

INTERVIEW II

DATE: March 2, 1971

INTERVIEWEE: CECIL STOUGHTON

INTERVIEWER: JOE B. FRANTZ

PLACE: Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 1 - begins at about 350

F: Okay, Cecil, this is the next morning, March 2nd now.

S: Right, I've got a little time left.

F: Yes. And we'll go on from there. As soon as the routine was re-established, did your mode of operation change much under the President, or is it sort of a "you've seen one, you've seen them all" proposition?

S: Well, no. No and yes. It was basically the same. I was subject to being called at times when I wasn't physically in sight. I worked there, and when he decided he wanted a picture of whatever he was doing or whomever he was with, an aide would madly call and I'd come running. In most cases, this could be around the [White] House.

F: How far did you live from the House?

S: Eight, nine, ten miles.

In fact, the earliest call of this nature came on Thanksgiving Day which was the end of that week, after the funeral which was Monday, I think. Thanksgiving must have been Tuesday, Wednesday, the twenty-eighth of November that year. I had made plans with the family to go to a Navy Mess with some former Navy friends of mine; we had a large party. I was seated at the table. Actually,

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they hadn't served the entree yet, but we'd had a couple of drinks and were getting ready for the entree. As in the case of all staff people, you would notify the switchboard, at least, the Signal Corps switchboard, where you are, because you never know when it's going to happen, and in that way, they can find you. I told them I was going to be at Old Gun Factory Navy Mess for Thanksgiving Dinner. So lo and behold, I get this call. A waiter came running and said, "The White House is on the phone." Well, of course, this was big news in those days, to bring someone to the White House phone, you know. But I knew, for me, it was going to be work. They don't call me unless they want something done.

F: "There goes my dinner."

S: There's goes the old dinner. So it was Jack Valenti, saying that the President had decided at that moment that he would try to squeeze in some time and he'd sit for the portrait that I'd asked them to make, the first official portrait he needed to get going on the presses and hanging in government buildings. He said if I came over like right now, "We're not interrupting your dinner, are we?" I said, "Oh, no, nothing like that. I'll be right there." So I excused myself and left my dinner. I got it a couple of hours later, I might add. But I came to the office, packed up my gear, which was relatively simple to do--I'd been waiting for a call like this--and went to his office and set up some lights and made the first of a series of portraits, from which he was to select that which would be called official. The

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word "official" always bothered me, with him, anyway, because it changed frequently. It could be official today and tomorrow would be out of favor and we'd do another one. And this is literally what happened, although we did use the picture I made that day for a long time. In fact, one of the post card companies downtown is selling it for a nickel, that picture they got from a White House hand-out. So I made that picture and went back to dinner. That was the beginning of extracurricular or curricular activities extra of the office hours.

F: Any White House employee to a certain extent takes the vows of the priesthood and he belongs to the church twenty-four hours a day. That's understood.

S: Yes.

F: But President Johnson worked longer hours than most and had more impulses, it seems to me, than most. Did you find that your schedule was less regular than it had been?

S: Yes, it was, very less regular, although I think I was still I don't like to use the word "outsider," but I'll use the word "outsider," I was not a member of his official brought-from-home type family. I sort of went with the lease. I was doing a job. If he needed a picture and he called for a photographer, I was the one that did it. So mine was kind of a routine assignment, and I didn't, not that I had the opportunity, inject myself into the inner sanctum uncalled for. I would only come when called. If somebody went into the office, I certainly didn't follow them in and say, "Look

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who's here, me. It's time to make pictures, click, click, click." I didn't do that. My successor, however, worked on a system like this; it was to his advantage and to the advantage of history that these pictures were made. We'll talk about that in more technical detail later. But in answer to your question, I felt that my job was being available whenever they wanted me. So I was at the end of the phone, day or night. I didn't get many calls after hours, although my hours went during the day a little bit longer. I didn't leave until I was sure that he was ready to go to the Mansion and begin his personal relaxation, although he never completely relaxed; he'd have people come in. I never got called to the bedroom to do the sitting-on-the-bed type pictures. I don't know why, but I mean I just was never privy to that. So mine was a routine, but I was aware that I could be called at any time.

I had some calls from the Kennedy Administration at night, too. Mrs. Kennedy and the President had a couple of last minute ideas, and they called me at home; it's still a thrill to my kids to remember the night they called. They put their ears up to the phone and listened to the broad As, talking to me.

F: Yes, right. Did the new President develop a habit of having a photograph taken of practically everybody who came in for a meeting with him, either on or off the record? Or had this surfaced as a routine yet?

