

William A. Keel Jr. Oral History Interview, 3/7/70
Administrative Information

Creator: William A. Keel Jr.
Interviewer: Ann M. Campbell
Date of Interview: March 7, 1970
Place of Interview: Washington, D.C.
Length: 31 pages

Biographical Note

Keel was research director of the Democratic National Committee [DNC] from 1963 to 1964. In this interview, Keel discusses the relationship between the DNC and John F. Kennedy's White House staff and preparations for the 1964 election, among other issues.

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William A. Keel, Jr., recorded interview by Ann M. Campbell, March 7, 1970, (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

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William A. Keel – JFK #1

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Oral History Interview

with

WILLIAM A. KEEL, JR.

March 7, 1970
Washington, D.C.

By Ann M. Campbell

For the John F. Kennedy Library

CAMPBELL: Mr. Keel, why don't we start out by your explaining how you first came into contact with John Kennedy [John F. Kennedy], or some facet of his career. Was it when you joined the Committee [Democratic National Committee]?

KEEL: Well, in 1962 I was a political reporter for the *Nashville Tennessean*, and was of course a supporter of President Kennedy. And the editor of the *Tennessean* and my close friend was John Seigenthaler. And I simply decided that I wanted to come to Washington. Through John's influence I secured a position as assistant to Mr. Samuel C. Brightman, who was then deputy chairman for public affairs for the committee. This was in September of '62, and I was employed to work initially in the congressional campaign.

CAMPBELL: Maybe we could talk just a little bit about the framework of the committee, how it was set up, who talked to who. Who did Brightman answer to? Directly to Bailey [John M. Bailey]?

KEEL: Yes. At that time H.W. Brawley, known as Bill Brawley, was the executive director during the '62 congressional campaign. Brightman answered to

him and to Bailey. He was very close to Bailey. Bailey trusted him and he liked the way Sam did speeches, and he thought Sam was a very, very shrewd, experienced public affairs man in Washington, and had been around. Bailey

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leaned on him for advice on public relations.

CAMPBELL: Brawley, now, had come over from the Post Office Department. How was he fitting into the committee when you came on the scene?

KEEL: As far as I could tell he was doing a beautiful job in organizing the campaign. In fact Bailey was never really too much involved in the actual administration of the committee. His big value was his knowledge of politicians and politics, and he worked much in the public relations aspect of it, in effecting liaison with the leaders in the states. He could talk their language in the back room. And of course he also did the ministerial function of making speeches and going to meetings throughout the country, Democratic meetings, exhorting the party faithful to greater effort.

CAMPBELL: I noticed that once in a while you seemed to get involved in preparing speeches for him. I was just interested to know if his speeches had to be cleared through the White House? Did they clear through anybody?

KEEL: The routing party speeches were not cleared, because they were either placing blame or praising the administration. There was no problem there. We had some extremely difficult times during the Cuban crisis in getting speeches cleared. As the crisis was developing in Cuba, of course we had no idea of what was going on. We simply knew that there was an air of crisis, and that the White House was extremely sensitive and if you mentioned Cuba they'd scream. We had one speech we sent over, and Brightman attempted to try to get it approved. And Salinger [Pierre E. G. Salinger] would say, "Just hold off, just hold off." We were trying to give Democratic state leaders some guidance, at that time, without knowing what was going on. The situation was that the Communists were in Cuba a few miles away, and the Republicans were crucifying us out in the boondocks. So we were trying to give our people some guidance and some policy. Of course you can imagine the White House didn't want to say anything about Cuba at the time. And to go ahead and complete this thread, the night that the President made his speech on Cuba I was a guest of Paul Corbin at the New Frontier Club. Just prior to that the President had called John Bailey in off the hustings, and he had called him -- according to what Bailey in off the hustings, and he had called him -- according to what Bailey told us when he came back -- and said, "Don't do anything to hurt me. Come on home," or words to that effect. The President of course had been out west, and had faked a cold or something and come on home. There was a real tense atmosphere at that time. People were talking about civil defense, and storing up food, as the crisis built up and before they had their eye-to-eye confrontation and the Russians backed off. And everybody

was called in and politics stopped. This was the strategy: stop your politics, because of -- for obvious reasons.

CAMPBELL: Cuba had been characterized by Republicans earlier in October as the dominant issue in '62. Did the DNC [Democratic National Committee] agree with that?

KEEL: Well, we tried to make it not the dominant issue, but obviously it was, because the Republicans could play on the apprehension of the American people by saying that the Communists were now just a few miles away in Cuba, which they often did.

CAMPBELL: I notice that in the election finally, four members of the Birch Society [John Birch Society] were defeated, Rousselot [John H. Rousselot] and several others. I know that later you made a big push against the far right, but was that a question in the '62 campaign?

KEEL: Yes. Yes, I can recall writing speeches. I wrote speeches primarily for Mrs. Price [Margaret B. Price], who was vice chairman, and also I prepared packages for them when they went on their tours from place to place, both her and Bailey -- although Brightman did Bailey's major speeches; I had just gotten there. And there was a lot of emphasis on the far right.

CAMPBELL: To what extent did the research operation get involved, just in -- let's talk about '62 -- state races, the big governor's races that year? Would DNC research get involved in that at all? For instance, Ohio with Rhodes [James A. Rhodes] and DiSalle [Michael V. DiSalle]?

KEEL: Now, you really need to talk to Robert Spencer, who was research director. I was a speechwriter, and they were involved in this whole process of providing information to the individual states and sending materials. But I think really the issue, the successful confrontation on Cuba, helped to offset the trend and resulted in a change of I believe only four seats in Congress. Is that correct?

CAMPBELL: Right, a very good result. Was there a feeling at DNC that Edward Kennedy's candidacy in Massachusetts might have been harmful to other Democrats?

