

Edwin O. Guthman Oral History Interview – JFK #1, 2/21/1968
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

Guthman, Editor, Seattle Times (1947-1961); Director of Public Information, Department of Justice (1961-1964); press assistant to Robert F. Kennedy [RFK] (1964-1965) discusses the press coverage during the Kennedy Administration, RFK's relationship with the press, and Guthman's involvement in the investigation of Jimmy Hoffa, among other issues.

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Edwin O. Guthman – JFK#1

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Oral History Interview

With

Edwin O. Guthman

February 21, 1968
Los Angeles, California

By John F. Stewart

For the John F. Kennedy Library

STEWART: Let me ask you first how you initially met Robert Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] or John Kennedy [John F. Kennedy]. It was through, I assume, the labor rackets business.

GUTHMAN: That's right. Another reporter on the Seattle Times and I, Paul Staples, who's a labor reporter, began investigating Dave Beck [David S. Beck] about 1949. And it started simply because he lied to us when we were covering the strike at the Boeing airplane company. We wondered why he would lie. Out of that, we began investigating. We developed some sources in the union. In 1954 I went to a Neiman Fellows reunion at Harvard, and I met Clark Mollenhoff [Clark R. Mollenhoff] of the Des Moines Register. We became friendly, and it developed that he was looking at Jimmy Hoffa. Paul Staples and I had been working on Beck, and we'd written some articles, but we were having a tough time. Mollenhoff and I agreed to exchange information and try to help each other. So we did that.

And in 1956, I got a call from Clark one day, and he said, "They're going to have this committee to investigate labor rackets, and they'd like to start out in Seattle. I'm going to send a fellow out to see you." And I might just say, to go back on it a little bit, the reason why they would have come out to Seattle: We had had some stories, and the Portland Oregonian, Wally Turner [Wallace Turner] and Bill Lambert [William G. Lambert], two reporters there,

had also developed a good deal of information about Teamster rackets that Clark knew about, and thus, Clark had suggested that the committee start the investigation in the Pacific

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Northwest. So Clark said, "I'm sending somebody out to see you, and I want you to help him." And I said, "Who is it?" And he said, "Well, his name is Bob Kennedy." It didn't mean anything to me, and I said, "Who is he?" And he said, "Well, he's Senator Kennedy's brother." And I said, "Well, that's fine Clark, but can you trust him?" And Clark assured me that we could.

Our problem was simply this: We had, developed by that time pretty good sources within the union; we suspected strongly that Beck was stealing from the union; we couldn't get to the records to prove it; we felt we would never be able to prove it unless somebody came along who had power of subpoena and could get to the records. And so we looked with some favor upon the idea, but we were also rather cautious about sticking our necks out and then having them chopped off, or being used, by some group of people in Washington.

So Robert Kennedy came out, and I got him a room in a hotel under an assumed name, met him, and had dinner with him and one of his assistants, Jerome Adlerman [Jerome S. "Jerry" Adlerman]. He told me what he was going to do and outlined the committee's purposes. The judgment that we had to make was whether we, as a newspaper in Seattle, would trust this fellow. And the next morning I told the managing editor of the Seattle Times that we ought to trust him and put him in touch with some of our sources and to help him if we could. But the main thing, we had to trust him. And we did. We were never sorry after that that we did because his word turned out to be absolutely good. We were concerned that the committee would come in, use us, get publicity, and then leave us with Dave Beck. And we didn't like that prospect too well. And if it was going to be done, we wanted the whole thing to come out, and Bob did exactly what he said he would do. I covered the hearings, and we just developed a friendship. And after the election, then he asked me to go to the Justice Department.

STEWART: Did you meet Senator Kennedy in this, President Kennedy?

GUTHMAN: Yes, I met President Kennedy when I went to Washington to cover the rackets committee hearings.

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STEWART: Do you recall your first impressions and any similarities or differences as far as their approach to the rackets hearings?

GUTHMAN: Well, as to my first impressions and so forth, I suppose that I first became aware of President Kennedy at the 1956 Convention when he tried to get the vice presidential nomination, but that was only rather in a dim way.

And then I met him, saw him really close up for the first time covering the hearings, and then had occasion from time to time there to talk with him. But differences as to Robert's approach and the President's approach to the rackets?

STEWART: Yes.

GUTHMAN: Well, I don't know how to answer that exactly. Robert was deeply involved in the actual investigation, and what impressed me about it was the thoroughness with which he did his work. The President was a member of the committee and as such was sort of sitting in judgment on the information that was developed. In the sense that Robert was more intently involved in the detail, the planning, the guidance, the going out and getting the information; what I recall about the President's appearance on the committee was his interest. He was present a good deal of the time. I don't recall him asking a great many questions, but listening and then, of course, the Labor Reform Bill that came out of those hearings and he did a great part of the work on that.

I might just say that we had great reason to be suspicious of what this committee would do—to be wary, I should say wary rather than suspicious. Our background was that of a conservative Republican-oriented newspaper. But we had strongly differed with the McCarthy [Joseph R. McCarthy] tactics nationally, and locally we had done a great deal in trying to defend people whom we felt were unjustly accused by the Washington State legislative Un-American Activities Committee, people in the federal government who had lost their jobs or been suspended because of a communist association fifteen years earlier. So we had been deeply involved and had a very low opinion, I'd say, of legislative and congressional committees as such. I had covered a great deal of that and had written a good many of

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those stories.

So what impressed me about what I was in rackets committee was that they didn't bring people up and just put them through the mill. When they brought somebody up and questioned them, they knew, and they'd taken the trouble to go out and get the facts. And I had never seen it like that before, and so I was properly impressed.

The other thing that impressed me was that, as far as my own town, Seattle, they could have torn Seattle apart with the information that they found about Dave Beck and the power that he held and the people that he had corrupted, and I thought they used good judgment. They didn't just batter the whole place apart, and they didn't sort of revel in the dilemma of people caught in this thing, but they were rather judicious about what they brought out. And they brought out what was not only an amoral climate in the whole city, but it was a corrupt situation. So we as a newspaper always felt some gratitude to the committee for having kept its word and, in a sense, cleaned up a situation, or certainly exposed a situation, which we felt badly needed public attention.

STEWART: Did you have any indication at this time, from either Robert Kennedy or the President, that they were going to make a drive in 1960 for the nomination? Do you recall?

GUTHMAN: No. I recall discussing it with Robert about, you know, whether his brother would run, and he explaining why, if he was ever to run, that he'd have to run in '60. I didn't think there was much doubt in my mind in 1957 that President Kennedy would try to seek the nomination, he would certainly be a contender for it. Now whether he would actively go, I don't recall any kind of conversations like that.

STEWART: I assume you were somewhat familiar with the Washington situation in 1960 as far as the delegation to the Convention was concerned, basically why they voted almost overwhelmingly for Kennedy. Who was primarily responsible for this?

GUTHMAN: Well...

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STEWART: Excuse me. Bear in mind, I'm asking this with little or no knowledge, as you can see, of Washington politics, and I don't...

GUTHMAN: Well, in the first place they didn't vote overwhelmingly for Kennedy.

STEWART: Well, it was fourteen and a half...

GUTHMAN: Right.

STEWART: Yes, it was about...

GUTHMAN: Well, there were twenty-four votes, right?

STEWART: Eleven, twelve, thirteen. Twenty-six.

GUTHMAN: Twenty-six or twenty.... Well, what is it?

STEWART: Fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, twenty-two, twenty-five, twenty-seven.

GUTHMAN: Well, the reason why I say it wasn't overwhelming is this. In the first place Washington politics are individual pretty much. People rise on sort of their own ability or their own personality and what kind of support they can get, and they kind of operate as individuals. There's no great political organization as such to carry a good deal of the spadework. And so it was sort of, you know, an open place. Senator Magnuson [Warren G. Magnuson] was working for Senator Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson],

and Senator Jackson [Henry M. Jackson] was working for Senator Kennedy. [Telephone interruption]

STEWART: You were saying that Magnuson was for Johnson and Jackson was for Kennedy.

GUTHMAN: And then there was a strong Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] feeling in the delegation. And at the state convention at Spokane no bandwagon started for any candidate. There were these different groups vying for position. And it was impossible to really tell how the delegation was going to vote. I kept close track of it, and I'd

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get a call from Robert, and he'd say, "Well, I understand we've got eighteen votes out there." I'd say, "Hell, you've got about four." And it was just that way, it was just up and down. So nobody really knew until they got down to the Convention.

Now the reason I said that Kennedy didn't get an overwhelming vote out of the Washington delegation is simply this: By the time the delegation got to Los Angeles, it seemed clear that Kennedy was going to be nominated, and Scoop Jackson was an important person in the Kennedy operation and he was a leading figure in the state. It would have been nice if the Washington delegates had gone with Jackson and given a heavier vote to Kennedy. But they didn't do that. And I always felt that the majority of the delegates who were tied with Stevenson consciously or unconsciously really took an anti-Catholic position, and that they were Scandinavian Lutheran types who stuck with Stevenson so they wouldn't have to vote for a Catholic. There were a few votes in there for Johnson and for Symington [Stuart Symington, II] that were really linked back to older alliances of the Truman [Harry S. Truman] days for the Magnuson-Johnson tie up. But the essential thing was that particularly the Stevenson people at that point had they been motivated by what would have been good for the state—it's small, not important, but it's the kind of thing that makes people vote, and they didn't do that. And so Kennedy got the majority of the votes, but he didn't get what, at that point, he should have, for by the time Washington voted, it was clear Kennedy was going to be nominated. The politic thing to do would have been to give that delegation to John Kennedy.

STEWART: The Governor wasn't at all enthused with Kennedy.

GUTHMAN: Well, the Governor, Rosellini [Albert D. Rosellini] was concerned only about his own position, and you have to remember that he was the first Catholic governor of the state of Washington. At that particular time the Governor was a Catholic; Lieutenant Governor Cherberg [John A. Cherberg] was a Catholic; the Attorney General, O'Connell [John J. O'Connell], was Catholic; the Speaker of the House, O'Brien [John L. O'Brien], was Catholic. There was almost a total Catholic leadership in the state, and I think, truly, that Governor Rosellini felt that if a

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Catholic headed the ticket, it would hurt him. I think that was what motivated Rosellini. Rosellini never helped Kennedy, he disengaged himself completely during the campaign. Of course, after the election, he wanted to be very buddy-buddy. But I think that was the reason that he stood aloof from the whole thing.

STEWART: Even during the campaign.

GUTHMAN: During the campaign, absolutely. Of course, he was in trouble. He had had scandals in his administration, and I think that had the Republicans put up a more attractive candidate, Rosellini would have lost. However, Rosellini made a very vigorous campaign. The Republican candidate Andrews [Lloyd J. Andrews] was very weak, and so Rosellini got re-elected. But I remember the margin was about seventeen thousand votes, very close. So, he ran his own operation, which, incidentally, was not unusual in the state. But I just say we should have expected some empathy and some support, and it never came.

STEWART: Who was the head of the Kennedy campaign in Washington in the fall?

GUTHMAN: Well, it wasn't much of a campaign. I suppose about the most effective workers were Brock Adams [Brockman Adams], now a congressman from Seattle, and a few young people. It was almost a joke when you'd read in Time Magazine or Newsweek about the well-oiled, hard-driving, efficient Kennedy machine which, if it existed, it didn't exist in the state of Washington. [Telephone interruption]

STEWART: ...well-oiled machine, and it was not operating at all well.

GUTHMAN: Walter Spolar, have you ever interviewed Walter?

STEWART: Yes. I've heard the name.

GUTHMAN: Well, Walter was involved in some of that. And then the other one was—he was Ambassador to Cuba, and he's now in New Jersey.

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STEWART: He was Ambassador to Cuba?

GUTHMAN: To Chile.

STEWART: Oh, Ralph Dungan [Ralph A. Dungan].

GUTHMAN: Ralph Dungan. Ralph was out here (in the West), and he made a number of trips to Washington to try to get a stronger campaign going. But they (the Washington campaigners) didn't have any money and really were very ineffective. My wife [JoAnn Guthman] had accompanied me to Washington once to cover some of the hearings, and she met President Kennedy, and she was quite taken with him, and she said then, in 1957, "Well, if he runs for President, I'm going to work for him." And so she did. And she's pretty effective, she's a pretty good campaign worker. And there were just a few people like her, really, and Brock Adams, and really, almost a handful of people. And sometimes they'd have a load of buttons and stickers and stuff, and they'd have a freight bill of sixty-four dollars to pay, and they didn't have the money. And we'd put up the money, and somebody, somehow Ralph or somebody else, would reimburse us. I mean it was that poor and that badly done. It was incredible. And yet that was the response of the thing. And I always felt, you know, that President Kennedy lost a state like Washington, probably the difference was the religious issue and the poor campaign that he had there.

STEWART: Okay, how did your appointment come about as public information officer at the Department of Justice?

GUTHMAN: I don't know exactly. I don't know in particular. But I was in Senator Jackson's office in Seattle about three or four days after the election, and he got a call from Robert Kennedy and they talked. And then Senator Jackson said, "I've got a friend of yours here. Would you like to talk to him?" And, you know, we just chatted, and he said, "Would you be willing to come back and go to work in the Administration?" And I said, "Well, yes, what are you thinking about?" And he said, "Well, I'll let you know." And that's the last I heard of that. And I didn't hear anything more.

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I was covering the Washington state legislature about the first or second week of January, I guess, and I got a call from him and he said, "Would you be my public information officer in the Department of Justice?" And I said I would, and he said, "Do you want to come back and talk about it?" I think I said, "Well, I'll do it, but I'll come back." So I did, and we talked about it, and I did it. I don't think.... Well, let me put it this way, I'd had a lot of opportunities to work in government at this kind of a job, either in the state government, in the city government, in the federal government, and I never thought about it at all, it never had any attraction to me. But I'd had some chance to think about doing this, and I don't think that I would have gone into the government except under those circumstances, and for the Kennedys. I don't mean that there's anything great about that, but it's just that I think you kind of would look at yourself the rest of your life and say, "Well, what kind of a man were you?" if you hadn't done it. And I'm glad I did.

STEWART: You didn't realize, I assume, then what you were getting into, or did you?

GUTHMAN: I didn't have any idea. No. No conception.

Despite the fact, you know, that I'd been a reporter around government, in government, around it all for fifteen years. It's a good experience, I think, to do it. I think I'm a better newspaperman for having done it.

STEWART: Let me ask you, what kinds of problems did you have in the first few weeks? Did you, for example, have any contact with the outgoing Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] people, or did you get there before they left?

GUTHMAN: Yes. Well, I didn't actually come to work until after the Administration took office. But Luther Huston [Luther A. Huston], who had been a reporter for the New York Times and had retired from the Times and had been Attorney General Rogers' [William P. Rogers] Director of Public Information, was there. A very fine, not only fine newspaperman, but a very fine person. He agreed to stay on for several weeks to help me learn what the devil I was doing and to give me, you know, some

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advice and help. And he did. He couldn't have been more helpful. He'd had a good deal of experience in Washington as a reporter and then, I think, about four years in the Justice Department. So he was very helpful to me. And that was the principal person that I had any contact with.

STEWART: What was your major problem? Was it getting familiar with the Justice Department activities or getting oriented to the Washington press corps?

