

**John Seigenthaler Oral History Interview – JFK #3, 2/22/1966**  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** John Seigenthaler  
**Interviewer:** Ronald J. Grele  
**Date of Interview:** February 22, 1966  
**Place of Interview:** Nashville, Tennessee  
**Length:** 180 pp.

**Biographical Note**

Seigenthaler was aide to Robert F. Kennedy during the 1960 Presidential campaign and Administrative Assistant to the Attorney General, Department of Justice (1961). This interview focuses on his role as administrative assistant, Justice Department reforms and appointments, tax and antitrust cases, and civil rights, among other issues.

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**Suggested Citation**

John Seigenthaler, recorded interview by Ronald J. Grele, February 22, 1966, (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

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John Seigenthaler

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John Seigenthaler  
JFK #3

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Third Oral History Interview

with

John Seigenthaler

February 22, 1966  
Nashville, Tennessee

By Ronald J. Grele

For the John F. Kennedy Library

[SESSION III, TAPE III, SIDE I]

GRELE: What did you do immediately following the election?

SEIGENTHALER: Immediately after the election I went to work for Bob [Robert F. Kennedy]. There were a number of loose ends that had to be tied together. I took about a week's vacation, called the editor here and told him that I wouldn't be able to get back right away and that I wanted my leave extended a little while longer. He said he understood that. So I postponed a decision for a period of

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weeks. Bob didn't know what he was going to do at that time. During that period I spent a good deal of time with him. I lived with him for part of the time. Finally, after he decided to go into the Justice Department, he asked me to come with him. At the time he asked me, my situation here had changed slightly. The editor and I – my predecessor here, as I said – had a difference of opinion about a problem that had come up. So I decided to go in the Justice Department.

GRELE: What were some of the loose ends that had to be cleared up?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, an awful lot of people had to be thanked; people he had worked with, people who had helped us all across the country. Some of these people were interested in coming into the new government, and some of these people we screened and turned over

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to Sarge Shriver [Robert Sargent Shriver, Jr.] and his operation which was then set up down the hall. Some of these people are now in government.

GRELE: Do you recall who these people were?

SEIGENTHALER: The example that stands out in my mind most pointedly is Bill Henry because he had come up. He went back to Memphis and didn't want to go to work for the government at all. However, I submitted his name at that time to Shriver. There were many others.

GRELE: What other names besides Bill Henry's did you put in for positions in the new administration?

SEIGENTHALER: Gosh, nobody comes to mind right now, but I'm sure there are a number of others who will as we go on.

GRELE: What were your duties as you understood them when you first came to the Justice

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Department?

SEIGENTHALER: I was his Administrative Assistant. He asked me if I would just go over there and continue what I was doing. Again, I didn't plan to do this on a long term basis. I mean he didn't ask me to do this at the time I decided to stay on and tie up the loose ends. I had to do that anyway. When he asked me to go to the Justice Department, again he wanted to disassociate himself from politics, insofar as he could. He wanted to put that business behind him and devote his interests and energies to being a good Attorney General. And I think I helped cut off and direct either to the National Committee or elsewhere some of the people who wanted to burden him with political problems. He recognized when he went into the Justice

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Department that he couldn't deal with people who had helped politically. This Justice Department was not a place to collect political favors. He had a rather strict sense of what he should be required to do.

GRELE: During the period from November of 1960 to January or February of 1961, did you have any contacts with President Kennedy [John F. Kennedy]?

SEIGENTHALER: From November to January?

GRELE: Yes. The post-election period to the Inaugural.

SEIGENTHALER: Yes, I had one very significant contact with him.

GRELE: What was this?

SEIGENTHALER: This was the morning that he told his brother that he would be Attorney General. This had been an agonizing period of day and weeks for Bob – that period from after the election until his own future was resolved.

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He didn't want to create great problems for his brother, and suddenly he was, he felt, creating problems for his brother. He talked to me about it, many of his friends, about what he was going to do; what they thought he should do. I don't know that he ever brought it up or volunteered, but all of us wanted to know what he was going to do. During this campaign he had, literally, collected around him hundreds of people who were dedicated first to him and then to the President. Some of those people had come along at the time he had been with the McClellan Committee. Part of his time was making sure that their ability was going to be recognized and that there was a place for them to make their contribution in the new administration. A couple come to mind off the top of my head: Salinger [Pierre E.G. Salinger] and Kenny

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O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell]. Their first loyalty had been and was to Bob before they went to work at the White House. Pierre, of course, had been the press secretary; Kenny had been an appointment secretary. But they were, nonetheless, brought into this campaign by Bob Kennedy with whom they'd worked on the McClellan Committee.

But his own problem was much more difficult because he was the brother of the President. I remember talking to him about it on a number of occasions. I had the feeling as a result of two or three conversations that what he really wanted to do was to go into the Defense Department, perhaps, and take a job in the Defense Department in some area where there was a need for positive action – such as, to use my term and not his, ramrodding the missile program, or in some other area of the

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government where he could serve his brother and not be controversial and at the same time be in a position where, if there was a problem or a failure, he'd be able to take the responsibility for that problem without transmitting it to his brother. I talked to him about this – specifically about this. I personally felt, and some other people felt, that he should go in the Justice Department. And we told him so. I remember he'd talked about it for a long time. One night I was staying with him out in McLean, and he talked about it at length. He had arranged on the next day to go visit a number of people whose judgment he respected. I should say in all this his father [Joseph P. Kennedy] was very interested in his becoming Attorney General. His father's reasoning for all this – and I heard him discuss it with his father on the telephone

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a couple of times – was that nobody was better qualified; that he had proved himself as an able administrator; that here was nobody who had the complete background in the area of organized crime that he had; that there was nobody who was more dedicated to trustbusting than he was; that in the area of civil rights nobody would be more driven by the law. He just said again and again to both his sons, “Nobody's better qualified than Bobby.”

At any rate, I remember the discussion the night before he went to visit these people. The next day we got up, went in, and he dropped me off at the National Committee office. Then he went really on this sort of tour. He talked to Bill Douglas [Justice William O. Douglas]. He talked to John McClellan. He talked to J. Edgar

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Hoover. He talked to Bill Rogers [William P. Rogers], who was then the Attorney General of the United States, and maybe a couple of more. He came back in the office that afternoon, and he went into the office and shut the door. I was seated outside the office.

He immediately got on the telephone on the straight line. I'm sure he was calling his brother. A little bit later I talked to him. He said, “I talked to a number of people today, and not one of them thinks that I should go into the Attorney General's office.” He sort of smiled and said, “That sort of goes against your advice, doesn't it?” I said, “Yes, I'm surprised to hear none of them recommends it.” He said, “J. Edgar Hoover said I should do it. But he's the only one. I think he had maybe some reservations about it. All the

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rest of these people think I should get out of government. Bill Douglas said I should take a sabbatical. Senator McClellan said he thought it would be a mistake. Bill Rogers said it's been nothing but headaches to him; the biggest problem has been the appointment of judges.” He had talked to a couple of other people too, but these are the ones that come to mind. So I said to him, “Well, what are you going to do?” He said, “Well, I'm going to think about it.” And he did think about it. We went home that night, and he agonized about it. Ethel [Ethel Skakel Kennedy] talked with us about it.

Finally he decided that he would not do it, and that he would call his brother and tell him that he was not going to do it. Just before he picked up the phone, he said, “This will kill my father.” And so he picked up the phone and

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called his brother and told him he wouldn't do it. He said he had been to these people, and he recited to him again what they had said. I never did find out whether the earlier phone call was to his brother. It could've been to some other person whose judgment he wanted, or perhaps it was to his father. At any rate, he recited the whole series of visits to his brother, who then said to him, “Well, don't tell me no now. I want to have breakfast with you in the morning. Come to the house on N Street.” It seems to me it was about 7 o'clock he told him to come by the house.

So the next morning we got up and went in. It was very early and cold. Snow was still on the ground, four or five inches. The President had been selecting members of his Cabinet on almost a day to day basis.

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They had been coming in to the house there to discuss these things with him. There were only two spots, as I remember it – this could be historically inaccurate, but my memory of it is that there were only two spots that were unfilled: the Treasury and the Attorney General. The President had sent up a trial balloon on his brother a short time before that while he'd been in Florida playing golf with Bill Lawrence [William H. Lawrence] with the *New York Times*. The story had come out that he was thinking of naming his brother Attorney General. Lawrence didn't attribute it to the President, but everybody knew that Lawrence had played golf with the President the day before. And so that story had been given wide circulation. The people who were most opposed to it, from whom the greatest opposition

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came were the liberals, the intellectuals in the country. They just didn't want Bobby Kennedy to be the Attorney General because they thought he was a narrow prosecutor who had no concept of civil liberties.

GRELE:                   Who?

SEIGENTHALER:   Well, I would say the person who comes to mind is Joe Rauh [Joseph L. Rauh, Jr.], but there were others. I always had the feeling, for example, that Walter Reuther and some other people didn't favor it. But I'd say that there was widespread protest, much of it from among the liberal elements of the Democratic Party. There were stories in the press about it and after a couple of days it sort of died down, you see, because of the President's “no comments” on it. But then this came – this morning.

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We drove in from McLean and got just about to Georgetown, and I told him to drop me off at the intersection where we turned off. I was going to get a cab, but he said, “No, come with me.” And so I went with him. A few reporters were outside when we went in. The President was upstairs. Bob went up, and within about two or three minutes they came down. We had breakfast in the little breakfast nook about halfway back in the house – bacon and eggs. The President began to tell us about his selection of members of the Cabinet.

Really, this was about as close as I’d been to John Kennedy for any one period of time, and it was really an exciting breakfast for me. This was the man that I had worked for and really turned my insides out for. And while I’d done it

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primarily because of my interest in and affection for his brother, this was still the President of the United States to be. I don’t mean I was giddy or anything, but I was very much interested in looking at him at close range to see, in fact, what sort of animal we had elected. Of course, I had dinner with him a couple of times before but never since he’d been President, not since the election.

GRELE: Two questions, if we can go aside now and maybe come back later to his appointment as Attorney General. What were your impressions of John Kennedy as the newly elected President?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, I think you could say that I had first impressions of just tremendous affection and friendship because when he came down the stairs that morning, he

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recognized me – I’m sure Bob may have said upstairs, “John Seigenthaler is downstairs.” He came forward and said, “I’m glad to see you,” and put his arm around my shoulder, patted me on the shoulder as we went out. He was completely at ease, completely relaxed, and I had a feeling of friendship. I mean, you know, he wasn’t maudlin about the way he said hello, and I wasn’t going to break up in silly laughter, but I just felt good about him being there. As we talked during breakfast, I guess as an interested newsman as much as anything else, I wanted to see at close range what he was like. I knew when we went in there that morning that one way or another history was going to be made. And I know that at some time during the morning it occurred to me that I was an extremely

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fortunate man at that moment to be there because as it turned out history was made.

I think if I had any feeling or any emotion that I remember, it was one of affection and friendship. I realized, I think for the first time that morning, simply because I was there,

that I liked him – that I really like him. I didn't say, "Would I do as much for him as I would do for his brother?" Or I didn't make any odious comparison. But I had this feeling then and when it was over, "Gosh, I like him." And I must say that I had that feeling before; at the dinner sometime before – every contact I had with him, no matter how brief, even the couple of critical contacts after I was in the Justice Department, he was in high good humor, and you had the feeling that this was a man of.... Well, I

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knew he was a man of competence, and I didn't think about his qualifications or his ability or his greatness. I just thought that as a human being, here was somebody I admired and liked, and felt friendship for.

GRELE:                   The second question I have is this: He discussed with you and Robert Kennedy his other Cabinet appointments...

SEIGENTHALER:   Some of them, yes.

GRELE:                   Do you recall any of the discussion about any of the particular members of the Cabinet?

SEIGENTHALER:   Yes. He told us about Dean Rusk and that Dean Rusk had come in and that he had talked to Dean Rusk about being Secretary of State. All of this will have to be paraphrase because I don't remember exactly what he said, but the effect of it was that after he and Dean

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Rusk had talked about it and Dean Rusk had said that he would be Secretary of State, he then was faced with the problem of what he was going to do about Adlai Stevenson. He'd already made up his mind he wanted Adlai Stevenson to go to the United Nations, and he had broached that subject. He was afraid Adlai Stevenson was not going to want to go to the United Nations. He had not finally, apparently, told Adlai Stevenson that he would go to the United Nations or that he was not going to be Secretary of State. Of course, a number of people – I'm sure Mrs. Roosevelt [Eleanor R. Roosevelt] was principle among them – but many others wanted Stevenson to be Secretary of State. The President said, "I told Dean Rusk I wanted him to call Adlai." And he sort of chuckled as he told us of Dean Rusk's call to Adlai

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Stevenson. He said he called him and said to him, Rusk said – This is the President telling us – he said to him, "Adlai, the President-elect has asked me to do this, and it's a sacrifice. I have given it careful consideration, and I have decided that as much of a sacrifice as it is, I cannot refuse it. I cannot say no. I feel all of us have a loyalty greater than our own interests.

And I'm going to be a soldier, and I hope that you're going to be a soldier. I think this is necessary. We need you; the country needs you. I hope you will serve as he asks you to serve." And the President sort of chuckled and said, "I think old Adlai was impressed."

He talked about McNamara [Robert S. McNamara], and how fortunate he thought he was to get McNamara.

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GRELE: Who had suggested McNamara?

SEIGENTHALER: Shriver. He talked about Ed Day [J. Edward Day] and I remember Bob laughed and said, "Was he for us?" There was some question about whether Ed Day had really been actively for us. I think Sarge, or somebody in Sarge's operation had come up with Ed Day. Later I remember talking to Teddy [Edward M. Kennedy], and Teddy indicated had he known about it, he might have had something to say about it before Day was named. I don't think he really thought Day contributed as much effort to the campaign as he might have.

And then he said that Dillon [C. Douglas Dillon] had accepted the job as Secretary of the Treasury and was going to be named later that day.

GRELE: Why did he want Dillon?

SEIGENTHALER: I think he had great respect for Dillon's

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integrity. I think his interest in the security of the financial institution was built around, as much as anything else – and again, I'm assuming an awful lot – the psychology of the monetary situation. I think he wanted William McChesney Martin to continue to serve and Dillon to serve because they were people who would hold the respect of the financial community. I think he recognized that this might be a problem, and he was relying on them – these men who had the respect of the financial community – to take care of whatever doubts might have existed. I had the same feeling about the appointment of Hoover and Dulles [Allen W. Dulles]. And this came immediately after he was elected; almost the first appointment. "I'm going to keep J. Edgar Hoover and Allen Dulles in these two critical security

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posts." This was long before our meeting that day. But he wanted to get those jobs in the hands of people who would provide confidence, I felt. He thought Dillon would do that. He told us that Dillon had said that he was a Republican, a card carrying Republican, and that when he accepted, he also said that he had expected to get back to his family business interests and his family; that he wanted to do that but that he recognized he really didn't have the right to do that if the President wanted him to serve in this high office. He was impressed

with Dillon and McNamara as Bob later came to be. I don't remember any of the other Cabinet offices that were discussed that morning. There could have been some other though.