KEEL: I've never heard that expressed.

CAMPBELL: Do you know at all what considerations entered into the President

deciding to be an active campaigner in '62? I believe he was more active than Presidents have been sometimes in off-year elections. Of course, before the crisis.

KEEL: Well, the general feeling was that the President wanted to demonstrate his popularity and to hold -- at least hold -- what he had in Congress, because he was having enough problems then anyway. So he decided to make an all-out effort to do this. And of course the concentration, as far as the Committee was concerned, was on the marginal districts -- you understand? Charles Roche, who was deputy chairman and assistant to Bailey, was really the expert on marginal districts. In these files I will give you is a listing of the marginal districts and Charles's assessment of each race.

CAMPBELL: Who at the DNC did the deciding how efforts would be divided in -- I suppose there were many marginal districts. Who would get involved in assigning energies to a certain race, or assigning funds, for that matter?

KEEL: Well, Maguire [Richard Maguire] was treasurer, and I would say Brawley, Bailey, Maguire, and Roche would be the principals.

CAMPBELL: I notice that long about that time a candidate in Tennessee named Wilkes Thrasher [Wilkes T. Thrasher, Jr.] was appointed as a special representative of the President to go to Trinidad for their independence ceremonies, apparently to enhance his standing at home. I wondered if you had anything to do with that?

KEEL: No, I didn't. I'm familiar with the situation. Wilkes Thrasher was a nominee at one time and ran against Brock [W.E. Brock], and because of division within the Democratic party and the fact that certain elements in Tennessee let their vindictiveness override their better judgment politically, we now have a Republican congressman in Chattanooga and the third district.

CAMPBELL: When the missile crisis broke, did you people at DNC immediately -- you called off campaigning.

KEEL: The President said, "Call off politics," and called everybody in, and we just sat there.

CAMPBELL: How did you feel? Of course until it ended you probably weren't able to assess its political implications.

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KEEL: Well, we felt that just incidentally there would be favorable political reaction. The President had demonstrated his ability internationally. As

you know, when he and Khrushchev [Nikita S. Khrushchev] had their initial meeting in Vienna, he didn't come out too well. Khrushchev chewed him out, supposedly. But the Cuban Missile Crisis showed that he had the courage and resources to be a president who would, as far as I'm concerned, be regarded historically as a great President. Had he weakened here, the consequences could have been catastrophic.

CAMPBELL: In that '62 campaign, and before the crisis, cabinet members were very active, most cabinet members. Did DNC do the scheduling for cabinet members in campaigning?

KEEL: Well, just based on my later experience in the '64 campaign, I'm going to say yes, because traditionally the national committee has a speakers' bureau, and if they weren't scheduled they were certainly cleared, the schedule was cleared, and there is usually a reason for sending persons to specific places. There was an unusual and tragic situation in California, in the first district -- Clem Miller, who was a great congressman, was killed in an unfortunate airplane crash. And he was then elected dead. They had a runoff election, and I was sent out from the national committee to work. And my friends -- my going to California was Chuck Roche's idea -- my friends felt that they were sending me out in a situation where I was bound to be bloodied. But anyway, I went. We lost the election, but it was a worthwhile experience. I wandered off your question.

CAMPBELL: It was just a question of scheduling.

KEEL: Scheduling. Well, the point I was going to make was that while there, this was a very conservation-oriented district, so we called in Udall [Stewart L. Udall]. Udall came in, and this was a situation where you had no Democratic press, you were at the mercy of the Republican press, and so that picture that appeared of Udall was him sitting on the divan, barefooted, with his shoes lying in front of him on the floor.

CAMPBELL: Do you recall if special energies were devoted to the '62 gubernatorial race in California -- that was the Nixon [Richard M. Nixon] - Brown [Edmund G. Brown] race. I've heard the President hesitated to get involved in that. Do you....

KEEL: I'll have to check and fill that in.

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CAMPBELL: Yes. Let's get back to the cast of characters at the committee. You've mentioned Chuck Roche a couple of times.

KEEL: Chuck was another very abrasive guy. He was abrasive and Paul Corbin was abrasive, and they were at each other's throats frequently.

CAMPBELL: What did Roche spend most of his time at?

KEEL: Congressional races. Congressional candidates would come in, and sometimes I would take them around and introduce them to congressional departments and officials, and they would have their pictures made with the President. Chuck would receive them and chat with them, and we'd find out what their problems were, what they needed, and what the prospects were for the campaign. Chuck was very sharp on this, very sharp, very experienced, although I did not consider him to be my friend.

CAMPBELL: How did his activities, then, relate to the congressional campaign committees that were on the board? Or were they mainly for incumbents?

KEEL: Well, I would say the main function of those campaigns on the Hill -- number one -- is money. In other words, it was interesting that when I took candidates over on the Hill, Ken Harding [Kenneth R. Harding] would immediately take them away from me, and immediately let me know that he was running the show over there, and that they could expect x dollars -- which was about all they had to offer except clippings from the *Congressional Record*. They would keep a clip file on everything that a Republican opponent had said in a district. And that was about it. They would of course take a candidate around and introduce him to McCormack [John W. McCormack], and Carl Albert and have a picture made, or with the head of the delegation from a state, if he was a Democrat. But there was sort of a tenuous relationship between the two Committees. In other words, there was really no conflict, because the congressional committee did have money: that was its forte, that was about all it did. About all they did was provide money and these clippings from the *Congressional Record*.

CAMPBELL: So in the research area there was a duplication of effort.

KEEL: We didn't clip the *Record*.

CAMPBELL: Oh, you didn't.