S: It might have surfaced soon, because I want to get into the

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appearance on the scene of Mr. Okamoto. Mr. Valenti apparently made arrangements for him to come over, although, as I mentioned earlier, he had made his appearance on the Berlin trip, and, I guess, had indicated to Mr. Valenti that he thought that the Office of the President should be recorded in all of its nuances for history. I guess he must have volunteered at that time to be available if that situation ever presented itself. I'm only guessing now. Because soon after my Thanksgiving Day picture was made, the President said, "Get hold of that Jap guy, 'Ickymoto' or whatever it was, and have him come over and try it. And get Karsh and Newman and any of these other guys that've been bugging me. Set up some appointments, and let's all try it, and we'll see which one we like." Well, that's where "Ickymoto" came into the scene, and he shall from now on be called Okamoto which is his name.

F: Yes.

S: So he did come on the scene. And pretty soon, he was in the House. He was doing things behind the scenes that even I wasn't aware of.. I saw him behind in the halls, out of the public eye, always with four cameras around his neck. And he had his camera bag in Juanita Roberts' office, just outside the President's. Then the press would be called in for a formal picture of some kind, and Okie would have been there already. He would have been shooting for goodness knows how long. He began to be a part of the furniture in the President's office. I was then, not relegated or delegated to the routine stuff, but I just came in when I was called, along with the press.

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At this point, I might add that I had gotten into the system of using a Hasselblad with color film and flash, and was making all my pictures in color negative stock which would print black and white if needed, but mainly in color, because color is what it is. It's different from black and white. The previous Administration had gotten to where they appreciated everything in color for hand-outs. So I just continued that without anyone telling me "Don't." No one said that flash was objectionable to the President, that he had eyes that didn't assimilate to light; he didn't like flash. Nobody ever said that. It came out later that apparently this was something that was true, but I didn't know about that. Meanwhile, I just kept shooting my flash pictures, which in those days was pretty much necessary, color film being the speed that it is.

So just getting back to the routine, I'd be part of the press then, as far as the office was concerned, except my pictures would be in color. I'd leave; we'd all be ushered out of the office, and Okie and the guests would still be there. So this went on for three or four months right after the administration took over, shortly after, well, in December, I guess.

F: Did you see much of Okamoto, yourself? Or was he in a sense in one world and you were in another?

S: We were in kind of separate worlds. By that time, I'd moved to a different office, just outside the hallway near the swimming pool. It was a little supply room there that was about eight by eight; and I moved a desk and chair and a phone and so forth in there. So

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I was a little bit closer. He would come in periodically and maybe put his camera bag in there or something. But whatever it was he was doing, I thought, "Well, he's on a special project, and, you know, it'll go away."

It did go away, but under different circumstances. I guess this has been made a matter of record also: The incident of the turning off of the lights, and the austerity in the White House and so forth came to the eye of a very astute reporter, who had known of Okamoto's prowess, and he got him to talk, unwittingly, and quoted him in a Newsweek article. The same day that the magazine came out, Okamoto was summarily dismissed from the House by the President, and "Don't come back till I call you." Because he'd embarrassed him, the figure of "X" number of pictures that he had made in a short period of time being contrapuntal to the amount of money that was expended in the saving of the lights. So this was embarrassing.

That particular morning, incidentally, Okie was going to set up a meeting with myself and Bob Knudsen, who had been there for a number of administrations, in the same category but he was working the distaff side of the House mostly. He did the ladies' things. Well, we all worked together. Then there was another government photographer, belonged to the National Park Service who also would appear at official functions in the Rose Garden and in the Rose Garden and in the office. So that on occasions, there would be as many as four and sometimes five government photographers

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making the same picture. Well, this was going to be cleared up by a meeting which was going to be held at ten o'clock this particular day; Okie had arranged it. We were all going to be together; we were going to share the wealth, split it down; some were going to do this and some were going to do that; and Okie was then, nominally, going to be in charge of a photo detail, which hadn't come into being at that time. Before we had a chance to have the meeting, he was dismissed. He left the House within the hour.

F: The President ruined your meeting, didn't he?

S: He messed it up. But what it did to Knudsen and I, and Abbie Rowe as the case may be, we went back into our usual routine of coverage. Bob continued to cover the ladies, Luci and Lynda and Lady Bird, and I would cover the Office of the President. And that's the way it went, back to normal. Now we're into the summertime, really spring, summer.