GRELE: What arguments did he use with Robert

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Kennedy to convince him that he should become Attorney General?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, the conversation went along in this vein for a good while. Finally Bob said, "Now, Johnny, can we talk about my situation?" Again, this is paraphrasing. This is my memory of it. And so the President said to him – cut him off, really. He said something like this: "Yes, well now, does John here know the arguments?" And before Bob could answer, he said, "Do you know the arguments for and against this thing?" I said, "Well, I've thought about it a lot." He said, "Well, just let me set it out for you." And then for the next five minutes I saw what I thought was.... He began by saying, "I know full well these are going to be difficult years in many areas, and I'm going to have great

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problems, and I'm going to need to rely on many people. But I'm in a difficult position because in this Cabinet there really is no person with whom I have been intimately connected over the years. I need to know that when problems arise, I'm going to have somebody who's going to tell me the unvarnished truth, no matter what he thinks, and Bobby will do that. And so I need him." And he spelled it out. He began to mention the people he had selected. He said, "The truth of the matter is I believe McNamara will make a great contribution, but I don't know him. And Dean Rusk is going to be my Secretary of State. The truth of the matter is I had no contact with him. Ed Day is relatively unknown to me. Most of these people I have had some cursory

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contact with." I guess he meant the Secretary of the Interior, Secretary of Labor. But he said, "None of them have I had a long standing close relationship with. I'm going to need Bobby," and he always called him Bobby when I heard him. "I'm going to need Bobby to lean on when these problems arise." Then he discussed the civil rights problem immediately. He said, "You're from the South. You know how difficult this is going to be. Now it would be possible for me to name somebody else Attorney General, and when problems in this area arise, for this person to become fainthearted. I don't want somebody who is going to be fainthearted. I want somebody who is going to be strong; who will join with me in taking whatever

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risks” – he didn’t say political risks, but the inference was – “take whatever political risks or whatever downside exposure there was and who would deal with the problem honestly;” and who would tell him exactly what he thought; tell him exactly what had to be done. He said, “We’re going to have to change the climate in this country. And if my administration does the things I want it to do, I’m going to have to be able to have someone as Attorney General to carry these things out on whom I can rely completely. I can do that with Bobby.” He said, “When these civil rights problems come up, if my Administration takes the rap for it, I want to know why we took the rap for it if there’s a rap to take. And with

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Bobby there I can count on him completely. I don’t know what other people are saying about this, but I don’t worry about it.” And then he said, “Now, I’m asking” – and suddenly, at some point – and I can’t tell you at exactly what point – he had turned to Bob as he was discussing something. He said, “You know that, Bobby. You remember that.”

And suddenly, he was no longer talking to me. He was talking to Bob, and he was saying, “Now, if I can ask Dean Rusk to give up a career; if I can ask Adlai Stevenson to make a sacrifice, he does not want to make; if I can ask Bob McNamara to give up a job as head of that company – these men I don’t even know – if I can ask them to make this sacrifice, certainly I can expect my own brother to give me the same sort of contribution.

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And I need you in this government.” And as he got to that point, he pushed back his chair and got up and went in the kitchen. And we sat there. I didn’t know whether he’d gone for more coffee or bacon and eggs or what. But the fact of the matter was, he had terminated the conversation. So I said, “Let’s go, Bob.” He said, “No, wait. I’ve got some points I want to make.” I said, “There’s no point to make.” So he walked back in and said, “So that’s it.” I think he said, “So that’s it, general. Let’s go.” He sort of laughed, and maybe cussed a little. And that’s it, and we went. We came back that day sometime around noon, and Dillon was there. He went out on the porch in the sunshine and the snow and told the press that his brother

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was going to be the Attorney General.

I remember when we went back that day, we came in through the alley way and walked across the backyard, and it was cold as blazes. There were several of us. Kenny O’Donnell was there, and some others. I guess this was the next day. I guess twenty-four hours must have elapsed before he made the announcement. It did. It was not the same day. It was the next day. It must have been because that night Bob called Whizzer White [Byron R. White] and asked him to serve as Deputy. He was out in Colorado.

So we left. We rode into town, and I said, “Congratulations, General.” I don’t think from that day on Bob Kennedy ever looked back on that decision. They had that great facility. Once they analyzed a situation from every standpoint and made

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the decision, they never looked back in second gear. But that was very dramatic, to me, a very dramatic morning.

GRELE: Robert Thompson, in his book, *The Brother Within*, reports that Robert Kennedy was slightly miffed at John Kennedy's crack about, "He needs some legal experience." Is that true?

SEIGENTHALER: No, not really. Slightly miffed – you know, it's so easy to say those things. I think he thought it was funny. I think he thought it was funny. You know, he had a way then when something would happen – Bob would have a way when something would happen that, uh, that was, that was, uh, could be construed as being critical of him, of really of laughing at it. All the people who think he's a vicious little monster underrate him because they don't give him credit for that ability to laugh at himself. I think I told somebody the story, maybe it's on the other tape of this

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lawyer out in Chicago who called him a vicious little monster. It's in his book. Kenny O'Donnell called him on the telephone to tell him and then he said to him, "I'd sue him if I were you. I don't think you're so – you're not so little." [Laughter] And he got the biggest kick out of it. He used to tell it, you know, "Kenny O'Donnell says I'm not so little."

For example, in this question, he would come in and say, "Can you imagine what my brother said about me? Can you imagine? I need some legal experience. My God!" And then he'd laugh. Slightly miffed. I never saw him slightly miffed about anything, about anything.

[END OF SESSION III, TAPE III, SIDE I]

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[SESSION III, TAPE III, SIDE I]

GRELE: When you first went into the Justice Department, did you have the impression that there were going to be any reforms in the structure of the organization of the Justice Department?

SEIGENTHALER: Yes.

GRELE: What were they going to be?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, I don't think it was clearly defined or spelled out, but I think he had in mind bringing in the best people possible. It might be well at

this point just to mention his conversation with Whizzer White that night on the telephone because Whizzer White had the opportunity to be Secretary of the Army, or Navy, or whatever in hell he wanted to be – whatever service he wanted. It seems to me he was offered the job of

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Secretary of the Army. Bob called him that night, and it was rather late when he did it. This was, of course, the night after the morning he had discussed being Attorney General with the President. He called Whizzer who was in Colorado. He called rather early, and Byron was out. Just before we were getting ready to go to bed, the call came back, and he said to him, “I talked to the President today, and I’m going to be the Attorney General, and I was wondering what your plans are.” Byron said something to the effect, “I don’t know. I haven’t made any decisions.” Bob said, “Well, you know, of course, that you could be secretary of one of the branches of the armed forces if you’d like to, and I thought as another possibility you might like to be Deputy Attorney General. I don’t know

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how you feel about that, and I certainly don’t want to impose my decision on you if you would rather have the other spot or still some other spot than that. But I have great respect for your judgment. I don’t think anybody I could have would be of greater assistance to me, and I want to make it clear that if you’d like to be Deputy Attorney General, I would like to have you. Maybe you want to think about it for a while and make up your mind. I don’t have to have a decision immediately.” So Byron said, “I imagine there will be some heat over where you are.” Bob said, “Yes, I’m sure there will be some heat over where I am.” And Byron said, “Well, I don’t need to wait to make up my decision. I’d rather be there where there’s some action rather than take a job in which I probably wouldn’t be doing

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very much. So I’d like to come.” Bob said to him, “Well, don’t you want to think it over?” And he said, “No, I don’t need to think it over. Count me in.” Then he said, “Well, I’m glad to hear you say that because I’m going to need an excellent staff, and I’m going to have to rely heavily on you.” And he did rely heavily on him.

GRELE: Rely heavily on him in terms of finding people?

SEIGENTHALER: Finding people to take jobs as assistants in the department.

GRELE: Did most of the people in the Justice Department come through Byron White?

SEIGENTHALER: I would say a large number of key people came.

GRELE: Katzenbach [Nicholas deB. Katzenbach]?

SEIGENTHALER: Katzenbach came from White. Burke Marshall came through White.

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Louie Oberdorfer [Louis F. Oberdorfer] came through White. Bill Orrick [William H. Orrick] came through White. Lee Loevinger came through Sarge Shriver. I think Ramsey Clark was recommended by Shriver. I'm sure that originally Lyndon Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] must have supported him, but he never made an overt effort for Ramsey Clark. Bob was impressed with Ramsey Clark, a young guy, thirty-two or thirty-three years old, who was an excellent, able lawyer who had helped the President, and so he wanted him. Also, Sal Andretta [Salvador A. Andretta] was kept as Administrative Assistant Attorney General at Byron's suggestion and request. Ed Guthman [Edwin O. Guthman], the Press Secretary, came in because Bob had known him as a Pulitzer Prize winning reporter during the days of the McClellan Committee. But almost all

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of the key spots in the staff were filled as a result of a talent hunt Whizzer conducted. You hear a lot about the Harvard clique in Kennedy's Administration. Most of the people who came to the Justice Department had gone to law school at Yale, and I had the feeling that Whizzer recruited them largely through Yale, or through his associations with them at Yale. There may be somebody I'm forgetting, but generally that was it.

I remember the day Burke Marshall came in. Byron came in with him. I was in the office briefly during the period. Burke Marshall was terribly nervous. I thought he was nervous. He kept getting up and walking around. I didn't get into conversation with him, and I didn't know what he was being considered

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for. After it was over, I went in to see Bob, and I said, "That's the fellow he wants to be head of the civil rights division." I was a very strong, active pusher for Harris Wofford if he wanted it. Bob, in deciding on Burke Marshall, I think made the right decision. To begin with, I don't think we would ever have gotten Harris Wofford through the Judiciary Committee of the Senate. It was very difficult to get Burke Marshall through.

GRELE: Why?

SEIGENTHALER: They just were suspect. They knew there must have been something in his background that they couldn't find out about; but he'd never given to the NAACP and.... You just get that lineup of Eastland [James O. Eastland] and Olin

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Johnston and John McClellan. It was a pretty tough panel. Now there were supporters on that. You had people like Kefauver [Estes Kefauver] and Ken Keating [Kenneth B. Keating] and Phil Hart [Philip A. Hart] who were very helpful. But we had to delay it about three or four times before we finally got him through, and they gave him a pretty rough time. They wanted to know what organizations he did contribute to. He almost floored them and said, "Well, I did contribute to the Democratic party in Maryland last year." I think actually Burke's demeanor may have misled them into thinking what many of us feared from the outset, needlessly; that he'd be weak and ineffective. Of course, he was a man of steel. He had more guts and more ingenuity than any man

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I met in the Kennedy Administration – and extremely good judgment.

GRELE: Was there any holdup over anybody else's appointment to the Justice Department?

SEIGENTHALER: I don't remember that there was.

GRELE: On your wall you have a pen and ink sketch of the front door of the Justice Department, and it's inscribed by Robert Kennedy, "We happy few."

SEIGENTHALER: "We few, we happy few,  
We band of brothers." That's from *Henry V*.

GRELE: Was this the feeling in the Justice Department among these people?

SEIGENTHALER: Yes, I think it was. He enunciated it the Christmas after the President was killed. He sent some of those out with a different inscription on each one. But it was the feeling, I thought, and not just in the Justice Department. It was the feeling, really, throughout the

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Administration among those who really were a part, felt a part. I mean, you talk about the mafia, and I never was a part of the mafia because I was not that potent or powerful influence on the Administration. But I felt a very close relationship with everybody who was working in the Administration, with people like Kenny O'Donnell, Ralph Dungan and Larry O'Brien, and Dick Donahue [Richard K. Donahue]. I remember it was a little strange and difficult for me in the beginning of the campaign. I don't want to go back now and start rambling. But it was because I was a fellow who'd come up here from the South. They didn't know or trust me. Some of them wanted to have reservations about Bob and his ability. But somehow we got along well.

I never will forget one time we were having lunch – Louis Martin

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and Donahue and Dick McGuire [Richard V. McGuire] and a couple of others; Hooker [Hooker, John Jay], I guess – in a place called Caruso's. It was just there on Connecticut Avenue, around the corner from where the National Committee was. It was right after we had made the error on the Belafonte [Harold George Belafonte] film, and it was not a laughing matter: I'll tell you that. Dick Donahue said, "We're going to win this campaign." I said, "Well, I'm glad to hear you say that, but I'd like to know why." He said, "We have a candidate. I'll tell you this candidate is like no other candidate that's ever existed in American politics. Nobody who has ever come across the horizon of American politics has been as good a candidate as this one. I'm telling you, when the chips are down, you have to say the American people are going to choose

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on the basis of which candidate is best. I'm confident that this candidate is going to win." It's a funny thing: I never doubted it after that. I never doubted we were going to win it. I never really thought about it again after that. And I think everybody who worked for him – some people he really never even knew worked for him, who were just maybe a name – felt that association whether they were close to him or not, and they felt as if they were indeed among that "band of happy brothers."

GRELE: Back to the Justice Department. With men of such obvious abilities, was there ever a decline in the spirit of teamwork in the Justice Department?

SEIGENTHALER: No. Oh, the other fellow was Jack Miller [Herbert John Miller, Jr.], who headed the criminal division, who was a staff member

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He was recommended largely by Walter Sheridan, who had known him during the Hoffa [James Hoffa] investigation.

But Bob immediately set up staff luncheons once a week, and he also set up a practice of requiring every assistant to have on his desk what that assistant rated the ten top cases then pending in his department. Then he would ask for a week by week follow up on progress on those cases. Those staff luncheons were interesting and, for me, entertaining. The conversation was challenging to everybody who sat around the table. You had lawyers there who overlapped, many of them, each the authority of the other. It was a good group. A subject would come or a problem would arise in the area of civil rights, and everybody would discuss it all around the table; a problem would come up in the

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area of antitrust, and everybody would discuss it; a problem would come up in the area of tax, and everybody would discuss it; a problem would come up in the area of criminal, and everybody would discuss it. I felt that there was at that table a deep understanding of the power of the Justice Department, and a recognition that each department had to impose self-restraint in its work. I think it did impose that self-restraint, and while each department was run by that assistant, those discussions in those staff meetings, I always felt, were very helpful in providing guidelines on action.