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KEEL: We didn't clip the *Record*, because they did. Now, since you've gotten into that, Mrs. Hannah Stokes [Hannah Hunt Stokes], who is the widow of the famous columnist Thomas Stokes, kept a detailed voting record on every Republican. So, while we didn't clip the *Record*, we had every vote that was made, and these were invaluable to candidates.

CAMPBELL: Did you ever get involved in helping candidates until the Democratic candidate was clearly defined? In other words, did primaries have to be

finished, and the state conversations held before you ever moved in?

KEEL: Right.

CAMPBELL: Yes, I suppose that would be so. What was your opinion of the effectiveness of Margaret Price's operation, the women's operation there?

KEEL: Well, I think that women essentially do the work of the party. They're much more devoted and dedicated and can spend more time than men. And Margaret was extremely dedicated and took her job very seriously. I know a lot of the pros on the committee sort of looked down on their noses, but I think she did her job well. She traveled all over the country and encouraged women to participate and work. She had Operation Support, which was dissemination of information on the campaign. I think she did a good job.

CAMPBELL: How about Louis Martin? How did he fit into the framework?

KEEL: Louis is a beautiful guy. He knew his business, he was extremely sharp. He represented the brothers -- that's what we call it -- the Negro vote. Of course now he'd be regarded as, I guess, too conservative for the younger element. Back at that time we had a most effective liaison with the blacks. I was reading last night that 90 percent of the Negroes polled were Kennedy. Louis's responsibility was the minorities.

CAMPBELL: Yes. What sort of things did you get involved in with Martin? Did you work with him much yourself?

KEEL: Not in this campaign.

CAMPBELL: How effective was the Young Democrats operation? I have a note here...

KEEL: I don't know.

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CAMPBELL: ...that a Richard Rausch was...

KEEL: Yes, Richard Rausch was the head of it. Dick was a nice guy but, I don't know, he was not a very strong, forceful, energetic guy. In my view they weren't too effective.

CAMPBELL: Didn't you come across the name of Tom -- is it Brislin?

KEEL: Thomas Brislin.

CAMPBELL: Who I guess was at Bailey's AA [administrative assistant], sort of.

KEEL: No, no.

CAMPBELL: That wouldn't be correct.

KEEL: Tom Brislin handled patronage. He worked with Dorothy Davies in the White House. Together they handled patronage.

CAMPBELL: Yes. How did that break down? You read that there might have been some problem about who handled patronage sometimes, between the DNC and the White House and Congress. Do you have a feel for what sort of thing DNC might have handled exclusively, and where the White House might be involved?

KEEL: I forgot what the divisions were. There were some divisions, but I was not directly associated with it. I didn't make any notes and I don't recall.

CAMPBELL: I think he resigned from the committee. There is some indication he resigned late in '63 to help an opponent, or would-be opponent, of Senator Dodd [Thomas J. Dodd] in Connecticut. How did that hit the committee?

KEEL: Like a thunderbolt. As you say, he and Bailey were fairly close. And none of us, and Bailey, can understand why in the world Tom would pull a dumb trick like this. I've forgotten the candidate's name, but it killed Tom with the committee. I saw him later, and I think Bailey had dropped him, wouldn't give him a recommendation. He had a terrific struggle finding a job. I think he finally found one on the Hill. Just one of those little sad tragedies in politics.

Matt Reese [Matthew H. Reese, Jr.] has as much to do with the success of the Democrats as anybody. Now, he is very capable, and everybody

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recognized his capabilities as far as registration was concerned. He had his techniques worked out, and he performed very effectively.

CAMPBELL: Who at the White House got most actively involved with committee stuff? Were there one or two aides that you people usually associated yourselves with daily, or anybody in particular?

KEEL: We're speaking now of the '62 campaign?

CAMPBELL: Yes.

KEEL: I'm sure it was the Irish Mafia: Ken O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell], and Larry O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien], Donahue [Richard K. Donahue], Chuck Daly [Charles U. Daly], if he was there then. I'm sure he was. Roche was close to those guys, and he conferred with them, I'm sure, quite frequently.

CAMPBELL: When you joined the staff in the fall of '62, just what generally could you see about the relationship between the committee and the White House? How would you characterize it?

KEEL: Sort of sporadic. As I say, I'm sure Roche had a relationship with the Mafia, but for example, there was no real direct contact between our department and the people at the White House. Brightman would call over and maybe talk to Salinger. But at that time there was no really, as far as I could determine, effective liaison on a man-to-man, personal trusting basis. The Kennedy's liked their own people. They didn't have one of their own people in research, and I came to be that person.

CAMPBELL: Speaking about Kennedy people, Paul Corbin was another staff member at DNC. How did you see his relations with the committee?

KEEL: Paul Corbin was Attorney General Robert Kennedy's man on the committee, and I believe he had a direct line to the Justice Department, as I recall. Bobby gave his orders to Paul, and Paul would then translate Bobby's wishes and desires into action. Paul was very loyal, devoted Kennedy supporter and had helped the President in the West Virginia and Wisconsin campaigns, among others. He was extremely close to Bobby. And I would say he was a favorite of the President, although Paul was very abrasive and was not liked by some of the people because the things that he had to do and the way he did them they were not done in a very smooth way; he just did them. Bailey disliked the idea that when

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Steve Smith came, Paul could write memos and Steve would sign them, and get things done that way. But the *Evening Star*, in an article, said Paul was a watchdog as far as corruption was concerned, on the committee -- which irritated Bailey to no end.

CAMPBELL: Was there corruption on the committee?

KEEL: I had no knowledge of any. There was no corruption on the committee that I know of.

CAMPBELL: Robert Kennedy often was involved -- I suppose directly and also through Corbin -- with political things and with the committee. Were his activities

accepted with good feeling at the committee, or were they sometimes resented?