F: You're still doing color and flash?

S: Right. And, again, no instructions to do otherwise, no admonitions. Pictures were still usable, and we were still putting them out. So the summer began to be interesting campaign-wise. Candidate-wise, Democratic party-wise, we had a lot of things going on behind the scenes. I was very busy doing those things together with the build-up of trips and just stuff for the campaign.

F: Did you cover the convention?

S: Yes, we built up, as you know, through the campaign trail, covering

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all of the many states that we did, and ended up in Atlantic City. And this was a very hectic time, with who was going to be the VP and all this quiet planning.

F: There's a certain amount of stage management in all this. Is a photographer useful in that, other than just to go ahead and take pictures of what's happening or does he try to get certain types of pictures? Do you have [to have] some managerial talent?

S: Well, the access to the principals, of course, is the main thing. He arranges for the media to have every angle that's at all feasible for them to cover for their own use. It's up to me or the in-house photographer to do the best that he can under the circumstances or to get more people to help, if you need more angles covered. But we were working rather thin at that time and maybe Knudsen was there, maybe he wasn't. But I was by then in the inner staff to the point that I never budged more than an arm's length away from the President, because I had established by then a rapport of being handy, where "Cecil" came out ringing loud and clear many times, if I had strayed and he would have found a little old lady or a little old man or a friend of his that he wanted a picture of, I was due to be there like right now!

F: Okay, it's generally accepted, rightly or wrongly, that Johnson had long picked Humphrey as his running mate, but was keeping a flirtation going with other people just so that the guessing game could continue. Were you sort of given any assignment to

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have pictures ready of Humphrey? You had no insight, as a photographer?

S: No, no, at that point when I said I was in the inner staff, I hadn't yet gotten into following him to every closed-door meeting that he had with anybody; and all of these private meetings that were taking place, those were not covered. I didn't have any idea, any more than my friends in the press, what was happening. All I knew was that I had to be on Air Force One chopper at this time; I had to be there, back and forth. We did fly down to the White House that afternoon and there was a picture made in the Cabinet Room of the President with Humphrey. The press made it also. We also did Thomas Dodd. So the guessing game was going on until that night, of course. I went with the President's party to Mr. Rosenbloom's home, that's the Maryland football owner's home. [Carroll Rosenbloom, owner of Baltimore Colts] We spent the evening in his home. The Secret Service, the doctor, and I were in the basement; everybody else was upstairs. I don't know what they were doing. I wasn't invited. I didn't go up. What we were doing was waiting for the proper time to arrive. As you recall, the Robert Kennedy situation, the film and all of that, transcended everything at that point time-wise. It just upset the schedule and, I gather upset the President, too, because he was in a foul mood when he went to the convention hall. But I didn't know why; we didn't have a TV down in the basement room. I found this all out later.

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But arriving on the scene, I worked right up on the podium with him and stayed behind. I did all the behind shots. If you look in the newsreel footage, you'll see what we call "Hail Marys" in the trade: camera up overhead pointing down with a wide-angle format, so that you have him in the foreground and the deployed thousands in the background. This was my proximity, and I stayed again with the blessings of everybody that I could be anywhere I wanted to be. So it was all of those people and me.

Then the convention ran its course, and I went back to business again the same--that was August of 1964--into the campaign trail again, the New England swing, and all the Midwesterns. I guess Lady Bird did her whistle-stop, her Dixie train. And we went to New Orleans.

F: You took that trip?

S: No, Bob Knudsen went on that. I went with the President. We met her at the station in New Orleans, and we had the big thing in the hotel there that night. Oh, I can't possibly recall all the many faces or the types of trips, but needless to say, wherever the President went, I was part of the party. On Air Force One now I was traveling first class, whereas before I'd been a part of the press party.

F: Standing forever at the President's elbow, did you get the feeling during 1964 that he was pretty confident about the outcome?

S: Yes, there was never any doubt in my mind that not only he, but the people were satisfied with--you know, certainly Goldwater was never

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going to shake him loose. It was just a won race at that point, just did it because it was expected; you know, you have to have conventions and races. The issue was never in doubt in my mind or his, I'm sure. It was obvious. He never evinced any feeling of doubt.

F: Did you run into any particular snafus during the campaign?

