separate from our congressional relations. The organizational effort, as at least was reported to me, indicated that this would play pretty well around the country.

So we launched it in Madison Square Garden, and we may, I don't recall, have had a few other meetings of a similar nature. A well-organized New York effort produced the bodies; the speeches were made and a fair amount of publicity emanated from it. I tell you, it was less than a pebble in the ocean as far as the Congress was concerned and might be counterproductive. They had taken on, these well-motivated people, a task that was beyond them, frankly, to replay Madison Square Garden in twenty cities across the country. It faded quickly. All of a sudden I found that there was no one around urging this continuity, and it disappeared and was never heard from again.

I think it taught some folks a lesson. There were times I was a little resentful of the attitudes of some of the observers. I'm not talking about media observers. I'm talking about administration observers that would have their own views on why we weren't making more progress, what was wrong with our operation and what they would do in its stead. Once in a while it was a little bit aggravating.

This effort fell of its own weight. And because it fell of its own weight and the impact was minimal, it blew over in terms of concern I might have had about people's having their backs stiffened because of the arrogance of the administration in trying to push them around in this way.

I think a lesson probably was learned, too, that if you're going to go to the people to try to stir the Congress, there are ways of doing it, as long as you decide up front that you're not going to put a cover on it. Harry Truman did it very effectively. President Reagan has done it rather effectively. I think a president can have some effect because he has every right to make his appeal to the people on behalf of his program. And he can hope that that would have an effect on the constituents or the member level. But in the organized concept we launched, the lesson learned is that it's somewhat of a dream. It is a massive undertaking and you'd better be absolutely sure there's no way it can fall of its own weight, because you're just going to self-destruct.

I think most of my friends that were involved in this didn't really understand what it meant to march fifteen to twenty thousand people into twenty arenas over a period of six or eight weeks--the cost factor, the sheer organizational factor. If you did put on a pretty good show and you looked for the reaction over the next seven days and you couldn't find any, that's pretty bad. In congressional relations, we'd reach out to the entities that have a common interest and have some resources in place in lobbying the Congress.

G: Who organized it?

O: I believe that there was a national committee involvement in the organizing of it. There was a fellow named Dick Maguire who was probably one of the key fellows. I don't recall that it was a formalized group, but I think it emanated probably from Dick and some people that had made the recommendations to Dick. That's the best of my recollection. And it had the full approbation of the senior citizens groups around the country.

G: What was President Kennedy's reaction to the Madison Square Garden speech?

O: I don't think he had direct involvement and I don't think that he directed a great deal of attention to Madison Square Garden, frankly.

G: Do you think he felt that it was not a success?

O: I don't really know. It was a program that he had no objection to. It had been passed by him and that was fine with him. That would be just about the extent of it. I found no reason to even discuss it with Kennedy after the fact.

G: Really?

O: No.

G: Well, was the administration sensitive at the time to the difference between speaking to a large arena full of people on the one hand and speaking to a television audience on the other?

O: They felt that you were getting a little of both because they felt that it would be covered by local television. And if you went across the country, you probably came within the range of local television nation- wide ultimately, and there would be an extensive amount of coverage of the events and the planning of the events and local press conferences to announce the events. It just didn't play out that way.

(Interruption)

O: If you're talking about farm legislation in just about any of its aspects, you're talking to a fellow who considered farm legislation somewhat similar to a foreign language.I found myself basically substantively out of it, and I leaned heavily--we all did--on Orville Freeman and his people. We carried on our responsibilities. Henry Hall Wilson had some basic understanding of farm legislation and its intricacies.But I'll say as a group we on the Congressional Relations staff were lost. We could discuss substance on just about any piece of legislation. Most of it went to a reasonable understanding of the legislation and a sense of compromise that goes with the job. So you could get along, and you could get into some basic, substantive amendment agreements. But when it came to farm legislation, I just never felt comfortable with it.

I decided that the best thing we could do on the White House staff in this area was to do our head counts, "Are you for us or against us?" without getting too far into the complexities, and then rely on Orville and that very good staff he had. I wasn't going to be around long enough or have enough time to become sufficiently knowledgeable in this field to be effective in the substantive side.

G: Did you have to balance the interest of the various state delegations in the Congress, like the tobacco states--

O: Oh, yes.

G: --and the rice-producing states and cotton?

O: Oh, yes, there was a continuing give and take--one hand would wash the other. There

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was a lot of that.

G: What could the administration do for the farm state congressmen?

O: Not a great deal beyond being advocates of what they believed in and sought. On executive action in the Department of Agriculture, there were areas where Orville could be helpful. Our advocacy didn't often conform with the Farm Bureau's views, but there's the other farm organization and the representatives of the farm areas in the Congress. My recollection of farm legislation is that all legislation would incorporate discussions in advance with the people that you were going to be dealing with after submission of the legislation, and you'd work on the message jointly. Oftentimes the messages were worked on jointly by staff people--our staff people and staff from the appropriate committees--to see if you couldn't get it into a shape that would be palatable. But on the farm legislation, I never participated in the development stages of the legislation. And I rather suspect that if you went back and checked it out, you'd find that a good deal--and this is what we considered a unique area of legislation--rested very much on the lap of the Department of Agriculture.

Tape 3 of 4, Side 1

G: The measure requested by the administration was the supply management, an effort to implement some control over production. The agricultural interests, particularly the large ones, seemed to be opposed to it.

O: Well, I think the problem continues. Corporate farmers re the family farmer? The interests of the large corporate farmer probably were best served by tax legislation rather than farm legislation. What do they call it, agri--?

G: Agribusiness?

O: Yes, it's called agribusiness. At that time, too--you're going back two decades--there were far more family farms than exist today. There was truly a farm constituency of significant proportions which was very vocal, very effective. The march on Washington of the family farmer is a tradition, and it can be awfully impressive. I saw it different times and I've seen it since. When they emerge en masse on Capitol Hill, it not only clogs the corridors, but gets the attention of the Congress. The lobbying power, and that's reflected in farm legislation, of the American farm community is extremely significant. We are now living in a period when there's great hue and cry about the demise of the family farm. Mortgage foreclosures appear on national television constantly. It's just amazing when you look at the statistics as to the percentage of farming in this country that is attributable to family farms and the tremendous change in agriculture in this country.

This change was certainly in place, but I can't envision the corporate farm, the agrimanagement or whatever they call it. Often now these farms are simply conglomerates; it has little or nothing to do with the history of farming in this country. It

has nothing really to do with the family farm, nothing to do with the city folks' envisionment of farming. But at that time it was more in the traditional concept, with a constituency that was highly vocal, well organized, and had a broad base of strong support on the Hill. Farm legislation had taken on all kinds of connotations. You get a little tobacco and a little cotton, a little bit of rice and you've got some mix.

As I said, [there were] all kinds of give and take and one hand washing the other. How can you explain how you can have tremendous public concern regarding smoking, and at the same time have continuing concern that tobacco be subsidized at the taxpayer's expense?

We've heard all these stories, but when you're dealing with farm legislation and what our role in the White House in congressional relations would be regarding farm legislation, it wasn't that it was insignificant. It was foreign to us and you had to look to those that were experts in this field to carry the burden. That made it different than the normal legislative struggle.