KEEL: I don't know whether you'd encountered this or not, but I've never seen the real truth printed about the.... There was a very deep division between Robert Kennedy and Steve Smith and their people on the one hand, and the Irish Mafia on the other. There was a struggle for power there. For example, I can recall that the Mafia decided they were going to name the state coordinators for the '64 campaign, without even consulting Steve Smith. I passed the word along, because at that time we were having these weekly breakfasts -- cold eggs and so forth -- at the committee on Wednesday mornings, as I recall. And these things would be discussed. And I would pass along to Corbin and Steve Smith the things that I thought they should know, and so -- maybe I'm a little premature; I'm getting into the '64 campaign.

CAMPBELL: We'll get to that. When you say the division, the kind of power struggle between the Irish mafia, you mean O'Brien and O'Donnell?

KEEL: I mean Maguire, O'Brien, O'Donnell on the one side and Steve Smith and Bobby Kennedy on the other. Of course this was at a level of political structure. It didn't mean they didn't speak to each other or things of that sort, but there was always this friction behind the scenes. O'Donnell would send people over to be hired, Smith would turn them down; and the mafia would move out on their own when they should have cleared through Smith, who was campaign director -- that sort of thing.

CAMPBELL: While we're on it, let's pursue it just for a little bit. When Steve Smith came -- and I suppose it was January of '63 that he came on board -- was his mandate clear at that time? Did everybody at the Democratic committee know what he was there for?

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KEEL: Oh, sure. Everybody knew he came to run the campaign. The general feeling of the knowledgeable people there was that Bailey was continued as chairman because he was weak and wouldn't interfere with the actual operation of the campaign.

CAMPBELL: Was it clear from the word go where he'd fit in the chain of command?

KEEL: Who?

CAMPBELL: Smith.

KEEL: Yes. Well, I'm just saying I knew. Because I was close to Corbin, I knew precisely what was going on all the time as far as the actual power was

concerned, because I happened to be on the right side. I'm reading now from some notes I've jotted down. "Paul Corbin says Bailey remains because he is easier to handle than a strong chairman. With Steve Smith actually running things, a strong chairman would resent it. Bailey's chafing; he objects to Paul Corbin approving memos under Steve Smith's name." And I must say Paul Corbin says he doesn't do this, but....

CAMPBELL: When would this have been written? Can you tell?

KEEL: September the sixth, '63.

CAMPBELL: When Smith comes in, what could you see about how he sort of set out his duties and responsibilities early on?

KEEL: Now, he's a very quiet, soft-spoken guy. And he was the very opposite of Corbin. Where Corbin was abrasive, Smith was quiet and unassuming, and quietly gave orders. By his actions you would know. For example the Mafia would try to block me on things that I wanted to do, and I would simply write a memo, and Steve would sign it and send it around to the treasury, and they'd have no choice. So....

CAMPBELL: Was there ever a problem in the relationship between Maguire and Smith, or does that run smoothly?

KEEL: No, that's what I'm saying. There was this problem. There's one occasion where, for example, Maguire wanted to keep a boy named Tom Baker as office manager, but Steve Smith ruled that out.

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CAMPBELL: Who did Smith rely on at the committee? Yourself, Corbin....

KEEL: Corbin. Corbin was his man in the front and I was his man back in research. And I wrote a memo reorganizing research like I wanted to. But I really made a mistake in taking over too much. I set myself up as research director and editor of *The Democrat*, and I shouldn't have taken on *The Democrat*. It should have been a separate staff there.

CAMPBELL: Did he ever discuss with you other changes he'd like to see made in the committee? I've heard that there was considerable dissatisfaction about -- perhaps just a question of the numbers of people over there, for one thing.

KEEL: Well, the feeling was that every time the President chewed them out he wanted to cut.... The President never could understand what was happening to the money at the committee. Basically you have to have a staff; that's x dollars. And the staff has to travel, and that's x dollars. And then you have to

contribute to campaigns and that's x dollars. So Steve -- there were some people there that he, I'm sure, would have liked to have gotten rid of, and some he did.

CAMPBELL: Did Milt Gwartzman [Milton Gwartzman] get involved in research?

KEEL: Yes, I was going to mention Milt. We are over into '63.

CAMPBELL: Yes, let's go ahead with '63, and we can come back, since we're here.

KEEL: At the time I was a White House liaison for public affairs. Steve passed the word that I was the man in public affairs, and I was White House liaison, and periodically every two weeks we would go over -- I would go over -- and chat with Sorensen, Lee White, Myer Feldman, Gwartzman and Paul Southwick. Gwartzman was -- I would say he was a troubleshooter, because I would send Steve memos, and he'd send a copy to Milt and say, "What do you think about this?" Because Milt's area was mine.

An interesting sidelight was that Gwartzman and Corbin didn't get along. Gwartzman was a studious type of guy, and Corbin was an abrasive type of guy. Corbin would come into my office and Gwartzman was there, he'd tell him to get out. And I can recall on one occasion he didn't get out and Paul threw him out. So that was an interesting sidelight.

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We'd have these conferences at the White House and discuss problems and what we should be doing. The President was deeply concerned about the fact that he felt his story of accomplishments was not being told. This really rankled him. I recall that at one particular meeting on Tuesday, September 10, 1963. Do you want me to go on with this?

CAMPBELL: Sure.

KEEL: Reading from my notes: "Sorensen was concerned. It was a very rough session. He had just attended a breakfast with Hale Boggs, the Majority Whip, Senator Mansfield [Michael J. Mansfield], Speaker McCormack, the President" -- this was the leadership breakfast which they had every Tuesday morning -- "and all said the President's story was not being told. They were receiving letters" -- a lot of them were receiving a lot of mail -- "against the test ban treaty." Sorensen said, "You're not getting the job done" -- speaking generally about the committee -- "What are we not doing that we could do? And so they asked me first, and I told them of a Western Conference machine we had prepared."