S: None that I can immediately call to mind. The only semi-humorous and/or dangerous incident was the New England trip where the press car that I was riding in caught on fire, and it was right behind the President's car, about two behind. We were climbing up a hill. It was a new Lincoln convertible, and somewhere it got overheated because it was slow and you have to go faster sometimes. We'd crept along and stopped on many occasions, so the car got over-heated and began to steam a little bit. So my friends and I jumped out and we hadn't any more gotten out than it exploded with a rather large explosion. It just upset everybody.

F: Yes.

S: We'd heard shots recently before, and this was just one of those things; the car just literally disintegrated in front of us. By that time, I was walking alongside the Secret Service car, and I jumped on the back of that car, as again was my privilege and not the press's. Then we went on with the trip. But that's just an interesting sidelight.

F: Did the President sometimes act as a sort of a head photographer

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and tell you where to be and what to do and who to take, and right angles and so on?

S: Angles and where and who were all pretty much cut and dried. It was him and whoever he wanted a picture of. And this would be pointed out very demandingly, discreetly, or however, depending on the situation. If we were on the campaign, and he was walking . . . I recall a situation. I think it was someplace down South, I don't remember the exact place now, but there was a little ninety-seven year old lady that somebody introduced him to. She'd been voting Democrat all her life, and this was the type of thing he liked to do. So he got real close to her, and I was right nearby and I made the pictures. Then I reached in my pocket and gave her one of his pens. I began to carry pocketsful of his give-away things, because I was always as close [as anyone]. The Secret Service guys and I shared pocketsful of these things, because we were always closer than anyone else. If he wanted something to give away, he'd just reach out his hand and we'd stuff something in it.

F: Yes.

S: A pen or a pin or a Senate card, something; a memento. So we'd stock up on our mementos as part of our packing up for the trip. We'd go to the keeper of them and say, "I need a couple dozen pens." And so this was another S.O.P. [standard operation procedure] that became [routine]. I was close at hand and, frequently, he'd just reach his hand out and I knew what to put in it.

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F: You'd put something in it.

S: Our relationship at that point was extremely close, but methodical. It could have been Sam Jones. It could have been anybody. I don't think there was any personality. I don't want to inject any personalities here because I was just doing what someone else would have been doing if it weren't myself.

F: Except you were the one who was doing it.

S: Well, true, and enjoying it. I mean, after all, what captain in the Army, which I was at this time, would have such an enviable position as the number one photographer in the country? People climb up various ladders of achievement in their professions; I got to the top of mine and was there for, oh, let's see, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, and down into July or so of 1965. So four years and a half of this pinnacle will be my golden years, as I see it.

F: Yes.

S: I did something. We've gotten through the campaign now and back into the routine. It was on towards inaugural time, 1965, that I began to feel the hot breath of Okamoto again. He was moving around in the back corridors. And I don't know how it happened or how it came about, but there were occasions when state visitors would come and USIA, with which he was still involved, would continue to do their

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thing in the way of give-away pictures and special albums and things like that. I'm sure Okie's people had a great hand in that. So he got involved again and, before long, it was pretty well back to the same routine, except that there was again no fine lines drawn. It was just that I'd go in to make a picture and find that he had been there already.

F: Did you and Okie get along all right?

S: Well, I have to confess--

F: This is a difficult situation.

S: It is. We had talked about it and we agreed at the outset that the President being the type of person he was, there was enough there for both of us, not only physically but--

F: There was going to be a certain ebb and flow, too.

S: Right. And if he had the inner track with Valenti and Mr. [Marvin] Watson through the other door, and I was subject to being called by Juanita [Roberts] or whoever would be calling for my particular type of picture, then I felt, yes, there's enough there for both of us, as long as we not necessarily keep our distance, but just play it cool. And that's what we did. There was never any times when we got in each other's way. I often had to suffer the slings and arrows from my colleagues because they said, "What's that so-and-so doing back there? He's been in there getting all this stuff and why didn't you?" So I was beginning to be demeaned because I wasn't doing my old job.

It began to be apparent to everybody but me that I was on

my way out, but I didn't realize it. Well, I realized it because there were other little issues taking place, like every other member of the former staff was one by one being transferred or resigning or being reassigned or being moved. And it turned out that down into May of 1965, General Clifton and a couple of congressional liaison assistants and myself were about the only Kennedy people left on the staff or I mean the staff as I know it. So I didn't know how long it was going to be.

F: Do you think your having been a Kennedy person sort of nagged at the President?