GUTHMAN: Well, no, just the change from reporter to doing that kind of work and learning the Justice Department and the operations of it and the people. And the Kennedys didn't wait, you know, you didn't have any time to.... You learned as you went. I mean, you're in action. We were doing things the first week I was there. It was instantaneous, which was fine. And there was a good deal of shaking out and learning, but it didn't take too long.

STEWART: Was it understood from the start that your responsibilities would be more than simply reporting the activities of the Department of Justice? Were you involved in speech writing at all from the beginning?

GUTHMAN: Well, when we talked about the job, we talked about public information and giving information and dealing with reporters and so forth. We didn't talk about other things. As I'm sure you know, a Kennedy operation revolves rather spontaneously. For example, I learned the first week, the first couple of days I was there that nobody was going to invite me to do anything. I learned, I'd say, within the first week that I could never go to Robert and say, "Gee, I didn't know that." It had to be my

business, and like John Seigenthaler, who was in the same boat, and some of the others, we had to push ourselves so that we did know. So we used to watch that calendar pretty closely, and who was in and who was not, and what was going on, and we just showed up if we felt this was something we should be involved in. I don't recall very often the Attorney General saying, "I'm going to have a meeting of so-and-so and so-and-so, and I'd like you there." We just watched, and we were there. So

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within his own staff it was that kind of an operation, and so it was sort of, as I say, kind of spontaneous as to what we did, and I think that he expected any of us to do anything, and we did what we felt that he wanted done. We wouldn't have been any use to him if we had stood on any kind of ceremony and said, "Gee, you didn't ask me. I should have done that, but I didn't know."

As far as the speech writing was concerned, he didn't make any speeches from the time he took office, really until May first, I believe. But he didn't really make a speech until May 6, 1961, at Athens, Georgia, when he gave the Law Day address at the University of Georgia Law School. I think he gave one speech prior to that, and that was in April at the American Society of Newspaper Editors in Washington. So that speech writing was never discussed. As it developed, several of us would work on speeches. John Seigenthaler and it might be somebody in the Department, it might be somebody outside, and the Attorney General would discuss what he wanted to talk about. And one of us would do a rough draft which he would then take and edit, go back and forth on. And ultimately, the final product, particularly in those early days when we had a little more time, was very carefully his own. Then later on as things were more crowded and we got more in tune with what his style and so forth was, we could do pretty well what he wanted, talk about what he wanted, and then get it down on paper so that the final draft would be what he wanted, I mean in his words, his phrases. He went over them carefully. I don't recall him ever giving a speech that somebody just handed to him: I mean, he worked hard on those things.

STEWART: Let me ask you a few questions about your relationship with Pierre Salinger [Pierre E.G. Salinger] and with the whole White House press operation. First of all, what were the relationships at the beginning? Was it a formalized thing, or were there attempts to formalize it in the beginning, or what?

GUTHMAN: Well, no. I had known Pierre when he was working for Collier's in San Francisco. I met him, in a sense, the same way I met Robert Kennedy. He

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wanted to do a piece on Dave Beck, and he came to Seattle, and he looked me up. And we helped him. His manuscript never got published because Collier's folded. He took the manuscript to Robert and that's how he got involved with the Committee. And so I'd seen Pierre, we had a personal relationship. And the only formal thing was that—and I don't

remember exactly when it started, but I think quite early—we would give Pierre, once a week, a digest of what was going on in the Department. And then before every press conference, when the President had scheduled a press conference, we would think of the questions that might be related to things that we were involved in. What we would do, we'd just give Pierre the question, situation, and a suggested answer so that he had this briefing book to give the President. And other than that, there wasn't, I don't recall, any very formal relationship.

STEWART: Well, was there some kind of understanding as to the types of things that would be released through your office and those that would go through the White House?

GUTHMAN: No, nothing like that. Often there was something that, obviously, we'd like to have a White House announcement on, to give it the prestige of that.... So if we had something of particular importance, we would discuss it with Pierre, but there were no orders or no direction of that type.

STEWART: Were there ever any problems deciding whether it should go through you or through him?

GUTHMAN: No, we never had any kind of problem with that. If the White House wanted to do it, that was fine. It didn't make any difference to us. And if they wanted us to do it, it was fine. So much of it was just plain routine. The type of thing that we would get into a discussion of who would make the announcement would be something like the Abel [Rudolph Ivanovich Abel]-Powers [Francis Gary Powers] exchange, or where we were all working on something—the civil rights crisis or something where the Defense Department, the State

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Department, the White House, the Justice Department were all involved. We never had, I don't recall, any really disagreements. That was never a problem.

STEWART: Was your situation in the Department of Justice different from that of other agencies? For example, a lot has been written about the clearance of speeches and certain releases through Pierre Salinger, and in his book I think he discusses at some length his attempts to gain some kind of an overall control over the press activities of all the departments or agencies. Do you feel that your operation was different because your boss was the brother of the President?

GUTHMAN: I don't know how to answer that, I can't really tell. I don't think so. If there was any speech that was of a very sensitive nature, it was shown to the White House. And I think that what Pierre tried to do, which we tried

to do in the Department of Justice, too, was to try to get the Administration to speak with one voice. Not that there was control, but that we were talking the same on policy, and that the head of a department spoke for his department, and that you didn't have just stuff going off. So we tried to do that, and he did. But it was never very restrictive, really not restrictive. You know, it was a case of you were going in the same direction, and how's the best way to do it. We frequently got a lot of good help and advice from the White House, and frequently people on the White House staff were deeply involved in things we were doing. I don't think that we had any greater freedom. I think the Attorney General had a good deal more freedom, obviously, and therefore, that might have reflected through in what he did. He felt freer to do things than, perhaps, other people. But we didn't have a freer hand in the sense that we were doing things that other agencies didn't do.

STEWART: Yes. Are there any general criticisms that you would make about the White House press operation during those three years?

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GUTHMAN: Well, I don't, you know, have, certainly, any general criticism of the way it operated. And in just specific incidents, I suppose sometimes we differed over something, but I don't, you know, I don't recall any. No. It's a difficult thing to deal with all the reporters and television. I don't have any.

STEWART: What about your relations with other departments or agencies? Did you have much contact with, for example, the people at State and Defense?

GUTHMAN: Yes, a good deal. Department of Labor, the Post Office Department, primarily, some with Agriculture, some with HEW [Health, Education, and Welfare]. But I had a good deal of contact with Art Sylvester [Arthur Sylvester], and with Bob Manning [Robert J. Manning] at the State Department, Jim Greenfield [James L. Greenfield], and through the government.

STEWART: Can you, again, recall any general types of problems that you continually ran into with any of these people? I'm thinking in terms of—these people, of course, would have their own department's and agency's interests in the forefront and you, perhaps, would have your own interests.

GUTHMAN: Sure.

STEWART: Was there ever any conflict, or can you think of any examples of major things?

GUTHMAN: Yes. We had a good deal to do on a cooperative basis, working out many, many incidents that were occurring in the government. I mentioned one, the Abel-Powers exchange, for example, how to handle public relations on

that. And there were many, many things like that. Generally speaking, we didn't have great conflicts over some of this. Gravest in the eyes of the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] was in connection with an article which Mr. Hoover [J. Edgar Hoover] wrote, or prepared, for the Reader's Digest.

STEWART: I was going to ask you about that, but before I do, let me ask you about your relations with other Justice Department programs.

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GUTHMAN: I had always felt that the Immigration Service was a difficult government agency that dealt rather unfairly with people. I got to the Department of Justice, and I'd have to say that probably the biggest surprise I had in government was to find out that the Immigration Service was a very well-staffed, very decently run, and efficiently run government agency. And what I found was that the Immigration Service was doing a lot of unpleasant things for the State Department and other government agencies. And these officials in the Immigration Service were just very willing good guys, and if somebody said, "Well, okay, you do it," they'd go ahead and they'd do it. And they'd take all the heat on it. And I thought that it was wrong, particularly when a lot of it was a sort of bureaucratic shoving off onto the Immigration Service. As I worked with the people in the Immigration Service and saw them under some very difficult circumstances, I developed a good deal of admiration for them, and I felt that, totally from a public relations standpoint, the Immigration Service didn't have to take all these bad things that they took, and took willingly, unless it was very necessary.

A typical thing, a one that I remember very well, was in the controversy over the Congo and the Katanga government. The Administration got involved in that, and the Katanga government sent a fellow over to the United States by the name of Struelens [Michael Struelens]. He entered the United States on a journalist's visa, and what he was, in effect, was a propagandist agent for the Katanga government, and the State Department wanted him to leave. He violated a... Not being a bona fide journalist, they wanted him to be removed from the country, and the Immigration Service was willing to do that. The Immigration Service came to me, and they told me about it, and I said that I didn't think they ought to take the responsibility for something like that; that if the State Department wanted Struelens thrown out of the country, why, that would be fine, but that we would refer all inquiries to the State Department. The State Department was very upset about that, and anyway, we just didn't, we stuck to that. Then they decided they didn't want Mr. Struelens thrown out of the country. In other words, they were willing to have Struelens removed as long as the Immigration took the responsibility, the State Department wouldn't. I don't know, in the long range of things, whether it was important or whether

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we were being picayunish, but I really felt that the Immigration Service had gotten a lot of black eyes for the State Department and other agencies. We didn't have much difficulty, like

in the civil rights, where the Defense Department was involved. I don't recall any particular incident there.

One other thing we worked very close, the Defense Department and the State Department worked very closely, and the Justice Department, in the Abel-Powers exchange. And the difficulty of that, from our standpoint, was that if the story got out, the Russians would have felt that we had deliberately leaked it and were deliberately sabotaging the exchange, and the exchange wouldn't have gone through.

[BEGIN SIDE II, TAPE I]

We wanted Powers back, and so it was pretty delicate to keep that secret because Mr. Donovan [James B. Donovan] was involved and there was movement of Abel from Atlanta to New York and then New Jersey, the flight back to Berlin, and so that was carefully considered and, as it turned out, successfully.

STEWART: What about your relationships with the FBI? As I understand it, somewhere in the early stages of the Administration there was a change in that releases and the speeches had to be cleared through your office, whereas formerly the FBI had dealt directly with the press.

GUTHMAN: Well, that's not quite accurate. The FBI always cleared all speeches and articles and press releases through the Director of Public Information of the Department of Justice. I think maybe the difference was that before we came there it was perfunctory clearance. And the way I felt about it, as long as I was going to put my initials on something and I was taking the responsibility, then I was going to exercise that responsibility. But there was no change in any policy other than the fact that we did exercise that responsibility, and I think it was correct.

STEWART: How did this come about exactly? Or was the decision yours entirely that you were going to make a more detailed review of these things?

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GUTHMAN: I don't recall ever discussing it, except when I had to do something that, perhaps, the FBI didn't like. But, no, I just felt that as long as that was my responsibility, I wasn't just going to sign anything, and say okay, and hand it back, and not look at it, and not read it, and not make a judgment about what I was signing because it was my responsibility, and so I exercised it. I didn't feel that I... I think I learned afterwards that I made them very unhappy, but they never expressed it in that sense until after President Kennedy died. But I think it was the right thing to do, I couldn't, I can't conceive of being in that job and not doing it that way. You'd just be a patsy.

STEWART: But that is the way it had been done?

GUTHMAN: I don't know that. All I know from the career people there that nobody had ever done it before that they could remember. In other words, it had been perfunctory in that statements had been cleared and so forth.

STEWART: But you had no real discussions with the people in the FBI as to exactly what you were trying to do, or...

GUTHMAN: No. We had a lot of discussions, but, see, it didn't pull like that. Part of the job was clearing FBI releases and statements, and magazine articles by Mr. Hoover and his speeches and so forth. That was just part of the operation of the Department of Justice before I came here. As I say, the difference was that I read these things, and I raised objections to things I thought ought to be objected to, and I don't think that had been done before. We had a lot of discussions about the release of various routine type things. We probably released more in the name of the Attorney General than they had done in the past on major type stories. We worked that out, and the FBI prepared the release and I cleared it. And this I felt was important that they....

STEWART: Were there many situations of you wanting to make changes that they absolutely didn't agree with?

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GUTHMAN: No, not too many. There were some. I never thought of them any more than the normal wear and tear of give and take of any kind of a job where you discuss something, and one person has one opinion and somebody has something else. I think that, perhaps, in the eyes of the FBI it was an affront.

This really goes to the position of the FBI on organized crime and the position that the FBI had held prior to 1961, that there was no organized crime syndicate; and after Robert Kennedy became Attorney General and the organized crime drive got under way, the FBI got into it, and they began to develop a good deal of intelligence. We were led to believe that they were getting this intelligence by planting informants into organized crime. We now know that it was done largely by wire tapping. But in any event, they began to get a lot of information. Then the Bureau of Narcotics uncovered Joseph Valachi, and Joseph Valachi then was turned over to the FBI, and the FBI very skillfully got a lot of information out of him. And it was quite clear now to the FBI that there was an organized crime syndicate, and that there was a thing called the Cosa Nostra, or the Mafia, or whatever you want to call it. And this time, when we were considering what to do with Joseph Valachi.... And there was some question about it, whether he would just have to remain an anonymous person in prison or under guard the rest of his life, whether we could use this information to alert, to give the public the details as much as we could. What was going to happen was somewhat up in the air.

I don't know the exact date of what I'm talking about, but I would guess early '63 or, perhaps, late '62. And one day the FBI brought over the draft of an article, or not a draft, a manuscript of an article which Mr. Hoover had written for the Reader's Digest. I read it, and

the only thing I objected to were two sentences deep down in the story which had to do with, for the first time in print, the words Cosa Nostra. And the implication, I don't recall the exact words, but the implication of it was that the FBI had known about this for a long time, and disclosing to the effect that there was a Cosa Nostra. And I felt that if we were going to disclose this, that we ought to do it in a way where we got maximum credit for it, and that it be done by the Attorney General. And we had a long and serious argument about that. I did not change my view,

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I would not clear the article unless they took those two sentences out. And the article never appeared.

I think that the purpose of the article was to get those two sentences in there so that the FBI could have a record of, or that Mr. Hoover could have had a record of saying, "Well, gee, back in - we wrote about this in Reader's Digest." I didn't think that at the time. At the time, the basis of my argument was that if we were going to disclose this Cosa Nostra, if we were going to reveal the existence of the informant and so forth, that we would get full publicity and full credit for it, and the public would know fully what was involved and not just sneak it out like this. And I felt that the Attorney General should get the credit; at least he should have some of the credit. Anyway, in light of later developments, I think now that that was the purpose of the article. Because it wasn't a bad article without those two sentences in there.

STEWART: On these types of things, who did you primarily deal with in the FBI?

GUTHMAN: I dealt only with Dekle DeLoach [Cartha Dekle DeLoach] who was the Assistant Director in charge of the Records Division but was, in effect, Mr. Hoover's public information officer, in roughly the same relationship or same position to Mr. Hoover that I had to Robert Kennedy. So he was the person I always dealt with at the Bureau, or his assistants Robert Wick and others, Bud Linebaugh [Harold Linebaugh], and Kemper [Ed Kemper]. But primarily I dealt with DeLoach, and we had a pretty good relationship. At least, it was a working relationship, and it didn't change much until after the assassination, and then it changed somewhat. But we still remained speaking.