One interesting thing was that Bob made the decisions come up through the department, through the divisions, through the deputies, to him. He questioned decisions that had been reached by the assistants and

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by the deputies in these staff meetings, but I don't believe I ever saw him override one. There may have been one or two, nothing that comes to mind, but you would expect one or two. But never did I see him override one solely on the basis of arbitrary gut reaction or a preconceived feeling about how a case should be handled. He'd raise a question about why you don't proceed in this area of antitrust. If it had come up from the division and the recommendations were solid and it was based on a conference and every avenue had been exhausted, then that was pretty much the way it was.

GRELE: Eventually, I was wondering if we could go through, division by division, for some of the cases and the strategy that you remember in each of these divisions. First,

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I'd like to talk about appointments through the Justice Department since they obviously came first.

SEIGENTHALER: Yes.

GRELE: Were you at all involved in judicial appointments in the Justice Department?

SEIGENTHALER: Yes, some.

GRELE: So you recall any of the major cases or decisions?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, of course, I remember Frank Morrissey [Francis X. Morrissey].

GRELE: What was the feeling in the Justice Department about the Morrissey appointment?

SEIGENTHALER: A number of people in the department were opposed to Frank Morrissey; a number of the members of the staff.

GRELE: On what grounds?

SEIGENTHALER: I think Whizzer primarily was opposed to him. They just didn't think he was qualified or competent. Whizzer White

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worked exceptionally close with a lawyer from Philadelphia who was then head of the judiciary committee for the American Bar Association and relied heavily on their judgment, and they were strongly opposed to Morrissey. I think Bob was loyal to Frank Morrissey. But he was more loyal to his brother and I think in his own mind – and I could be wrong about this – he sort of reached an intellectual detente in which he just put off this question.

GRELE: Did the Ambassador [Joseph P. Kennedy] ever contact him about Judge Morrissey?

SEIGENTHALER: If he did, I don't know about it. But there was no question he knew that his father wanted Judge Morrissey to be a federal judge.

GRELE: I've been told that there was stiff opposition among the Irish Mafia in the

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White House to this appointment.

SEIGENTHALER: McGuire was bitterly opposed to it, but I don't think he had any influence. Perhaps with Kenny O'Donnell he had some influence, but I don't think that's what stopped it. I have the feeling that the President and Bob between them stopped it although I could be completely wrong about that.

GRELE: Do you remember the conflict with Senator Kerr [Robert S. Kerr] over Judge Bohanon [Luther L. Bohanon]?

SEIGENTHALER: I remember it very well. Why do you bring that up.

GRELE: Because I was just told about it the other day.

SEIGENTHALER: Who by?

GRELE: How was that handled in the Justice Department?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, I know who told you about it.

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Geoghegan [William A. Geoghegan] told you about it. Geoghegan and I went down to make the investigation of Judge Bohanon. I don't know if he told you all about that.

GRELE: What were your reasons for opposing this nomination?

SEIGENTHALER: I didn't oppose him. I thought he was a political animal, but most of the judges that I saw were political animals. I think he had some problems early in his career, but his law partner, who had also had those problems, was on the bench. Basic opposition to him came, I thought, from Howard Edmondson [J. Howard Edmondson] who was the Governor and who was Kennedy's supporter. Unfortunately, the President was in a position that he couldn't do anything about Howard Edmondson. This was Kerr's business. That's the mechanics of the way the judiciary in this country is appointed and has been appointed.

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This was Kerr's prerogative to nominate that senator or recommend him to the President, and he recommended Bohanon. I turned Bohanon inside out. I felt that there were some things about him that, perhaps, I wouldn't want in a father-in-law. But the opposition to him, by and large, came from a group that had an ax to grind. With Howard, I thought it was strictly a political mind. The details of the opposition don't come to me right now.

I remember Kerr went to the President about it and Kerr, in effect, had said, "Look, these fellows in the Bar don't support me anyway. The reasons they're against this fellow is not because they're against a lawyer who's bad news, but primarily because they're against me politically." He said he would not accept

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any biased report from the members of a Bar. He found out that the Bar report, I think, had come from interviews conducted by a Bar committee, and one of these fellows was opposed to Bohanon. It seems to me Bohanon and Murrah [Alfred P. Murrah] had been law partners as young men. Murrah had been put on the bench, and now Kerr wanted to put Bohanon on the bench. But I remember I came back, and I had some reservations about Bohanon as a fellow I might want to live with. I wouldn't want to go around the world on a tandem bike with him, but I couldn't see any valid reason for withholding his judgeship from him.

GRELE: What was the Attorney General's position?

SEIGENTHALER: I think he was listening to Whizzer, who was listening to the Bar Association, and it was one of those matters that came up in

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that way. Once Kerr took it to the President, and the President told Bob he wanted a personal appraisal of it, I think Bob sent Geoghegan and me to Oklahoma on the theory that if the guy was a crook, we'd find out about it and let him know.

I must say the FBI couldn't find out anything. As much as anything else he wanted, I think, our personal appraisal of the man, of Bohanon. I think Geoghegan and I both went out there with an open mind. I did, I know. I liked and admired Howard Edmondson, but I didn't like his position. With Howard Edmondson it was strictly political: "Kerr is against me. I want this job, and the President ought to give me this job. I've taken a beating out here for the President, and this guy is bad news. There are enough people who'll say he's bad news." Some of

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the people who told us things about him were one of the lawyers who really had a song and dance about him.... I think the most extended tirade came from a lawyer and his son, primarily from the father but from both of them, really. I thought they were jealous as much as anything else of Bohanon's success. This lawyer had been in school with Bohanon and finished way ahead of him. I didn't think much of his discussion. Most of it had been disproved by people who made an investigation of it.

So when I came back, I said, "I don't think it would be a mistake to name this guy. I think you should name him and live with it. The Bar Association won't like it. I don't think he's a crook, and I don't think he's dishonest. I think he's obviously a successful lawyer. If I

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were you, I'd take him." I had the feeling that Geoghegan felt the same way although it's possible Geoghegan didn't feel the same way.

GRELE: Did you ever confer with Senator Kerr about the appointment?

SEIGENTHALER: No. Kerr talked to Bob about it. I ran into Kerr when he was coming out of Bob's office. I started to walk past him, and Bob said, "Senator, this is John Seigenthaler." And Kerr put his arm around me and said, "I think the state of Oklahoma owes you a debt, son." [Laughter] I said, "Well, I don't know what that's about, Senator, but thank you very much" and I walked on by.

GRELE: Did the Attorney General tell you the details of their conversation?

SEIGENTHALER: No, he didn't. I think it was over and settled then. I mean, again, he didn't

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look back.

Another appointment that's very similar to this is Sarah Hughes. Have you heard about the Sarah Hughes appointment?

GRELE: No.

SEIGENTHALER: I think Mr. Sam [Samuel T. Rayburn] wanted Sarah Hughes.

GRELE: In Texas?

SEIGENTHALER: And I think she was a little bit too old. Some of this you should research because it's a good story, and Bob remembers it much better than I. But the Vice President came in with Mr. Sam, or maybe he just called on the phone when Mr. Sam came over. At any rate, the Vice President joined with Mr. Sam in asking for Sarah Hughes. Bob said, "We've got this strict rule. I've refused Senator McClellan; I've refused this senator; I've

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refused that senator. We've just got a strict rule. We can't name a federal judge who's a year off." At some later date the President and the Vice President were talking, and the Vice President was bitterly complaining that the President's brother wouldn't grant his request on Sarah Hughes. The President talked to the Attorney General about it and said to the Attorney General, "Look, you've never done anything that he's asked – he's never asked for you to do anything, really, and he is the Vice President of the United States. He's never asked for a favor, and he's on record for Sarah Hughes. I think in this one case you could make an exception." So Bob made an exception, and the Vice President came back and raised hell about it. He said,

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"They told me you were a man of your word, and you told me you wouldn't take her because she was too old." [Laughter] I didn't hear that conversation, but I heard about it. I think it might be something somebody would forget. But it's interesting that she ultimately was the woman who swore in the Vice President in Dallas that day.

GRELE: I have been told that at one time appointments were being held up in Texas pending some kind of a resolution of the internal political situation in Texas. Were you at all aware of this?

SEIGENTHALER: No. I think Whizzer probably handled most of those. Yes, there was a problem. Well, the difficulty was Yarborough [Ralph W. Yarborough]

and Yorborough's prerogatives. I mean, it was that

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simple. The mechanics of it I don't know, but everybody was aware that this was a problem. Everybody also was aware that Lyndon Johnson, when he became Vice President, was still from Texas and wanted to keep his hand in on politics in Texas. Now what was held up, I don't know. Most of those things were handled with dispatch – the appointments, the U.S. Attorneys, for example, and others. Some resolution was reached on most of that.

GRELE: The way I've heard the story is that the Minimum Wage Bill was being held up pending the outcome of....

SEIGENTHALER: The situation out there?

GRELE: Yes. Do you recall any of that?

SEIGENTHALER: No.

GRELE: Moving on now, do you recall...

SEIGENTHALER: I just didn't handle any of that

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legislative matter. I wouldn't know about it.

GRELE: Do you recall the discussions over Irving Ben-Cooper in New York?

SEIGENTHALER: Yes.

GRELE: Who was his pusher? Or who was his supporter?

SEIGENTHALER: Gosh, I can't remember. I remember that case so well, but I don't remember who his pusher was. Do you remember? Who was it?

GRELE: Congressman Celler [Emanuel Celler].

SEIGENTHALER: Yes. Manny Celler wanted him. That's right, he did. Manny Celler wanted everything, I thought. I didn't see much of him, but when I saw him, he wanted the Assistant Attorney General in charge of Antitrust. That was the one he wanted handed over on a platter.

GRELE: For whom?

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SEIGENTHALER: I don't remember the fellow's name, but it was one of the men who worked for him as counsel for his committee in the House. That's the one that stands out in my mind. He came over one day with Kefauver, and that's the first time he ever broached it. He had gotten Kefauver to say that Kefauver would support his man for Antitrust if Celler would support a friend of Kefauver's named Burkhalter [William M. Burkhalter] for another job – tax or lands or something. Bob listened very patiently to both of them and promptly forgot it and went on about the business of naming those people. But I do remember Celler and Irving Ben-Cooper, and he was difficult as hell about it.

GRELE: Do you recall the discussion over a possible appointment of Congressman Oren Harris as a judge?

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SEIGENTHALER: Yes.

GRELE: Why wasn't this done?

SEIGENTHALER: Because he wanted to be named in Arkansas, I believe. McClellan had somebody else he wanted. I don't remember who he was, but he was bad news. I can't remember his name. I remember I handled some of that. But he was bad news. Do you remember his name – the man he wanted? I don't think Oren Harris' name ever went very far. McClellan wanted this fellow. Bob didn't think he was qualified, didn't think he should have it, and he held it up for an awful long time.

GRELE: You don't recall any discussions of why or why not?

SEIGENTHALER: No. In that connection, I might say – I mentioned Howard Haggerud a while back. Howard Haggerud was the protégé of John

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McClellan. He had been John McClellan's contribution to that southern operation. Howard Haggerud wanted an appointment with the Defense Department. He was an able fellow, and McClellan wanted him to have that job. Bob Kennedy worked his tail off to try to get that for him, and did get it for him and got it for him because McClellan wanted him. It was my job to try to arranged it, and when I was unable to help him, Bob ultimately helped him.

GRELE: Why were you unable to help him?

SEIGENTHALER: There was some sort of a log jam. Somebody else wanted another man

for the job. I just don't remember the details of it except I do remember Howard wanted the job and he ultimately got it. It was not a big job – a ranking job. It seemed to me it was a GS 18.

GRELE: Do you ever recall that this played any

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role in the conflict between Senator McClellan and his committee and members of the Defense Department?

SEIGENTHALER: No, I don't think it did. I don't think it did because it was worked out; it was worked out before there was any problem. Do you mean TFX and all that?

GRELE: Yes.

SEIGENTHALER: No, this was worked out very early in the.... It seems to me it was either in the Army or the Air Force. I can't remember which department it was.

GRELE: Do you recall the discussion of the nomination of Judge Rabinowitz [David Rabinowitz] in Wisconsin?

SEIGENTHALER: Yes.

GRELE: What was the opposition to Judge Rabinowitz?

SEIGENTHALER: Again, I think it was the Bar. There may have been some other opposition. Do you

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know?

GRELE: I've been told that there were claims that he had a left background.

SEIGENTHALER: Oh, yes. That's right. That was very strong.

GRELE: Something happened in Memphis. Do you have any knowledge of that?

SEIGENTHALER: No. No, but he did. Bob was very friendly with Dave Rabinowitz and was one of his big boosters and wanted him to have that judgeship. He

didn't think there was anything wrong with him. Rabinowitz had helped when help was needed.

GRELE: Which faction was he identified with in Wisconsin?

SEIGENTHALER: I don't remember.

GRELE: I think that encompasses all of the disputed northern judges, and we can move on to southern judges. Do you

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have any comments on the southern appointments in general?

SEIGENTHALER: No.

GRELE: Why was Judge Allgood [Clarence W. Allgood] appointed?

SEIGENTHALER: I don't remember that case.

GRELE: In Alabama.

SEIGENTHALER: Let me just think for a minute. I don't remember.

GRELE: Do you recall any of the discussion about Judge Cox [J. Harold Cox]?

SEIGENTHALER: Yes. I remember some of the discussion. I sat in on some of the discussion. I mean Eastland just wanted him and said, "I'm going to have him." And he was chairman of the Judiciary Committee, and he got him. Bob didn't want him. Bob talked to him, and Cox said he was going to live by the law of the land. That's what he would require of each of these

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southern judges. They would come in, and he would say, "You're a man of your word. Do you believe in the law of the land?" "Yes, I do." "Will you live by the law of the land?" "Yes, I will."

GRELE: Was it left that vague – the law of the land?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, no, he was pretty strong, pretty firm, pretty clear with them. You know, "I'm being asked to do this. I want to know if you think everybody's entitled to equal justice; whether you'll treat the cause of a Negro who has a right to go to school the same as the school board who does not." My memory of it is, and I can be wrong about this because, again, I didn't sit in on those

conversations, but they were rather lengthy. I mean, I was in the next office. They were rather

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lengthy, and they were very serious. He told the senators that he would require this assurance from them before they had any judge down there. Eastland would say, "This is an awful good fellow." Do you know if there's any conversation with Hooker on Eastland?

GRELE: No.

SEIGENTHALER: There's just a trace of this. You might try to get into it when you see him. I would suggest to you that you get into this with him on the question of, "Do you know anything about the appointment of judges in the South?" He'll immediately take it up and get into two appointments in Tennessee that he was interested in.