G: You had a one-year extension of the emergency feed grains program that year, and this bill was passed in the House by seven votes that reportedly were obtained at the last minute. Do you recall that one?

O: Who were the seven?

G: I don't know, but there were four GOP members that voted for you and I know who they are: [Robert] Dole, Phil Weaver, Carl Andersen, Odin Langen. Also, you got the support of a lot of the Eastern Seaboard Democrats who normally opposed this kind of legislation. Do you recall--?

O: Yes. I recall that it was another indication of the degree of support for the President that existed among eastern Democrats. I do recall that there were some of those fellows who had never voted for a comparable farm bill. This was a first for a number of them. Some of the other votes represented the effectiveness of the farm lobby. The farm lobby would have no effect on the Eastern Seaboard Democrats, to any extent. Frankly, it is easy to say the seven that were needed were finally there--they were converted--but it would not have succeeded without the support of the Eastern Seaboard Democrats who had no constituent interest to speak of in this area and had traditionally not been supportive. That was to support the President, it was as simple as that. Those votes really had little or nothing to do with the substance of that legislation.

G: One of the press accounts noted that you ran into a last-minute revolt from patronage-hungry northern Democrats on this bill.

O: Well, that would be an appropriate time for them to discuss patronage with me, because the pitch that we would be making to them is "you have to help the President on this one." You were not in much of a position to be persuading them on the merits. This was a

matter of loyalty, of support for the President and that would be appropriate.

It is an excellent example of votes from sources that have no constituent interest. On the basis that "You've got to help the President. This is the President's program, and now come on, it isn't going to hurt you any, and you can go with it." And that would inevitably in some instances lead into "Hey, okay, but wait a minute. What have you done for me lately? This is a two-way street." That's totally understood; that's part of the process. And, Lord knows, there might have been a few people tucked into position somewhere as a result of those votes. Or maybe we reopened some old files that we'd put on hold.

(Laughter)

But that was an acceptable practice. You didn't resent it at all. Fair enough.

G: Was President Kennedy sensitive to this, too? Did he understand the need for this kind of give and take?

O: Oh, sure. I'm not suggesting he lacked farm knowledge to the degree I did, but by the same token I don't think he ever would present himself as a farm expert. He'd know that the only way you could piece this together was to get some solid friends up there to give you one that was of no benefit to them. But, of course, it wasn't that tough, because you weren't asking them to give you one that was adverse to their interest. That was where you got into the tough situations. This wasn't nearly as tough to vote as foreign aid.

G: Another measure that year was the Mexican farm labor law that was extended. This was a very close vote in the Senate, I think a one-vote margin. It was basically a measure to protect the wages of American farmers while providing for this imported labor. According to the press reports, LBJ worked actively for the defeat of the amendment which had the administration's support. Does this ring any bell? Of course, he was coming from Texas--

O: I was going to say, "working actively" might be an exaggeration in the press report. I would accept that he was trying to be helpful on a regional basis. It's a difficult area and, as we know, remains a difficult area to this day. This wasn't an initiation of a program; this was something you're faced with on a calendar. This is a form of extension that we would like to have, and if even friends wanted to do a little adjusting in that regard, I don't think it would be of overriding concern to us. That's probably a pretty callous statement, but that's the reality of it.

G: Was it unusual for him to take a position that was officially not the administration's?

O: I can't recall any similar circumstance. In that case, you have to remember that he was reflecting constituent interests that he had been supportive of for a long time as a member of Congress.

G: Yes. You've talked about the NASA program to the extent that Albert Thomas was interested. In 1961 here you started out with a smaller amount of money and it would get larger. Was this a purposeful approach, to expand it over a period of years rather than go in front asking for--?

O: It was trying to recognize the possibilities. You wanted to establish a policy and build on it later. There were those curbstone observers who would suggest that's lacking in courage. But it would be a judgment, and in that case is a pretty clear one, that it would be far better to establish this and build on that. Because you could darn well wind up with no loaf otherwise. That's a very practical approach to it.

That was weighted in a variety of ways from time to time. There were those that would suggest probably when we get to civil rights, that's the best example in the history of the legislative process, are you to be faulted because you did not demand the absolute, 100 per cent, strongly developed civil rights bill? And there were those that did just that. We got a lot of heat in that regard. Or do you open up this difficult area by some realistic approach that can ensure that you will accomplish an objective and you can build from there? That was the judgment that went into this equation and went into a lot of them.

Incidentally, that fight would go on with regularity within the administration. I was involved in those struggles often. Just how far, how much of a bite are you going to attempt to take? And I guess there were those, frankly, colleagues of mine that felt, "Gee, O'Brien is always sort of backing up or compromising even before we start." You have to weigh those things.

Now, I did it in the opposite direction when we got to the trade bill. Do you have an extension or do you have a new program? Frankly, the State Department was in favor of an extension. George Ball and I discussed it directly with the President and had it out. It was my judgment that it was doable, that we just cut out this nonsense, trying to stay alive--let's bite the bullet. And we did. So it isn't that on every occasion I was for withdrawal or limitation. I would be perfectly willing to carry on, just to get the adrenalin flowing, if I felt that was the appropriate approach.

G: Any insights on President Kennedy's attitude toward the space program here?

O: Yes, very early on he was awfully concerned about progress or lack of it in the space program. He became very much personally involved and committed. It intrigued him, attracted him, and again it's the old Jack Kennedy syndrome: the challenge. It wasn't the Houston Ministers Conference or the Texas delegation or Humphrey debates or what have you. This was a challenge: "Those Russians, we're going to get this job done and we're going to have national pride." I'm personalizing it because, as president of the United States, Jack Kennedy very early on was upset. He was intrigued, upset, enthusiastic and looking forward, and his enthusiasm, of course, was most pronounced when some accomplishments received national attention.

G: Did he view it as a military potential as well as a scientific--?

O: I don't really think so. Not that he was specific with me, but I think that there was a significant element of, "By God, they're not better than we are. They can't do this better than we can. I'm not going to sit here and be second class." And I think that would be the motivating factor. Then you go into the scientific. On the military side, I never heard any indication that he had focused his direction into this area because he felt that there was significant military fallout. Certainly the scientific potential was well understood by him. But knowing him as I did, I want to emphasize that. Everything was a fight and he loved to win. It was almost like a direct confrontation. It was, "Those guys are doing all this bragging, and I keep reading about how inept we are. I'm not going to stand for it." It got his adrenalin flowing. Oh, yes, he was very much involved in that area.

G: Do you think the military would have liked to have had a larger role in the program than they had?

O: Yes. Only by the nature of the military.

G: Did this ever come up when you were--?

O: Not in terms of our activities. I guess to some extent never the twain shall meet. I never felt that the military was really aboard. Maybe there were a lot of civilians in government that weren't aboard regarding the New Frontier program, but I never deluded myself into thinking anybody in the Pentagon other than our own people at the top gave a darn. So I think that it would be our natural tendency really to be reticent about accepting military demands in most things. We tried to keep them a little bit at arm's length.