I think from the beginning he understood my position, and I sure as hell understood his, which is an interesting sidelight because when I left Seattle, a couple of friends of mine in the FBI said, "We want to take you to lunch." So we went to lunch, and we had a very pleasant lunch, and they said, "We're going to give you a piece of paper, and there are some names on this piece of paper. When you go back to the Justice Department, you watch out for these fellows." And that was all that was ever done with that. And it was as good a piece of advice that I ever got from anybody because the names on there

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were the guys in the FBI that I learned later on that I did have to look out for, and I took that. One of them was DeLoach. And the thing is, as I say, I had a good relationship with him.

The first.... I was there two days, and the FBI offered to see that I got all my meat wholesale for my family. I didn't accept that kind of a thing. But again, in reflection, I wouldn't have done it under any circumstances, in reflection, I think it's just a means to get their arms around you right off the bat. And so we had, I think, a realistic relationship; I think it was relatively pleasant. I liked him in many ways, and I felt sorry for him in other ways because his relationship to Mr. Hoover was such that he'd really sold his soul to Hoover. But he was a bright fellow and a rather nice personality, and we got along well. He came to my home, we went to his home. We made sure that, you know, the amenities were more than normal. For example, we made sure he was invited to the White House reception on November 20, 1963, and that kind of thing. And so we weren't ever at dagger points. Now the relationship changed after the assassination, as it changed for everybody, as far as the FBI was concerned. I mean the whole Department of Justice had changed. And it changed somewhat between DeLoach and myself. We had some very strong words about what happened. I felt that they were acting unnecessarily cool for no reason. And I told him what I thought many times, and he told me what he thought. So we, you know.... And as I say, today if he came in town, I think he'd come over and see me. But we still know where each other stands.

STEWART: Could you give some other examples of the types of things that you were particularly looking for in the articles and releases of the FBI? The types of things that you didn't really...

GUTHMAN: Oh, they're minor in a way, I suppose. Communism, the extent of communist influence in the civil rights movement, statements on organized crime. Sometimes I just suggested what I thought were better ways to say something. Those were mainly the things, and I felt, what we talked earlier about, that the Department should speak with one voice. If the policy of the government was something, Mr. Hoover's remarks, without trying to limit him in any way, in

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that sense, that they at least should not be contrary. And I must say they weren't very often. There wasn't any great problem about that. The greatest problem is the one I've mentioned to you, and the others were relatively minor. And I thought of them all as a sort of, as I said, the kind of discussions you have every day with people that you work with over how something ought to be done.

STEWART: Did you ever have any direct dealings with Mr. Hoover?

GUTHMAN: Well, I saw Mr. Hoover. When I first came to the Department of Justice, as with everybody else, you are taken to see Mr. Hoover, listen to Mr. Hoover for forty-five minutes. I didn't say anything. You don't, you know.

He told me which newspapers he liked, and which newspapers he didn't like, and why. And I saw Mr. Hoover from time to time after that at ceremonies or something, but I had no contact in a meaningful sense with Mr. Hoover.

STEWART: There've been stories that the FBI, Mr. Hoover in particular, would send over, occasionally, stories that appeared in the press, in various papers and magazines, about the President, or about the Attorney General, some very very unfavorable stories, and along with these would come information that the FBI had on the reporter or the person who wrote the story. Do you recall that?

GUTHMAN: No. I don't ever recall that.

STEWART: Not at all?

GUTHMAN: No, I don't think so. I've got to say it sounds natural. It sounds like what they might do, but I don't ever recall it. I recall in connection with some movies, proposed movies or proposed television shows, that they would gratuitously provide a background on some of the people that had been proposed to be in it, or some of the people who were involved in it. I don't ever recall an... [Telephone interruption]

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STEWART: You mean movies that were being...

GUTHMAN: Oh, people would come in with various proposals for television shows or movies that they might want to use the Department of Justice or about the Department or something in it, the Bureau of Prisons or the FBI or something, you know, that type of thing. I don't ever recall that as to a reporter. I think I recall, I remember once about a reporter's wife, but I don't remember the circumstances, and I don't remember the reporter.

STEWART: Is there anything else about the FBI that you think is of significance?

GUTHMAN: Historically?

STEWART: Yes.

GUTHMAN: Well, I think that the abrupt change which they underwent about five minutes after one on November 22 was the thing that was most significant to me. It was just like that. [Snaps fingers] And from then on they just moved to consolidate a position with President Johnson and went out of their way to really stick it in, and hard. And they didn't have to do that, but I think that's the way they—as I say they, I'm talking about Mr. Hoover, you know; it was his way of doing things and may be the

way he had done things all the time that he had been in Washington. But it was unnecessarily cruel under the circumstances, and unnecessary just from the fact that we had no illusions about what had happened or what changes in power and so forth and all of that.

But I think that they aided and abetted the split between President Johnson and Kennedy. I think, not only think, I know that they brought every kind of report that they could to widen President Johnson's fears and suspicions of anybody that had anything to do with the Kennedys. And the suspicions were already there, and all the bad feeling and everything was already there, I don't mean to—but they played on it, and they made it very unpleasant, very difficult. As I say, it was.... The only word I have for the whole operation was that it was

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unmanly. It was a type of thing that I've never seen.

For example, John Reilly [John R. Reilly], who had been in the Department of Justice as head of the office of the U.S. Attorneys, before President Kennedy had died, John Reilly was nominated to be a member of the Federal Trade Commission, and President Johnson sent the nomination up and John became a member of the Federal Trade Commission, and when he left the Department of Justice, we had a party for him. A U.S. Attorney from Minneapolis was there, Miles [Miles W. Lord]—I can't recall....

STEWART: A colored fellow?

GUTHMAN: No, no. Miles.... Anyway, a U.S. Attorney...

STEWART: Yes, I know.

GUTHMAN: In any event, there was a very interesting party, we had a lot of fun. Miles went back to Minneapolis, and what he exactly said when he went back there, I don't know, and I don't think he knows. But in any event, something that he said was picked up in Minneapolis, and the effect of it was that a number of us in the Department of Justice, and if I remember the names rightly, it was Nick Katzenbach [Nicholas deB. Katzenbach], Burke Marshall, and Jack Miller [Herbert J. Miller, Jr.], and Lou Oberdorfer [Louis F. Oberdorfer] and myself, had held a meeting to plan how Kennedy could get the nomination in 1964 away from Johnson. This information was sent to the FBI, and Mr. Hoover sent that right over to the White House. Nobody in the FBI came around and said, "What the hell are you guys doing?" Nobody from the FBI said, "Gee, we got this report from Minneapolis about you guys having that meeting up there, and what had happened?" They just.... Well, of course, it was untrue. The meeting was the party for John Reilly. And when I say unmanly, I never heard of people doing things like that before. And so that caused the President, he got agitated about that and mentioned that to a couple of the Kennedy people who were still in the White House, and of course.... But that was just one of a series of things like that that went on and on. But we were able to trace that back to the FBI and

confronted the FBI with it, DeLoach, and they denied it. And so we had rather strong words about it. That was one part of it.

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The other part of it was that Robert Kennedy after the assassination was a pretty forlorn figure, I've never seen anybody go through anything like that. I never want to go through anything like that. I don't mean just a few weeks after the assassination, I'm talking now about months after the assassination. And Mr. Hoover.... Many, many people in the government, whether they were risking any position with President Johnson or not, but just as men, were very kind to Robert, and they went out of their way to be kind to him, not that he needed, you know, coddling, or anything, but I mean it was nice, and they did nice things, and they were thoughtful. I mean, as far as Hoover was concerned, it was like he had been transplanted to the moon.

Now go back to the Department of Justice, there's the Immigration Service, and there's the Bureau of Prisons, and there's the FBI, and then there's the Department as a whole. This didn't happen in the Immigration Service; this didn't happen in the Bureau of Prisons; this didn't happen in any part of the Department of Justice, except in the FBI. And it was totally unnecessary, and it was really cruel. And then when you get right down to it, about the worst I could say, I guess, after my whole experience was that I wouldn't believe it. I wouldn't believe the FBI. I have to say that today I don't believe the FBI. It doesn't mean that I don't believe them on everything, but after my experience there, I don't. And it's a hard thing to say about that agency.

STEWART: It's all totally Hoover, though? It's a one man, completely a....

GUTHMAN: Yes, it is Hoover. Yes, and he should have gone a long, long time ago. His creative period ended about 1950, and it's been downhill ever since, and he's turned that agency into a caricature of himself. The men that are left are soulless men, really, God, they've just been gutted. And they do some pretty horrible things. The basic difference, I'd say, one of the basic differences, from my position and, say, DeLoach's position, which I think tells a good deal about the two operations, I never had to lie. I never had to, say, do something that within me I didn't think was the right thing to do. There are plenty of times when I was fighting not to release something, and I was going around

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here and going over there and smoke screens and dodging and ducking, but if it had come right down to it, I never had—you know, I never would.... My instructions were to tell the truth. It's not the case on the other side.

STEWART: Well, did you still make an attempt to review their things after the assassination, or....

GUTHMAN: Sure.

STEWART: And you did it in the same way?

GUTHMAN: Yes. I wasn't going to sign anything. And it still had to come out, I mean, they could leak it out, they could do anything with it, could ignore it, I didn't care about that, but still I had to put my initial on it. I didn't have to put my initial on. So it was always a duel. The biggest problem we had, I think, was over the Warren Commission thing and the leaking of the FBI report to the Warren Commission, the original report. A short few weeks after the assassination, they did their investigation, and they had a voluminous report which they sent over to the Warren Commission, and the Chief Justice had asked that it not be released. And I felt that, too, and so did Nick Katzenbach, who was running the Department at that time. It was important from Nick's standpoint that if the Chief Justice didn't want this released, it didn't get released. Well, as a consequence, the only people that saw it on our side of the building was Nick Katzenbach and Jack Miller, I think, and myself. And since we didn't prepare it, there were no secretaries, nobody who saw it. It was delivered by the FBI, we read it, we kept it. So we knew that we didn't leak it, and the whole damn thing was leaked right on out. And it was obvious; there was no question; by the name of the reporters who got the story, you knew where it came from. But we had a pretty serious disagreement over that. But we were helpless to really be effective in that; they just did it anyway. But, you know.

STEWART: Was the problem of leaks with the FBI always a big one?

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GUTHMAN: Yes, but as long as President Kennedy was alive, there was a self limitation on what they did. Sure, yes, there were a couple of times when they could have been a little helpful to the President, and they didn't. Mr. Hoover could have been, I should say, and he didn't, and didn't try. Then I would think a couple of times of some stories that came out that were not particularly to shed credit on the Administration.

STEWART: For example?

GUTHMAN: Well, I remember, it always dealt with organized crime, that was the main area, primarily. I'm trying to think of a specific incident. I remember it, but I don't recall the detail of it. What was I going to say? Wait a minute, shut it off just for a second. [Tape recorder turned off—resumes]

STEWART: Well, you mentioned things that they would have wanted to bring out or had leaked out that they wouldn't cooperate on, can you think of any examples of that?

GUTHMAN: No, not specifically. No, as long as President Kennedy was alive, they were respectful of the position, and I think they were concerned, I think Mr. Hoover was concerned about whether he was going to be reappointed.

STEWART: I was going to ask you, had there been any definite discussion on that?

GUTHMAN: I never heard any, and I have no knowledge on that at all. The side that I got it from was about every two weeks I'd get a call from DeLoach or Bob Wick or someone, and they'd say, "We've got this report that Mr. Hoover's not going to be reappointed. Do you know anything about it?" And I never did know anything about it, so I'd say, "No, I don't think that's right." And it almost got to be a ritual. Or a reporter would come around, one of their patsy reporters, and say, "Gee, we've got a report that Mr. Hoover's not going to be...." I don't know whether this is

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what, I never quite understood all that, except whether this was a needle or whether they needed reassurance, or what it was. I never knew, and I never discussed that with the Attorney General, and I don't know what happened.

STEWART: Who are some of their patsy reporters?

GUTHMAN: Well, when I use the word patsy, I suppose that's really being unfair in the sense that they had people who were friendly to them. Jerry O'Leary [Jeremiah O'Leary, Jr.] of the Evening Star, Joe Mohbat [Joseph E. Mohbat] of the AP [Associated Press], and there were others that when they had a story to feed out to, they fed it out. But that's not, I mean, hell, everybody had people who were friendly to you or more friendly than others.

STEWART: What about your relationships with other areas of the Department of Justice? Were there any major changes that you instituted as far as getting information from the divisions and from the other two bureaus? Or were there any special problems with that?

GUTHMAN: We tried to, in a loose sense, control the contacts between the people in the Department and the press, which had not been done, I don't think. That was again trying to, in some sense, have the Department speak without a good deal of conflict. We saw our job as trying to get information for reporters. If somebody wanted to see Burke Marshall or somebody else, or John Doar [John M. Doar] or something, we'd be glad to arrange it for them, which we did. And in many of these cases, Burke Marshall wouldn't see anybody unless we would ask him to do so. But I didn't particularly like that idea, but it was...

STEWART: Was it all going through you?

GUTHMAN: Yes. I didn't like the control of the thing. I preferred to have some relationship with the reporter and have a trustful relationship, and yet, as happens, you have more trust in some reporters than in others. But we did that, and I think we also ended the Department's preference for the New York Times. The New York Times

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had a very able reporter there, Tony Lewis, and when we came to the Department of Justice, we found that he was getting very, very special treatment, and we ended that. He was very upset, but that didn't last very long and developed a fine relationship with him, and he developed a wonderful relationship with the Attorney General and probably got more news out of the Department that way than the Department handing everything to him and treating him with greater care than officials at the Department. For example, in the Solicitor General's office, when they were going to file a brief in the Supreme Court, they filed one brief with the Supreme Court and delivered one to Tony Lewis. Well, if the AP or the UPI [United Press International] wanted it, or the New York Herald Tribune wanted it, or the Washington Post, they had to go up to the Supreme Court and get it. I don't know whether they delivered a copy to the office of Public Information. I mean, I found that Tony Lewis was getting copies at the same time the Supreme Court was. Well, I think that was the kind of... And we stopped that.

We, at the same time, tried to open up the Department, and I spent most of my time trying to get things out of government. And the higher you went in government the tougher it was. You could find things out in the city hall and county courthouses You could find out a lot, and the records were there. State government, it was a lot harder, and the federal government it was virtually impossible, in many instances, to ever get information. And we tried to open it up a good deal and make people available and to get favorable coverage by, you know, giving people access to what we thought were the facts, or the facts as we saw them. So we did that. You know, you'd have to ask reporters as to whether they felt it was successful or not. But I didn't particularly like a lot of formal type of things or anything like that. We didn't do that.

STEWART: Do I have you straight? You made more people available to reporters.

GUTHMAN: I don't know whether we did. I just say we made an effort to make people available, and advised them if there's a case of whether they should see a reporter or not, see him. And know in the Department where a reporter could go. You want to help him. If he wanted to write a story on organized crime, make the people on organized

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crime, get them available, the right people, people that had information; let him develop a relationship with the officials so they can find out, and then find them. And then, we could find out which reporters you could trust, and which were not. And we tried to do that all the way through the Department.

STEWART: Were there many other reporters, other than Tony Lewis, who had special relationships with permanent people in various parts of the Department?