CAMPBELL: That Western Democratic Conference.

KEEL: I prepared a brochure....

CAMPBELL: I believe I have one of those. Maybe this one?

KEEL: Yes, that's right. Which was a source material setting out precisely what the President had done. This was in the West, and we also did one for the Midwest, to give the people at home an opportunity to give the President credit. Now that I am an administrative assistant to a congressman, I can see where the problem is, because a congressman's not going to give the President credit for anything in his district. This gets back to the great game of blame placing and credit taking in Washington. Everybody claims credit, if he's involved; the local politicians claim credit. You know, that was one of the problems. So I listed the things that we were doing. We were getting up a package for Labor Day.

Sorensen then said, "Well, that's fine, but this is not getting in the press." And Paul Southwick said that Sorensen was only seeing the Washington press. Sorensen then said, that the local press was the worst, all Republican. Southwick then recalled certain stories that we had done that were published, and I said, "If you want to do more, it will take more money and more people, if you want to do a real broad, in-depth job." And Sorensen said, "What do you do with

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all the people over there? What do you do with all that many people? What have you got to show for it?" And his general attitude was that he had been chewed out by the President, and he was translating that message on down to us. Sorensen said to me, "You see, I'm not reflecting on you or your department, but don't you think you've got too many people, speaking of the committee generally?" I said, "I can't answer for our other departments. I'm not overloaded. In fact we have a bottleneck because we have no money and we have to rewrite everything."

Feldman then said that the reason the Republicans were getting the play was that they were attacking. They were creating the conflict, and creating the news, and it's much more difficult to get a newspaper to list accomplishments of some administration, because there's no conflict there. Positive statements don't get the publicity that negative statements do. And he suggested that we create an atmosphere of attack, go after the Republicans. And Gwartzman and Sorensen had a sharp discussion, and the gist of this was whether the President's program and the presidential campaign were one and the same. Sorensen said yes, and Gwartzman said no. Then there was some joking.... That was about it. Sorensen did say at the meeting that President Kennedy had raised ten million dollars, and the national committee was four million in debt. So this was another thing that came up -- "what happened to the money, how was it spent?"

CAMPBELL: In these meetings, was Sorensen clearly the President's representative there?

KEEL: Yes, but this was an unusual meeting. Most of them were very easy and very pleasant and constructive. It just so happened that prior to this one the

President had obviously indicated he was deeply concerned over this matter of his story not being told. And at one time at another conference, earlier, Sorensen said that the President wanted to get word to the South on what the Democratic party and the administration had done. The President, you know, received sharp criticism in the South over civil rights.

He also said that the President wanted a book entitled, *Why I Support President Kennedy*, published, written by leaders of all areas of American life. As I recall, he knew of some Roosevelt book in which a cross section of leaders had written essays, and he wanted a similar book published.

CAMPBELL: For the '64 campaign?

KEEL: Right.

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CAMPBELL: You've mentioned Southwick now several times. He, I guess, joined Salinger's staff in May, I believe, of 1963. What was his function to be?

KEEL: Well, this gets into the broad heading of what I call "maximum utilization of federal power for political purposes," and they were doing a beautiful job. Southwick was set up to bring together information to feed to us to relate to the campaign. In other words, we had representatives, political people, set up in each department. These were essentially the same political people who came to the weekly breakfast.

CAMPBELL: For example, just one or two. For instance, in Commerce [Commerce Department] you had a representative -- is that what you mean -- on that level?

KEEL: I'll supply that. I've got a list here. And this, for example, was something that Southwick did, which I brought for your record, which shows a summary of accomplishments for a period of three years there. And here's a...

CAMPBELL: State by state.

KEEL: And here, for example, is an explanatory letter to Steve Smith from Southwick, giving their thinking about the....

CAMPBELL: Was it more useful to have him in the White House than it would have been to have him at DNC?

KEEL: Yes, because he could operate under the aegis of the White House. When

the White House calls, people jump. So Paul's job was to pull together the information we needed and to utilize the federal establishment to assist in the operation of the political campaign.

CAMPBELL: Now, was it being done effectively at the White House level before he came?

KEEL: No, it was a haphazard operation. He did it on a systematic basis. He did an excellent job. Over a period of time he got his organization developed within the agencies.

CAMPBELL: Do you know how he was chosen for that job? Did you get involved in that at all? You'd been around for some time before he came along. I think he came out of ARA [Area Redevelopment Administration].

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KEEL: No, I've forgotten that.

CAMPBELL: When you were planning for '64 -- and you were planning for '64 from the time you came on -- early on, was Rockefeller [Nelson A. Rockefeller] viewed as the logical opponent? He remarried in May of '63.

KEEL: They thought that Rockefeller would perhaps be the opponent, but Sorensen said all along that he thought that Romney [George Romney] would be the strongest candidate. And President Kennedy thought Goldwater [Barry M. Goldwater] was a joke. He wouldn't take him seriously at all. I mean this was the impression I got. He just said he was too blanked dumb. This was a phrase which was relayed to me. They were good friends, I think, but he just couldn't believe that the Republicans would nominate Goldwater. It would be too beautiful. I'll give you here the polls which indicate the standing of the various candidates at that time.

CAMPBELL: As a consumer of polls, I suppose a major consumer of polls, did you have feelings about which pollster you preferred?

KEEL: Actually, the polls were usually authorized by Steve Smith. At the time this happened there was just a poll here and there. There was really no systematic national polling.

CAMPBELL: Let me get back in this first session to some more general background about your research operation at DNC: how it was when you came, and then perhaps how you changed it. In the first place, what happened to your predecessor?