G: Your files seem to reflect by 1962 an increased White House interest in the NASA contract activities. That these contracts were getting larger and there was a lot of potential for political considerations there, because in some cases it apparently didn't matter who got the contract. Do you recall that aspect and can you elaborate on that?

O: Yes. I'd like to elaborate on it. I can tell you that there was a recognition of the political potential. And once there was a recognition of it, there was an attempt to implement where we could and be helpful where we could, and we became very much involved and probably to an inordinate degree, because that isn't an area you're supposed to get that much involved with. But we didn't consider that sacrosanct or untouchable at all. In fact, it was very much a part of discussions regarding contracts and how they might relate to legislative progress.

G: How did you get this recognition to begin with? How did it come to your attention that NASA was awarding all these contracts?

O: It came to our attention because it represented a relatively new area. This not only

showed rapid growth, but it would have continuing rapid growth and we're going to be up front and keep a close eye on all of this. And this could be a meaningful tool. We just can't sit idly by and let all this happen without seeing if there isn't some fallout that's advantageous to us. So we were very sensitive to it.

G: Did you meet with Jim Webb and educate him on it?

O: We met with Jim Webb often. Not necessarily me all the time, but Jim Webb was a constant visitor to the White House. The communication was regular over that period of time.

G: Did Jim Webb make a lot of these decisions in terms of contracts and location of facilities?

O: Well, he had input, and Jim Webb was a very able guy. He was a good administrator, very attentive, and we were impressed with him. And I think what impressed me was that he had a sensitivity to our problems and a desire to be helpful. It was like John Connally saying to us, "If my department isn't functioning in the best interests of the White House and there are some ways that we can do better, all I need you to do is tell me." And Jim Webb was of that school.

G: Do you recall how Webb was selected as administrator?

O: No, I really don't. I don't think I knew Jim Webb prior to selection.

G: Was there ever any discussion of an alternative to going to the moon, or should we go to the moon, or anything of this nature?

O: I don't recall any discussion about whether or not we should go to the moon, no. As far as I was concerned I knew that's where we were headed and that was our objective. And I don't know as that was a matter of great debate. I would not have had any doubt in my mind about the President's view.

G: He shared that?

O: Well, the President's commitment to the whole thing.

G: Let's see. We've got--

(Interruption)

O: --the extension [of the Civil Rights Commission]. It didn't turn out to be just a simple process. There was an effort to dismantle this in a sense. There was a variety of efforts in that regard, because the opportunity presented itself, at least in the minds of some of the fellows on the Hill. So we had to fend off a variety of suggestions and efforts that would, if not eliminate it, leave it ineffective, certainly diminish any activityMy recollection is

we succeeded in fending all that off.

G: Yes.

O: I don't think we wound up with anything overridingly negative in the extension, although there were probably some pretty close calls there, though. I don't remember the details. Does the record reflect that?

G: Well, the Republicans seem to have been in favor of a longer extension, a four-year extension. Was the administration, on the other hand, concerned with keeping the Democratic Party relatively united on this?

O: I mean, I don't think we wound up with any overridingly negative aspect in the extension, although there were probably some pretty close calls there, though. I don't remember the details. Does the record reflect that?

G: Well, the Republicans seem to have been in favor of a longer extension, a four-year extension. Was the administration, on the other hand, concerned with keeping the Democratic Party relatively united on this?

O: That's right. I think that some of the Republican support for the extension was callous. This afforded an opportunity to play some games, and games were played. When you think of extending an existing com- mission, the Civil Rights Commission, why should that create serious problems really? But it did. Weren't there attempts to restrict the activities of the commission? There was something else in there, too. There's no indication of that?

G: I don't see it here. I'll check it though.

Anything on the reorganization of the regulatory agencies? The White House submitted a whole--I guess Newton Minow and some of the others, maybe Jim Landis had come up with a series of reorganization packages.

O: Actually, Jim Landis was brought into the White House for that express purpose. He was a long-time associate of Joe Kennedy's and had quite a reputation in the general field. That was launched as a broad-based attempt to correct and reorganize and improve. It was very broad, and Jim's mandate was to go right at all the regulatory agencies and come up with an overall omnibus proposal. He devoted a good deal of time to that. And what was the motivation? The obvious. There was a dire need. It was pretty messy. Very messy.

G: Some of these proposals encountered a terrible time on the Hill, didn't they?

O: Oh, sure. And we were not naive about that. Listen, you're getting into the territory of fellows on the Hill, their little prerogatives. They're comfortable with a lot of these things, and all of a sudden you're trying to shake the tree. That inevitably was going to be a very

difficult situation and that motivated at the outset [our plan]: let's not go at this piecemeal. Let's get the best fellow we know or can find and give him free rein. It really is going to be spinning wheels if you're going to do a piece of this or a piece of that, or correct a measure here or correct a measure there. You've got to go to the regulatory process in all its dimensions and evaluate it and recommend what action should be taken to improve or correct. So you have taken on some task [inaudible].

G: Yes. Newton Minow had referred to the television programming as a vast wasteland and said there was nothing sacred or permanent about a broadcast license. Did this give you a little bit of heat on the Hill to work with?

O: It gave us some heat on the Hill, but I loved it.

(Laughter)

Because he was stating a fact. I think I've had an innate sort of resentment--well, it isn't resentment, but I don't think I appreciate some of the arrogance of the communications industry. It was clear to me that [if] you receive a television license, you've received a right and a privilege that is revocable. So in the commercial context you derive a great deal of profit from this, but you should never feel that you have an exclusivity that isn't subject to periodic scrutiny and under certain circumstances revocable or think that you are General Motors--you're not in the private sector. You've got a license to use the public airwaves. I see CBS people down there testifying as though somehow or other they created the airwaves and somehow or other they have a corporation that's analogous to the automobile industry and that there is no continuing public right in this or no governmental right in terms of this authority granted to them by license.

So having said all that, you can picture that as Newt made this comment, he couldn't have been more accurate.

G: But the plan was defeated something like 320 to 77.

O: (Laughter) I think that's one instance that [we thought], let's put it to a vote and we anticipated defeat. I think some of us were motivated, a little differently in that instance. I know I was. I just don't appreciate the granting of public usage of public property, and then have people after a period of time determine that it's exclusively theirs. And somehow my right as a citizen to the airwaves has been just eliminated. I don't accept that sort of thing and I do resent when I see somebody testifying in an arrogant manner that somehow ownership was acquired by simply a piece of paper given to them as a privilege they have as a citizen. That is not subject to inheritance. Each time this crops up I have a tendency to get my dander up a little bit.

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O: --beyond the normal corporate procedures.

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G: Yes. Did President Kennedy share your attitude?

O: I'm not sure that he did. I know this, that President Kennedy thought very highly of Newt Minow, and his regard for Newt Minow wasn't dissipated in the slightest as a result of that comment.

G: The SEC plan, which was opposed by the New York Stock Exchange, was rejected in the Senate by a roll-call vote. Here apparently the opposition centered on the commission's delegating some of its decision-making power to subordinates so that you would have lower-level people making [decisions]. Do you recall your efforts to clear this reorganization plan?