GUTHMAN: Yes. Oh, sure. There were many reporters, and it's just natural; you develop interests, either by developing an interest in a specific subject or by working to develop a relationship so that you could come and get information. And a number of the reporters, besides Tony Lewis, were assigned to the Department of Justice. Miriam Ottenberg was assigned to the Department for the Washington Star, and Jim Clayton [James E. Clayton] for the Washington Post, and Don Irwin for the New York Herald Tribune, and we saw those men, you know, and Miss Ottenberg, regularly. And they covered it. And there was a lot going on in the Department of Justice then. The Attorney General made a lot of news, and he also really served as kind of a sounding board for many, many reporters who had nothing to do with the Department of Justice. Some it related to his work on the rackets committee. He developed on the rackets committee very close relationships with a number of reporters, and he had a great deal of trust in these men. And thereafter, they could find out anything that he was in the position, that his knowledge, that he could help them in any way, he would. There were people like Don Irwin of the Herald Tribune, Ed Woods [Edward F. Woods] of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Ed O'Brien [Edward W. O'Brien] of the St. Louis Globe [-Democrat], Joe....

STEWART: Where's he from?

GUTHMAN: New York Times. Joe Loftus [Joseph A. Loftus] of the New York Times and many other fellows. And then during the campaign there were some of these men and others. And so there was, frequently, Ed Lahey [Edwin A. Lahey] of the Knight Newspapers, for example, Pete Lisagor [Peter I. Lisagor] wanting information on

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other aspects; they would come to see him and talk to him, and columnists and so forth. So we had a good deal of activity.

STEWART: Were there any of the types of problems that occurred at the White House where the President had known people, columnists, fairly intimately socially, and this presented a problem for them in writing and being critical, and being totally objective?

GUTHMAN: Well, yes, I suppose it did, in some respect. I don't have any clear, you know, recollections of specific things like that. In Robert's case his relationship with reporters was quite a solid one. Just in my own case, for example, I said at the outset he kept his word with us. Well, he never, in the whole time that I ever knew him, ever misled me. I'd never run into a public official like him. He was totally candid. Once he found that he could trust you, he trusted you. And that meant he trusted you all the way. He had his trust broken a couple of times, but with most of us, almost all of us, that never happened.

STEWART: By the reporters, you mean?

GUTHMAN: Yes. So that that relationship we respected because of his candidness and his truthfulness; we respected that very much because it was very unique. And he respected the fact that if he asked us to keep something, we kept it. We kept our end. So this relationship was a very strong relationship, and whether that affected anybody's writing, I don't know really. Certainly many of those reporters went out of their way, I think, to help him, too. And they didn't lose their interest in the labor rackets, which they'd gotten, and they kept working in those areas, and that type of thing, all of which was not unhelpful to Kennedy. But I doubt that, I think it would have been hard for many of them to be critical of him in print. That's not totally true because Clark Mollenhoff, for example, had serious disagreements with him, and he had serious disagreements with me, and I was one of his closest friends. So, you know, in newspapers, you're a newspaperman first. I guess it's a long way around to answer your question. I'd say it probably did.

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STEWART: Who were real problem reporters, or were there any people who were consistently critical or that you were consistently concerned about?

[BEGIN SIDE I TAPE II]

STEWART: Do you recall if there were any particular reporters, columnists, or papers that stand out in your mind as being particularly troublesome during the three years?

GUTHMAN: Well, I'd say that there were a few columnists and a number of magazines that were not too interested in finding out both sides of a story. I think, as far as the magazines are concerned, the two that were the most difficult to deal with were Time and the U.S. News. They had their own viewpoint, and they made the news conform to that. And even when they had access to all the facts, it still came out a different way. I recall a number of incidents. One in connection with U.S. News and World Report, which was typical of the way they operated, was at Oxford, Mississippi. They had a reporter down there by the name of Sterling Slappey; he was on the scene; he saw what happened; he reported it, and it was an accurate report; and they printed it. It reflected that the

marshals had held their ground, that they had been attacked, that they had been reviled and so forth, and generally reported it as we thought it happened. U.S. News and World Report was Southern oriented, and I imagine Mr. Slappey's report caused a good deal of trouble for him. So the next week they published a letter that was unsigned from a student which told an exactly opposite story of how it was the marshals who precipitated all the trouble and who did all the things, which was the view of the officials of Mississippi. Well, we got a lot of letters then asking us about it and criticizing us for what we did. And what I did then was to Xerox copies of Sterling Slappey's story, which had appeared one week, and the unsigned student letter, and I sent back letters, quite a number of them, and I said, "I suggest you ask U.S. News which version of this thing is right." They were continually doing that; they had good reporters; they got the facts: so you can only conclude that there was someone at the top that wanted it differently.

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And that's also true with Time magazine. Well, we had repeatedly.... They had good men, very decent people—they were trustworthy, bright—and no problem about giving them access to any information that they wanted, but somehow it very often didn't get reflected in the reporting. In the exchange of the.... When we got the Bay of Pigs prisoners back, apparently someone up there didn't think that was a very good idea, so they just reported it in a completely distorted fashion. A better example of that, one that we finally were able to do something about—and it's a kind of interesting anecdote—when the Civil Rights Bill was first proposed in 1963, in that summer after the trouble in Birmingham, Time magazine reported that the open, not the...

STEWART: Public accommodations.

GUTHMAN: Yes, was something that we had dreamed up, and something that we sort of manufactured, and that there was no real need for it. This went on for a couple of weeks, and they really zinged us on it, particularly the Justice Department and the Attorney General. And we were trying to figure out what we could do about it, and we finally decided that about the only thing we could do would be to go up and try to have lunch with Henry Luce [Henry R. Luce]. So we arranged to have lunch with him, and the Attorney General and Burke Marshall and I went up to New York, and we had lunch with Mr. Luce and the editors of all of his publications. And the Attorney General and Burke Marshall during the lunch explained to Mr. Luce why there was a need for the public accommodations section of the Civil Rights Bill. Mr. Luce kept saying, "Oh, I didn't know that." And then they would explain a little more, and he would answer, "Well, I didn't know that." And it was, "I didn't know this," and "I didn't know that," and went on and on. And finally Tom Griffith, who was, I think, at that time assistant managing editor of Time, finally, he said, in the presence of everyone, "Well, Mr. Luce, what these men are telling you is what is reflected in the reports from our correspondents in the field." And I was quite grateful. I thought it took a good deal of courage on his part. But it showed what the hell was happening

on that magazine. Why they would do that, I don't know. As the result, that did get straightened out, and thereafter, they, again, worded it accurately, you know.

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You had times with Newsweek or Fortune or Look or Life or Saturday Evening Post where you had a difference of opinion, where they got something and you wished they hadn't, or they got something and they didn't get all the facts, or something. But it is the normal course of doing business, and there was no pattern to it, and it could have been that it was a difference or a mistake on our part, or on theirs. But with Time and U.S. News it just was a constant attempt to portray the Administration, and particularly President Kennedy and Robert Kennedy, in something other than what was the fact.

Anything that I ever had any personal knowledge of, that I saw remarked, was very seldom factual. As far as the columnists are concerned, I think that most of them did an excellent job, are good reporters. Obviously, Drew Pearson was always a source of irritation. He had a favorite explanation for something. Whenever he would write a column which reflected on something in the Department of Justice—and it was always about two thirds wrong, or perhaps higher wrong—I would call him and say, “Well, why didn't you at least give us an opportunity to tell you what we think has happened or give our side of it?” And his answer was, and was really funny because he'd say, “Well, I got that from such a good source, I didn't think I needed to check it.” And, you know, it was ridiculous. He was a very unpleasant man to deal with; he was not interested in checking out anything; and I think that's his stock-in-trade. I think he's brought things to light that ought to have been brought to light. I just don't like on a day-to-day basis a guy just going at people without giving them any opportunity to at least state their side of it. And he almost never did. And if he did call you, you were so goddamn scared of what you said because you had to be so careful because you didn't know what he'd do with it.

There were other reporters, like Henry Taylor, and I don't know what his hang-up was. He obviously had something with the Kennedys, whether it was because they didn't continue him as Ambassador to Switzerland, whether it was bitterness over his son's death in the Congo, or whatever it was, when Henry Taylor would just write off the top of his head, sometimes very, very erroneous, and troublesome, and would not even give you the courtesy, if you tried to reach him, which I did every time something like that happened—he was in all the Scripps-Howard papers and a number of other good papers—I'd try to reach him,

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I never got the courtesy of a call back even. And he was always an irritation.

And it was different with a fellow like him than say David Lawrence. David Lawrence wrote a lot of columns that didn't reflect very handsomely on what we did or on any of.... He was very critical. I always enjoyed, though, talking to Mr. Lawrence, and he was always very courteous. He listened to what we had to say, then went ahead and wrote. And I didn't always like what he wrote, but at least he listened, and if he made up his mind

differently, he was writing a column of opinion, you can't argue with that. You can be upset, maybe, that he didn't agree, but you can't.... But that wasn't any problem.

It was so different between, say, a man like Lawrence and a man like Taylor. Even men like Arthur Krock. Arthur Krock, for example, despite his attainments in the journalistic field, would call you up to check a date, I mean, you know, strive to be accurate. And it was so different with other men who, like Pearson or some of the others that just—Taylor, and one or two others....

I thought, perhaps, that some of the older columnists, newspapermen, had difficulty accepting that young men were in the government and running the government, and some of them, like William White [William S. White], for example, had connections, or not connections, but were close to other figures, like White was close to Lyndon Johnson. But you must say, to White's credit, while he might reflect in the column some of Johnson's thinking, he was a fair man. But on the other hand, you found other older men, like Walter Lippmann and, curiously enough, George Sokolsky, as the time went on, writing with a good deal of understanding as to what President Kennedy was doing.

The George Sokolsky thing was always curious to me. I had read him for many years in the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, and I had thought, particularly during the fifties, his views were quite foreign from mine. I don't recall exactly what the circumstances under which I met him with the Attorney General—it was early in 1961—but over a period of time a relationship developed between us, and when we'd go to New York, he'd often ask, "Would you come by and see me?" And he had had a heart attack or two at that time, and I found him to be a very warm, very learned man, and we enjoyed going over there and spending an hour or so with him and visiting with him. And, you know, it was

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a totally different thing. It was like the experience I had with the Immigration Service: I found him to be very different than what I thought he would. And we saw him, I think, about two days before he died on another one of those visits, and I'm glad we had those visits with him. But he seemed to understand, and, as I say, older men like Lippmann and others. But I always thought that part of, perhaps, Mr. Lawrence's trouble, and some of the older publishers and editors, was that just they had trouble accepting that these young men would be able to do anything right.

STEWART: Was Robert Kennedy as sensitive about the press and press criticisms as his brother, President Kennedy? Of course, a lot had been made of how sensitive the President was to the views of particular papers, and columnists and so forth.

GUTHMAN: Well, I suppose the word sensitive, if you mean they were tuned to it, and they listened to it, and they watched it. They could take criticism pretty well, both of them. I think the best thing that enabled them to do well with the press—and when I say that, also radio and television—was that they had a pretty good understanding of the reporter's role, and they understood, for example, that if a reporter wrote

about them and he just wrote real nice things about him, he wasn't going to be much a reporter very long. They understood that. And they understood the very careful, the very—well, the relationship that a public official can have with a reporter, and vice versa, and the rules of that. So that they didn't require any kind of slavishness or agreement or anything like that. What they were looking for was somebody who was friendly, in the sense that he would make an effort to understand, that he could be trusted with confidence, or could be told something and not see it in print the next day, if it was a sensitive matter, and they let you have the feeling that they were making some effort to find out.

And within that framework the President and the Attorney General were.... They read the paper very carefully; they watched television every morning; they watched it at night; they read the magazines; they read quickly; and sure, if something was wrong, there was an error, they wanted to have it corrected. And they didn't waste time. I used to say if I got by five after eight in the morning, and I hadn't had a phone call from the

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Attorney General, and sometimes it would be from the President, saying, "What are you going to do about that?" that they'd seen on television or had read in the New York Times or the Washington Post or something, well, I was starting out a pretty good day. So in that sense, he was certainly sensitive to it, but not in a complaining way. I mean, he knew the rules, and he played it, you know. It was like playing soccer, you play hard, and if you got kicked in the shins, well, you didn't like it too well, and you might try to straighten that out.

STEWART: Did the President call you directly very often?

GUTHMAN: Well, if he couldn't find his brother or a couple of the other people higher up in the order, yes, he'd want to know what we were doing about something. It was always fun to talk to him. After the trouble at Oxford, Mississippi, and next, the following spring, we were heading into the confrontation with George Wallace [George C. Wallace] at the University of Alabama, and we knew what we were going into. We had critiqued Mississippi, our actions at Oxford, for a day and a half, and we knew what we had done wrong there and how we could do better for the next time if we had to do that.

And one of the things that we had neglected or were deficient on at Oxford was that nobody knew the territory. We didn't have any good maps, we didn't have accurate maps, and John Doar was the only person who knew how to get from the Lyceum Building up to Baxter Hall, or how to get around. And so we decided that we ought to get a good map on the University of Alabama, the area around Tuscaloosa, and we found there wasn't any. And we asked I believe it was the Department of Agriculture if they had any Forest Service maps, and so forth, and they didn't. And so somehow, I don't know exactly how this was done, or what exactly the procedure, but anyway, approval was made for a jet plane to photograph the campus of the University of Alabama. And that was duly exposed by the press. It came out in the late afternoon editions that we had sent a jet plane some weeks earlier to photograph the University of Alabama. And the President had called for the Attorney General, and for the

Deputy Attorney General, and for Burke Marshall, and not being able to get them, he finally got to me, and he said, his first words were, "Who pulled that rock?" I said, "It wasn't your brother, Mr. President." And he said, "Did Nick know?" And I said, "Yes, he did, Mr. President." And he said, "Oh. Well, Nick's a good

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man. What are you doing about it?" And I told him, and that was the end of that conversation. I think what it meant to me was that had that happened and somebody in authority had not okayed it, he would have been, I think, really unhappy about it, but when he knew that Nick Katzenbach had approved it, well, he knew that it hadn't been done precipitously, hadn't been done thoughtlessly, and it was done, and so what are you doing about it? And that's the way he was. If he was unhappy about something, something we had done, he let you know about it. But then he always wound up by making you feel pretty good, so I never worried about getting a call. It actually always was interesting.

STEWART: How did it come out, did you ever find out the story of the flight?

GUTHMAN: Well, I know that I was involved in it, but I don't remember exactly. I think it was almost routine, one of those kind of things. We knew certain things we wanted to do, and one of the things was we wanted to get a map. So somebody said, "What about the Forest Service?" And so they checked the Forest Service, and they didn't have any. And, "Well, what about sending a plane? Let's get a new aerial photo of it." I don't think anybody thought of the implications of it, and it was done. And, of course, it was an embarrassment.

STEWART: It smacked of the U-2 flight.

GUTHMAN: Yes, that's right. We were intent on getting a map so that if we had to run around like we did the night at Oxford, Mississippi, we'd know something, know where we're going. Sure, I suppose I should have thought about those things, but I didn't. That's not the only thing I didn't think of at that time there. But in any event, that was.... And you know, the only thing to do in a situation like that is to be honest about it. You know, we didn't beat around the bush on it. We just simply said that that's why we had done it, and it wasn't the worst thing in the world. of course, it did smack of spying on Alabama, and of course, Wallace made the most of it.