KEEL: He was a professor who was there, and his time expired and he went back -- I think he went back as assistant to the governor of Vermont, whom he had supported.

CAMPBELL: What was the kind of general mandate of the research operation when you took over. You did basic background research, you did demographic studies, and handled some polls.

KEEL: I had written a memo to Steve Smith at that time, telling him what I thought was wrong with it. I'm fumbling for that.

CAMPBELL: Take your time.

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KEEL: I forgot specifically what I thought. I thought there were a number of things that could be improved and improved upon. I thought essentially it should be a more aggressive organization. I mean you have your basic studies that you gather about who all is running and what marginal districts there are, but my feeling was that since the other part of public affairs was not aggressive that we should be an aggressive department and get the stuff out and into the battle. I had some long conferences with Neil Staebler. He had some excellent ideas on getting the message to the people. And we worked up a voter education program which would involve getting grassroots Democrats informed on the programs so they could discuss them with people and at meetings and in the newspapers and all that sort of thing. And we were in the process of writing a manual; we called it *Truth at the Grass Roots*, TAG.

CAMPBELL: How did Staebler get involved in this?

KEEL: He was simply interested in this same thing and volunteered his services. He had done a beautiful job as chairman in Michigan and this sort of thing, and he was just helpful.

CAMPBELL: When you came on board...

KEEL: Pardon me, one of the things that we did -- as I say, at first there was no effective liaison between our public affairs [division] and the White House, as far as I could determine. So Bailey on one occasion went over and was talking, you know, in the light of this "What do you do over there" bit in the White House, he was discussing this with, I assume, O'Brien and O'Donnell, and told them that we were available. So he came back and sent a memo to three of us and said that the boys over there think that you can be helpful in certain ways, and why don't you give them a call.

Well, I saw that as an opportunity to really get involved, so I just took the bit in my mouth and set up a meeting over there with Chuck Daly. And on the basis of that we did

establish a direct relationship between me and Chuck Daly, and we worked closely with them. And one of the first things that we did and the thing that really set us in motion and showed that we could perform a job was one of O'Brien's pet projects, a speech for Carl Albert which was called "America first or America last," and that's O'Brien's description. It was about what Republican false economy would do to the country. We prepared this in a brochure for him, and that established our

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relationship. And we were continually funneling material to O'Brien's operation for transmission to congressmen for speeches, press releases and that sort of thing. We got a good system set up, and they could ask for something one morning and we could get it to them immediately. We had good writers and....

CAMPBELL: Daly was your contact?

KEEL: Daly was my contact. And another thing that we did -- this was my brain child -- was Operation Backlash. This was something which involved the sending of press releases to the districts of marginal Republicans, on the effect of their negative votes. It was quite successful. There was an article written in the *Chamber of Commerce* about how effective it was, and the Republicans screamed. They would counterattack, because we were hitting them at home. But anyway, I just believed that research should be more aggressive, and I tried to make it a more aggressive active organization.

CAMPBELL: Funds were important to you. Who did you talk to about funds? Did you go to Maguire, Bailey?

KEEL: No, Corbin was usually the man that I talked to. The Kennedy's were very close with money, believe it or not. And Steve constantly wanted to cut down.

CAMPBELL: He brought in Barbara Coleman.

KEEL: Yes, well, Barbara Coleman was his Girl Friday. And Barbara was an excellent girl, and she would volunteer to help us out on certain things, but we'd just sort of pick up.... Pat Butler came down from New York looking for a job, and we gave her a job because the county chairman recommended her. And then a boy named Jerry Emmet was there, and he was from a wealthy family, and he worked a while. And they put him on the payroll. And we gradually hired a research girl that was with Charlie Bartlett [Charles L. Bartlett] for a while. We gradually built up a good staff. We had a good staff by the time I left.

CAMPBELL: In his book about the 1960 campaign, Theodore White says an interesting

thing. He characterizes the research operation -- and of course he's talking about 1960 and before -- at the Republican National Committee as the finest research staff in Washington. Then he goes on to say that he finds it remarkable that the DNC, which is full of men who love politics, refuses to fund research adequately.

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KEEL: This is traditional. Right now, for example, the Democratic Committee has forty people. The committee doesn't have enough people in research to give a congressman a piece of paper to counter Republican charges, and the Republicans, I think, have forty people in research. Democrats have just a handful. And this has fairly consistently been true. Republicans have gunned the Democrats on research, as far as I know, through the years.

CAMPBELL: Of course as a party with a president in the White House, you were able to, I suppose, use agency research facilities, up to a point. Was it more difficult for.... I guess you've already said -- it was more difficult for DNC to get material out of the agencies than for Southwick, when he came into the White House.

KEEL: Well, it just expedited it. The agencies cooperated, but unless you had a special mission they would give you all sorts of excuses. And we had some pretty abrasive times getting the agencies to set their computers up right, and we just finally had to tell them to do it. We even had trouble getting the agencies -- and this was one thing that I emphasized repeatedly at these weekly breakfasts which began in the national committee and I think we had one or two sessions in the White House before the President was killed, and that was, getting the speechwriters in the individual departments and agencies to put the President's name in speeches. And I finally told the departmental people, "If your speechwriters can't put him in, you should get them out and get somebody in that will put him in," which went over like a lead balloon.

CAMPBELL: Do you remember agencies that you had particular problems with, or was it just a general thing?

KEEL: Yes, I remember one, because I've got a memo in here. Housing and Home Finance [Agency], I had problems with them.

CAMPBELL: Semer? [Milton P. Semer]

KEEL: Semer, yes.

CAMPBELL: Milton Semer. So then how would you attack something like that? You'd see them as a problem...