O: The problem with the contention of the opposition was that there was some merit to it. I think there's always a resistance to delegating authority down. I think there was a valid criticism. Now, maybe structurally and administratively it should be done. I'm not suggesting that it wasn't meritorious in that regard, but I think the very concept that there's going to be significant decision-making down three or four levels is a matter of concern. I think at that time, our advocacy was obvious and we did what we could on it. You think about it and there's an argument that can be presented. It's not in the context of "How can we find a way of gutting the administration?" Now, maybe I'm exaggerating that, and I'm not suggesting there wasn't that motivation. I repeat it only because it is a little different than most things you were faced with. There was that element that to a lot of people made sense. It's a little hard to argue. You can argue it administratively, but how far do you go in creating little kingdoms?

G: The Republicans seem to have been relatively united in opposition to most of these reorganization packages.

O: Yes. I think that came naturally. [It lacked] the inherent appeal that you need in some of these things to shake solid opposition. This wasn't an overriding, major attention-getter in the political context or in public dimension, and [there was] sort of [the feeling], "we're going to stay with tradition." That came rather naturally and I think brought about the unity you described.

We didn't have much of a constituency, other than claiming that it would be more effective; it's more businesslike, it's a better approach. There's a big yawn out there while you're engaged in that kind of an effort. In fact, on something like that, the New York Stock Exchange would not be considered part of the constituency of a liberal Democratic administration. I think there would be a tendency to view the New York Stock Exchange as supportive of a reorganization process. I wonder why they couldn't be more effective than they were.

G: Yes.

O: After all, the New York Stock Exchange, that's the heart of the business community. That was Jim Landis' area of greatest expertise, of course, the SEC.

G: You had the highway bill that year which was passed.

O: Yes. You could put that under the general category of public works.

G: Was there any way to promise or suggest where the highway funds might be spent?

O: No, just a general conversation that would always be in the context of a number of alternatives, nothing specific. You could always anticipate and hope.

G: Did members of Congress make their support contingent on their getting a federal highway or--?

O: Not observably. And if they had that in mind, some of those members were in a position to get it done whether we liked it or not.

G: What was Wilbur Mills' role here in the highway bill?

O: I don't recall.

G: One of the press accounts indicates that he deserves a lot of the real credit for the passage of this legislation in 1961.

O: Well, I think just being supportive of it would have a real plus factor. And that would indicate that he was more than supportive of it. I don't recall the specifics, but when Wilbur Mills was aboard, you always remembered two things. One, you were on the verge of success or it appeared that way, and you could prove the case to Wilbur that you had done your homework and the ducks were in reasonable order. And secondly, he had a personal commitment and personal reasons for being supportive or helpful. He was very much a realist.

G: The administration proposed continuing a four cents a gallon tax on gasoline and increasing the taxes on heavy trucks and excise taxes on tires. And here you were opposed by the trucking industry. Do you recall this?

O: I only recall one aspect of it, that prior to formalizing the proposal we were clearly aware of where the opposition would come from and to what degree it would impact. That that proposal was going to have widespread opposition from the industry, and traditionally always has. So that was all part of the equation.

G: You did have some regulation of billboards in this measure, which--

O: Rather modest, as I remember. I think, again, there was a little bit of the "let's get the foot in the door," maybe you could get your foot in the door. The billboard [issue], even at that stage, was becoming a matter of some discussion. Not only in the administration, you'd hear a lot of negative comments regarding the proliferation--and rightly so--of billboards all over the highways. We were sensitive to that and person- ally felt that way. It was sort of a natural reaction, and at some point we decided that maybe we'd see if we could get something started.

G: Senator Kerr opposed this effort to limit or control billboards.

O: Yes, and you know something, we couldn't understand it because he didn't have a billboard in sight out where he lived.

(Laughter)

I'm only being facetious.

G: Was he regarded as a supporter of the billboard industry?

O: Yes, it was understood.

G: Why was that?

O: I don't know really. You know, it takes strange turns. The billboard industry has muscle. There's a lot at stake and it's a big business. Also, they know they're in an area that people aren't particularly enamored with. Most people don't get overly excited about it. But certainly you're not going to have a lot of people jumping up and down and saying, "Gosh, I'd love to see more billboards." I'm not sure that there's been a complete handle on that to this day. Certainly Mrs. Johnson had very, very strong views in this area.

G: Was this apparent while LBJ was vice president?

O: I don't recall that.

G: Okay. I have a few miscellaneous things I want to ask you about: JFK's trip to Europe in May of 1961, his meeting with de Gaulle, his meeting with Khrushchev, the summit in Vienna, meeting with MacMillan. Did you have any involvement in any of these?

O: No.

G: Okay.

O: No, that was a rather natural evolvement in the context of our recognition that his election had brought about the beginning of a new era. For example, when you think that when Kennedy became president of the United States, he was truly representative of a new

generation. He, among the world leaders, was of a new generation. You have de Gaulle and Khrushchev and MacMillan and Churchill and the rest. And at some point in terms of your leadership role in the whole policy area, you have to make your presence known. And it was carefully orchestrated so that there would be this exposure to the established leadership of the western world and the establishment of Kennedy as not only a world leader by virtue of election as president, but a world leader in terms of his own personality and presence.

G: Did you ever talk to him about his meetings with these people later and his attitude toward--?

O: No, other than fleeting comments about the Khrushchev meeting, which was quite disturbing to him.

G: Oh, really? The Vienna [summit]?

O: Yes.

G: What did he say, do you recall?

O: Well, I don't think he felt particularly comfortable about it, was a little taken aback with this fellow. He had a negative reaction to the meeting and he had a newer view of Khrushchev as a result of it, and didn't feel that the meeting accomplished.

G: Did he ever talk about de Gaulle?

O: No, not to me.

G: The Berlin Wall, were you involved in any of the deliberations there?

O: No, I joined the last leg of the trip in Ireland and only because he--see, this wasn't a trip that had any involvement with the legislation or congressional activities and I had no role in it. He suggested to me, however, that in view of my heritage, why didn't I meet him at the airport in Dublin and travel the three days in Ireland with him. That finally resulted in a whole planeload of people going over.

G: Really?

O: Everyone that could actually or remotely establish any Irish heritage wound up getting his or her name on the roster. It probably was ***Air Force Two*** because it did have some sleeping accommodations, and [the roster] included one or two of Jack's sisters. Jack Anderson got hold of the--

G: Manifest?

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O: Manifest. And published the names of all of us in his column as another example of squandering taxpayers' money.

But I did join him in Ireland and stayed through the trip. He went on to Italy and I went there informally, stayed with the Italian side of the trip, too. But I was not on the major aspects of the trip.

I must say that the appearance in Berlin has had staying power to this day. It was one of the most remarkable public appearances of any figure in history. And I don't believe that those that were involved envisioned that kind of impact.

But that was the highlight to him, I think. And in personal terms, not as president, the highlight was clearly his visit to Ireland. He became emotionally caught up in the visit. I was with him throughout the visit in the helicopters at each one of these stops, including the homestead of his forebears, an aunt still living there in this thatched-roof cottage. At the end of that trip he never got over it. He continually brought it up.

G: Really? What did he say about it?