GRELE: Did you have any interest in the appointments in Tennessee?

SEIGENTHALER: Kefauver made a couple of extremely good

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appointments: a judge in Memphis named Bailey Brown, and a judge in east Tennessee named Frank Wilson. Two appointments, one here name Judge Gray [Frank Gray], and another of a lawyer here named Charles Neese, who is now a judge in east Tennessee, were questioned by the Bar Association. I knew Frank Gray, and I thought he was a very able fellow. He was a country lawyer and therefore, members of the National Bar.... He was down in Franklin, which is about eighteen miles to the south. The lawyers here who were contacted by the Bar Association just gave him a very, very low rating. I knew him, and I pushed pretty hard for him. He enlisted Hooker's support, and Hooker

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helped, came up and talked to Bob for him, about both Neese and Gray. Kefauver himself just said, "Well, these are the two men I want. The Bar down there hates me. Nobody in the Tennessee Bar Association ever supported Estes Kefauver. They all think I'm a Communist. If I have to depend on the Tennessee Bar Association, I'll never be able to recommend a judge to the President." Both of these fellows had handled Estes' campaign for the United States Senate, and one of them had been his national campaign manager for president in 1952 – Neese. Kefauver was a pretty persistent fellow, and he just stayed in there, and the got his way.

GRELE: Did the Attorney General ever comment to you on the subsequent

behavior of judges like Judge Cox, Judge

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Mize [Sidney C. Mize] or Judge Allgood in civil rights cases after they had made this pledge to obey the law of the land?

SEIGENTHALER: Yes.

GRELE: What were his comments?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, he didn't like it.

GRELE: That tame?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, that's not very tame. I would say he was disappointed. I would say he was disappointed.

GRELE: How much influence did civil rights groups have when it came to judges? Were they at all consulted?

SEIGENTHALER: I think from time to time various leaders in the field of civil rights would contact Bob about various pending appointments. But insofar as having a civil rights committee to screen or clear them, I don't think so. Burke Marshall had reservations about a number

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of them, and he made it known that he had reservations about them. But again, I think he recognized the box that we were put in when these men would come in and say, "I'll believe in the law of the land. I'll obey it. I'll abide by the decision of the Supreme Court. I'm going to be a good judge. All I want to do is crown my career with stars from the Supreme Court." It just made it difficult to oppose them on that basis. I think we expected some difficulty. I think Burke Marshall was convinced that with diligence these matters could be overturned in a relatively short period. And rather than worry about whether a judge was going to be good or bad, he concentrated his efforts on building up the staff of the civil right division

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as best he could to get more out of them, and they did get more out of them.

GRELE: Was it expected that the appointment of Thurgood Marshall would engender a great deal of hostility on the Hill?

SEIGENTHALER: Yes, it was. I talked to Thurgood Marshall the night before he was

named. Thurgood Marshall said he had told Louis Martin that he couldn't accept a District Court appointment, primarily because he didn't think he could get it, and he was merely saving face. When the opportunity came to give it to him, nobody thought that Bob would make the effort, but, of course, he did. I talked to Thurgood Marshall the night before it was done to make sure that he really was interested. I think he had some reservations about whether the Attorney General would go

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all the way. Louis Martin had asked me to call him and talk to him and see. Louis said, "This fellow wants it, but he doesn't think he's going to get it. He doesn't want to be embarrassed about it." I think that was a pretty good analysis. So I called and talked to him. I became convinced he did want it and told Bob he wanted it. I think Bob talked to him.

GRELE: Did the Attorney General ever confer with the President on this appointment?

SEIGENTHALER: Oh, I'm sure he did. I'm sure he did. He worked very closely with the President on so many things that nobody ever knew about. I mean, he didn't make any arbitrary decisions on controversial matters without at least saying, "Look, Johnny, this is coming up, and you're going to get your head knocked off. Get ready." I always

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felt that it was pretty much the relationship that the President outlined that first morning in his breakfast room: "I'm going to have to take the rap for some of these things. I want to take the rap from a man I know I can trust, whose judgment I trust, and whose loyalty to me I trust completely."

GRELE: There was some discussion of an appointment of a Negro judge in Minnesota. Do you recall that incident?

SEIGENTHALER: No. Is this the....

GRELE: Hubert Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey]?

SEIGENTHALER: The United States District Attorney appointment?

GRELE: US District Attorney, excuse me.

SEIGENTHALER: Hubert Humphrey wanted Miles Lord, and Miles Lord had been a highly controversial political figure, and the Bar Association...

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GRELE: Controversial in what sense?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, he literally had been in every political controversy since Hubert Humphrey had been in politics. But he had been loyal to Hubert Humphrey. He was constantly popping off matters that involved politics. He was a political animal, a political creature. Hubert Humphrey wanted him to be United States District Attorney.

At that time we were looking around the country for qualified Negro lawyers who could serve as District Attorneys. We found Cecil Poole in California. Louis Martin pretty much came up with another fellow named Merle Macreeedy in Ohio. I think that's his name. And there was a third one in this district in Minnesota. This fellow had worked with Louis Martin during the campaign. I

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had met him. Louis had called me and said, "What are you going to do with that district out there?" I said, "Miles Lord is up." He said, "Well, is he going to get it?" I said, "There's a problem about it." He said, "Well, fit this fellow in." And he gave me this fellow's name, but I don't remember it. I can get it. But he was a distinguished lawyer and a distinguished looking gentleman, graying at the sideburns, a face like a portrait, and a man of some background; and he was a successful man. I remember when Louis mentioned it to me I was surprised that the fellow would be interested because I think he could probably make more money.

At any rate, we held up on Miles Lord for a good while, and ultimately we went over to Hubert

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Humphrey's office to talk to Hubert Humphrey about it. Going over we said, you know, "Why will he be arbitrary about this? This guy's making more money in what he's doing – the private practice of law – and why should he want to be United States District Attorney?" We turned it over in our minds upside down. Bob had this fellow's name. We went in and sat down together with Hubert Humphrey. We outline all the problems Miles Lord, and there was a pretty good case against appointing him. He literally had been in every political dogfight in Minnesota. It seemed almost impossible that he could make the statements that he had made in some of these cases. He attacked the members of the court in public – just sort of intemperate

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remarks that you would not expect from a fellow you're going to appoint to a high government position. Old Hubert hung in there for him like a champion. The same story: "He's my man. He's for me. When I needed help, I got it." And then he said, "Look, I'm not going to be foolish about this. It's not just that Miles Lord is for me. There's nobody else out

there who is for me.” I said, “Senator, I think you’re wrong about that. I think there are some lawyers out there, at least one.” He said, “Who?” Bob hit him with this name. And then he said, “Oh, my God, we’re not ready for that in Minnesota.”

GRELE: What did he mean by that?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, that’s what he said: “We’re not ready for that” – this was a Negro lawyer.

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I must say for Bob Kennedy, he never changed expression. He didn’t even pause or take a breath. I felt like I was going to throw up. Bob said immediately, “Look, Senator, if you’re vouching for Miles Lord, if you’re giving me your word that he’ll be a man of integrity, do justice to this job, I’m going to appoint him solely on the basis of your recommendation and your say-so.” And Hubert Humphrey said, “You can count on him. I vouch for him. I take full responsibility for Miles Lord.” And we shook hands all around and walked out, walked down the hall to the elevator. Bob said, “Shh, would you believe it?” And that’s really all he ever said about it. Miles Lord turned out to be a damn good District Attorney. It was an excellent appointment.

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He was a vigorous, industrious prosecutor and a man of complete integrity. He had only one problem with adjustment after that. In the next couple of days his name was sent up. He said to somebody that he had an understanding with the Justice Department that he was going to be able to continue the cases he had pending in private practice. Someone up in Minnesota who was against him called me on the telephone and said he had said this on television. I got the tape in, and we played it. Bob turned it over to Whizzer and called him and told him to straighten the guy out, that he wasn’t going to do that. And he did. And I think that straightened him out completely. From that point on, I think he was a terribly good prosecutor and District Attorney.

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GRELE: Were you or the Attorney General at all involved in the proposed appointment of William Gaud as US District Attorney in New York?

SEIGENTHALER: Yes.

GRELE: What were the events leading up to that decision, and why wasn’t it made?

SEIGENTHALER: I can’t remember who opposed him, but somebody up there just solidly, strongly opposed him. Maybe that was Sullivan. I don’t know.

Do you remember who it was?

GRELE: Buckley.

SEIGENTHALER: Charlie Buckley [Charles A. Buckley]. Bob wanted him; thought he would be able to get it through Charlie Buckley. Bill Gaud came down. We talked to him. Bob talked to him twice – really wanted him. But he simply was not able to get him approved.

GRELE: For what reason? Do you recall?

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SEIGENTHALER: Buckley just didn't want him; had the blocks in. I don't know whether he had them in the Senate or where, but Charlie Buckley got his way. He didn't get Gaud. I can't remember who he wanted. It's a funny thing how many of those district attorneys we thought were bums turned out to be damn fine men. There was another one in New Orleans. What was his name?

GRELE: LeCour [Louis LeCour].

SEIGENTHALER: Yes. I thought this was a terrible, just terrible – I couldn't believe it – it was awful! That's the only one I ever raised any hell about. I said this would be a disgrace. But he did a hell of a job. I think he did a great job.

GRELE: Did you ever hear of Senator Ellender's [Allen J. Ellender] reaction to the Justice Department opposition to his appointment?

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SEIGENTHALER: No.

GRELE: Do you recall the case of Elliot Richardson in Massachusetts?

SEIGENTHALER: Yes.

GRELE: The *Readers Digest* in 1961 carried an article claiming that Richardson was not reappointed because he was investigating frauds in highway construction programs in Massachusetts. Was there any...

SEIGENTHALER: That's not so. Nothing whatever to that.

GRELE: What was the problem with Elliot Richardson?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, I just think they wanted somebody else. And actually, I think Elliot Richardson was ready to come out of there. I think Elliot Richardson was ready to move on. He was a terribly ambitious fellow. There was some claim

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that he was trampling on people's rights to make a name for himself. But I think Bob laughed those off too. My memory of it is he talked to Elliot Richardson about this job, and I think Ben Smith [Benjamin A. Smith, II] felt he was entitled to have somebody else in there, and they got him in there. My memory on all these things is so vague. Really, I was on the periphery of so much of this, and while I might have had a conversation and been involved in it, just to have it come up – but I remember every one of these cases so well.

GRELE: Do you recall offhand any other problems with appointments that we haven't mentioned?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, I remember there was a small problem with Merle Macree in Ohio,

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but Ray Miller came along. He didn't want to name a Negro at first, but he did. There were some other problems. Bob would have liked to name Bill Brady [William Brady] US District Attorney in Philadelphia, but he'd run against Billy Green [William Joseph Green, Jr.], or something. Billy Green wanted somebody else so that didn't get anywhere. By and large, I thought the appointments were outstanding. There's one other appointment that came later. Bob wanted to name Judge Miller here in Tennessee to the Court of Appeals, and Albert Gore went over his head to the President and recommended a judge here named Harry Phillips. Phillips got it.

GRELE: Why, just political reasons?

SEIGENTHALER: From Gore's point, it was political.

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Phillips had been offered a district judgeship, but he couldn't send people to the penitentiary. His conscience, religious conviction, wouldn't let him send people to the penitentiary. Once he'd ruled himself out, I think Bob moved on to somebody else up to the time this other appointment came on. And the fellow decided he wouldn't mind upholding a conviction, that he could personally bring himself to do it.

I think there was more concern on Bob's part over these judges in the South than anywhere else. It was so frustrating to deal with them. I remember he once said the great

advantage that Eisenhower had was that he didn't have to worry about recommendations from his senators in many cases. Judge Tuttle [Elbert Parr Tuttle], for example, was an Eisenhower appointee.

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I believe Judge Johnson [Frank M. Johnson, Jr.] in Alabama was an Eisenhower appointee. Some of the people in the South we named were really good men, but you never were sure. You always had a fear that one of these men might be misrepresenting his intentions when he came to talk to you. Are there any others you know of that were controversial?

GRELE: I can't recall.

SEIGENTHALER: I remember Bill Gaud. After he went back, Bob talked to him about coming in the AID program, and he did come.

GRELE: Was the Justice Department at all involved in now Senator Tydings [Joseph D. Tydings]; but then US District Attorney Tydings', prosecutions in Maryland?

SEIGENTHALER: Yes. Joe Tydings was a problem too. There was a small problem getting Joe

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Tydings named. One of the Senators – I can't remember who it was, but it wouldn't have been.... Well, whoever it was – had some mild reservations about Joe Tydings. He was more a Kennedy man than he was his, but it was not serious.

Speaking of appointments, there was a fellow named Joe Curnane [Joseph Curnane] who worked Maryland as a coordinator. He was a Massachusetts undertaker, and he did a terrific job for us in Maryland. Gosh, he was fine. He's a typical undertaker. I always thought about Joe Curnane during the campaign as if he was a comic book character. He understood the game of politics, and he was a pragmatist. He played the game the way the people who were in it understood, and he was a nice sort of counterbalance to Joe Tydings

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who was also spending some time in Florida. Joe was a complete idealist and a hard worker. But I remember after the campaign was over, and we were in the Justice Department – we went over there a few weeks early to set up before we moved in – Joe Curnane came in. I don't remember who was head of the Veterans Administration under Eisenhower. It seems to me Joe Curnane was from Lowell – the Lowell undertaker. I could be wrong about that. Curnane came in – and the then Administrator of the Veterans Administration had come from the same town. And I remember Curnane coming in and saying that he had picked out the job

of Veterans Administrator for himself; that this was what he wanted. He said, "Now the reason I think I'm qualified – you

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may not think I'm qualified – but the reason I think I'm qualified is this." He said, "This fellow comes from my hometown and he and I were in grade school together. Now, he wasn't no smarter than me, and I wasn't no smarter than him. And that way I got it figured, that's a Lowell job." [Laughter]

[END SESSION III, TAPE IV, SIDE I]

[BEGIN SESSION III, TAPE IV, SIDE II]

GRELE: Unless you have any other recollections on appointments, we'll move on now.

SEIGENTHALER: No, I don't have.

GRELE: Do you recall any of the discussions surrounding any of the tax cases in these years?

SEIGENTHALER: No, not offhand. What do you have in mind?

GRELE: Well, I was wondering if the Attorney General and Lou Oberdorfer and you were

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ever involved in any discussions about various tax cases.

SEIGENTHALER: Yes, some cases.

GRELE: Which ones?

SEIGENTHALER: One that comes to mind was the Tennessee case, primarily, but there were other cases that came to mind.

GRELE: What was the Tennessee case?