KEEL: Just give them hell. You just have to go back to the bureaucracy tooth and toenail to turn them around. One thing I want to get into, because I just thought of it.

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We had an intelligence operation. These breakfasts -- they had a system set up, coordinating the sending of people from the federal agencies out into the cities and states. And they had a system set up so that a guy would touch base with the right people -- and make himself available to the right political people when he got there, and utilize his presence there even if he was civil service. They could go and make the speeches, make the contacts. And then Bernard Boutin was chairman of this deal to...

CAMPBELL: I wanted to ask you what he was up to.

KEEL: ...collect intelligence. This was supposed to be all channeled back to Bernard Boutin. At the time the President died it wasn't worth a damn.

CAMPBELL: It hadn't gotten going.

KEEL: People just didn't want to fill out the forms. They didn't want -- it was a long form here that you....

CAMPBELL: That was to be submitted to local political figures?

KEEL: No, no. This was for the national committee and the President's information.

CAMPBELL: Oh, I see.

KEEL: In other words, the intelligence was to be channeled back here.

CAMPBELL: I see. A traveling cabinet member would then fill out this form.

KEEL: A traveling cabinet, a traveling anybody that could be utilized...

CAMPBELL: And submit it to Boutin.

KEEL: Now here's a -- if I might quote from an entry in my notes from August '63: "Have had several meetings of intelligence operation. Bernard Boutin of GSA [Government Services Administration] is in charge. Maguire leads the way. Not working well. Both chewed out those attending the last meeting. Steve Smith attended one meeting and I understand his opinion of the whole operation is extremely low. The setup is that each person would

funnel into this central intelligence operation the political data.”

But there really wasn't too much enthusiasm. They were supposed to report on such things as how the President stood, and the Republican positions, and who's mad at who in the state, so that you could get a feel -- you know, the latest feel -- for the state, and make this available to the central coordinator, and then to the coordinators in the state. This was a continuing problem, but it was at these breakfasts that everything was coordinated. There was a representative of the Vice President there, and there was a representative of the Study Group, and congressional committee. And, for example, Maguire would -- I've got notes here on one meeting -- urge them to try to find as many fat cats as possible to build up his President's Club, which he originated, and did a beautiful job on.

[BEGIN SIDE II, TAPE I]

KEEL: At this particular breakfast, September 11, 1963, Maguire at this breakfast urged those attending to send him the name of prosperous fat cats for whom the administration had done a favor. He said he wanted a thousand new members in the club by December, the President's Club. And somebody asked what would happen if duplicate names were submitted, and he said that it would be unfortunate if they contributed twice. Anyway, I can't overemphasize the effectiveness of the Kennedys in understanding and utilizing power, the fact that they understood power, and they were utilizing power beautifully, through Southwick's operation and these breakfasts and other sources of power in the federal government.

CAMPBELL: Did you have a feeling for -- you've mentioned that the President was upset about the question of how publicly was getting out. Did you feel that he was extremely interested at this early stage of his '64 race? Once in awhile you come across an indication that he was less than fully committed to worrying about 1964 in 1963.

KEEL: No, he was very much concerned, because all through the conversations we had with Sorensen and the others at the White House, we would get the presidential line on various things. Somewhere here I've got some memos on our meetings there. I had those a minute ago. Okay, here's some of them. I remember one time that I wrote Sorensen a memo, October 25th, 1963, because Goldwater was having a field day. I said, "I would like for you to think about just what we want to say about Goldwater's statements on foreign affairs, in comparison with the reasonable, strong position of the President. Do we want to say Goldwater's position could lead to war? Do we want to ask whether the people want to

have a Goldwater or JFK near the button that would determine peace or war? Goldwater has just said he thinks field commanders should have the right to use atomic weapons.” And I drew the contrast there that later developed between Goldwater’s attitude and impulsive reaction compared to calm and deliberate thought. And the President’s response was that for the time being we would ignore Goldwater although he should be classed by others, and made -- by other speakers -- into a war-whooper.

And then others.... Here, for example, are some notes on one of our conference at the White House: “Be careful in the steel situation. The President is opposed to a general price increase but not to selective increases. The administration has a good record on inflation. The record’s the best of any major western nation, including Canada, which has been troubled with inflation. Hammer at public works. Hammer at the theme that the Republicans talk of acting against unemployment, and when they have a chance to act, they vote against measures that would help. Emphasize a story in the Wall Street Journal which pointed up the fact that the Republicans want things for themselves, for their constituents, but not for unemployed. Go after Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] and his budget history. Coordinate Rockefeller material. Collection and assimilate, break down, compare states performance in prior years with other states, economic growth.”

We had some people that did nothing -- I think this was in New York -- but collect Rockefeller material, because the feeling was he would probably be a candidate. “Find other spokesmen to attack Rockefeller, people in office like Wagner [Robert F. Wagner], Stratton [Samuel S. Stratton], and so forth, all over the state. Get away from party people.”

CAMPBELL: What was the date of this memo? Do you have the date of this one?

KEEL: No, I’m sorry, I don’t.

CAMPBELL: Moynihan [Daniel P. Moynihan] was involved in...

KEEL: I deliberately didn't date or identify these, so nobody but me would know that I made these notes. “Governor Romney will be up for election in ‘64. Be affirmative in fact sheets. Cultivate special interest groups, civil rights.” These were the results of our caucus with Sorensen. Often he would go in to see the President before talking to us to see what the line should be.

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CAMPBELL: Rather late in the game of the Kennedy administration I think an operation was set up under Southwick with Wayne Phillips kind of to deliberately counter the far right.

KEEL: That’s correct. Wayne was in charge of a campaign to counter the far right. Maguire was deeply concerned about this, and they did a lot of research on

the fairness clause and worked out techniques to get local candidates to ask for time to respond to the far right. But this was really just getting off the ground when the President died, and it was continued on over into the Johnson campaign.