O: Well, the wonder of it all. There must have been more people that saw Jack Kennedy in Ireland than the entire population of Ireland. The smallest little by-way stop that you helicoptered into, you'd find thousands of people grinning and roaring and screaming and this went on for three days. Then it culminated as he departed the airport. It was Shannon. And they had this youth choir sing "Come Back to Erin." It just absolutely broke him up. He got the recordings of all this. He'd play the record and reminisce. He was probably third-generation Irish. It wasn't as intimate as my relationship with the country would be. But his pride in his heritage just overwhelmed him. It had nothing to do with foreign policy; it was highly personal. I got a kick out of him. He loved to reminisce about those days.

But the major attention-getter was the Berlin stop.

G: What did he say about Berlin?

O: Not much to me. I mean, it was all pretty obvious; there was nothing much to say. The comments he made to me regarding the trip were on two or three occasions in reference to Khrushchev and his experience with him and his reaction to it. It was quite negative. They were later on to confront each other, in any event.

G: Yes. Did he feel that his Berlin speech was a big success, though? Did he [comment on that]?

O: Yes. Nobody anticipated he wouldn't be enthusiastically welcomed in Berlin, but the extent and depth of it was remarkable. That's one of the best pieces of film I've ever seen. I've noticed in any retrospective involving that Kennedy era, inevitably they have that

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sixty seconds in there.

G: Do you recall his sending LBJ to Berlin to receive the troops as they marched--?

O: Yes. Nothing other than the schedule aspect, and his unavailability for a period of time in the legislative side. Nothing in terms of the sub- stance of the trip.

G: The Vice President also went to the Far East that year.

O: Rather extensive travel that year.

G: That's right: Vietnam, China, Indonesia. Was Johnson reluctant to go to Vietnam? I understand that the President had to persuade him to go.

O: I really don't know. I can tell you this. After the fact, the President was extremely pleased with the Johnson trips, both trips. He felt that he had acquitted himself well. There was never any second-guessing or any criticism of any aspect of it. And some aspects of that trip were quite sensitive.

G: Which ones in particular?

O: The Vietnam end of it. That whole trip. You had to be very careful and very diplomatic in the way you handled yourself.

G: Was part of that mission to press reforms on the South Vietnamese government, on [Ngo Dinh] Diem?

O: Yes. I couldn't say that that was the overriding factor, but certainly that was one aspect of it.

G: Do you think that that trip changed LBJ's attitude toward Vietnam or toward Diem?

O: I don't know. I just never had discussions with him that would qualify me to have an opinion. I don't think we had any extensive discussions after the fact.

G: Yes. The President's sister and brother-in-law [Jean and Stephen Smith] went along on that. Why did they go, do you know?

O: I don't know as I can comment on that either. Other than the participation of the family in a variety of ways in the administration was apparent: Bobby as AG; you had Eunice [Shriver] quite active in making appearances here and all the members of the family. Again, you have to reflect on the Kennedy family. It was that way in the campaigns and it was inevitable that it would follow a similar pattern in the White House. In the campaigns every member of the family played a role, and it was not just a routine or a cameo role. They were very actively engaged. We know Sarge Shriver's role and for a relatively brief

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period of time, Steve Smith's role. Jack Kennedy's approach would be to afford them an opportunity to participate and have experiences. I don't think I'd read anything more significant than that into it.

G: Anything on Kennedy's trip to Latin America in December 1961?

O: No, I wasn't on that trip. I didn't travel with the President unless it related to congressional activities. That was of my own choosing. I would have enjoyed going on some of those trips, but I knew that that would impact adversely on my own activities.

But I do have to make one side-bar comment about that Latin American trip. Lo and behold, sometime after that trip, I believe it was the ***National Review***, which wasn't a periodical that I was in the habit of reading [carried a piece on it].

A clipping from the magazine was brought to my attention in which Buckley stated that Larry O'Brien on the trip to Latin America had embarrassed the President no end, and that he had chosen to visit nightclubs in off hours and rather raucous activity. I haven't been to Latin America in my life, with the President or otherwise. Well, it's a rather minuscule item, but by the same token it was so highly personalized that I thought that this man Buckley would regret making this error; somebody had misinformed him.So I'll drop him a courteous note. And I did. I was sure he would want to know that I was not with the President, nor indeed have I ever been to Latin America, and I would appreciate whatever he thought was appropriate in terms of correcting the record. And that was it. Never heard from him. Never had the courtesy of saying, "Well, I'm sorry that that happened." So that's my recollection of the Latin American trip. That's as close as I came to being involved with it.

G: As long as we're on the subject of your press coverage, I want you to recount the occasion in which you received that ***Time*** magazine cover story and the background of that. This was September 1961, I believe.

O: Yes, I guess so. Well, that resulted from the observations of the ***Time*** magazine journalist that was assigned to covering the Congress. He had been in place for some time: Neil McNeil. He and an associate of his had on their own--and I had had no discussions with them--apparently concluded the new or differing congressional relations activity involving the White House, the thrust of it, was worthy of some in-depth review. I learned later they would have a group meeting in New York projecting their ***Time*** covers well ahead, and making a group decision as to the cover.

My first recognition that this was in the offing was Neil asking me if I would join him for lunch at the ***Time*** magazine building. I had a pleasant lunch with a group of people on the magazine. The discussion was informal, related to congressional relations, what it was about and how we engaged in it. I noted an artist was doing a sketch. He worked on this sketch pad during the course of the lunch. I guess about that time they started developing a cover story, because I was questioned by Neil at some length. I had

no knowledge of who else he was talking to, but obviously there was a great deal of contact with various people as part of the cover story. They devoted what seemed to be an inordinate amount of attention to that activity, because it seemed to go on for a period of weeks, to the point where at a given weekend Neil asked me where I would be on Saturday and Sunday.

In the meantime, ***Newsweek*** decided to do a cover story on four of us in the White House. They set up some camera work for a cover photo, and it included Ken O'Donnell, Ted Sorensen, I can't recall who the fourth one was--it might have been Mac [McGeorge] Bundy--and me. We went through that process over at the White House, out on the lawn. I was told that the cover of ***Newsweek*** was to appear in a certain issue. It turned out that the issue ***Newsweek*** contemplated for that cover was identical with the issue that Time contemplated for my cover. And ***Newsweek*** dropped their cover.

G: Sure.

O: I have to assume that they decided to drop it at least for the time being because it would relate to the ***Time*** cover.

And it turned out okay. When you get a number of follow-up calls and the questions that you're asked become unbelievable--back to your birth--you begin to have real qualms. Therefore, when the magazine came out, it was with great relief and I imagine that's a normal reaction, that you found nothing really devastating and accepted it at that.

But it was surprising what Luce had accomplished in that, because the aftermath, it went into the thousands of ***Time*** covers mailed to me for my autograph. I was asked if I had some idea how many, because they kept record, I guess. And I forget, Phyllis [Maddock] or whoever was just loaded with them for months. It turned out these are people that had a hobby of accumulating [autographed] ***Time*** magazine covers. In fact, as recently as six months ago I had a cover sent to me. Somebody had forgotten to take care of it in their portfolio."