SEIGENTHALER: The Tennessee case involved a fellow named – in Knoxville – he's a grocery store operator up there. His name is Cass Walker. This is a fellow who has a homespun radio show every morning, and I told Oberdorfer I thought it would be a waste of money to come down here and try him. And they came down and tried him, and it was a waste of money. He'd go on television every morning

and talk about what this federal government is trying to do to me and they just.... It was a waste of time. There may have been some other cases, but there's nothing that comes to mind.

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GRELE: Do you recall any of the discussions about the prosecution of the Mayor of Gary, Indiana?

SEIGENTHALER: Yes, George Chacharis? Yes. Ray J. Madden came in – Ray Madden was a congressman – with Chacharis, and I went into Bob's office with them. As I remember it, there were just the four of us. Madden, I think, outlined the fact that Chacharis was – I believe he said – a Greek immigrant who had come up the hard way; who had been elected mayor; who, when Kennedy needed help in Indiana, was the driving force for Kennedy; who was a man who raised political money for Kennedy, and that he had been investigated six or eight years by the Eisenhower Administration. At any rate, he made a plea for Chacharis and said that he was not being investigated, he was being persecuted; that the people who had initiated the investigation were the people

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who despised Kennedy, and they were the people who would benefit if Chacharis should have troubles. And Chacharis began to talk and broke down and cried, wept. Chacharis cried, literally cried, and it was embarrassing to Bob and to me. He made it clear that he didn't have any idea of prosecuting him if he was innocent, but that he'd make an effort to find out what it was all about; that he would give Chacharis an opportunity to talk to the head of the criminal division, or anybody else, and explain to him what it was all about. Chacharis' contention was that these were campaign funds that had been raised and that they had been spent in campaigns, Kennedy's included, and that he hadn't made a dime off them and that any honest, objective investigation would show this. I remember at some point after that having a conversation with Miller in

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the criminal division and asking him to take a look at it, and he said, "I don't have to take a look at it. I can tell you what it is. They're dummy corporations set up with members of his family involving substantial sums of money. They were not political contributions. It looks like they were kickbacks." I told Bob that and subsequently he talked to Miller. My memory is that he arranged for Chacharis to talk to Miller and Oberdorfer, one or both. And subsequently Chacharis was indicted and convicted and sent to prison.

A similar situation involved Keogh [J. Vincent Keogh] in New York. I remember I was at the White House one day in Kenny O'Donnell's office. The President asked me if Bobby was going to indict Vincent Keogh, and I said, "I honestly don't know, but I know that there are some problems." And the President said, "My God, I hope that he doesn't.

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Gene Keogh [Eugene J. Keogh] was my friend, and if there's any way I can honestly help him, I'd want to help him." And I said, "I know Bob feels the same way." We talked about something else for a minute, and as I was walking out the door, he laughed and said, "I hope you all know what you're doing over there." Gene Keogh's brother's indictment was a great problem. Bob talked to the criminal division about it during the course of the investigation. He talked to Geoghegan and Bill Hundley [William G. Hundley] and Miller. I think Hundley handled most of the investigation. He made them prove to him beyond any doubt that they could make a case against Keogh. That was the only time during the time he was there that I thought Whizzer demonstrated any lack of faith in Bob. One night the Justice Department had a party at the White House, and Whizzer and the people in the

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criminal division, before going into the party for the Justice Department employees, stopped Bob on the steps and raised the question of Keogh. And Bob said to them, "Look, I want to see the full evidence. If we have a case, we're going to proceed. I think you people are worrying about something you shouldn't be worrying about. If the evidence is there, as difficult as it would be for the President of the United States to hurt his friend, and as difficult as it would be for me, we'll proceed." The evidence was there and they proceeded.

Whenever I hear all this criticism about Bob Kennedy being a political animal and completely controlled by politics, and that he'll let politics get in the way of his integrity, I think about those two cases. Those were difficult decisions. The night before they indicted Gene Keogh's brother,

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Bob called me at home and said, "I don't want to rub salt in the wounds of Gene Keogh, but I told him I'd let him know how this was going to come out. You'd better call him and tell him we're going to indict his brother." And so I called Keogh, and he broke down and said, "Oh, my God," and there was a long pause. And after he got through I said, "Congressman, the Attorney General asked me to call you because he said he would let you know. Now, he would like to talk to you about this if you'd like to talk to him, but he does not want to impose himself upon you at this time. He told you that he'd let you know, and that's why I'm calling. He still has great affection for you and would like to talk to you about it, but only if you want to talk to him about it. He doesn't want to make a bad situation worse. He said if you

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would like to talk to him, he'll call you." He said, "Well, let me call him." I said, "No, Congressman. He wants to call you." He said, "Oh, John, let's don't bicker about this little thing. Let me call him." And he did call, and I think they talked about it. I never asked Bob

what they said. Bob had very warm feelings for Gene Keogh, but he had a strong feeling, too, that Vincent Keogh shouldn't have been on the bench, he should've been in jail, and so he prosecuted him.

GRELE: Back to the Chacharis case for a moment. When the investigation was begun in the Justice Department, was it then known that he was under consideration as Ambassador to Greece?

SEIGENTHALER: I think it was known by Bob, but I don't think he ever let it be known to anybody else in the Department. I could be wrong about that. I think

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it was known by Bob. Certainly nobody in the criminal division ever guessed or ever had any idea, which again, I think, says something for Bob Kennedy's integrity.

GRELE: Do you recall any other tax cases?

SEIGENTHALER: No. I remember a lot of conversation about our first Ambassador to Ireland in the Kennedy Administration. What was his name? I can't remember.

There's one little interesting thing. When Bob walked into the Justice Department, he had a present from Bill Rogers on his desk with a note. It was a bottle of aspirin and a new fountain pen set. The effect of the note was, "The judicial appointments are going to cause you a lot of trouble. I'm leaving you two things you'll need: a fountain pen to sign the appointments and an aspirin for the headaches it will give you."

GRELE: What was the general consensus of opinion

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as to how Lou Oberdorfer handled the tax division?

SEIGENTHALER: He was outstanding.

GRELE: Were there, to your knowledge, any revision of techniques or alterations of organization?

SEIGENTHALER: In almost every division, procedures were reviewed and new procedures were put into effect. Ramsey Clark, for example, in the lands division, I thought completely rejuvenated the work of that division. Oberdorfer's staff meetings were something to attend. I sat in on one or two of them briefly, and he really dragged out of that division everything it had in it. There was nothing about his division Louie Oberdorfer didn't know. That's my opinion. He had his finger on

every case, not only in his division but on many cases working in the IRS [Internal Revenue Service] and some that had been turned over to the

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Criminal Division for prosecution. He was a good man.

Miller, of course, reorganized completely the organized crime section and set up a separate operation, really. If there was any disappointment in the staff, and there was one, it was with Loevinger.

GRELE: Let's move on to antitrust.

SEIGENTHALER: All right.

GRELE: In the liberal press, there has been a great deal of criticism of the antitrust activities in the Kennedy Administration. The claim is that there wasn't enough of it. What is your impression of this criticism?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, I think it may be valid, but not because there was not enough push. The problem was that Loevinger was not an activist. The problem was that Loevinger was not a good administrator. He had a difficult time demanding of his staff adequate preparation

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of cases. Of course, he had been on the bench in Minnesota, and he had a great ability to write. He had a very facile mind, an alert mind, but he was not an administrator, and he never really got that division going; it never moved under Loevinger. As I say, I think it was solely a mechanical problem.

GRELE: Maybe this would be a good place to discuss your trip to Minnesota to see Hubert Humphrey about...

SEIGENTHALER: Oh, it was not in Minnesota. It was out to Hubert's house in Maryland. When Loevinger was up for appointment, Bob said, "Sarge has recommended this guy. How about going out and seeing him," and I did it. I remember I went out with Bill Rivkin [William R. Rivkin], who was later to be an ambassador for Kennedy and who had worked as a coordinator in Minnesota. I remember on Humphrey's back porch there was a Wurlitzer record player. He was watching television, had the television on, and

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the record player was on when we came – this big jukebox type thing. He had it out on a back porch which had been filled in, sort of a den like, and that's where we sat and talked

about Loevinger. I said to him, "You must have had a dance out here. Did your kids have a dance?" He said, "No, I just like to listen to the music sometimes." I don't know whether he was pulling my leg or not, but anyway, it was there. At any rate, we got into the discussion about Loevinger, and he said he'd be for Loevinger. Loevinger was then on the Supreme Court of Minnesota. He said he'd be for Loevinger. Loevinger had been in the past reasonably helpful to him. He said, "I'd like to make it absolutely clear that Loevinger is not my appointment. This is not Hubert Humphrey's patronage. I'm not getting that appointment." I said, "Look, Senator, that's fine. If you have somebody else you'd like to recommend for this job, I'd be glad to..." "No, no. I wouldn't do

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anything to hurt Lee. But you came to me about Lee. I didn't come to you." I said, "That's right, Senator. This won't count on your scorecard." He was very, very friendly and helpful about Loevinger and gave us some good background. He said, "Again, he's had some domestic problems, but nothing that would bar him from getting in there. He's a brilliant man, and I think he'll do a good job."

GRELE:                    Were there cases that could have been prosecuted?

SEIGENTHALER:       Well, I don't really know. Some were prosecuted and some pretty good cases were made. I always had the feeling Loevinger was waiting to be told. And if he was told, he immediately rebelled. We had the responsibility for the GE [General Electric] sentences. I keep saying "we;" I didn't have a damn thing to do with it. You know, all I

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can do is identify it. It's like a reporter who works on his first newspaper – it's always, "When we did this." But Loevinger really had a tough time making up his mind what he wanted to do in that; whether he wanted to go soft, whether he wanted to go hard; whether he wanted to accept the recommendation. It seems to me Bicks [Robert A. Bicks] was in for a long time after that. Bicks helped make the decision. When Loevinger came on, the decision had really been formulated, but he was never sure it was right. He never really came to grips with it. I may be mistaken about the GE case. Bicks may have been there throughout that. Bob may have kept him for that sentencing. But that was a big problem. I'll say this: as far as I know, there was absolutely no pressure from the top down in any of these areas. Now there were times when cases were sent back to make sure they were strong, as in the Keogh case.... I saw the file on the Keogh case, and I swore they'd

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never get a conviction on the basis of the evidence that I saw in the first place. However, I didn't see the file that was finally completed – the file he finally approved. I just didn't have any way to. I sort of lost interest in it.

Another thing regarding Loevinger. Loevinger was not really happy about leaving the Justice Department. I talked to Bill Henry after he was appointed chairman of the FCC, and Bill Henry called to congratulate him. Loevinger, according to Henry, said, "I'm not accepting it." I don't think Lee Loevinger wanted to leave the Justice Department. I was back here, of course, at that time. But for what it's worth, I didn't think that.

GRELE: What we can do is insert these where they belong in the transcript.

SEIGENTHALER: Yes.

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GRELE: The discussion of the tax division and the antitrust division brings to my mind a question of jurisdiction. Was there ever a conflict of jurisdiction between these two divisions and other agencies like the Internal Revenue Service or the FTC [Federal Trade Commission] who also dealt with these problems?

SEIGENTHALER: I don't remember any open conflict.

GRELE: You mentioned the GE case. Did the Attorney General ever express to you either his opinions or his brother's opinions, the President's opinions, over the behavior of the top executives of GE in this situation?

SEIGENTHALER: Yes, he was disgusted with them.

GRELE: Why?

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SEIGENTHALER: Well, he just thought it was disgraceful conduct. He thought they deserved to go to

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the penitentiary. I don't think when the time came to make a decision on whether we'd stand behind the previous position of the department, he didn't flinch for a minute. He thought this was a corrupt practice – this price fixing. As I say, there was some soul searching about it – about whether this is the position or some other position. Whizzer advised him on it. I don't remember what he advised him. But I do know that insofar as their conduct was concerned, he didn't like it.

GRELE: Were you still in the Justice Department at the time of the steel crisis?

SEIGENTHALER: Do you remember the month of the steel crisis?

GRELE: April, '62.

SEIGENTHALER: No, I was back here one month. April, '62, would have been – yes. The first week in May of '62 – I think I told you last night about this visit we paid to the President?

GRELE: Yes. We'll get that on the tape.

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SEIGENTHALER: All right. Do you want to get it on now? That relates to the steel crisis, just vaguely. Not directly, but it does. Well, shortly after I came back here, the newspaper celebrated its hundred and fiftieth anniversary, and I had an understanding with Kenny O'Donnell after the publication that we'd have an opportunity to present the President with a copy. There's a picture of the presentation right there. The publisher and the advertising director and Ross Bass and I went up and called on the President and gave him a copy of the paper. We walked in, and I was very formal about the introductions to my friends from the newspaper who came up with me, and I introduced each one very formally after which the President said, "Well, John, I guess it got too tough for you up here in Washington." It broke the ice, and it was a very friendly discussion after that, except for one thing. Well, he talked about the press in the country; about the

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responsibility of the press in the country, and where the press had been fair and friendly to him and where it had not. And he began to talk about the good papers in the country, the papers he thought met their responsibilities. He said, "Outside Washington, as I travel around the country, I'm appalled at the lack of knowledge and the lack of understanding of some responsible newspapers. We find it's very difficult to get a fair editorial discussion of an issue in many papers. Your paper, the Atlanta paper, sometimes the paper in Miami, the *Louisville Courier-Journal*, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, sometimes the *Kansas City Star*; outside of Washington and New York, that's about it." And then he said "Over on the West Coast, I think the *Los Angeles Times* is making an effort, but still it's very difficult for us." So during the discussion, I said to him, "What did you think about the

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manner in which the *New York Times* played your comment about, "They're all sons of bitches?" And he said, "That's not what I said. That was taken out of context. Sure, something like that was said but that was taken out of context. I told Dryfoos [Orvil E. Dryfoos] it was taken out of context." So I had with me a copy of the *Banner* of the day after the *Times* story appeared. The *Banner*, which is our competitor here in Nashville, had taken that quote from the *Times* story – which was really buried quite far down in the *Times* story –

the *Banner* had encircled it with a black pencil, blown it up, and put it on page one at the top of the page with a headline, “Businessmen sons of bitches – Kennedy” or words to that effect. And after he was a little bit heated about the subject of the *Times*, I said, “Well, let me show you the way our opposition played it.” And he looked at it and he exploded. He said, “Let me get Pierre.” He

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yelled, “Pierre!” Then he went to the door and he said, “Kenny, will you get Pierre in here?” And Pierre came and he threw it on his desk and said, “This is disgraceful. Salinger, will you look at this? Now I want you to call the *New York Times* and tell them just how this story is being played around the country. I want you to send...” He said, “Can I have this?” I said, “Yes, sure you can.” “I want you to send this up there and let them know just how this comment is being played around the country.” And then he laughed and said, “I can’t believe it.” He just wouldn’t believe that a newspaper would do that. He thought that was complete irresponsibility.