S: Yes, for a couple of reasons. I was always conscious of the fact that the wearing of the PT boat tie pin upset him. In fact, he's been heard to have said that he didn't want anybody around him wearing one, including his agents, all of whom had come over through the administration, not with him, but through him. And it was an honor to have had that association, and everyone affected a certain personal feeling. So wearing a tie pin, I thought, was being just a little bit much, if you would have to be told how to dress. I guess I, along with the others, rebelled at that to the extent that I continued to wear one. So whenever I was up close, it was me, and him, and my tie pin.

F: You knew at least he could focus his eyes on something, didn't you?

S: Right. So in answer, I think that there must have been a feeling that when he looked at me, he didn't see Kennedy necessarily, but he certainly could associate us.

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This came to full head in May; I must get to that part of it now, because I'm nearing the end of my tenure. If you recall the incident of England donating three acres of land of famed Runnymede area to a memorial to the President and they wanted to establish a memorial there. Mrs. Kennedy accepted the memorial, and the President graciously let her have an Air Force plane at her disposal, General Clifton to be her major-domo, to run the mechanics of it. Early in the game, it was determined that I could go because it was mentioned at that time, in the early planning stages. The night before we were to leave the following Wednesday morning, I got this frantic call from General Clifton saying, "You'd better come over, Cecil. Something has come up." So I came running over and he said, "I just had a last minute check of the passenger list with Valenti and when I mentioned your name, he lit up and flew into a rage" and wanted to know who had said I could go, I couldn't leave and the President couldn't get along without me, you know that type of thing--he'd never let me go and how did my name get on there. Then Clifton said, "Well, you know, we talked about this earlier and apparently, it just slipped by." Because I had made all the plans. I'd known that I'd been briefed [?]. My bags were packed and my camera equipment. I'd borrowed some new cameras and was all set to make the trip. So I knew that I wasn't just doing this from sheer desire. It had been arranged.

F: Yes.

S: Valenti, on the other hand, said, "The President's got to know

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about this, and I'm not going to tell him at this late date." And I was talking to Clifton now and he said, "As I see it, we'll just have to do without you." I said, "I don't want to be done without. This means too much to me, I really want to go. If it means my job, and it might, why, I'm willing to gamble because this is something I really want to do." He said, "Well, what do we do? I said, "Let's go over and talk to Valenti again." So the two of us walked from the East Wing to the West Wing, and we sought and got an audience with Jack. And we talked about it again, saying how it started, and how it got slipped off, and how, when he saw it, he was upset, and how he wasn't going to do anything about it. Clifton allowed as how he didn't want to get involved with it either. I said, "Well, may I make a suggestion?" And Valenti said, "Yes. What?" And I said, "What if I ask the President? After all, I'm the one who wants to go. Can I ask him?" Well, you know, people don't talk to the President, the President talks to people. I'm sure that Valenti could see my head on a silver platter being held by the hand at that time, and seeing that this was an easy way out, said, "Sure, go ahead. If you want to do that, fine. He's in the Cabinet Room with some labor leaders or something. Have a chance. Have a go." So I went to Juanita's office, which is between the President's office and the Cabinet Room, and I sat, like I had done before, and was going to trip him when he came by. As it happened, it was a phone call that brought him out of the office. Juanita went in to get him

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and brought him out to her office. He took the phone call, and I stayed in the room. Just before he started back to the Cabinet Room door, I said, "Mr. President, could I trouble you for a moment? Something has come up on Mrs. Kennedy's trip." He said, "Well, what is it, Cecil? I've got these people in here"-- and his hand's on the door and he's ready to go back in. And I said, "It had been discussed earlier that I could make the trip with the General and Mrs. Clifton, but Mr. Valenti didn't find my name on the list. Would you mind if I went?" "No, no, fine, go ahead." You know, zap, and he was gone. He went through the door. Juanita was my witness. I went back to Clifton and Valenti and said, "He said I could go."

F: You were restored.

S: And I subsequently left.

F: Yes.

S: So I went. Okay, we made this trip. It took a week or so before we did it all and came back.

Sometime towards the end of May, the twenty-sixth or twenty-eighth, something like that, there was a distinguished visitor in town which required the usual parade to Blair House and then the ride back from Blair House to the South Grounds of the White House by the President and his aide. I had made the pictures at the Blair House, dashed across the street, back in through the main entrance, out on the porch, so that I'd be there when they drove up because I hadn't had a chance to see him up until that point.