Neil's such a marvelous fellow and as a result of that involvement we became well acquainted, and we would anyway on the Hill as the years unfolded. So he went out of his way to do something that I really appreciated. He got the original painting, had it framed suitably, and had a little luncheon at a restaurant in Washington and presented it to me. And I recognized later on that that was not the usual procedure. I received a request from ***Time*** for the loan of the painting because they were going to ship a number of original covers to some traveling display of ***Time*** covers in South America. My recollection is I didn't send it to them; I was fearful I wouldn't get it back because I knew that I didn't have the right of possession in the first instance.

There was another fallout later. At a leadership breakfast with President Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey, there was an exchange between them. The President said,

"Hubert, have you that invitation to go to this Henry Luce soiree in New York on the fortieth anniversary of ***Time*** magazine? All the cover subjects." Hubert [said], "Yes, I got that." "There's no way they would get me to go to that--the way they've treated me." Hubert, of course, was in total agreement with him.

G: This is President Kennedy?

O: Yes. And it was just sort of a passing comment, but it alerted me. I had received the invitation. I had not acknowledged it, but I'm sure at that point contemplated that this would be a nice experience, to spend three days as the guest of Henry Luce in New York in the variety of functions. But Hubert was in total agreement with Jack Kennedy that they weren't going to honor that occasion by being there, and that was enough for me. So I declined. I think the only surprising thing about the cover was that the activities in congressional relations in the judgment of the ***Time*** magazine people justified a cover.

But there was one other fallout, and this has another humorous aspect to it.

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Within a couple of years of the 1961 [cover], it couldn't have been any longer than that, I received a call from Neil McNeil and he said, "We are going to be discussing upcoming ***Time*** magazine covers and you will be under consideration for a ***Time*** cover. Where are you going to be in"--a certain time frame. I said, "I'll be in Rome at that time." He said, "I'll give you a ring, because I'm sure you'll be curious as to the decision on a second cover." So I said, "That's nice, Neil," and went about my business.

Sure enough, I got a phone call from him. And he said, "You're not going to be on the cover. We had quite a discussion in-house. It came to a choice between you and another person, and it was decided that we'd go with the other person, which would be an entertainment cover rather than a political cover. So you were a finalist. Are you curious about who beat you out?" I said, "Yes, who is it?" And he told me it was a very prominent actress, a singer, movie star, I think British--Julie Andrews.

So I had the satisfaction, if I were being beaten out of a cover, to be beaten out by an attractive and talented young lady. That was the story of the magazine cover.

G: There was another element that you mentioned when we discussed it before, that Neil did give you the raw file on that--

O: That's right, too. At some date after this appeared, Neil sent me the raw file. He thought that I might enjoy [reading it]. Whatever number of words are used in the cover, then obviously there's probably five or ten times that number in what is submitted for consideration. He sent me the raw file, or a copy of the raw file. I'll have to say that I don't recall really reading it carefully. I filed it and I'm sure it was included with the material I forwarded on. I guess I would have liked to have read it recently just for the

fun of it, but I haven't, and maybe I'm better off. Maybe there were some comments in there that I wouldn't have appreciated.

But anyway, I think the painting, the raw file, and being an advocate of a second cover were a reflection of Neil's reaction to the activities we were engaged in, which he was obviously in a position to closely observe on a day-to-day basis. And that certainly was appreciated, because Neil did on many occasions tell me that he thought it was effective, and you always appreciate a comment of that nature. So let me say that I consider Neil a very objective reporter.

(Laughter)

G: What impact did that ***Time*** cover piece have on your work on the Hill?

O: Well, there was a widespread recognition of it. I don't know what the impact is of ***Time*** covers currently, but it had become something that did attract attention. The ***Time*** people had placed so much emphasis on it over the years and had so many of these related events that tied in with the cover. Of course, they have a large readership. So there were a lot of humorous, pleasant comments around the Hill for a brief period, just a fun sort of thing. I don't think it had any particular impact in terms of the business at hand.

G: Do you think it advanced your work, or do you think it was--?

O: I don't know. It may have given a little credibility to it. I don't know. There wasn't anything discernible that I can recall.

G: What did President Kennedy say about it?

O: He made reference to it when it came out, just sort of a positive comment. He thought it was awfully good or something to that effect. He also made an additional comment. As I reviewed in my book, we had had a Kennedy-Furcolo-O'Brien situation years earlier that was rather sensitive, and a Kennedy-Furcolo confrontation which was indirectly part of my involvement with Furcolo at an earlier time, at least it was construed to be. It was widely reported in Massachusetts on that occasion and left a lingering of animosity between Kennedy and Furcolo. That had long passed, but Jack's reaction to the cover was, "I bet Foster Furcolo will love this when he sees it."

(Laughter)

He got a big chuckle out of that. In any event there was nothing unpleasant about the whole thing, no fallout in terms of what was written that would cause any concern.

G: I don't know what the circulation of ***Time*** was at the time, but I assume it must have increased your public recognition just on the street.

O: I suppose so.

I think the mere fact that Luce developed this fortieth anniversary concept--it obviously included a tremendous number of true notables, not the Larry O'Briens. It was a major event in New York. It was a major attempt and an expensive effort on the part of ***Time*** to further promote that cover concept. Imagine calling all these people in from around the world, and getting a number of them. Neil told me that he thought this was one of the great ideas of all time, to have the ***Time*** cover become almost part of the language. That of course had a lot to with the general promotion of the magazine.

G: So my impression is that President Kennedy did not insist that his aides have a passion for anonymity.

O: No, there was never any discussion of that. You came to your own conclusions that applied to me and my staff. We had a responsibility to communicate with the press, because, after all, we were promoting a program and you had a lot of press contact. But you did not take speaking engagements or go on talk shows or that sort of thing. Media attention, if it was directed to you, was of no great value to the President or to the program. So you had to weigh that. Obviously, with the political writers, you had constant communication with them, but it was rare to accept a speaking engagement. Certainly you did get into the profile stuff. That would happen from time to time. The ***Time*** cover would be an example, and your concern on the ***Time*** cover--conceivably it might even help promote the program, depending on how it turned out--became rather personal. You go through this sort of period and you just hope that it doesn't turn out badly. That's about what it amounted to.

G: On a different type of publicity, I noticed from your files there was a question of cabinet officers and others in the administration appearing on Kenneth Keating's television program in New York. A whole list of cabinet officers and administration officials had participated in this program, and there was a decision made that this was not in the best interest of the Kennedy Administration, to advance Kenneth Keating's--

O: Actually that decision was made as a result of comments emanating from New York Democratic politicians and some on the Hill. But there was a building resentment and it eluded us because you're not paying that much attention. And actually if a cabinet member can find a forum somewhere to advocate the program, he ought to be doing it. We were really pushing them to be out there as advocates. Some of them didn't care much for that kind of--some had to go to some remote areas and make speeches and submit themselves to terrible travel problems in order to fulfill some of those obligations. But we felt--and incidentally Lyndon Johnson felt--that's part of the job of the visible members of the administration, the cabinet members.