STEWART: Did you have many meetings with publishers or editors, such as the one you mentioned with Henry Luce?

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GUTHMAN: Well, from time to time, as the Attorney General traveled around, he would be invited to come to a paper, and we made an effort to try so that we could have conversations. But I think that's the only time when we were faced with the problem of getting our views across accurately that we'd asked for something like that. As I say, he frequently.... For example, when he came out to Los Angeles, he came up to the Times here. I remember meeting at least twice with the editors of the New York Herald Tribune, the Daily News, the Times; in Cleveland he always saw Louis Seltzer of the Cleveland Press, and so on; he went to Atlanta; he went up to the [Atlanta Journal] Constitution to see Ralph McGill [Ralph E. McGill], and tried, always very conscious of maintaining relationships with the press.

STEWART: But not in trying to straighten out specific situations, such as the one with Time?

GUTHMAN: No, not like that. Sometimes we went to a publisher where we couldn't work out anything else. For example, in connection with Henry Taylor, I repeatedly went to the head of the Scripps-Howard and his editor of the World Telegram in New York. It was of absolutely no avail. But I never had any.... If I couldn't get it done through the writer or reporter, I didn't have any hesitation to go right over him, if I felt it deserved it. I mean, in other words, if you knew what the truth was, and you weren't getting that out, and somebody was really sticking it into you, I didn't have any problems with that.

STEWART: What about the Negro press? Is there anything that stands out in your mind as far as your association, in general, with the Negro press?

GUTHMAN: Well, my main association with the Negro press were with two reporters. One was Chuck Stone [Charles Sumner Stone, Jr.], who was working on the Washington paper and then later went to Chicago, and Simeon Booker, who was the Washington representative for Ebony, and Jet, and those magazines. There were other Negro reporters. We tried to help them, and I don't know, I don't recall anything special.

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STEWART: I mean, there certainly was an attempt to be as generous as possible with them, or make a special effort with them, or....

GUTHMAN: Well, I don't think we tried to make a special effort with them. We tried to treat them like we treated the others. They were men who were good at their craft. I knew Simeon Booker for a long period of time, had total confidence in him as a man, as a journalist. I had a good relationship with Chuck Stone, and there are a number of other Negro reporters.

STEWART: Let me ask you about deciding on the type of cooperation you'd give to people who were writing major articles or books. Oh, for example, Robert Thompson [Robert E. Thompson] wrote the book, The Brother Within. What general criteria would you use in evaluating a person's request to do a major article or book? I imagine you got quite a few requests, some you cooperated with extensively, and some you didn't.

GUTHMAN: Well, I don't think we had any general rules on that. It was sort of you played it by ear. You know, if you can give me a name, I could tell you pretty much how we cooperated, or what we cooperated with. Robert Thompson, his background was this: He'd been a reporter who had covered the rackets hearings; he was in that group of men whom the Attorney General had that sort of special relationship with; so he wanted to write this book, and we were willing to cooperate with him up to a point. I'd known Bob, and I knew that he was a good newspaperman, and it wasn't very likely it was going to be a very good book. So there wasn't much point in just unloading everything that he wanted, you know, just because, if you take the book realistically, it wasn't going to be much of a book.

STEWART: It wasn't going to be?

GUTHMAN: No.

STEWART: Why?

GUTHMAN: I don't see how it could be. Well, just as I stated, I didn't think he would have the ability to, the depth, and you know, I don't mean to say that in a

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depreciating manner. I don't think I could do it, for example. I think there's certain news writers that can do it and some of us that don't have that particular ability. At some time along the line somebody may come along and want to write a book about Robert Kennedy, well, maybe that's the time you unload everything. But I certainly tried to help him every way we could. But you said, "How do you decide?" Well, I don't know. Some people you'd help more than others on the basis of their ability and on the basis of how much you could trust them.

STEWART: Were there many people wanting to write books that you, in effect, turned down?

GUTHMAN: I don't recall turning down anybody. You can't, I mean. . . .

STEWART: No, I mean, making it known to them that they weren't going to get as much cooperation as they'd need to write any kind of a book.

GUTHMAN: Gosh, you know, I suppose there were, but I don't just recall that. There were people writing books about.... I think if people were writing derogatory books, they wouldn't bother to come and see you anyway. There were a number of those, and there have been a number of those written. Who's the fellow that wrote JFK: The Man and the Myth? and then the book on RFK, you know, what's his name?

STEWART: Well, Shannon [William V. Shannon].... No, that's another one.

GUTHMAN: No, not Shannon.

STEWART: de Toledano [Ralph de Toledano].

GUTHMAN: Well, he's another, but what's the fellow that...

STEWART: Oh, Lasky [Victor Lasky].

GUTHMAN: Lasky. Well, I mean, Lasky, you know he's.... It wouldn't help him anyway. But I mean, he wouldn't bother to come and ask you either. You know, I think

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you know a writer is going to do a hatchet job and that's what they're doing, you're not going to help them. And then it's not likely that they're going to come and ask you. The rest of the people are well motivated and trying to do a decent job, you're going to try to help them up to a certain point. Heck, you're dealing with a man's career, and some of the matter in the government, you're dealing with sensitive material, and you want it to be handled with judgment, and so I think you sort of look at the writer's ability and how much you respect his judgment, and then within that sort of loose framework, you go as far as you think you ought to go.

STEWART: What about television specials? Didn't ABC [American Broadcasting Company] do a big thing on the Birmingham crisis, and they had some people actually following everyone around?

GUTHMAN: Yes.

STEWART: Were there many requests of this type? And were many of them turned down, or....

GUTHMAN: No. I think that the ABC thing—this was done by a special group and then sold to ABC—illustrates the willingness of the Administration to explore and go long ways to try to give the public some insight into what was going on. You know, I'd have to say, in retrospect, that that was probably a mistake, allowing the ABC crew to bring their cameras into the discussions and cover it the way they did. But it was a good idea. And the problem was that, I suppose, it's great to allow that all to be recorded; this film's someday going to be a great insight for historians to see President Kennedy, for example, how he actually talked, and without trying to—not totally aware that he was on camera. Now the thing was, this was done with small cameras, and a portable camera and a portable mike which was quite sensitive, which was never intruded, and after awhile you just forgot these people were there. And so nothing was held back from them so that, as I say, history's got a wonderful record of the meetings in the Department of Justice, in the Defense Department, and in the White House, and at the same time in Alabama with Governor Wallace, because he allowed them a certain amount of freedom, not as much as the Administration did.

But then to try to put that into a program, into an hour,

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and to get it so that it's really in perspective and so the things that were said are in context all the way, is almost impossible. And probably, a President shouldn't do it. But we tried it, and we thought that it would be a good thing to do from a historical standpoint, and we thought it would be a pretty good thing as far as afterwards, the public having an understanding of whatever the decisions were, how they were reached. I don't think the program had that impact. It caused a good deal of.... It was a headache for both Pierre Salinger and me, and I think that we probably were wrong to advise that.

But we tried that, and we tried other things. In "David Brinkley's Journal," we tried a couple things. Ted Yates was the producer of that program, the fellow that was killed recently in the Middle East. He was a very creative man, and so, of course, was David Brinkley, and so we tried a number of things with them. For example, they wanted to do a program on organized crime. Well, we allowed them to photograph a meeting in the Attorney General's office in which some of the problems, cases, were discussed, as it was done. I don't think it came off too well, actually. I mean, it sounds like a great idea always, and everybody wanted to do it. But yet there's something lost between once it gets on film and is edited and cut, not because anybody's trying to make a point of view or anything, but just something gets lost. But, anyway, we tried it.

And we were interested, as I said earlier, to try to open things up, and if people had ideas in writing or in television or radio, we were willing to explore them and see where we'd come out. As I say, I think we probably learned a good deal, and I think we wouldn't do some of the things that we did. But I don't think it hurt either. I mean it caused some of us a good deal of anguish—you know, as I say, it gave us a headache because we got into a lot of problems and difficulties over them—but in the last analysis, it didn't hurt the President, or it didn't hurt the Administration, and maybe in some sense helped.

STEWART: Were the initial arrangements for this ABC thing done by your office, by you, or by the White House?

GUTHMAN: They were done through me.

STEWART: And then who made the final decision to do it?

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GUTHMAN: Well, as far as the Justice Department was concerned, the Attorney General made the decision; as far as the White House was concerned, I assume the President made it, or Pierre, I don't know. But ultimately Pierre, you know, arranged for this crew to be present at the White House.

STEWART: Let me ask you a few questions about Robert Kennedy's press conferences and his general feelings about meeting with the press. How often did he have regular press conferences?

GUTHMAN: Well, he didn't have regular press conferences. We had press conferences when there was some reason for it. And they were irregular. I think that was.... He was always available to anybody. I don't know any reporter that couldn't get in to see him, even Drew Pearson. I mean we didn't like that, and we didn't make it very easy. But he was available. And he saw the reporters who covered the building regularly at least once a week, but he didn't do it on a press conference basis. I don't recall how many press conferences he had, but he didn't have a great many in Washington. He had them when it was necessary for, oh, something that needed a good deal of explaining, or there was a situation or a crisis in which he was involved; whenever he traveled, of course, he went from city to city, he held press conferences in various cities.

STEWART: I would assume that in his briefings for press conferences and for appearances, like on "Meet the Press," his briefing would have to consist of both Justice Department matters and Administration matters in general because they would be as apt as not to ask him about things not related to the Justice Department.

GUTHMAN: That's right.

STEWART: Was this a problem, or is there anything you could say about this briefing process that...

GUTHMAN: No, because he was well informed and we briefed him. If it was like "Meet the Press," maybe four or five of us would meet with him the day of it and ask him

a bunch of questions and have thought about what kind of questions he'd get and suggested some answers, and we'd discuss what kind of answers and try to anticipate, you know, what areas he was going to be questioned about. And he tried to prepare for them as best he could. But it was no problem really; I mean, you know, he had the information, he knew it, he had a very retentive mind, so that it wasn't ever any problem particularly.

STEWART: I was thinking more in terms of the getting ready for questions not related to the Justice Department, things relating to the Administration in general which he was frequently asked about.

GUTHMAN: Well, again, I don't recall anything that was major, you know. He knew, he was well briefed from the Defense Department, the State Department, and the White House, those would be the areas mainly, he knew pretty much what he could say and what he couldn't. He has good judgment. And he'd back off of anything he didn't feel he ought to discuss. I don't recall him ever doing.... I think the toughest press conference he had was in West Berlin at the time that he went there, the first time, in 1962, and it was a delicate situation, if you remember, internationally, and he held a press conference with the German press. It was just, you know, like holding your breath the whole time because they asked pretty difficult questions, and the thing that saved him there, was they didn't ask that second question; for some reason the German reporters don't follow up like the American reporters do, and he got through it, but it was very, very difficult. But he handled himself very well. He always handled himself well in a press conference and very, very seldom said something that later on he would wish he had said it a little bit differently or had not said it. So this worked out pretty well.

STEWART: Was he always relatively satisfied with his performance in a press conference type of situation?

GUTHMAN: No, I don't think so. There was an uneven quality to his public appearances of all kinds, whether it was press conferences or television appearances or speeches. And I always had the problem, was always curious as to why, what was the reason. Sometimes it would be a very good forum, and it'd appear that he had a good speech, and he'd do very mediocre. Other

times there would be a very, very difficult forum, and he'd do well.

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And I decided that it had something to do with the chemistry of the challenge that he seemed to get out of the audience or out of the situation. And the greater the challenge, the better he

did. As I say, whether it was the situation like in West Berlin, or whether it was the audience. And, if he could relate to the audience somewhat, if he liked the audience, or if he was determined that this was an audience he had to, why, he did very well. An example of that would be at the.... The first speech he ever made was one of the best he made was the Law Day speech at the University of Georgia. It was an excellent speech, but it was a real difficult forum.

And I think that's—particularly at that time, I think now he's more able to meet any situation a little better, but I think it's still true that he responds to the challenge. If he goes before an audience of well dressed middle class or wealthy people, and they're just there to hear some person speak, he can be very, very flat, despite having as well written a speech as you could get. He'd go before a bunch of kids in a junior high school and they start asking rather difficult questions, and he can rise to great heights. And you never knew. You know, he knew when he did well, and he knew when he didn't do well. We tried to do well every time, but it wasn't always successful.

STEWART: But was there anything specific as far as things you were trying to get him to do that he wasn't doing or....

GUTHMAN: You mean in physical things or....

STEWART: Well, I guess you'd have to distinguish between formal speeches and press conference type things.

GUTHMAN: Well, no. You mean, was he doing something and I thought he ought to do something else?

STEWART: Right.

GUTHMAN: No, I don't.... No, not really. He had a good style, he had an effective way of doing things, he answered concisely, he knew what he was talking about, and very few things that, if you'd—mechanical type of things, like on television, be sure you look at the camera instead of the ques-

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tioner over here so that you're looking at your audience rather than over here. This was difficult for him to remember to do because he'd get engaged in the conversation, that type of thing, but that's relatively minor. And he constantly improved; but really, again, it depended an awful lot on the circumstances and audience.

STEWART: That's interesting that there could be that much of a difference depending on the audience, and depending on the reaction.

GUTHMAN: I suppose performers have something like that, but he, you know, he really could reach a tremendous inspiration quality, but it might happen one out of five times. And then he might be very, just so half good, fairly good, and other times just flat. And it had more to do with the quality of the audience and the circumstances of the appearance, rather than something that might have happened at home, or at his office, or whatever the pressures that were with him, was not that so much, it was what was out there in front of him. And if he instinctively liked the audience, or if the circumstances were a real challenge, there were memorable experiences. You know, I can go down the list of these things, go through it, where did he do well. I could just remember them because they were things that just stood out in my mind. Again, I can tell you times when I thought he fell flat.

STEWART: Moving on, the whole subject of freedom of information and news management came to the fore during the Kennedy Administration, certainly Pierre Salinger devotes a big part of his book to this whole subject. To what extent was this whole matter a concern of yours during the three years? And maybe I should also add, did your opinions of the whole matter, as a newspaperman, change drastically because of your experience in Washington?

GUTHMAN: Can you ask that—a little specific in what you....

STEWART: Well, to what extent, if at all, were you concerned with reporters who were constantly digging at you for greater access or greater freedom to write and do what they wanted to, or was this a problem?

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GUTHMAN: Well, I didn't regard it as any great problem. Basically our feeling was that we should give reporters access to the Department of Justice, and that it was a public agency, and, therefore, we were conducting public business, and it ought to be done for the public. And that was our general philosophy, and as I said, I had spent most of my career as a reporter trying to get into public matters, and I wasn't going to come to the Department of Justice and start closing things up. And the Attorney General fully agreed, and it was his philosophy.

Now, obviously, there were troublesome reporters and troublesome incidents where it would have been very nice if there hadn't been a free press in this country. It would have been a lot easier for us. And you could have conducted your business and made your mistakes and gone about your way and not have to explain to anybody or worry that somebody might find out really what you were doing. Hell, we weren't in that kind of a situation, and I don't think we regarded that as any great loss, as a, you know.... We were devoted to the basic freedoms of this country, and we weren't going to do anything to lessen them.

A certain amount of the news management thing, we didn't have the problem that Sylvester had in the Defense Department, or that Pierre had at the White House. And they had much more difficult problems than we did and were under greater pressure than we were.