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You know, nothing had happened. I hadn't been exposed to him and knew that this would be a time when, walking up the green, I could thank him for letting me go, which is what I really wanted to do. It turned out that Clifton had gotten his ear for the first time that day also, and he was walking up the path with him, telling him about the trip, how it went, and what took place, and Dean Rusk did this and so on and so on. Then I hove into view, and at that point he said, "Oh, and Cecil was there; he made all these great pictures and Mrs. Kennedy really appreciated it", and blah, blah, blah. The President put his arm around my shoulder and [we] walked to his office together and chatted a little bit and I went out of the office.

Three days later, I got another phone call from Clifton saying, "You better come over here. Something has come up." And what came up was Marvin Watson said that I was to be made available to the Defense Department and to let me go anyplace that I wanted to go. "Where did I want to go, in the world?" Now, you may draw at this point your own conclusions.

F: Yes.

S: I only drew the conclusion that my time had come, I had done what I thought I was going to do. Okie had meanwhile been there during my absence and had made sufficient inroads into the system, and there was really no need to have another one around. So I was available.

F: Is Okie the type who would in a sense elbow you out, or would

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he be singled-minded about himself, and you'd just kind of get lost in the crush?

S: Well, Okie was a major in the Army reserve also. He served the same Uncle I was serving at the time. Mine was a military assignment. He was aware of that. I'm sure that I can't possibly look into his inner recesses and find out what really took place, but I can only surmise that he thought I had had mine and he had a chance to have his and that, if I had to be sacrificed on the military aspect of this thing, that another assignment would move him into number one.

F: "The guy's had five years. How much more does he want out of life?"

S: Well, it amounts to that, plus the fact there was certainly no . . . It was rather understood that I was a Kennedy man and that he was an abstract man. I don't think he necessarily had any love for either. It was just, as I see it, a job. He saw an opportunity to move into a job and he served himself.

F: Yes.

S: I guess it was a self-serving assignment.

F: In that period when you're in grace, did the President ever talk in your presence about things that were highly secret and delicate and so forth? In other words, did he sort of take for granted that you were in?

S: I think I'm correct in remembering that the only times I was exposed to him when there were remarks made that should not reach

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the public ear for any number of reasons, I was never alone. There was always somebody else around, and that I sort of went with the woodwork and that it would not be expected of me to repeat anything I had heard. But I was never in a similar situation that Okamoto got himself into, as the history will prove, wherein he was the third party in the room on nearly every occasion. Security Councils, Cabinet meetings, high level foreign diplomats, presidents, kings, whatever, Okie was always the third person in the room and, in many cases, the only person in the room. I never had that entree. It was never asked of me. If I had gone in, I think I would probably have been allowed to stay, but maybe not for very long. I know what the secret of it is, but I find it difficult to say--that is, that the overriding need for being photographed, mechanically, was something that transcended the event. In other words, no matter what it was, a photographer in the room making pictures is equally as important. Therefore, Okie was allowed to stay. Why those things weren't important when I was there, I don't know.

F: Did the President, when you made the official portrait originally, make the actual selection? Did you do a preliminary editing of those that were to your mind just unthinkable?

S: Well, he had the chance to select the one that he wanted. He was very difficult to please with pictures, as you probably know. And we did go on into the [Arnold] Newman, [Yousuf] Karsh, everybody that had a camera type routine, to come up with a picture, and in many cases, we used some of all of them. Life used Karsh's. I

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immediately pointed out to Walter Jenkins that the picture of the President on the cover of Life that week was a very poor selection. They shouldn't have allowed him to have that complete control without somebody seeing it, because if you just cover up the President's face and look at the eyes, there was a very strong, unhealthy look in his eyes in that particular picture. When I did this with Mr. Jenkins, he said, "God, I've never looked at it that way." I said, "Well, just look at the eyes. There's something about them." It was a provoking picture, and it provoked a lot of bad things. I said, "On the other hand, look at this." And I showed him a picture that I had made with pleasant eyes, pleasant expression. And he said, "Let me take this in to the President." So he went in. And it was at that point that my picture became the official picture, because [Yousuf] Karsh at that time was running with his. In the box, it said, "This first and official portrait of the President," where he was leaning on the desk into the camera, with a wide-angle lens and just something unrealistic about it. So my picture then became the official portrait for a long time. The President signed hundreds of them as give-aways. They were hanging in buildings and so on.

F: On a technical standpoint, your picture can be bought downtown on a post card. How does that get released to some commercial venture?

S: The commercial organization, post card company, writes a letter to the White House; and it eventually finds its way I think in most

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cases to the office of the press secretary, who makes a decision or with guidance makes a decision that he sees no harm in their having this transparency of the President. It's public domain. The President belongs to all people. The fact that this is a picture of the same man, who cares who made it? Give it to them. So they give them a transparency just outright.