With rather a smile, he mentioned the Washington Press Corps, and he used a term which I’ve never really heard used before and only heard used once afterward, and that was in his television appearance with three news-

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men, three television newsmen – I guess, Bill Lawrence and Vanocur [Sander Vanocur] and somebody else. He talked about the abrasive quality of the press; how it made governments better. He said, “I don’t mind the abrasive quality of the press. I think it helps to have members of the Washington Press Corps looking at you. But,” he said, “I wish sometimes they were better informed.”

Then he spoke, too, of the French press. He said, “Because of the French Press, not in France there is almost a total consensus based on de Gaulle’s [Charles de Gaulle] statements, de Gaulle’s unfriendliness to the United States. I think if you asked a Frenchman what he thought of the United States right now, he would think we were all bastards.” He compared that with the response in the United States to the President’s positions on anything. Many papers, simply because they oppose the President, would oppose him on

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matters which were more visceral than cerebral – more with gut, Republican, anti-administration response than anything else.

GRELE: Let’s save a section of the interview for a discussion of the press.

SEIGENTHALER: All right. I don’t know if there is anything else about it, but I think there is that.

GRELE: Moving on now, do you have anything else to say about the antitrust

division? Were you at all involved in any other...

SEIGENTHALER: Except there was general dissatisfaction from the beginning. Bob criticized it himself for that.

GRELE: Clark Mollenhoff, in his book on the Teamsters [*Tentacles of Power*] makes the claim that a special Teamsters division was set up in the Justice Department under Attorney General Kennedy. Is there any truth to this claim?

SEIGENTHALER: Not a special division. [Pause] It's hard to say yes or no. There was in the Justice Department a group of men who were assigned

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to the Hoffa case, as there were a group of men assigned to the Chacharis case and to the Keogh case. These men concentrated primarily on Hoffa.

GRELE: This was the group headed by Sheridan [Walter Sheridan]?

SEIGENTHALER: By Sheridan. Sheridan came in to the Justice Department because Kennedy brought him in, and he was assigned to that job because he knew the subject matter. And so it's true that those people did exist. Walter Sheridan, Charley Shaffer [Charles Shaffer], Bill French [William French]. Bill French is a good example. Bill French was in the Department of Justice, and it seems to me he was in the lands division. Shortly after Bob went there, he had these meetings with the various sections. Bill French was getting ready to leave the Justice Department because he was fed up. He just didn't find any challenge there. He was a bright young lawyer. At that time, there

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was a need to put somebody on in the development in the Hoffa case to make an investigation of a particular subject matter, and so French went in there and did that and stayed with the department another year because it was challenging.

Bob knew Jimmy Hoffa was a crook. You know, he had made a personal investigation of him. And he wanted to do something about it.

GRELE: Did the activities of the Justice Department, *vis a vis* Jimmy Hoffa, grow naturally out of the earlier rackets committee experience?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, there were an awful lot of leads that had never been followed up or checked out. I think that's right, yes.

GRELE: Were they checked out in '61, '62?

SEIGENTHALER: Some had been and some had not been. The first big consideration was the.... These cases were not dormant. They were being developed when we got there. The Florida

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Land Case, for example, had been under investigation for, it seems to me, well over a year. The Sun Valley Case: there was a lawyer in the department named – again, I can't remember his name, but I will. He had a team of three or four lawyers. One of them was a woman, and they had been working on this case, the Sun Valley Case, and they were completely dedicated to it. As it developed, Bob decided not to prosecute that case.

GRELE: Why?

SEIGENTHALER: He just thought that the evidence was better in other cases. At some point he had to make some determination on which cases to proceed on and which ones not to proceed on. He decided not to proceed on Sun Valley. He could've gotten an indictment on Sun Valley without much doubt; it was a *prima facie* case, I think. But he decided to take another case.

GRELE: Did he ever comment to you on the appeals that

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arose out of some of these cases and the overturning of convictions on some of them?

SEIGENTHALER: No, which ones?

GRELE: Well, wasn't the Florida Land Case Hoffa's immediate involvement in this appeal, and finally nothing happened?

SEIGENTHALER: Yes, I don't think so. I may be wrong about it, but I don't think so. I don't think.... Well, we got an indictment in the Florida Land Case, but I don't think that it was the fact that that case was overturned. It seems to me it was some jury technicality. But that didn't hurt the case; it didn't damage the case. The case could still have been prosecuted. I just think the thought he had stronger actions elsewhere. If it were simply a matter of harassing Jimmy Hoffa, he could have brought that case in Florida again. You know, if it were just, "We're going to hit him with everything we've got, everywhere we've got, as frequently as we can." Three or

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four or five or six other indictments that could have been brought against Jimmy Hoffa, in my opinion, some place. Almost everywhere he screwed around with the pension and welfare funds probably made a case. But there were so many things. I mean, it was not just Jimmy Hoffa. It was Benjamin Dranow and many other people who were associated with Hoffa in one capacity or another. Incidentally, Miles Lord prosecuted Benjamin Dranow and got a conviction from him.

GRELE: Were you at all involved in the final charge against Hoffa down in Tennessee, tampering with the jury?

SEIGENTHALER: Yes. Involved?

GRELE: Well, you weren't involved, but you still had contacts with the Attorney General despite the fact that you were no longer with the Justice Department.

SEIGENTHALER: Yes, sure. I did. I talked with him about it.

GRELE: What was his general strategy?

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SEIGENTHALER: Well, I don't know about his strategy. He just put the investigators on the case, and they went into it. I told them if there was any way I could help.... The time that I talked to him about it he was very much concerned about newspaper publicity damaging Hoffa's rights, of all things. He asked me to be very careful about how we proceeded. Hoffa later filed a motion and called me as a witness to try to prove that there was a conspiracy to damage his reputation in the community and an effort to get a change of venue, and of course, he couldn't. They never asked me the question, and I didn't volunteer it, but if they had asked me the question, I would have told them clearly that the Attorney General had called me and asked me not to take a chance on printing something about Jimmy Hoffa that would result in a continuance or change of venue or interfere in some other way with due process. I told

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them that we were always careful to protect the rights of defendants, and we treated Jimmy Hoffa like we treated everybody else.

GRELE: Did the decision to prosecute in Tennessee have anything to do with the earlier investigations of the Teamsters in Tennessee?

SEIGENTHALER: Yes, the original trial in Tennessee came here, and it was a case that involved the Test Fleet Company, which had been a Hoffa interest.

Hoffa had setup Test Fleet in Memphis. Test Fleet was a company that hauled automobiles. It was set up under his wife's maiden name, Josephine Poszywak and it had been set up for him by management after a strike had been settled which was favorable to management. The business was incorporated in Memphis, and it was registered with the Secretary of State over here in Nashville, at the Secretary of the State's office. The prosecution went in there, and it wound up

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in a hung jury. And that was the case that Hoffa tampered with the jury on. He was indicted for tampering with the jury here. In the middle of the period between indictment and prosecution, his lawyer was disbarred for trying to fix the jury that was then about to be impaneled, and there was a great deal of publicity about that. As a result of that, there was a change of venue granted, and the case went from there to Chattanooga and was tried over there.

GRELE: How carefully did the Justice Department investigate the background of the Teamster who turned evidence in this case?

SEIGENTHALER: I don't know. I didn't know anything about him. I was in a unique role. I was friendly with all those people. Still I was in the newspaper business, and I had to be loyal to what I was doing here. And I didn't want to be disloyal to them. I didn't want

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to hurt them in any way. When he wanted a lawyer to prosecute Jimmy Hoffa, when he was looking for an attorney with a local background, I recommended several lawyers here to him. He ultimately made the choice of John Hooker, Sr., but I had recommended maybe four outstanding lawyers, all of whom I thought would do a good job. I was very careful about not getting my loyalties confused, and I didn't ask a great deal of questions about how the details of the investigation were. From time to time, I'd bump into Walter Sheridan or he'd call me and ask me if I had a ticket to a ballgame, or I'd ask him if he wanted to go to dinner somewhere. But beyond that, he realized that I was in the newspaper business, and he couldn't afford to have stories leak in the newspaper. And I realized that he was on highly sensitive investigation and that my own position was problematical to him because I had been with the Justice

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Department.

GRELE: When you were with the Justice Department, do you recall any discussions with the Attorney General over Hoffa, other than what you've already said; that he thought he was a crook?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, I had worked with him on *The Enemy Within*, on the preparation of *The Enemy Within*, and we had talked Jimmy Hoffa just about out during that period. I don't remember any discussions with him in particular although I'm sure that there were times when we did talk about him.

GRELE: Moving on now, perhaps we can get into civil rights. How did you become involved in the issues of civil rights?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, one thing, I was interested in it and concerned about it. And I had been for a long time, and Bob knew this. I think he wanted to give me an opportunity to work in this area that I liked.

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GRELE: What was your first involvement?

SEIGENTHALER: I don't remember. How did you know I was involved in it at all?

GRELE: You were beaten up in Montgomery.

SEIGENTHALER: Oh, yes. Well, did you know anything besides that?

GRELE: No.

SEIGENTHALER: Yes. Well, that's what it was – just my own personal interest. I went out of my way to see what could be done. I thought this was a vital area for the Administration. I don't know. Maybe I came from the South, and maybe I was more aware of the problem than some other people. I don't know. I doubt that. But whatever it was, I was interested in it. Maybe I pushed my way into it. Frequently Bob invited me into it, and I took every opportunity to be helpful. I remember – do you want to talk about civil rights now?

GRELE: Yes.

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SEIGENTHALER: I remember the first time – one of the first times – Martin Luther King [Martin Luther King, Jr.] came in to talk to Bob about the problem of civil rights, and Bob said to him, "I recognize that you've got this broad area; all these barriers to break down. I would think you could do much better if you'd begin now with a voter registration campaign and try within a period of two years to register voters on a massive scale throughout the South." He pointed out to him areas of the South where Negroes were permitted to register but where registration was extremely low, largely because of apathy on the part of Negro leadership. He said, "Put on drives in these areas.

First of all, I think some funds can be found from some of the foundations who are interested in this sort of thing.” And he was not offering him any Kennedy money. He never did, as far as

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I know.

Bob made the point to Dr. King that an effort should be made in voter registration on a massive scale; that if the Negro vote became a fact in southern politics, it would change some minds.

GRELE: Was this the general attitude in the Justice Department?

SEIGENTHALER: No, I wouldn't say so. No, it was just his personal opinion and his personal advice to Dr. King: If you want to change the minds of men, one way to change it is through the leadership, and the way to change the leadership's mind in the political field is with votes.

GRELE: What did Dr. King say to this?

SEIGENTHALER: He thought it was a good idea. A year later they hadn't moved a peg on it. We cited places: Baton Rouge, Louisiana, for example, where there was an opportunity for voter registration – New Orleans, Memphis, Nashville, other areas. Memphis, I guess, by that time

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had done a good job. Birmingham admitted some.

GRELE: Did he talk to other civil rights leaders on the same mission?

SEIGENTHALER: Yes, yes.

GRELE: Who?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, most of them. Most of them he had contact with. Wilkins [Roy Wilkins] was one. Louis Martin was another.

GRELE: Was there any discussion at that time about legislation, or the need for legislation, or the non-need for legislation?

SEIGENTHALER: No, there was not any conversation at that time. Dr. King didn't mention that in that first discussion. Bob suggested to him that he had

these dedicated, bright young people who could help the Southern Negro find two things: one, courage to participate in political affairs; and two, find a way to educate themselves so that they'd be able to register and understand the issues – give

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them some leadership in there on who the people were who were most likely to be helpful to them, who the candidates were. I remember Bob used this term; he said, "You know, if you had a massive Negro vote in Mississippi, congressmen like John Bell Williams wouldn't be so fresh." And King agreed in general with the theory. But as I say, a year later Bob talked to him and they hadn't done a bloody thing in that area. They'd moved in a number of other areas, but they had hardly turned a peg in voter registration. By that I don't mean that they had not tried in some areas, and that we had not supported in some areas to get Negroes registered to vote. But they always seemed to try in an area where they could make a graphic demonstration as opposed to moving in areas where they literally could get Negroes registered. They left that to other groups such, I guess, as local political

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organizations.

GRELE: What was the first incident in which you were involved directly?

SEIGENTHALER: I don't know. I guess it was Montgomery.

GRELE: How did you become involved in Montgomery?

SEIGENTHALER: My memory about this is sketchy. It's time, not the blow on the head, that did it. But the letter that came from CORE about the freedom rides through the South, that was only a form letter that had been sent to many people, I presume. As I remember it, it was a mimeographed letter. I later looked back in the files and tried to locate it and couldn't. I had the feeling that it was sent on to the civil rights division in that mass of mail. I think it was from Farmer [James Farmer], but it could've been from somebody else. At any rate, there was little press given to those riots before they started. They went through the South. I remember before they left, a reporter for

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Johnson Publications whose name is Simeon Booker came in to see Bob. I was out when he came in. He talked to Bob and told him he was going on this trip. Really, I don't think there was much attention given to the riots in the Department of Justice because.... There just was not much attention given to them, by the press or any other group. There was not much concern about something happening to them. Then they got to Alabama – I guess there were a couple of incidents along the way. They got to Alabama, and it hit. The bus was stopped, wrecked, and burned. This, I guess, was in Birmingham, or maybe north of Birmingham.

GRELE: Anniston.

SEIGENTHALER: Yes, it was at Anniston. That's right. At any rate, they wound up in Birmingham. They were bound for New Orleans. I remember – I guess that was on a Sunday, weekend – Monday, Simeon Booker called in, and I talked

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with him. Ultimately, Bob talked with him, and he said, "It's pretty bad down here, and we don't think we're going to get out. Bull Connor [Eugene Connor] and his people are pretty tough, and I don't think there's any bus that's going to take us out of here." They started talking about getting on an airplane. We began to work – Burke Marshall and I and Bob – through political and business contacts to try to get Greyhound to take them through, to try to get the police to give them protection. Bob tried to reach John Patterson and couldn't. He was supposed to be out on a boat somewhere in the Gulf. Burke tried to work through the Greyhound people. Greyhound had just had a bus destroyed and was real concerned about it. Finally, late in the afternoon these people said they were going to get on an airplane and fly out of there that night. And sometime in the afternoon in a conversation

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I had with Bob, he suggested that I go down and get with them. He thought that would give them some umbrella of protection and a sense of security, and very well might mean that, with a federal representative with them, they would not be harassed by local authorities. So I got on an airplane and flew down.