But in the Keating instance, that was not a remote. We had no objection to cabinet members going on the program and that would include a congressman or senator's back-home television or radio programs. That went on all the time. But in that instance

with Ken Keating, the Democratic Party people in New York would find administration officials as guests of Keating, and complaints were registered with us. And we reacted to the complaints because, after all, in the political context they were valid complaints.

G: I have about three appointments I want to ask you about. One, John Connally's appointment as secretary of the navy. Do you recall where the impetus for this appointment came from?

O: No, not really. I made an assumption, obviously, that the impetus came from Lyndon B. Johnson. Now let's assume that, and that's a valid assumption, that Johnson would be interested in Connally having a role in the administration and Connally would be interested in that. John Connally was a worthy adversary at Los Angeles, as Hubert Humphrey was a worthy adversary in West Virginia.

In the early stages of the administration I was living at the Mayflower Hotel. John was staying in the Mayflower on a long-term basis. We saw a fair amount of each other. His entrance into the administration was a natural evolvement, as far as I was concerned. I had input in a couple of cabinet appointments, because I had objections to what was contemplated. If I felt that something might develop not in the President's best interests, then I would fulfill a responsibility in that regard.

With Connally, there was no element of great surprise that he was entering the Kennedy Administration. Those of us who were political intimates of the President thought it was a good move. John's role, until he chose to leave to take the governorship, was just what you'd expect--a cooperative member of the team.

G: There was opposition to his nomination on the Hill: Yarborough, [William] Proxmire and Wayne Morse. Do you recall dealing with that?

O: No, not particularly, nor do I recall that we were overly impressed. I do recall the objections, particularly the Yarborough one and it was obvious why. That was part and parcel of that continuing problem. But it wasn't anything that shook us at all.

G: How about Robert Kennedy's appointment as attorney general? Did you have any consultation role on that at all?

O: No. I was aware of it before it was announced. My reaction to it was one of some surprise. And I'm not sure that I totally accepted it as the appropriate thing to do. That would be in the context of what kind of general public reactions you would get to appointing your brother to the cabinet. I anticipated that there would be some adverse reactions. Bobby was willing and enthusiastic about doing it, and I didn't question his competency. But I did wonder, again in the political context, whether there might be some adverse reactions.

It was like the concern that the President had expressed to me when Teddy was

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going to run for the Senate. We discussed that at the time. Jack had some concern regarding that. He felt that perhaps Teddy should consider some other office initially. He did not want to suggest to Teddy that he refrain from a political career. But he wondered about reactions, and that was a quantum leap, to go into the Senate. He was going to have a primary contest that would again renew the old McCormack-Kennedy problems. And the President did discuss that with me and wondered if Teddy might seek some statewide office, state treasurer or secretary of state or what have you, as a stepping stone.

But it wasn't an overriding concern. He kicked it around: "What do you think; what adverse aspect might there be to this?" It was hard to determine, and I didn't see any great difference; if you seek an office, you seek an office. If it's a statewide office, it's not the United States Senate but it's the secretary of state of the Commonwealth or whatever. Sure, there's a great difference in the level of the office, but by the same token it's got some of the same elements, too.

So he said that perhaps I could chat with Teddy regarding the matter. And I'll have to tell you that I decided not to; I never did discuss it with Teddy. I think it was too personal. It involved members of a family and that, as Eddie McCormack used to say to him, "If your name had been Edward Moore, you wouldn't be in this position." His name was Edward Moore Kennedy. If it didn't involve members of the same family, of course, it was an obvious thing for the fellow that's engaged in the political side of things to do.

So he didn't evidence an overriding concern, but he did say that he wondered whether that was the right thing to do from Teddy's point of view, to make that quantum leap, that there might be some resentment. Teddy went on, went through a vigorous, hard-fought primary and then was, as we know, elected.

But at the time that Bobby was named by the President, I had no discussion with the President. Obviously, the President, if he did consider reactions, it didn't dissuade him at all. And there wasn't, as I recall, anything of any significance.

G: Do you think that the President's father had input into any of these cabinet appointments?

O: I would think not. I'll tell you why. Because the President's relationship with his father was one of mutual admiration. It wasn't long after I became acquainted with the family that I realized Jack was the senior member. He was first among equals because of the date of his birth and the death of others in the family. He was obviously, in Joe Kennedy's mind, the heir, the man of destiny. He was the fellow he was looking to in terms of the presidency.

I had an experience that brought into focus how each one handled the other or dealt with the other. Joe Kennedy was a strong-willed fellow who voiced his opinions without any hesitation, had definite opinions in business matters. He had definite opinions in political matters, too. And he was very protective of Jack, and I got into a conflict on a

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matter with Joe Kennedy. It was in 1958.

My judgment on this run-through election against a fellow named [Vincent] Celeste in 1958 [was] that it would be useful to have the largest margin of victory in the history of the state. In other words, put in a major effort. We could do it, because we had retained contact with the Kennedy organization, a massive organization of people across Massachusetts who were still relatively young, aggressive, and interested. We could move that group into a campaign comparable to the 1952 campaign against [Henry Cabot] Lodge, and mount a campaign that would establish that record. That in and of itself might be usable when you got to the primaries and the presidential election. My motivation was primarily that we could utilize these people who had been sitting for six years with their affection and commitment to Kennedy maintained at a high level.And why not?

So I developed a campaign in detail. It would include a carefully planned, perceptibly vigorous, aggressive campaign on the part of the candidate. The overall view of the campaign would clearly indicate that this fellow had taken nothing for granted, that he appreciated the sup- port in the state and went out and made appearances. It was carefully put together and what it amounted to was ensuring the activity of all these people and responding to their activity by more than a token appearance on a part of a candidate who was going to be re-elected.

Jack and Jackie were in Europe, but he knew that I was going to have a presentation to make to him immediately upon his return. It would be very close to the kick-off of this campaign. We were to meet in an apartment here in New York in a building that Joe Kennedy owned. Jack and Jackie were returning by boat in New York.

Well, that morning, in anticipation of his arrival, Ken O'Donnell was there and there could have been one or two others. Joe Kennedy was there and we were sitting around chatting. We got to the subject of the campaign, and I told Joe Kennedy that I had this campaign program that as soon as Jack arrived and was in the mood to do it, we could all go over it and get comment. He said, "Could I take a look at it?" I gave him his copy and he looked at it. He said, "Oh, my God, you're going to kill him." He reacted very strongly. He said, "God, you can't do this to him. You know, this is just unfair to poor Jack," and this went on. He wasn't violent, but he was certainly very strong in registering his objections.

Well, I wasn't about to accept his objections. We had the arrival time of Jack and Jackie and Ken O'Donnell and I decided to go down and meet them. So we greeted them, and quickly briefed him on what had transpired. He had no idea of the program, hadn't seen it. And I said, "I just want you to know this so it doesn't hit you straight out. This is going to be a topic of very serious and prolonged discussion. I'm not asking you to react at this point; you don't know what I'm talking about, but I did want you to know that there are storm clouds." So he said, "Fine, I'll see you in a while."