F: They don't pay any kind of royalty or anything?

S: No royalty, no nothing.

F: I mean, the White House, as you know, like any home, needs money.

S: Right. I would have liked to have thought that the monies would go into the historical association or something like that. I really can't say that it never happened, but I really don't believe so. I think that these were publications who were looking for freebies. In many cases, the pictures that I made and that my cohorts made in the White House, are being published widely and freely. These companies, on the other hand, are making many, many dollars, thousands of dollars, on these pictures. The first, in 1964, when the assassination was still news and the inauguration was news, there was a fly-by-night outfit that came out with slick paper, cheaply produced color pictures the bulk of which were handouts from the White House. I've seen records where they made well over a half a million dollars, just a dollar a throw. Because everybody wanted them, you know, wanted these pictorial records. You could buy them in every drug store for a buck. And all the pictures were official White House photographs

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by Cecil Stoughton and Robert Knudsen.

F: And all of the publisher's resources were free?

S: Everything. All they had to do was crank the paper.

F: That's a good way to do it.

S: Sure is.

F: Was the President good on posing when he actually wanted?

S: When he wanted a picture, he'd do anything that was required. [I] moved him around occasionally but I usually let him find where he wanted to be; then I'd get in my prescribed place, which was always on his favored left side. Nobody ever moved to his right side with his permission. During large crowds, where the photographers would spread, well, naturally, there'd have to be some. But this always displeased him a little bit. We soon got into--not soon--but we always knew where we were supposed to be, we, the official guys. If the other guys wanted to do it, I think they did it for malice.

F: Was any effort made by Secret Service, other people, to keep photographers away from that side?

S: Yes. It began to be a routine. The press secretary's office and the Secret Service would not allow photographers to go on the left side of the podium, that is, as you face it. They were always on the right side of the podium. This took place after I got with the Park Service, as a matter of fact. The first official thing I did with the President was over at Theodore Roosevelt Island. The press were set up, and we could only work in this particular area. Nobody gets on this side. So it became a pattern and a part of

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the prearranged plans.

F: What did you do, retire from the Army?

S: Yes. I completed ten years service on April 30, 1967. We stopped the chronology here, when I was asked to leave. That was May of 1965.

Just for the record, I selected to go to Germany at that point, and a couple of months later, after port calls and packing up and so forth of the baggage, went to Germany. But there's a very interesting little piece of history here that I think bears recording and I may or may not ever know the reason, or how it ever happened. But towards the end of July, the movers were in my house packing boxes, dishes, taking beds out, and so forth. We could take a certain amount with us to Germany, and the rest had to go into storage. So the storage guys were there this day, and they were carrying out the big things. The telephone people hadn't been to take out the White House phone yet. They were due that afternoon. The White House phone rang. It was Jack Valenti himself; not his secretary, but Jack. He said, "Cecil, the President just heard about your leaving, and he's very upset about it. He didn't know anything about it, and he wants to see you right now. I'm sending a car to pick you up. Can you come down?"

F: Ought to set you up with the movers, anyhow.

S: I said, "Well, the moving men are here." As I was talking, my davenport just went out the door. He said, "Well, that can all be stopped, if he wants it stopped. After all, he is the Commander-

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in Chief." I remember him saying that. And I said, "I don't know that I want it stopped." But he said, "Well, he wants to see you and I'm sending a car." So my clothes were all packed and I was going to travel in uniform because I was going to be the Army Army then, instead of the White House Army. So I put on my captain's uniform and, sure enough, the limousine arrived, and I went to the South Grounds, just like a dignitary. The President was meeting with someone at the time in the Fish Room. I was told to wait out in the hall and when he came through into the office, I was to go in the office where he wanted to talk to me. So he did, and we did. He came out and said, "Cecil, what's this I hear about your leaving?" I said, "Well, you know, my time apparently has come, and it's time for me to go overseas and do a tour." He said, "Well, do you want to go? Do you really want to go?" I said, "Yes, I'd like to give my children the opportunity to travel a little bit at the government's expense, if you don't mind." I sort of chuckled about that. He said, "You know, there's enough work here for you and Okie, too. I'm sure we can work this thing out. If you really don't want to go, just let me know." I've always wondered why I didn't say, "I don't really want to go, and I'm surprised you don't know about this." I don't really think it happened that way, and that's why there's always going to be a question mark. But if I had had the gall--there's another word, but I'll say gall--to say, "No, I don't want to

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go. Let's call this thing off," the rumors would be stopped.