The Department of Justice is a relatively small department and staffed mostly by professional people, high caliber, by and large, career people. I think that, coming in from civilian life into the government, the one thing that I was always impressed with was the caliber of the people in the Department of Justice, the career people, and by and large there were very, very able and dedicated men and women. And so we didn't have the difficulties that Sylvester had with the military or in the State Department, where there were people who were accustomed to running to the press if they didn't agree with a policy—you know, and Pierre's problems in the White House. So it wasn't as serious a problem.

We didn't get the attention from the press that they got. The wire services had two reporters, an AP reporter and a UP

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reporter, Tony Lewis from the New York Times, and Jim Clayton of the Washington Post, and Miriam Ottenberg of the Washington Star were the only people that covered the Department regularly. Of those, Miriam Ottenberg was the only one who was a really investigative type reporter, and she did, and her main interests were in organized crime. And she got into a lot of things.

Now, the only other reporter who was interested much in what was going on in the Department of Justice along that line was Clark Mollenhoff, who had excellent contacts in the Department, knew a hell of a lot, and of course, he sometimes wrote stories which we wished he hadn't been able to dig out. And sometimes Tony Lewis would get a story in antitrust, or in some of the other divisions that jumped the gun. I don't think we got hurt by any of these things. Like I say, they might have been inconvenient, they might have exposed something that we wished they hadn't.

You asked did I change my views about reporters. Not really, I guess I would think that government agencies ought to be operated out in the public as much as they can. And it's important that they do, not only for the public knowledge but to discipline their own operations. I think that I wouldn't be as trustful of some newspapermen as I was when I originally went there. I think I thought, perhaps naively, that most newspapermen could keep a confidence, that they would be concerned about their relationship with the public official and their reputation for accuracy and reliability, and I think I'd have that in better perspective. In other words, I think that, after a year in the Department of Justice, I had a different idea—but basically not different. In other words, then it was a question of always find out who were the ones you could trust, and who were the ones who were interested in the truth and being accurate, and who were the ones who were just interested in making a name for themselves or running a story, or who were just gossips. And there were a lot of gossips among the press in Washington, and they run around telling each other everything, and pretty soon you find out that you might be a source for something that you didn't think you were going to be. So I think, you know, you learned to protect yourself a little better in that sense. But I don't think fundamentally that we changed much.

STEWART: You mentioned the other day—well, I don't know if you mentioned, but it's a well known fact—that in the Powers-Abel exchange the Herald Tribune found

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out before it beforehand and were asked to withhold it, which they did. Do you recall any other in incidents like this of having to go to newspapers, or to publishers, and ask them to withhold something?

GUTHMAN: Well, yes. Let me just say, as far as the Powers-Abel exchange is concerned, I don't think they were asked to withhold it. Now, if they were asked to withhold it, it was on a little different basis than I understood it. David Wise was the reporter, and I think that David knew that there was going to be an exchange. He came over to see me, and we fenced around with each other. He never asked me whether there was going to be an exchange. I think he didn't ask me because he didn't want to put me in a position of having to either tell him the truth or not tell him the truth. But I think that he knew, and I think that in my answers to him I indicated so that I confirmed what I thought he knew anyway. But we never actually said the words one to the other so that it was ever on the basis that he knew, and we had asked him not to print it. I think he didn't do it; I think he knew the sensitivity of the thing; he knew what was at stake if there was a premature disclosure. The Russians would have thought we were trying to end it, and there wouldn't have been an exchange. And I think that that was the kind of very commendatory role that he played. With a reporter like that, you have no problem telling him anything. I don't know what I would have done if he had asked me, "is there going to be an exchange?" What a hell of a thing. But anyway he didn't.

We had many times when reporters would find out about something, or we'd tell them. Perhaps the best example of that is when the efforts were being made to get the Bay of Pigs prisoners back. That began in late November 1962, and I think it was early in December that the Attorney General called a number of us in the Department of Justice and said, "We're going to get those fellows out by Christmas." And we thought, well, you know, you're out of your mind. But after some days, we began to see that we could. And you know, it was quite an effort. Well, I would think about the seventh of December, it was early in December, Monday morning Miriam Ottenberg showed up in my office, and she said, "Why was everybody working yesterday?" And she is not the kind of reporter you can lie to. And I wouldn't have done it

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anyway, but, I mean, there was no point in it, so I told her, and I also told her that the success of this venture rested somewhat on the fact that it was not the United States government that was involved—at least, that there was no appearance of the United States government being involved—and that either Castro [Fidel Castro] didn't want the United States government to be involved or didn't want the appearance. In any event, we knew that if this was openly a

government effort or the extent to which the government was involved in this, and particularly the Department of Justice, that it jeopardized the getting these men back. I told her what we were doing, and she went to her editor. We did not ask them not to run the story; we had, I suppose, some confidence in her and in the Star; and they said that they would not run it.

Now, subsequently, of course, others learned it. There was Jim Clayton of the Washington Post, and Tony Lewis of the New York Times, and a number of others. And we did the same with them. And the basis on which we did, we told them everything that was going on; we told them that they could stay completely abreast of what was going on, and as soon as we got those men out of there, they could write their stories of the effort that done, which they all did. And I think, finally, we told the AP and the UP so they'd know and, in sort of a sense, to protect ourselves.

The only place there was a breach in that, and it wasn't really a breach, but it was Jack Steele of the Scripps-Howard papers. And Jack wrote a story that the government was involved in this, I forget the exact date, but it came too late at that point. By the time he wrote that, I think it was the twentieth of December, and at that time it was well on, and it didn't attract a lot of attention. The others kept their word. And when the fellows got out, everybody got their stories. So it worked out pretty well.

STEWART: To go back a minute, did you say, as far as the Abel-Powers thing, that there was no direct contact by you with the Herald Tribune, it was just through Wise?

GUTHMAN: That's correct. The only person I talked to on the Herald Tribune was David Wise. Now, if there was any other contact with the Herald Tribune, either through the White House or through the State Department, I'm not aware of it.

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STEWART: I don't know, I vaguely remember reading some place

GUTHMAN: Well, that was with the exchange of the two pilots at the very onset of the Administration.

STEWART: Maybe that's it.

GUTHMAN: That was the Herald Tribune they did find out about that, and they were asked to hold it up.

STEWART: Yes, maybe that's the.... I'm confusing the two. Okay, why don't we get into the first major civil rights crisis, which was the Freedom Riders affair in May of 1961. As far as the press was concerned, what were your major

concerns in this first crisis? One of the things that I think is important, and possibly you'd have something to say about it, is this whole matter of the involvement of the press in these crises. It, of course, was often charged by Southern political leaders that the press, by being there and asking questions and going around with their cameras and television cameras, were actually inciting people and getting the thing worked up to much more than it really was. Was this a problem, was this something that you were concerned with, in the Freedom Riders or later?

GUTHMAN: No, I wasn't. You mean about whether somebody was doing something for the press, or that the press was making the situation more difficult?

STEWART: Yes.

GUTHMAN: No, I wasn't concerned with that. I don't think that there's much validity for that. I suppose that there're some incidents where television cameras have caused people to do things, or act. You can get that both ways, I suppose. But I never was much concerned with that. I never operated on that kind of basis.

STEWART: Did you go to Alabama during the Freedom Riders thing at all?

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GUTHMAN: No, I didn't. I didn't, no.

STEWART: I guess, well, one of the big items in that whole crisis was this matter of—there was a dispute with U.S. News and World Report as to whether, I guess they hinted in their story that the Attorney General had provoked these people to take the bus and go down there. Do you recall this?

GUTHMAN: No, not exactly. I don't recall that. That is possible. You know, we didn't even hardly know—he didn't know they were going. I recall that Burke Marshall had gotten a press release or something that these people were going, and he and I had discussed it. And he might have discussed it. And he might have discussed it with Byron White [Byron R. White], I don't know whether he did or not. We were only dimly aware of what they were doing. And they'd gotten through Virginia and North Carolina, and South Carolina, and Georgia. And then it just burst on us.

Wallace Turner, who was Director of Public Information for the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, accompanied Byron White and the marshals to Alabama. He had been a reporter on the Portland Oregonian, was another one of the men who had covered the rackets hearings, been involved in that, and was a close friend of mine and also had a close association with the Attorney General. And I stayed in Washington, and we asked Wally if he would go down and handle the press, and he did. He's now a reporter for the New York Times in San Francisco. But I do kind of dimly remember some... But I don't recall that about the Attorney General having sent these people down. I don't recall it as anything of

any really great.... In any event, I don't think he knew anything about it. He, at that time, you know, was involved in the Bay of Pigs investigation. And he wasn't at the Department of Justice, only, you know, maybe a couple of hours a day, or he might come in afterwards for an hour or two in the evening. As I say, we were aware that they were going on this trip, but that's about all.

STEWART: Is there anything else about that whole situation that stands out in your mind? Of course, the problem with this, and with other crises is that so much has been written about them, and there's certainly no need in going over

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the whole thing, minute by minute, but....

GUTHMAN: Well, one thing that might be interesting, it told something about the Kennedy Administration, I think, that gave it a little bit different character than either the Eisenhower Administration or the Johnson Administration. And that was this, that virtually every person in the Kennedy Administration had been in combat over a fairly long period of time in the Second World War. They had been deck officers or platoon leaders or enlisted men, non-coms, and many of them, like the President, had had fairly long periods of combat, and almost all of them had put in three to five years of military service. And they knew how, instinctively, to do things rather quickly. I don't think that any group of men could have mounted this force of five hundred marshals that went down there with Byron White unless they had had this kind of background. And I think that just in the logistics of the whole thing, of the how do you do it, the improvising that went on, the thought about communications, the thought about transportation, the thought about feeding, of all the things that a guy thought of when he was a platoon leader or non-com or was an enlisted man, he had to think about all these things. And as a result of that, they rather quickly got together a force of five hundred men.

The problem was that the President and Attorney General did not want to send the United States Army down there. The experience of Little Rock was fresh in their minds, and they wanted to do it without the appearance of uniforms. All right, where do you get those men? There were about a hundred and fifty U.S. Marshals who were young enough to take that kind of duty. Where are you going to get some more? Well, what about the Immigration Service, what can they do? The Border Patrol, immigration fellows come back, "Well, we've got X number of Border Patrolmen. We can get them." Well, how are you going to get them there? Prison guards. The whole thing. And it just started to come together. And if you look at the men who were involved in it, every one of them had this experience in the service, and they started thinking about how you get men fled, how you get them moved, how you get them armed, how you get them organized, and it just, you know, it went like that. And it was remarkably successful for an operation that was just pulled together in a very short period of time.

It's like all this down at Mississippi, there was a lot of this, too. When we got to the Lyceum Building, the first thing

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we did was to go to a pay phone and put in a dime and call the Department of Justice, and we got another phone and we placed a call to the White House. And all through the night somebody manned those two phones. The result was that the President was getting information of what was going on there directly, while the Defense Department was getting it roundabout. So the President was always well ahead.

About four days later, Nick Katzenbach and I were going back to Washington. They had sent a jet down for us, a little jet, and we picked it up at Memphis, and there was a signal corps general there, and he asked, could he ride back with us, and we said sure. We got on the plane, he was a major general, and he said, "Well," he said, "you guys really screwed this up. It's the worst thing that's ever happened to me in my whole career." And he said, "You were getting this information to the President, and the Justice Department. You were way ahead of the Signal Corps." And he said, "Tell me, how did you do it?" And Katzenbach just reached in his pocket and took out a dime, and he said, "Well, General." The general laughed. But, I mean, there was that thing all through the government, and particularly within the Department of Justice, and the people there could react very quickly, and they were falling back, rather consciously or unconsciously, on their military experience.

STEWART: In terms of the press coverage of these crises, specifically the Freedom Riders thing and Oxford, what were your major concerns? Or is it possible to generalize about them?

GUTHMAN: Well, I think we had two major concerns. One, that there was accurate reporting of what happened, and who did what to whom. And the other thing, which was most difficult, was to clarify the role of the government in the thing. For example, the Freedom Riders, what role does the government have? And, of course, the role was the right of people to travel in the United States when local authorities couldn't or wouldn't move to protect them.

At Mississippi, the issue was whether a federal court order was going to be obeyed. And that's a rather fundamental issue. To try to get it clear that it wasn't.... The federal government had nothing to do with Meredith [James Howard Meredith] going into the University of Mississippi; the federal government didn't send

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Meredith to the University of Mississippi, had had no contact with Meredith about going to the University of Mississippi. He went to the University of Mississippi; there was a suit involved in that and, ultimately, a federal court ordered that he go. And then when he tried to go in furtherance of the court, the state of Mississippi moved to interfere with the court order. Well, that was difficult.

And always through all these civil rights things, the role of the federal government, why it was doing what it did, or why it didn't do something. And it was very, very difficult because you're involved in the whole federal-state relationship. The law may be fundamental, but it's awful difficult sometimes for people to understand, depending which side of the issue they're on. It was difficult for Southerners to understand why the federal government was concerned whether a man like James Meredith got into the University of Mississippi, or that the Freedom Riders could travel on a highway; and on the other hand, it was difficult for many people in the North to understand why the federal government didn't do more in many instances. And so that was a continuing problem, and that was a major problem.

STEWART: This leads into something else I want to ask you about. In terms of the overall, I hate to use the word image, the overall picture that you wanted people to have of the Department of Justice during that period. Was there some kind of an overall picture? For example, there was a good deal of criticism and reservation, I think, when Robert Kennedy was appointed Attorney General by liberal people that possibly he wasn't as much of a liberal as they would have wanted in that position. Was this a problem that you were aware of from the beginning and consciously trying to do something about?

GUTHMAN: No, I never thought about it in that way at all. And neither did the Attorney General. We felt that if we did our job, and we maintained relationships with the news media and that we could get accurate reporting of what we were doing, the public would understand what we were doing, and that was the way you got public acceptance. And frequently, the Attorney General took upon himself the responsibility for things in the civil rights area, particularly—but in other areas—which he might have avoided somewhat. He saw his role as drawing away from his brother some of the criticism, some of the

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responsibility, that might go to the Presidency. He never considered himself as going to ever run for public office and, therefore, really didn't care. There were a number of times when he was getting his head knocked off on something that we did in the South where I'd say, you know, "You don't have to accept all this. You can do something about that." He'd say, "No, I'd rather it be on me than on my brother." And he'd say, "I'm never going to run for anything, and he is, so I don't care." And the other thing was that he took responsibility sometimes... For example, the most glaring thing, and probably the thing that had carried with him, the public image of him as Attorney General, was the waking up of newspapermen in the steel crisis.

STEWART: Yes, I was going to ask you about that.

GUTHMAN: Which was something he had nothing to do with. But it was done by an FBI supervisor who felt that it was important to see these newspapermen and sent his men out in the early morning hours. And the next morning when there was a storm about that, we talked about what we could do, and he decided it rather easily. He said, "Well, I get credit when the FBI does something good, and I'll take the responsibility when they blow one." And so he just simply said, "I'm responsible for this." That was one of the things that the FBI didn't bother to clarify. And not that it made any difference at that time. You know, again, he wasn't thinking of himself as a candidate for public office. As he did, he did get credit when the FBI made a case or did something. So he took the blame.