So we met, and we started to go through the campaign outline and Joe Kennedy

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again expressed to Jack what he had expressed to me, that this just can't happen, it'll kill you; why go through all this effort and so forth. So Jack is sitting there and he's not commenting, but he's thumbing through and finally gets to his decision.He said, "Dad, why don't we try out the first phase of this, just to see how it goes? We won't go public with this overall program. We'll just go through the first couple of days or phase of it and see how it goes and then we can get a better feel for it and I'll have a good feel of whether I agree with you or not. Let's do it that way." It was a compromise, obviously. So with great reluctance Joe Kennedy was kind of forced to accept his son's decision.

We're going to start to implement it. It called for the visit to the high school, the high school auditorium and the school band at 10:00 a.m. and then move on at 11:15 to the next community. It was a pretty busy first day. Lo and behold, we got to the first stop not far from Boston. This first day or two would be just in communities around Boston. I look up in the balcony and who is sitting there but Joe Kennedy and Frank Morrissey, who later became a judge, very close to the Kennedys. [They] literally had gone out to this town to observe directly what transpired. And I'm sure he showed up at the next event, or the third event of the day where he was spotted in the crowd.

Well, whether it was the first night or the second night of this--we did it in stages; then you'd have a break. And, really, it looked imposing on paper. It would do the job; the perception would be there, but it had been very carefully handled to husband his time and yet leave the impression we wanted.

They had an apartment in Boston, and we're going to all just wind up in the apartment that evening at the end of the day's activities. So Jack said to me, "Larry, don't get into an argument with Dad. Whatever he says, just listen it out and we'll all stay calm." And sure enough, we got in the apartment and Mr. Kennedy was there and he made a couple of snide comments, but nothing more than that. And I stayed briefly and left. Jack went on and we did the whole venture. But I told that story because I think it gave you a sense of Jack's respect for his dad and his dad's affection and total commitment to Jack. But in the final analysis Jack had reached an age in life, and accomplishments in life, where he'd be willing to listen but his dad wasn't going to direct him or make his decisions for him. And I wasn't going to make any decisions for him either. He'd make his own judgment on whether or not he felt that he wanted to go through this task and that would be determined by whether or not he thought there was any real value in it. We had a replay of the 1952 campaign and we accomplished that modest objective.

I guess I'm repeating myself, but we're on the subject. At a later date I was taking a swing through the state to have contact with our Kennedy secretaries and some of their Kennedy committee members in the various communities.There's a score of communities on Cape Cod, and we always made a particular point that you went everywhere. That didn't mean that Jack Kennedy went to twenty communities on Cape Cod; he'd go probably to Hyannis and we'd have a regional meeting. But I would, in fairness to these people, show up and chat with them. It was part of the political, public relations aspects of the campaign. It was suggested, by Joe Kennedy, why not stay at the Compound rather

than a hotel? He was going to be there and the family was away.

So I stayed there and Joe Kennedy was there and I received a few phone calls before we went to bed, just check-out calls on my travels for the next day around the Cape. I'm not an early riser and I hadn't scheduled myself to start at dawn, but Mr. Kennedy was an early riser, and I was in a bedroom on the ground floor off the foyer which was actually Jack's bedroom. I could hear through the door around six-thirty Mr. Kennedy on the telephone with someone; maybe it was somebody calling me."As far as I know, he's not up yet. I don't know what time he gets up, but he's got to be up pretty soon, because I know he's going to travel a lot today. I expect to be talking to him soon."

Well, the voice was so loud it got me up, and after I got dressed he was waiting to have breakfast, so we had breakfast together. You have to picture the breakfast table. It was the dining room, and he was at one end of the table and I'm at the other, and there's a void of several feet in between. We have a pleasant chat before I depart for the day, but what left a lasting impression on me was one statement he made. He said, "You know, Larry, Jack is destined. He will be president of the United States. He is destined to be president." I accepted that, except as I'm wending my way around the towns that day, it did enter my mind that if destiny is the determining factor here, I'm wasting a lot of my time, because there's no need for any of this.

(Laughter)

But I found Joe a very interesting fellow, and I don't pretend to be privy in any intimate way to the relationship between Joseph Kennedy and Jack Kennedy, other than these little fleeting incidents. That gave me a feel for Jack's respectful acknowledgement of any comments his father was making. At all times, he was very respectful to him, and appreciative, but he had reached the point in life, which his father should recognize, too, that he makes his own decisions and he'll make them rather independently of anyone else. "I appreciate your point of view, but--" he makes the decisions. And that was an instance of it, and all he wanted from me was not to be a wise guy or get into any kind of exchange because there was no need for anything like that.

Tape 4 of 4, Side 2

G: --in the father's sense of destiny for his son, did Jack Kennedy have a similar sense of destiny?

O: I never detected that. Jack Kennedy was very much a realist. There was no question about ambition and that ambition was far from fruition. It was a long, long road and you couldn't even see the road signs from where you were at that point. But the effort would be made some day. I'm sure he did not for one moment conceive of himself as a man of destiny.

G: But that ambition itself translates into a certain level of that, just the fact that--

O: Yes, but it's an ambition that has been shared by many others through history. It wasn't that unique.

G: How about you? Did you feel that Jack Kennedy was destined to be president?

O: I didn't feel he was destined to be president, but I had two thoughts. One, I felt that he was well qualified to be president; I'd have no concern about that. And secondly, I felt that he would be an eminently attractive candidate in every respect for the presidency. And I was persuaded that with all of that, like any quest for the presidency long range, it has an element of a long shot in it, and everything has to work right or it isn't going to happen. So I had no feeling of destiny. You just go on the roller-coaster ride and you're going to come to the finish line and don't be concerned about arriving there. I wouldn't even deign to think along those lines.

G: A couple of other appointments: Robert Weaver to head the housing agency. Some of the extreme conservatives raised questions about whether or not he had ties with left-wing communist organizations. Do you remember that?

O: Yes, I remember some of that. My recollection of Bob's background is somewhat vague, but I do recall that an appointment of this nature required very careful review--all the aspects of normal consideration plus the sensitivity of a black coming into a very key cabinet post. This man met every check-out. There were some mean, carping comments made regarding him. We were not only extremely comfortable with Bob, we were extremely pleased that he had come to our attention and he was joining us. That was a feeling we all shared.

G: Sarah Hughes' appointment as federal judge. Here was a case where she was actually over the age limit, the informal age limit I guess, that had been set up.

O: My only contact with Sarah Hughes was at the swearing in on***Air Force One***. I don't believe I knew of her existence prior to that. That was a historic moment, also in personal terms for Lyndon B. Johnson, a moment that he, his family and friends would always remember. Why was Sarah Hughes selected by Lyndon Johnson? I don't know the background of it, but clearly his regard for her was to a degree where he had no compunction about overlooking the age problem.

G: You don't recall Rayburn pressing for that nomination either?

O: No.

G: One other thing. In August of 1961 President Kennedy and LBJ reached an agreement on the vice president's assumption of duties in the event of presidential disability.Do you recall that question and their discussions on that? Were you involved in that in any way?

O: Not directly. I do have some recollection of being present or to some degree a participant when some general discussion took place regarding that. I'm sure that occurred, but nothing beyond that, no.

End of Tape 4 of 4 and Interview III

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

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