I've often wondered what would have happened.

F: Do you think that the notice for you to pick yourself a job in the Department of Defense more or less came down from the President or do you think somebody in between decided that this was the way it was?

S: Knowing as much as I acquired during my time of working with him about his attention to minute details, I cannot believe that his number one or number two staff people would make a decision of that I can only say importance, because it was important to him, without his knowledge. Therefore, he must have known about it. He probably directed it, is what I'm saying. Why the Mickey Mouse about not knowing about it, and giving me this private audience, and making it appear that he had just heard about it and was aghast? Why was he trying to impress me? I was only one of the many of thousands of captains in the Army at that point. And he really couldn't gain or lose anything by going through this charade, but that's what it amounted to.

F: There's no overt rancor at any time.

S: No. No, we parted the best of friends, howdied and shook real good. And a couple of days later, when the actual physical departure took place, it was on the occasion of General Clifton getting this distinguished service medal and leaving the service at the White House at the same time, thereby ending

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the strain. There was only one man left in that congressional office on the original staff.

F: Who was that?

S: Mike Manatos stayed on.

F: Yes. Mike stayed on till the end.

S: So when the General had his Rose Garden ceremony, to which he invited all the brass from the Pentagon and the press and so on, my family and I had been given the pleasure of two staff cars to drive us to McGuire [A.F.B.] so we could get on our Air Force plane to go to Germany. We were en route. We delayed our departure long enough to stop for the ceremony. We stopped and were in the inner ring of the group at the Rose Garden. Immediately upon the cessation of all of the talk with Clifton and all of his stuff, the President walked right down to me, put his hand on my shoulder, and said, "Cecil, we're going to miss you around here. If you ever want to come back, just give me a call. You've always got a place to hang your hat." [He] kissed my wife on the cheek and shook hands with my children. And it was a great show for the press, who were all there, and I was sure that big man talking to a little man didn't go unnoticed at that point by the press. It didn't get any action in the press. I left that day and never saw any clippings.

F: You can't judge another man's motivations all together, but do you think that he was sincere at this moment? In other words, what I'm wondering is if he in a sense convinces himself?

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- S: I want to say, yes. Really, down deep, I still feel, as you must have noticed, a little bit of querulous curiosity. I don't really know.
- F: A little bit of uncertain cutting edge there.
- S: I'm just not sure that the same thing would have taken place if I'd just come clean on the scene as not necessarily a friend from Texas, but just somebody.
- F: Yes.
- S: I just wasn't in that crowd. I frequently tell my wife, and I told her again this morning, "Don't overlook the fact that I was doing a job that the cooks do, that his barber did, that the people that take care of any of the machinations of running the office [do]." I was just an integral part of that job that Private Jones could have done just as easily. It just happened that I was there. But I was certainly a mechanical thing. I was a part of the machine.
- F: I think he is enormously proprietary, in a sense, and here's a part of his family, maybe gone with his blessing, but still leaving.
- F: Mrs. Johnson was there that day and likewise gave us her surprised blessing. She didn't know we were leaving and was very kind in her remarks. But I can only go just one step further, and that is to say that after all of this has taken place and we're down into 1967-1968, my exposure to both parties of the family has been as if I never existed, just totally cold and indifferent.

An unusual experience at the Ranch, vis-a-vis the establishment of his Birthplace as an historic site: in my job I was required to

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make some pictures of that. We were making pictures to be used in the museum that's across the river, run by the state. They wanted literally hundreds of pictures of Texas flora and fauna and culture and color and hill country. Doug Hubbard, the man in the office here, was the liaison with Mrs. Johnson, and he told her that I was coming down and would be making these pictures. I must have presumed that she would have told the President, but apparently she didn't. Because, one day when I was down there working, we ran into each other on his Ranch, without his having any knowledge that I was there. This was rather awkward, because he wanted to know what the hell I was doing there, to coin a phrase. And his Secret Service man whom I had talked to and said, "Look, I've got to do this job, and Mrs. Johnson knows I'm here," didn't bother to tell the President I was there. But at that point he did. He said, "What's he doing here?" "Well, he's here working and so forth." "Get rid of him," you know. So I was asked not to come back.

F: Hmmm.

S: And so I sent a replacement. From then on, I was persona non grata.

F: Curious.

S: Very.

F: Yes.

[End of Tape 1 of 1 and Interview II]

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Cecil W. Stoughton
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