The fact was he didn't know anything about that, had nothing to do with sending the agents out to the homes in the early morning hours. So that was the way we, you know, operated, and we thought that if we were doing right, and it got out, ultimately, the public would accept what you were doing.

STEWART: And there was nothing more, as I say, as far as image was concerned?

GUTHMAN: Well, I don't, you know, I'll tell you, though—you mean to make somebody look like they're not?

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STEWART: Well, no, no. Again, you read so much about, well, the type of image that either the Department or he was trying to create as far as his conservatism or liberalism was concerned. And, you know, I guess what I was asking, basically, was if there was any conscious attempt to deal with the public reaction to him or to the Department, however that might have been.

GUTHMAN: Well, as far as the question of whether he'd be a good Attorney General or whether he was too young to be Attorney General or any of that, I just figured that the evens would take care of that one. Our actions, our performance would either be good or bad, and we'd have to rise or fall on that. Obviously we tried to put the best light on everything he did. Sure, we were conscious that there were people who felt that he might be soft on Communists, or others who felt he might not do.... But I don't recall ever having any discussions along that line as to whether you did or did not do something on that kind of a basis, it was never a factor. You might make a speech some place. It made sense to make the Law Day speech in 1961 at the University of Georgia; it made...

STEWART: To firmly establish what the goals of the Administration were going to be.

GUTHMAN: Yes, right. Or to make it in Georgia and not out in Nebraska some place. In that sense, you thought about the wisdom of where you did things and how you did them, but I never recall discussing whether we were doing

something in a liberal or conservative way. We went to make speeches, or do things, as I say, out of....

The major speech that he made on antitrust policy, for example, he made in New York City before the Executive Club at the Waldorf Astoria, and it was a disaster as far as the audience was concerned. It was a good speech, but those men didn't want to hear that. The effort wasn't to, here, all right, you go before the men who are most affected and lay it out. Oh boy, that was a tough night. You went to the American Bar Association, and you went before various groups of all nationalities—Poles, Negroes, Jews, Indians, you know—in the context of this was something that you ought to do, this was a good thing to do, and it was good for the Administration, but not necessarily in the way you

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put it. And as I said, the Attorney General was really not too concerned about it.

STEWART: Bear in mind, I'm only asking the question...

GUTHMAN: Oh, I understand that, I understand that. I'm not, you know....

STEWART: All right. Because, again, I think in the popular mind there is a connotation that there was some image building in one way or another there, and I think, you know, that there is some discussion about it.

GUTHMAN: I'd say that the conscious image building was this: that it disturbed me always that there was this kind of stereotype about Robert Kennedy that he was a ruthless, hard charging person who was not too considerate of people's rights and determined to win at all costs. Well, that wasn't the man I knew, and it wasn't the man I had known from 1956 on. Now, he matured tremendously by the time he became Attorney General, had matured way beyond his years. But the man I knew was a bit different from that, and I always sought to encourage people to try to get at the real person that I thought that he was. And it was difficult because, first of all, he's a difficult man to interview. And secondly, because of the stereotype, writers were always under the pressure that if they didn't deal with the stereotype, somebody would think they had gone soft on the Kennedys, so that with rare exceptions they always had to deal with the stereotype.

Probably the best piece written about him, I think, while he was Attorney General was done by Paul O'Neil [Paul E. O'Neil] for Life magazine. And O'Neil had all the preconceived notions about Kennedy, but he also is an unusually fine writer and reporter, and he spent a good deal of time getting underneath these stereotypes, and then wrote, I think, not a totally friendly article maybe, but it was one that had him, Kennedy, at least much greater insights into what kind of a man he was and the character. Sometimes it was difficult, and distressing, because publications or writers felt that they had to deal with the stereotype. Now, Newsweek, one time...

STEWART: Wait a minute, why don't you stop right there, I've got to change this.

[BEGIN SIDE I TAPE III]

GUTHMAN: One time the Washington bureau of Newsweek wanted to do an article on Kennedy, as the way they saw him, so it was done by Ben Bradlee [Benjamin C. Bradlee], who was the bureau chief, and Jay Iselin [John Jay Iselin] and a couple of other men. And what they wanted to do was to take Kennedy now, what was he like now, what was he doing now, and take him from today forward. And they did, and they wrote their article, and they submitted it, and it was a cover story. And I gather that the editors of Newsweek felt that if they ran that story and didn't deal with the stereotype, everybody would think they had flipped over to the Kennedys. And so somebody up there dealt with the stereotype, and you can see where the article just breaks in half. It starts out dealing with the stereotype, and you mash through the stereotype, and then all of a sudden, like this, [snaps fingers] you go to the new story. And that has always been a problem, and I felt strongly about that, and I suppose, in the sense that there's any image building, that's what we were trying to get over. But it was very difficult.

STEWART: And certainly, it lasted through the whole three years.

GUTHMAN: Well, it's still going on. That's still a problem for him.

STEWART: As far as Oxford is concerned, again, as I say, so much has been written about this that I wouldn't want you to go over an hour by hour thing, but are there any general comments you could make as far as the handling of the press that night was concerned? To what extent, for example, did you in your own mind assume a certain responsibility for their safety, for their physical safety? Or was this a....

GUTHMAN: Well, to the limit of what we could do at that point. I had met with some of the reporters on the steps of the Lyceum Building while the demonstration was going on, the kids were.... It was, you know, just sort of building up. And I said, well, I'll go down to the motel where they were staying, all the reporters, and I'll meet them there about eight o'clock. You know, I didn't think we were going to get into what

we got into. So I briefed them and asked them if they had any questions and so forth.

Well, of course, then it erupted, and some of the reporters were inside with us and some were caught outside. Well, I could do nothing as far as the reporters who were outside, and, of course, we did take care of the men who were inside. One reporter was wounded, shot in the back, an AP man from Memphis. But, sure, those that made their way into the Lyceum Building during the night, or anything, we took care of them and certainly felt some responsibility for their safety. But they were also experienced newsmen, they knew what they

were getting into. The next morning, of course, we had, I think, probably three or four hundred newspapermen there.

STEWART: I was going to ask you about how many.

GUTHMAN: Certainly over three hundred. We had press conference. It had been decided that I would answer the questions and that Katzenbach would not. I don't recall why that decision was made, except I guess it was just not putting the top officials of the government on the stand. So I held, oh, in the next three or four days, press briefings or conferences twice a day, which was what the reporters wanted. The first time I brought Jim McShane [James J.P. McShane] to the press conference on that morning after, and we just answered questions. They were held in a room in the Lyceum Building, and we stood on a table, there were that many people there, so that everybody could see us and hear our questions. We had very good cooperation from the press there, and they understood the difficulties of their position. In other words, you have this small campus and three hundred or so newspapermen and photographers and television men, and it was almost unmanageable. But we worked out pool arrangements for everything, and it worked out very, very, well. And we would pick someone from the reporters—they picked their own, television people picked their own, and the radio and the newsreels, and the stills. It worked well.

I think the one anecdote which is kind of interesting: When Meredith went to class the first day, the reporters wanted to go to class with him, and the University of Mississippi said nobody could. I didn't see why the reporter shouldn't be there, but the University was adamant about it. We went to the head of the

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University about it—so did John Doar, both of us went—and we got nowhere. So...

STEWART: You were asking that people be allowed to stay...

GUTHMAN: That a reporter, that one reporter be allowed to attend the class as a representative of the press. So we got turned down, and so we talked with the reporters, and we finally decided that there were two reporters who might get in anyway. One was Harry Ferguson of the United Press, and the other was... [Tape recorder turned off—resumes]... Relman Morin [Relman G. Morin] of the Associated Press, both of them are elderly men. Oh, they look like professors; they didn't look like newspaper reporters although they're two of the best in the business. So we decided that we'd try to get Harry and Pat into the class, and everybody was delighted with that because we figured we could do that. Nobody would ever take them for reporters. So they did. They just went in, and they sat down, and they got along pretty well, but finally....

STEWART: No one was screening people going in?

GUTHMAN: No. Well, they just didn't look like reporters. Both of them are outstanding reporters, but they just.... Pat Morin is tall, he looks something like President Eisenhower, except he's taller, with balding hair, and probably, at that time, was fifty-eight, fifty-nine years old. Harry Ferguson is a jolly looking round-faced fellow, about the same age. And they didn't have any trouble getting in, but once they got in, they were in there for a while, and then somebody decided to ask them who they were, and, of course, they told, they said who they were, and they got kicked out. But they did get to see Meredith come into class, and they did get to see all the things.

STEWART: I thought you were going to say you took some young reporter who could go in as a student, or look like a student. There was no thought of that?

GUTHMAN: No, no, strangely enough there wasn't. I don't know that we had anybody down there who could fill the bill. There probably were some, but you know, most of the

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reporters were at least in their middle twenties, or their thirties. We didn't have anybody like that, and didn't think about that, as a matter of fact.

The reporting of that incident though, of course, was very important because it was a confused situation; you had the state of Mississippi and the authorities there putting out a version and we putting out another version. And we felt what we said was in accordance with the facts, and so a good deal rested there on what the reporters saw and did. And basically, as to what precipitated the violence, did the marshals precipitate the violence, or did the kids, or who did it? And so, certainly, it was important for us to tell everything that we knew, and give the full details and answer everything that we could get. I don't know that we were totally successful on that, but I think that, by and large, the public understood what the United States was doing there. And the reporting, I thought, was generally quite high caliber.

I think probably the best piece of reporting done out of that was done later by Look magazine, and they came in after the incident. They sent three reporters, George Harris [T. George Harris] and Christopher Wren [Christopher S. Wren] and George Leonard [George B. Leonard], I believe. It's an outstanding example of what newsmen can do coming in afterwards. And they began, I suppose they got down there—or they may have been there the time, I don't recall. But they went at this thing actively about two days after it started, or the day after, and then over a period of weeks worked at this thing as to reconstructing what did happen, and their report is the best thing that was done. And we gave them every kind of help that we could and got them any information that it was possible to get them.

STEWART: I should ask the question, was there absolutely any time that you were withholding from the press at that time, during the crises or the few days after?

GUTHMAN: I don't think so. I don't recall anything. I suppose if I went over.... Well, I just don't recall.

STEWART: I mean, nothing sticks out in your mind?

GUTHMAN: No, there's nothing.... I don't recall anything that we had that we were ashamed of, or that we would rather not have to come to public light. No, I don't recall anything like that.

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STEWART: Was Meredith made available to the press generally?

GUTHMAN: Well...

STEWART: Or at what point was he?

GUTHMAN: I don't believe Meredith ever held a press conference down there like that, in that sense. No, we didn't make him available. And I think, first of all, he didn't want to be made available, he wanted to go to school, he didn't want to.... He was, I think, somewhat, well, he took it in stride, at least outwardly, the incident which attended to his arrival there. He was interested in having as normal a stay at the University as was possible under the circumstances. He was never shielded from reporters and at times saw them individually, but I think it would have been wrong if he had had a press conference. That wasn't what he went there for. He went there to break the color line and to permit Negroes to get to the University of Mississippi, and wasn't interested in.... You know, he personally wasn't, and it wouldn't have been, from a public relations standpoint, any great thing to have him get up and.... So we didn't encourage it, but, most importantly, he didn't want it.

STEWART: Were all of his activities as far as the press was concerned handled through you or was there someone else?

GUTHMAN: No. No, Meredith was a very independent person, and he has some sort of a perhaps mystical quality about him. As far as the overall situation, we dealt with the press about his arrangements and that type of thing, and what was happening to him, what kind of protection he was getting, what, he was going to do, and all of that. But then as far as his own views, or what his thoughts were, we didn't handle that, didn't do anything about that. He, you know, he didn't always.... A couple of days later, the Army withdrew all of the Negro Soldiers who had come in and had them out in an encampment there by the airport, and he spoke out against that. And by the time he spoke out about it, we had already acted to correct that; in other words, when we became aware that the Army had done that. I recall I was

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going out to the airport with Nick Katzenbach, and here were all these Negro soldiers over there. And Nick moved immediately to end that situation. Well, it was several days after that that Meredith learned that it had happened, and he sounded off. Nobody could control him, and nobody tried. Other than, I suppose, John Doar tried to advise him that his best course would be to go about his business.

STEWART: Did the Army have the press man down there?

GUTHMAN: Yes, they had a number of men, and they were very, very good men. We began working with some of these men prior to that time and had known them or their superiors, you know, in the Department of Defense. They were cooperative, and they operated under our direction.

STEWART: Did you have much contact with the press officials of the University or of the state of Mississippi?

GUTHMAN: Well, not the state, but yes, I had a good deal of contact with the officials, not so much their press person, but the chief administrator and the assistant president and some of the deans. Yes, I did.

STEWART: But they had no one person who was handling their press?

GUTHMAN: They did. They did, and he was somewhat helpful to us. But they were all in somewhat of a compromise situation where nobody who helped us was sort of considered a collaborator, and so they were wary, but as far as the use of the hall and facilities and stuff like that, they were helpful.

STEWART: Were many members of the press that night helpful to you in a non-press way? There were a certain number of reporters inside the building with you that night, were they working with you on other things you were doing?

GUTHMAN: No, they were there on the scene, and they saw, and they were part of the.... We made it possible for those fellows to phone out their stories and that

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type of thing. We did that, but we didn't.... There was Tom Joyce of the Detroit News and a couple men from the AP and Jerry Greene [Charles J. Greene, Jr.] of the New York Daily News and a couple of men from Life magazine, and there were several others. But they didn't

help us, you know. Well, there wasn't much they could do anyhow, we were just staying in there trying to hold back the mob.

STEWART: Were you ever personally fearful that they were going to overcome the building physically?

GUTHMAN: No, I didn't really think so. But I certainly would have had some anxiety about the whole thing. I thought about that a good deal. I think Nick Katzenbach was thinking about something else. It was maybe two o'clock in the morning, and he was sitting on the front steps of the Lyceum building, and I walked up and sat down, and he said, "What are you thinking about?" I said, "Well, I'm thinking about where the hell the United States Army is and when they're going to get us out of this damn place." I said, "What are you thinking about?" "Well," he said, "I'll tell you what I'm thinking about." He said, "I'm thinking that at eight o'clock tomorrow morning we're going to take James Meredith, and we're going to march right up these front steps, and we're going to march him right in that front door and going to take him right up to that registrar, and we're going to register him, and we're going to take him to class."

STEWART: You fellows were all armed, I assume.

GUTHMAN: No, no we were not. The marshals were armed, but we weren't. I mean, that would have been ridiculous.

STEWART: Why?

GUTHMAN: Well, hell...

STEWART: I mean there was a possibility that....

GUTHMAN: Well, I suppose if you had gotten into that much.... The shooting was sporadic sniping. We weren't in a skirmish. There were a lot of shots fired, but they

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were fired at various intervals, and they never felt that we were in battle to that point that we had to take up arms to do it. Could have, of course. But we were not armed.

STEWART: Just one last question I have, were any special efforts made by you with the foreign press to make sure that they understood exactly what had been going on?

GUTHMAN: Sure. Oh, of course.

STEWART: I mean anything unusual, apart from what you were doing with everyone.

GUTHMAN: No, we certainly, you know, made people available, and particularly in Washington where Burke Marshall was available to the foreign press to explain the role of the government in this situation, why this had happened, and why we had to enforce the orders of the court, and that type of thing. You know, but all you can do there is to spend a good deal of time with people and answer their questions. But we did that.