GRELE: Prior to this time, when the Attorney General was attempting to contact the people at the Greyhound bus terminal, did he in fact over the phone give any reason for people to construe his words to mean that he had sent the freedom riders down there?

SEIGENTHALER: No, there's a question of semantics there, and I'd have to look at the file. But what he said was subsequently misunderstood – completely misunderstood – I think perhaps honestly by that fellow who later testified about it. But if you look at what he said in the context in which it was said, that never occurred. It

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just never occurred. Do you remember the exact quote? I don't either. He, I'm sure, does and I probably should and will research it because it's important. But the *U.S. News and World Report* made it an issue in a piece, and Bob had a conversation....Did David Lawrence tell you about that? Well, he should've if he didn't.

GRELE: No we haven't interviewed David Lawrence of *U.S. News and World Report* yet.

SEIGENTHALER: Oh.

GRELE: Did you go first to Birmingham?

SEIGENTHALER: So I went to Birmingham, flew in there, and when I flew in, they were in the air terminal. And three planes to New Orleans had been cancelled because of bomb threats. Another was due in a half an hour. I walked into the terminal, and they were scared. They were literally shaking. They were a sad befuddled group. Some of them had been badly beaten; their heads were bandaged.

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Simeon Booker and his photographer were there, and they were really upset. Simeon Booker said to me, "I don't believe they'll ever let us get out of Birmingham." They were concerned about people coming in to the terminal on the highways and groups standing around and glaring at them, and they were so easily identifiable because they were sort of cluttered in a little group in one corner of the terminal. I talked with them and told them who I was and why I was there. I went to see the airline official.

GRELE: Did this seem to reassure them?

SEIGENTHALER: They were scared. They were scared. I wouldn't say it reassured them; they were glad to see me. I went to see the official of the airline – I think it was Eastern, but I could be wrong. It could've been Delta. I said, "I'm from the federal

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government. I've flown down here on instructions of the Attorney General. We want to get these people out of here and on their way. It's going to be better for you if you do that." He said, "Well, we've had two bomb threats, and we've cancelled two flights. We have another flight coming up now, and I'm afraid we're going to have another bomb threat." I said to him, "They're not going to blow up any airplane. Couldn't you just ignore it?" He smiled and said, "No, we can't." I said, "Well, you don't want these people here forever. Why don't you get them the hell out of here, and we'll all be better off." He said, "Well, I'm hopeful we'll be able to get them out."

A short time after that the plane arrived – well, it arrived while we were talking. He pointed it out to me, and he said to me, "Let the people sit there. You tell them to sit there until the plane is

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loaded and ready to go. Let them act as if they were not going to get on the plane. When I give you the high sign, we'll go. You get them on quickly; we'll get the plane off the ground as quickly as possible." And they coordinated that through the control tower so that the airplane didn't have to wait. The plane revved at the ramp. We got them out and got them on, and I got on with them, and we were in the air. It was the quickest takeoff of any plane I've ever flown.

Anyway, we flew to New Orleans. And we got off the plane in New Orleans. I never will forget it. We walked through the lobby of the airport and who was out to greet us but Barry Goldwater, in his shirtsleeves. You just wouldn't believe it. Walking along – all of a sudden comes Barry Goldwater with his hand out.

GRELE: I hadn't heard this before.

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SEIGENTHALER: Nobody has. I don't know that anybody had heard it, but there are pictures, I'm sure, that show Barry Goldwater shaking hands with them in Miami. And I identified myself, and he said, "This is horrible. Just horrible. Never should have happened. I'm glad you're with them. If there's anything I can do, I'm going to be down here," and he told me where he was staying. "Please contact me."

So they all were met by people waiting for them. An organization there – I guess it was CORE – met them and took care of them, housed them. I contacted the lady who was in charge there, and she said they'd let me know. So I registered in a hotel, and about three o'clock that morning I got a call from Burke Marshall who said, "Do you know Diane Nash in Nashville, Tennessee?" I said, "No. I know who she is." She was a young girl active in civil

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rights here, and I'd known her during the demonstrations here in 1960, I guess, '59 and '60. And he said, "Well, she's getting ready to lead a group to Birmingham to take up where the other group left off. Could you call her and ask her not to do that?" I said I could. I tried to reach her, and I couldn't reach her. I called a lawyer here named George Barrett who knew her and who had represented some civil rights people in cases from time to time. He gave me the number where I might reach her. I did get her on the phone and she said, "I'm not coming. But there is a group on the way to Birmingham now to take up where the other group left off. I said, "You know, they're going to kill them." She said, "They don't care. They think this is important. If they kill them, we'll just have that many more down there, and sooner or later we'll get somebody through."

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So I said, "I'm going to need to contact you. Will you give me your number?" So I took her number and the number of the people they were contacting down there – Reverend Abernathy [Ralph D. Abernathy] and several other numbers. I had them in a little notebook. I called Bob the next morning and said, "Well, they're on their way, and there's nothing we can do." He said, "You better get back up there."

So I flew up to Birmingham and arrived there after they had arrived. They had driven down in cars. It seems to me I contacted Abernathy or Shuttlesworth [Fred Lee Shuttlesworth], or one of them there, one of the numbers they had given me. They were going to try to get out that night.

GRELE: By bus?

SEIGENTHALER: By bus. They were arrested, however, at the bus station – I think this is accurate – put in jail, held there. In the middle of

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the night Bull Connor took them all out of jail and drove them back to the Tennessee line and put them out on the Tennessee side, told them good-bye and left them there in the middle of the night. They immediately called Diane Nash in Nashville. She sent cars down, and they picked them up – almost beat Bull Connor back to Birmingham – and went down and tried to get on the next bus out to Montgomery.

Then there was a period of a couple of days in which we were trying to get them out. I'm a little hazy on this. John Doar [John M. Doar] was down there working on some other matters. Bob by this time reached Patterson and told me to go to Montgomery and meet with Patterson and talk with him. I think it was at this time the conversations with the bus officials took place. It was concerning this group – getting this second group down. I think that's when that

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conversation occurred and when it was transcribed by this bus official's secretary. At any rate, I did drive down to Montgomery that night from Birmingham in a "U Drive." I'm not sure whether I met John Doar in Montgomery or whether I drove down with him. I rather think I drove down with him. Yes, I did drive down with him and registered in a hotel. The next morning I went to see Patterson. Patterson was in his conference room at the capitol, waiting for me when I went in. It seems to me like this was maybe Friday of the next week, but I can't be sure, of course. I went in to see him and there were maybe twenty members of his staff and cabinet there with him --- all of his advisors. They were seated around this table. The only one I remember was a fellow named Floyd Mann. Active in all of this, in the

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background, was Charley Meriwether [Charles M. Meriwether] who was trying to resolve the matter. He was then in Washington, I guess, with the World Bank. He was President

Kennedy's appointee. His appointment, incidentally, was opposed by civil rights groups. But Charley Meriwether had worked very hard behind the scenes to get Patterson to see the light, just to get these people through, and he hadn't been successful.

So I came down. We shook hands and he asked me to be seated at this long conference table. We went over to sit down, and there were two empty seats at the head of the table and on his right. Floyd Mann was seated on my right, and the others were all around the table. Patterson launched into a diatribe – these are some of the things – really a fist-pounding diatribe in which he said,

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“The people of this country are so goddamned tired of this namby-pamby business in Washington where these Negroes are concerned, and I'm sick of it. I'm sick of these spineless people that I supported not standing up. I'll tell you, I've got a stack of letters over there in my desk, and I am more popular today in the United States – not only with the people of Alabama, but with people all across the country – for the stand I've taken against these people than Jack Kennedy ever will be. And it just makes me sick to see this happen.” He went from that general theme, which went on for maybe five, ten minutes – ten minutes, fifteen minutes, maybe – but he went from that general theme into an attack on Bob. And he said, “By God, I'm telling you if federal marshals come in to Alabama, there'll be

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blood in the streets. You'd better not send federal marshals into Alabama.” There had been some statements in the press.

I had talked with Bob and with Whizzer at length the night before, before going in, and we had outlined pretty well what our position was going to be. The total speech that he made went on for about a half an hour. He attacked everybody and everything from the Supreme Court to me, but was heaviest on Bob Kennedy.

[END SESSION III, TAPE IV, SIDE II.]

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[SESSION III, TAPE V, SIDE I.]

SEIGENTHALER: But the climax of it was the pitch against the US marshals. This was the final thrust. “You do this, there'll be blood in the streets.” And he played this theme several different ways: “There will also be blood in the streets if you dare to integrate the schools,” or if you do this or if you do that. Basically, “If you send marshals in.” There'd been a couple of stories saying it might be necessary to send marshals in.

I said that I appreciated everything he said; although I didn't agree with everything he said, I respected his right to say it; that I too was a southerner; and that as a southerner, I

respected his position because I knew a lot of people felt the same way. Speaking for myself, I didn't agree with him; that my position was,

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personally, that these people had a right to travel the highways; but more importantly the position of the United States government was that these people had a right to travel the highways. That the United States government was going to make sure, if necessary, that people had the right to safe travel and free access on public conveyances and on public highways; and that if he was not capable or willing to provide safety to travelers that we would provide it in any way that we could. That we wanted to give the state of Alabama the full opportunity to meet the responsibility to protect travelers and that we would provide that opportunity if there was any indication on the part of him or on the part of officialdom in Alabama that safety would be provided and security to travelers would be provided. If no, then it very well might be necessary for the Attorney General to send

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in United States marshals and that the United States Attorney General had advised me to tell him that while we hoped he would meet his responsibility, if he was not ready to do this, we would take whatever alternatives were necessary to give these people safe conduct.

He said, and this is almost an exact quote, "The state of Alabama will provide safe travel for all who travel the highways, including visitors, on the highways and elsewhere while they're in this state. You can tell the Attorney General I said that." And I said, "Well, that's a firm commitment from you, then, that these people can expect safe travel; that you'll protect them." He said, "Yes, we have the means and the desire. Now I'm not going to say I'm going to protect a bunch of goddamn foreign troublemakers who come in here to stir up trouble.

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I can't say that. But I am going to say this: that we have the means and the desire to protect on the highways and elsewhere citizens and visitors, and we will provide them safety."

So I called Bob on the telephone in his office. I said, "Well, can I use your phone?" He said yes, so I called Bob and Patterson was standing there across the desk from me, and this group of people were around the table. Oh, before I called him, I said, "Now, how will you do that?" He said, "Well, now I'll tell you, we ain't going to have no escorts. We ain't going to get a police car in back of them, but we'll take care of them." I said, "How will it be done?" He said, "I'll let Floyd Mann take care of it." Floyd Mann said, "I'll make sure that they'll never be out of sight of an Alabama highway patrol." So

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I called Bob on Patterson's phone with Patterson's permission, and I repeated the statement to him. Bob said, "Will he issue a statement to that effect?" I said, "Governor, will you issue

a statement to that effect?" He said, "No, I prefer that you issue any statement you want to, but I ain't going to say nothing. I'm telling you, however, and you can say that I have given you assurance that we will provide safe conduct on the highways and elsewhere for citizens and others." And I said, "Well, that's fine." Bob said to me, "Has he said this in front of other people down there?" I said, "Yes, we're sitting here with about twenty people around the table." He said, "I don't believe we've got a problem." He said, "If he'll do that, I'll believe him. He's making a statement in front of his friends there. Do you believe him?" I said, "Yes, I think it's sound.

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It would be better if he'd make a statement on it." He said, "Well, don't worry about that. We can make a statement, and he won't deny it."

The night before in a conversation we had had, we had discussed the situation with Greyhound, and I had been given the name of the official at Greyhound. I'm not sure if it's the same one Bob had talked with earlier. It could've been. At any rate, Bob said, "I now suggest that you call him and tell him that's what Governor Patterson said and see what he says because he's reluctant to move. He thinks they're going to bomb and burn his bus." So I said to the Governor, "This is what the Attorney General suggests. How do you feel about it?" He said, "Call him, talk to him." So I called him. I got him at his office in Atlanta at the number that I'd been given and I said to him, "I'm sitting here with Governor Patterson. We've talked to the

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Attorney General, and Governor Patterson says he's able to protect all people within his state, citizens and visitors, on the highways and elsewhere, and that this they will do. We thought in light of that you might be interested in making certain that this bus moves from Birmingham down here to Montgomery and then on to New Orleans tomorrow, in view of the Governor's willingness to cooperate." And he said well, he'd want to talk to the Governor about it, and my impression from the Governor's conversation was that he expressed some real concern about the loss of busses at Anniston. Patterson apologized to him for that, assured him that that was an unfortunate incident; that it occurred because they had not had adequate advance notice; and that he felt sure nothing like that would happen in the future. And so I got back on the phone with this man. He

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said, "In the morning I'll have someone on the bus, driving it. We'll get it down. Thank you very much." I left. I thanked the Governor. He gave me his phone number. I wrote that on this notebook. Floyd Mann had a long conversation with me. He gave me his phone number. So John Doar and I went to dinner that night, and I thought I'd done a good day's work – made a substantial contribution.

The next morning Doar and I got up early. We were still in Montgomery. I checked with somebody, looked in the press, and Patterson had issued a statement saying in general

the same thing he had said to us the night before, except he had punctuated it with a few blasts at “trouble-making outsiders.” But the context of the statement was still there: “We’re going to protect the visitors and others on the highways and elsewhere.” And so I didn’t worry about

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that. Just before we left the motel, we found out that the driver at Birmingham had chickened out; that he wouldn’t drive. So I called the man in Atlanta with Greyhound, and he said, “There’ll be a driver on there.”

Doar and I went to breakfast and heard on the radio while we were on the way to breakfast that the bus had left. We had a leisurely breakfast, and Doar had some work at the federal building – the courthouse, really – which adjoined the bus station. I let Doar out at the bus station, and just as I let him out, I noticed a police motorcycle headed in the opposite direction. I didn’t pay any attention to it. I let him out and began to circle the block. The bus was not due for about a half an hour or so.

As I started up the street on the back side of the bus terminal, I looked across and saw that crowds had gathered. And as I drove slowly up, I saw suitcases and bags being hurled into

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the air, and people started shouting. I drove slowly on up, realizing then that the bus had come early and that there was trouble. I looked around for the police officer, but he was gone. I drove on up the street. A Negro boy in a blue suit, chased by about ten white men, came running across the street. A funny thing – the white man who was in the lead chasing him, really sort of holding the other back as he ran, was crippled, dressed in overalls. I thought, “That’s a fellow they’ll never catch.” I circled the block, came down on the other side, and the concrete parking area of the bus terminal looked like an anthill; people crawling, shouting, just a constant movement; people running, pushing, shoving, fighting to get in on these freedom riders who had just gotten off the bus. Bags were still being thrown into the air.