STEWART: Okay, what about the march on Washington? In general, what special problems did this present for you as far as the press was concerned?

GUTHMAN: Well, I didn't have much to do with that, only peripherally. The thing that we were most concerned about is that the march would be carried out in good order and that there would be protection for the marchers and that there would be facilities for the marchers and that type of thing, and the press part of it was.... We didn't make any facilities for the press, or we didn't do anything like that. So I was not much involved in that part of it.

STEWART: The crisis in Birmingham in May of '63, were you down there at all?

GUTHMAN: Yes, I was.

STEWART: Again, is there anything outstanding that comes to mind that hasn't been written about or...

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GUTHMAN: Well, I don't know. There are a couple of things which might be interesting. We had a difficult time with the FBI down there. Whether the special agent in charge down there was just unfriendly towards us or whether he was under some kind of instructions or what, but we didn't get much cooperation from the FBI, we got surface cooperation. But our problem was to try to know what was going on, particularly in the Negro areas. And the FBI was either unable or unwilling to find out. And so we didn't bother much with what the FBI did, or what it was going to do.

We relied on two sources of information. One were the Negro attorneys who were in the Department of Justice who were over working among the Negroes who were letting John Doar know; and then the other thing was my contacts with Negro newspapermen. And they were very helpful to us, and our intelligence through the Negro attorneys and Negro newspapermen was way, way ahead of the FBI's. And, you know, it wasn't a situation where the Negroes were unfriendly to the Department of Justice at all, it was just a case of trying to find out. We were always trying to find out what was going on in the white community, but the access there was a little bit different. I think one other thing that might....

Of course, that incident down there settled once and for all whether there was the need to be civil rights legislation, and the Attorney General had talked to Burke Marshall when it was over and we were heading back, and he said that he wanted to see us in the morning, and we were to start having some ideas about what could be done. So going back on the plane that night discussions began as to what we could do about that. Then the next day the Attorney General had to make a speech down in North Carolina, at Asheville. So Burke Marshall, and Lou Oberdorfer, and Nick Katzenbach—I don't remember whether Nick was on that, I think he was, but anyway, Oberdorfer, Marshall, someone else, myself, and the Attorney General. There the genesis of that bill, the major parts of what was needed—in other words, it had to be the public accommodations bill, there had to be the other provisions—were discussed.

STEWART: Did you frequently get information from people in the press that you knew who had some association, or some contact within the civil rights movement, within particular organizations?

GUTHMAN: Some, yes, some, would get information, yes.

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STEWART: Anything of any great value, or...

GUTHMAN: You know, you're always trying to figure out what was—we were always trying to figure out what was going to happen: what the white people were going to do in a situation, and what the Negroes were going to do. So we were grateful for any information. I talked a great deal to people that I knew in the press, and they often told me a lot of things—I don't recall anything of great, you know, result—what they thought, or what somebody might have said to them that might be important as to what was.... It might be in a little town, or it might have been in Birmingham.

STEWART: I was thinking more of any inside information about the activities or the plans of, for example, Martin Luther King's [Martin Luther King, Jr.] organization or any of the other organizations.

GUTHMAN: Well, no, because we could talk to Martin Luther King directly, we didn't have any problem with that, talk to him on the phone any time, or we saw him. The relationship that he had with the Department of Justice at that time was, I think, a pretty good one. He could reach the Attorney General any time he wanted to by phone, he could get to Burke Marshall, and they talked a great deal. A lot of times, he did things that they thought it would be better if he didn't do, but there was no question about what he was going to do, there was no mystery about that because there was a very open communication.

STEWART: Let's see, there's a few other things. Time is moving on. A general question about judgeships, was there always, or frequently, a problem of withholding information about people who were being considered for judgeships?

GUTHMAN: Not particularly. You mean, if somebody wanted to know if somebody was under consideration? Well, no, because, first of all, when a reporter asks you if so-and-so is under consideration, he had been told probably because FBI agents started going around asking the prospective judge or the candidate questions so that they knew he was under

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consideration. And so there's no point in kidding around on that. We used to say, "Yes, he's one of several people under consideration." Another thing, it was so easy to find out whether a man is under consideration. First of all, oftentimes senators will say who they've recommended, or what, you know, so there's never.... It was very routine.

STEWART: Were there any other problems as far as appointments that investigations were let out by the FBI before the Administration wanted it known?

GUTHMAN: No, I don't think the FBI ever did that. I don't recall any. There may have been some where people, where one group or another were opposed to a man becoming.... They might make it somewhat difficult—or try to. But it really wasn't very often decided on that type of thing, but more or less between what was going on between the senator and the Administration, and if the man were qualified, what kind of a man he was, and how powerful the senator was. You know, that was the arena in which the judgeship was decided. Very seldom, like, was there something like the Morrissey [Francis X. Morrissey] case. There was the Irving Ben Cooper appointment in New York where there was a good deal of public controversy over whether he was fit to be a judge, but he became a judge. And sometimes those were kind of sensitive as far as the press because people were pro or anti. But, you know, it wasn't a particularly major thing.

STEWART: What further association, if any, did you have with the whole Teamster investigation?

GUTHMAN: You mean, as it went on to the Department of Justice?

STEWART: Yes, yes.

GUTHMAN: Well, I was very interested in it all the way through. I was involved in all the major discussions that were held about what should be done, and I, you know, was.... From a public relations standpoint I considered what, you

know.... I don't recall anything that was specific, but, you know, in whether I arranged for reporters to talk to men who were involved with those investigations, when charges were filed,

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or anything like that, and getting stories of the amount of work that had been done, the degree of corruption that had been exposed in the Teamsters Union. I tried to encourage people to write about it, made information available to them.

We kept track of how many of Hoffa's close friends and associates had been charged, convicted or acquitted, and we kept a running record on that and made it available to anybody who wanted to see it. And we were involved in a difficult fight always as to motives of the Department of Justice, and whether this was a vendetta or whether there had been a criminal action that needed redress. And Hoffa used every means at his command, whether it was a publication like The Nation magazine or Drew Pearson's column, or any place that he could do it, and so, you know, there was a good deal of that kind of activity, countering it, heading it off, getting out the facts as we saw them. And basically, it was one of the more sensitive and one of the more difficult things we handled at the Department of Justice. Also, one of the most worthwhile.

STEWART: Were you generally satisfied with the amount of success you had in getting your story about Hoffa across to people, or the amount of interest the reporters had in the story of Hoffa?

GUTHMAN: Well, I've always been surprised that there was so much sympathy for Hoffa. The only reporters that really felt strongly about Hoffa were the ones that had been all through the rackets hearings, and they had had their noses pushed into that corruption and the violations of everything that they felt were ethical and moral, and they understood the challenge that Hoffa posed to the country, and they wrote about it. Now there were a few others. Ultimately, a fellow like Tony Lewis came to understand the depth of that situation, and one or two others. But by and large, it was easy, I think, easier for people to say, "Oh, that's a feud between Kennedy and Hoffa."

And I think perhaps many people today think that Hoffa was persecuted. And I think that one reason, perhaps: The New York Times took a kind of a light attitude about it, I don't know why. Abe Raskin was the labor reporter, he never seemed much concerned about Hoffa. Whenever he wrote about Hoffa, he always made him

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sound like a pretty good guy. And the New York Times, of course, paid off to the rackets, and that had been exposed during the rackets hearing. I think that made a difference because I think if the New York Times had taken the position of, say, the Seattle Times, or the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, it might have made a little difference in public opinion. But Life

magazine understood what it was all about. I think that we may have held our own, but we were against a determined and well-financed effort to paint a different picture.

And, oh, when you ask am I satisfied, I guess I'd have to say I'm not satisfied because I would think that people would have been repelled by what Hoffa did, and how he abused his power and misused the funds that were entrusted to him. I would think that would be pretty basic. And finally, the effort to pervert the whole system of justice, probably the most massive effort ever undertaken by Hoffa, and he got caught at it. And I would think things like that, when that happens, the people would just say, well, you know, that man is beyond the pale.

But you find a good deal of sympathy for Hoffa, and the fact is, of course, Hoffa would have destroyed the country as easily as anybody ever—if he could have had the power. It took some effort of the kind that Kennedy could mount, and the kind of people that he had working out and the... [Telephone interruption] The kind of people that he had were tough enough and skillful enough to combat Hoffa's effort.

I think perhaps you can sum it up in the caliber and the strength of the group, the fact that in the jury tampering trial the chief witness against Hoffa was a man whom Hoffa trusted implicitly, Ed Partin [Edward Partin]. There were probably about thirty-five people in the Department of Justice who knew that Ed Partin had become an informant for the Department, and knew that over a long period of time. And yet, when he took the witness stand and testified against Hoffa, it came as a great shock and surprise to Hoffa. I think that told something about the group, that they could keep that information, and there was no break in it, no indication, no nothing. I think that had it not been done, that if Hoffa had not been investigated and prosecuted, he would have been so powerful today that the country would have been a different country.

STEWART: Really? Going that far?

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GUTHMAN: I think that the amount of money that he had at his disposal and the strength and the will to use that money, and power to corrupt anything that he wanted, he would have tried to organize on a national basis, greater than he did, and use that power to control as much of the country as he could. I don't mean control in the formal government sense, but it was quite clear that as he acquired power, he used it corruptly. He used it to expand his power and to corrupt more. And I have no reason to think that he was ever going to stop, unless he was stopped.

So I don't think that anybody who worked on that, or really saw the depth of his connection with organized crime, and the complete evil of his own operation, of his own character, had any illusions as to what they were doing and what they were up against. And you know, he operated for a long period of time and was able to gain a great deal of power despite the fact that it was pretty clear that he had broken most of the standards under which people normally operate in this country. And so I think that was an important thing. Perhaps one of the most important things that the Department of Justice did.

STEWART: Do you ever recall any discussions within the Administration of the political effects of all this against Hoffa? You mentioned the fact that the irony of this was that he was still felt by a large number of people to be a persecuted man, and there was a certain amount of sympathy. Was there ever any discussions about potential political impact of this?

GUTHMAN: Yes. Not in quite that sense, not in the political impact of it. I think trying to have the public understand what was at stake was the important thing. If it had meant that everybody in the country thought that all the people in the Department of Justice were ogres, we would have gone ahead because we felt that this was the right thing to do, and that the seriousness of his acts, his potential damage to the country was so great that if he wasn't stopped some way, he would go on to bigger and worse things. So that was the first thing, that it was important to investigate his activities and to try to bring a case against him.

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But we tried very hard to make it clear that we were doing that on a legal basis, and that there had been crimes committed and there was no question about that, and that we would have been derelict if we hadn't tried to get evidence on which to bring a case, and that's the thing we worked on a lot. And also we tried to show the depths of the corruption in the Teamsters union, and the ties to organized crime and the abuse of power. And I think, you know, that then if everyone makes up their minds that Hoffa's really a good guy, there's not much you can do about it. But we did everything we could to get public understanding of what was at stake.

STEWART: And there was no real discussion that conceivably this would have some harmful political effects?

GUTHMAN: I don't know.

STEWART: No, I'm not meaning to imply that...

GUTHMAN: No, no, no.

STEWART: ...anything would have been changed if that had been the conclusion, but...

GUTHMAN: No, I don't think it ever was a factor. If it was, I never was involved in any discussion of it. And I think this, that anyone who had their background in the labor rackets hearings and saw, as I've said before, the depths of this operation, of Hoffa's activities, if they had any qualms about it at all—and that includes President Kennedy, he participated in the rackets hearings, that includes the FBI, and everybody that.... It was important to get your nose pushed right into this and see it all, as

much as you could. And it was a dismaying situation that it could happen in this country, that one man could get that much power. That he could be so immune to any counteraction was a frightening thing.

STEWART: Are there any anecdotes or stories about President Kennedy you would like to relate?

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GUTHMAN: I think my favorite recollection of President Kennedy occurred at a ceremony for the Young American Medals for Freedom in 1962, and the girls in my office did all the work...

[BEGIN SIDE II TAPE III]

...as far as going through the applications, preparing the whole thing. So when the ceremony was held at the White House and the young winners of these medals were brought over, it was one of the few occasions when the girls in my office could go to the White House. In fact, it was the only time that they did. And so they were there and all this, and at this time, in 1962, the President said to the people out there in the Rose Garden, "Would you like to see my office?" So everybody, of course, wanted to see his office, and they trooped into his office, the winners and their families and everyone.

I had a secretary whom I had hired recently, whose name was Wendy Sears, and her father was a very distinguished Republican lawyer in Boston, and I hadn't known this when I hired her. She'd been working for Congressman Bass [Perkins Bass], and he had been defeated, and she was looking for a job, and we needed a secretary, and so Wendy Sears was one of the girls in our office. And the name of Sears, of course, means something in Boston. Anyway, the girls were just coming out of his office, and he had been across over in the Cabinet room, and they passed like this, and I was standing there and I said, "Mr. President, I'd like you just to meet the girls who did all the work for this ceremony." And he said, "Oh, I'd be delighted to." I said, "This is Miss Junghans [Dorothy T. Junghans], Miss Sears, and Miss Minnick [Carolyn Minnick], and Miss Abdouch [Helen Abdouch], and Miss Nelson," and so forth, and went on down the line. And he stopped about four down the line, he went back to Wendy, and he said, "What did you say your name was?" And she said, "Sears, Mr. President." And he said, "Are you a Democrat?" And she looked at him and she said, "I am now, Mr. President." [Laughter] I always wondered, did he know who she was, or was it just the name? But it was a great incident.

STEWART: I don't think the name is... Well, there was a Sears that ran for mayor of Boston, a Republican, but I'm not so sure it's that prominent he'd remember the name. Maybe it is.

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GUTHMAN: No, her father was the lawyer who was going to represent Joe McCarthy, and then there was some conflict that he couldn't because he had...

STEWART: Oh, oh.

GUTHMAN: I mean, he was very—I can't think of his name. He died, oh, a couple of years ago. But he was, you know, a leading figure in the bar association; he was a very conservative lawyer and well-known in Boston and in legal circles around the country.

STEWART: Did you ever find out that she was from.... She was from that family, yes.

GUTHMAN: Yes, she was his daughter, she was a daughter.

STEWART: Yes. Did he ever find this out?

GUTHMAN: Yes, I told him later. But, I mean, you know, it was the greatest double take, because he....

STEWART: What was the ceremony? The Young American...

GUTHMAN: The Young American Medals for Freedom. The Congress established the Young American Medals for Freedom, and the committee that selects.... Young American Medals for Bravery, I guess it is. Excuse me, did I say freedom?

STEWART: Yes.

GUTHMAN: Young American Medals for Bravery. Young people who have done courageous acts are nominated by their governors, and the entries are submitted to the Department of Justice. The Director of Public Information is the secretary of that, and the selections are made by J. Edgar Hoover and the Solicitor General and the Director of Public Information in the Department of Justice. There are just two or three a year, and their families are brought back

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to Washington, and they receive the medals in the White House. It's a very nice ceremony, and the kids have always done, you know, incredible acts of courage, of saving people in a fire, or saving somebody from drowning at sea, or, you know, incredible things. So it's a nice ceremony and, as I say, the one thing that the secretaries in the office of Public Information have a reason to go to the White House and see the President and to see this kind of thing.

STEWART: Okay.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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