I came on down the front side, really, of the terminal

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and looked over, and I could see in the area where the bus had parked that some people were getting beaten. Just in front of me, maybe twenty yards, a girl was walking around with a circle of people around her taunting her. She was a white girl. There was a woman walking behind her – a little fat woman who looked like Nikita Khrushchev’s wife a little bit. A peasant woman type. She had a pocketbook with a strap, beating this girl over the head about every two or three steps. In front of the girl was a young, skinny kid who looked about fifteen years old, and was facing her and dancing backwards like a boxer and smacking her in the face. There was a second girl on the outer periphery of this circle that I did not notice. But

anyway, as I came along side of her, I saw an opportunity to....The curbing stopped, and there was a driveway up for the busses to come in, I

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guess. I pulled into that, and I blew the horn. I thought that I could pull up close to her and tell her to get in the car and then get away. As I pulled up, however, this woman either hit her with her purse or somebody pushed her hard, and she fell into the front fender of the car. I stopped and got out of the car, ran around the front and took them by surprise. I took her by the arm and said, "Are you hurt?" She was bleeding a little bit from the mouth. She said no. I pulled her around to the door and started to put her into the car. It was that far away. I then noticed that the other girl had gotten into the car on the other side, and I yelled over, "Who are you?" She said, "I'm with her." I said to her, "Get into the car." She was dazed, and she said, "Mister, get away. Leave me alone. You're going to get hurt. You're only going to get killed. This is not your fight." I said to her, "Get into the car," and I began to

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push her. She grabbed a hold of the car door and began to resist. At that time some man in khaki clothes said to me, "Who the hell are you?" I said, "Get back, get back. I'm a federal man." I turned back to her, and got it over the left ear.

I don't remember anything until some time later I came to, and I was sitting in the right hand front seat of the car with a policeman looking in the window. He had my notebook. Of course, the notebook had all sorts of names in it; Diane Nash of Nashville and Reverend Abernathy and Reverend Shuttlesworth and Floyd Mann and Patterson. I was pretty groggy, and I said, "What happened?" He said, "You've been hurt. You better sit still." I said, "You'd better call Mr. Kennedy." He said, "What Mr. Kennedy?" and I said, "Robert Kennedy." He said, "Why? Who are you?" I said, "I work for him. I'm with the

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Department of Justice. So it scared him. He opened the door of the car and said, "Get out." I got out, and as soon as I got on my feet, I passed out again.

I woke up in the hospital some time later again with the doctor who was there, an older fellow named Bartlett, talking to Whizzer on the telephone when I came around. He was saying, "He won't stay. He wants to leave. He wants to go." So then I got on the phone with Whizzer and he said, "Look, stay there. Bob's not here. He'll be back in a little bit, but you're going to have to stay there over night." I said, "This is going to cause an awful mess." He said, "It already has. Don't worry about it. Everything's all right. It's probably the best thing that couldn't have happened." They x-rayed me, and I had a concussion. They gave me a room on the downstairs floor and put guards on the doors and around the

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building. Floyd Mann came in and apologized. They had given them good protection all the way from the city limits of Birmingham to the city limits of Montgomery, but at Montgomery the state police protection had dropped off. Patterson had said the day before that after they got inside the city of Montgomery, it would be up to the local police, but they would notify the local police. We later found out they did this, but the local police just stayed away. I always had the feeling that the officer who was driving away really had checked to make sure that they were going to be met and then got away from there. But I had no way of proving that.

At any rate, Floyd Mann came in and apologized and said he was sorry. Bob called a little bit later and said, "How are you? How do you feel?" I said, "All right. I've got a small headache." We talked back and

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forth. Before we rung off I told him.... I said, "Let me give you some advice." He said, "Yes." I said, "Never run for Governor of Alabama. You couldn't get elected." He called pretty regularly. I told him I regretted it. He said, "There was nothing else you could do. I think you did what was right." I said, "it's going to create an awful stink." He said, "Well, the marshals are on their way." I said, "I regret that. I hate that. It's sort of like an invasion." He said, "Well, sooner or later something had to happen. This is what triggered it. You did the right thing. You did what you had to do. I talked to the President about it. He feels very strongly about it. We're moving in the proper direction." So that was it. A number of other things happened when I was in the hospital, but they're not relevant to this.

GRELE: Did the President call? Did you talk to the

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President at all about this incident?

SEIGENTHALER: No, I didn't. I left the hospital the next day and went back to Washington. He called after I got back to Washington.

GRELE: What did he say to you?

SEIGENTHALER: Pretty much the same thing Bob had said. It was a very brief call that night when I got in. He said, "We're glad you're back safe. You did what you had to do."

GRELE: Did this incident in Montgomery trigger any successive action in the Justice Department, or change anything?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, I think it was the first of a series. It was the first federal intervention on the part of the Kennedy Administration in the southern

states. This set the precedent for everything that came afterwards. The next time, marshals were tried again but of course, the next time marshals didn't work. Jim McShane [James J. P. McShane] will give you that story.

GRELE: What was the next incident in which you were

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involved in civil rights?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, I was not really involved in anymore incidents. After that I traveled with Burke Marshall across the country, primarily to southern cities where an effort was being made to desegregate schools or to arrange for other desegregation – desegregation of busses, and so forth. We'd go in and meet with southern officials. I'd go in, my southern accent dripping sorghum and molasses, and warm them up. Burke would tell them what the law was. We worked, I thought, as a pretty effective team. I thought we got some good results: Memphis, Dallas, New Orleans.

GRELE: What cities were particularly easy and what cities were particularly difficult?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, you know, it was pretty much the same situation in every city. The local officials – I think as a result of Montgomery and as a result of realizing that the President was going to move – were

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extremely concerned that the federal government would come in. Invariably, they would say, "Let us alone. We can handle it. We can take care of it. Don't worry about it. If you want to help us, stay away." Of course, our mere presence there – even bearing the olive branch – was a clear indication that we would come in if we had to.

GRELE: Were you at all involved in Prince Edward County?

SEIGENTHALER: No, I was not. You know, I remember it. I was in on some of the discussions, but it was more as an observer. This was a legal problem, principally, and I was not involved.

GRELE: Do you recall any discussions with Martin Luther King about alleged Communist influence in the civil rights movement?

SEIGENTHALER: Yes, I talked with him myself about it once. I went to a meeting at the Statler Hilton in one of the rooms with a group – I believe

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Harris Wofford was there. They wanted somebody from the Justice Department to come over, and we talked. There was a person in that meeting whose past associations were suspect.

GRELE: Was this Levinson?

SEIGENTHALER: Was it Levinson or O'Dell [Hunter Pitts O'Dell]? It was one or the other. Later that day Martin Luther King came to the Justice Department and had a meeting with Bob and talked with him. They said a number of things. Afterward, I went down with him to get his car. I explained to him, without mentioning any names, that I thought one thing that could damage the influence of his organization was association with Communists; that I was sure that they were going to prey for him and that it would be difficult for him to reject anybody who came with an open heart; but that I hoped for our

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sake, as well as for his own, he would examine the situation carefully and closely; that if there was any way we could help him at any time – of course, we could not make charges against any person, and we could not brand anybody with the label and didn't want to – at the same time, we would be as helpful as we could; and that Burke Marshall was available to him at all times. Burke had already talked to him about that and told him that. Subsequent to that, he had a number of conversations with Burke in many areas.

GRELE: What was his response when you told him this?

SEIGENTHALER: He said that it was a matter of concern and that he was worried about it, but that it was a difficult thing to deal with. He was not in a position, and didn't want to get in a position, of accusing people who came to help him and who were dedicated to the same cause he was dedicated to. I didn't have the

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feeling that he was concerned, primarily because I didn't think he thought they could change his will or the course of action of the Movement.

GRELE: Is there anything on civil rights that we might have missed?

SEIGENTHALER: There probably is, but let me think about it tonight.

GRELE: Were you in Washington when the organized crime section of the Justice Department had its genesis?

SEIGENTHALER: Yes. Sure.

GRELE: What was the thinking behind it?

SEIGENTHALER: Just that organized crime was making great gains, and that something needed to be established and set up to compete with it.

GRELE: The assumption, of course, is that there is organized crime.

SEIGENTHALER: Sure.

GRELE: Did everyone hold to that assumption?

SEIGENTHALER: I think so. I think so. Certainly, Miller

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did. At the staff meetings nobody questioned it.

GRELE: I have been told at one time that the only people in Washington who believed in organized crime were the Treasury Department and Estes Kefauver. Was that the attitude reflected in dealing with the agencies who were in charge of crime.

SEIGENTHALER: The big problem was getting coordination among all branches of government. I'd say there's one other person that believed it: J. Edgar Hoover. Add him to the Treasury and Estes Kefauver. And this was a big effort – getting coordination among the various branches of government – and I don't guess the goal was ever completely achieved, but certainly there was great progress made in many areas. They began to function together at least a little bit. You come up to the time of the assassination of the President, and you find that there's

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still not the sort of coordination you should have between the Secret Service and the FBI, and maybe that you should have between.... But I think that in cooperating in the gathering of files and intelligence and information the cooperation was there. How deep it went within the organizations, I don't know. But at the top level, at least, it was there. There was some access to information on an interdepartmental basis. These files were compiled and were set up. They're still there, I guess.

GRELE: Were you at all involved in the legislation?

SEIGENTHALER: Not in a very direct way. Only as sort of a coordinator. I sat in again on some of the meetings, maybe had an idea or two. I don't remember

anything specifically that I did, but I know I must have done something – or Bob at least thought I did something – because the day the bill was signed, we went over for the

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signing. I really went as an observer more than anything else. The newsmen came in. I stood away behind the newsmen. Everyone in Congress who had led the fight and those in the Department who had worked for it all gathered together behind the President's desk to watch the signing. After the signing, I went out into Kenny O'Donnell's office and was talking to him, and the President came out with one of the pens and gave it to me. I know that Bob sent him out there. He said, "Here, this is for you. You worked hard on this." Now I, personally, aside from some conversations that I had, don't remember anything that I did, but I know that I was in on some conversations, and Bob thought, you know, that this was deserved, and he wanted me to have one. It's a little thing, but again, the gesture shows that Jack Kennedy was a big man, I think. You know, he'd walked

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from his own office, left the people who were there and came out and said, "This is for you."

GRELE: Do you remember any of the conversations that you might have had in particular?

SEIGENTHALER: Just complete blank on it. I don't remember – except in general. Except in general. I do remember that I helped background some of Bob's speeches on the subject; perhaps maybe some of his testimony, put some of that together.

GRELE: This brings up another question. Did you help him on his testimony before – oh, no, you were gone by then – Senator Ervin's [Samuel J. Ervin, Jr.] committee on the civil rights act?

SEIGENTHALER: No, I didn't. And really, the work that I would do was really more of a polishing nature. I mean, the material, if and when I did it. And then only when he was not satisfied with what some other people had

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done. He'd say, "How about taking a crack at this?" And I would. And sometimes it would be what the doctor had ordered, and sometimes it wouldn't be what the doctor had ordered.

GRELE: In general, what were the relations between the Attorney General's office and the FBI?

SEIGENTHALER: Why don't we put that off until tomorrow? That's a good subject and gets into another whole area.

GRELE: Going by divisions, the civil division. What were your opinions of the functioning of the civil division?

SEIGENTHALER: I thought Bill Orrick was an excellent head of the Civil Division. I thought he was taken out of his element when he was put into the State Department. He was too nice a guy, and he was not tough enough. Whizzer thought he was much tougher than he was, and Bob, I think, thought he was tougher than he was. And I think that was a barrel of

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worms over there and he just was not really able to cope with it. When he came back, I think his confidence had been shaken, and I never thought he really functioned as well in the antitrust division. But he was an improvement over Loevinger.

GRELE: The criminal division. Do you recall any specific incidents that revolved around the criminal division?

SEIGENTHALER: Nothing in particular. Nothing in particular, but let me write that down. I'm sure I had some relationships with Miller.

GRELE: You've already stated how effective you thought Ramsey Clark was in the lands division. What did this division do in 1961 to '63 that made its function so unique?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, of course, it's the most important division money-wise. And the problem was they were just buried. You know, nobody ever paid any attention to them or took any interest in them. I think Ramsey made their

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problems come alive for them, and he interested Bob in their problems. Bob was interested in their problems. He was interested in the Indian situation anyway. Ramsey would call him, for example, and say, "Do you think you could come over and visit us over here? I think it would be good." And Bob would go over and go through it, as he had done with all of the divisions. But they were over in the old HOLC Building, part of their operation. He'd have to go way over there and talk with them, but he would go. Really, it was morale more than any other factor, I thought. Bob became interested in it. I think he did a piece for the *New York Times Magazine* on the lands division, or some phase of the lands division. I'm certain he did.

GRELE: Was Archie Cox [Archibald Cox] an effective Solicitor General?

SEIGENTHALER: I thought he was great. I thought he was very helpful. He never forced his way in, he never came in unless he had a problem. Any time his advice was asked, he gave a completely objective, straightforward answer, and usually his answer was based solidly on legal precedents. He did not get into a competitive situation with anybody else in the Justice Department at any time. He recognized his role as Solicitor, and he was happy with his

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role as Solicitor, and he performed.

GRELE: I'm trying to think of what cases he might

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have argued. I don't recall them offhand.

SEIGENTHALER: I don't remember either.

GRELE: Shall we double back now again to the tax division and Grant Stockdale?

SEIGENTHALER: Yes, Grant Stockdale was named Ambassador to Ireland. He'd been very active in the campaign, had been very helpful to President Kennedy, very close to President Kennedy. He had some tax problems which were coming up as he was about to leave the country, and some people were trying to stop his appointment. I think some functionaries in the Department of Justice were trying to stop his departure and creating problems for him. Bob took a look at what they had and they didn't have anything. He told me to tell Grant to go ahead. It got right down to, "Well, I'm leaving tomorrow. Should I go or shouldn't I go?" And he did go. He was a strange guy, a strange guy. A wheeler-

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dealer type fellow, but a good fellow. I remember later I ran into him in Paris. He was just a good egg, a very personable fellow. I don't know anything about his money operations, except I know they didn't have a tax case on him. Obviously, he had financial difficulties, and I think that led to his death.

GRELE: Unless you have something else, that's all the questions that I have on the Justice Department per se – the various divisions, et cetera. The rest of my questions then come under the heading of, more or less, your life in Washington, questions about the Hickory Hill seminars. Do you want to put those off until tomorrow?

SEIGENTHALER: Yes, let's do.

[END SESSION III, TAPE V.]

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