CAMPBELL: By this late date, I suppose that Goldwater was viewed as the potential candidate after Rockefeller's remarriage. He remarried in, I believe, in May of '63. Perhaps sights were sort of switching.

I think you put out a special issue of *The Democrat* in July of '63, an anti-far right issue. Let's talk about that just for a minute. You said you cut off more than you could chew, almost, taking over *The Democrat* and research. Who did you aim at with *The Democrat*? Kind of the party faithful in mass?

KEEL: We tried to provide them with ammunition and also to educate them on things like the far right. For example in this issue on the far right, we quoted Goldwater on Birch [John Birch Society], and -- here it is. This was really a sensational sort of thing, but it seemed to me that people needed a basic education about what we were talking about. So I quoted Welch's [Robert H.W. Welch, Jr.] saying he'd love to see Barry president, and also that democracy is a fraud. I had an editorial pointing out that the far right was founded on oversimplification and negativism and smear. At that time they were running rampant in California. And so we had a special article by Senator Clair Engle, on the operation of the John Birch Society and allied organizations there, with a montage of the rampant right and related GOP [Grand Old Party]. We were just linking, really, the far right with the Republican party. Going back to the basic elements of the John Birch Society and what they stood for, and what the leaders said, and the fact that Goldwater was their baby.

CAMPBELL: How much editorial freedom, if you will, did you have with that paper?

KEEL: This one here?

CAMPBELL: Well, with *The Democrat* in general. Who all got involved before that came off the press?

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KEEL: Well, there were a number of people involved. Nobody really actually read the copy, as far as I recall. O'Brien would have certain things he wanted. An interesting thing is that this issue of *The Democrat* was never published. This was written for November 25. And if you'll note inside there, Robert Kennedy, through Corbin, sent me word that he wanted this article republished on "The Other Side of Bob Kennedy." But it was never published in *The Democrat*. We killed the edition because the President was killed.

CAMPBELL: And this, by Bonnie Angelo, portrays him in a more favorable and human

light.

KEEL: By that time Bobby was being criticized as being a hard, inflexible campaign director person. And this was an effort to soften his image.

CAMPBELL: I've heard that some political people would perhaps view Robert Kennedy as a liability to the Democratic party in his position as attorney general, or perhaps a little bit of feeling that at least for the party's sake, he'd be more useful where he was less of a lightning rod. Did you ever hear anything...

KEEL: The initial feelings were that, of course, the President shouldn't appoint his brother to be attorney general, and that it was a disadvantage. But actually after he did so well, I think that this dissipated. But he had a lot of enemies because he was abrasive and courageous.

CAMPBELL: Did you have a sense of... Getting back to Bailey and his relationship with the Kennedys, it's been suggested that he was restless at the DNC, and it was suggested before '62 that he'd resign and help Ribicoff [Abraham A. Ribicoff] with his campaign, and it's suggested again that he be replaced. Did you get any feeling for that sort of thing?

KEEL: Yes, I think Bailey was restless, because he was smart enough to know what the score was. But he liked the prestige, and he liked to be chairman, and liked to have the aura of being chairman. But he naturally, I'm sure, resented the general situation.

CAMPBELL: I wanted to ask you also about another change that's rumored occasionally, and that's the question of a vice presidential candidate for '64. In your meetings and

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the planning for '64, was there ever the suggestion that President Johnson might not be on the ticket again? Or the then Vice President Johnson.

KEEL: There were rumors periodically that Bobby was going to cut him off the ticket. But there were never any formal discussions, or anything substantial. I think the President made an announcement that he would be on the ticket, if I recall.

CAMPBELL: Yes, he did. You run across these suggestions once in a while.

KEEL: There's no question about the antipathy between Bobby Kennedy and the Vice President.

CAMPBELL: After Steve Smith comes on board in early '63, there weren't significant personnel changes at the Democratic National Committee. Almost everybody stayed. Perhaps....

KEEL: Why don't we just run down what everybody did.

CAMPBELL: Yes, maybe we can, and then if you recall a significant change either in what they did after Smith's arrival or in kind of their status, it would be interesting perhaps.

KEEL: Let's see. Of course Bailey was the chairman, and Steve Smith was executive director, Corbin deputy chairman, and Roche deputy chairman, and Brightman continued as deputy chairman. Maguire was treasurer. Margaret Price continued to head the women's division. Matt Reese was head of registration. Bill Brawley was there, but I'm not quite sure what he did. Jack Christie was in charge of TV and radio, and he had been there. Mary Clynes was librarian. Mary is the stable part of the committee. If it weren't for the fact that we had Mary there to maintain these files through the years, as far as continuity was concerned we'd be in bad shape, because of the big turnover.... Carlos McCormack was there on Spanish speaking, Louis Martin on minorities, Paul Pendergast, speaker's bureau. They had a system set up -- I believe Senator Inouye [Daniel D. Inouye] and Mike Kirwan [Michael J. Kirwan] were coordinating congressional speakers for the overall campaign. I was in research. I guess that's about it.

CAMPBELL: How about Mayor Wagner's operation? He's appointed to be chairman of, what, an all-American council or something. Was that a useful thing at all?

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KEEL: I think so. I was just trying to think this morning of the name of his man up in New York. But they were helpful, and they operated more out of New York than Washington, as I recall.

CAMPBELL: Yes, I think that it's not much of the committee. When the New York political situation got so confused and confusing, in cases like that, how could the Democratic National Committee know just where to turn?

KEEL: Well, we didn't really. I remember one time the President went to New York and Wagner didn't even welcome him. I have here in my notes someplace, the comment was made that.... Yes. "Corbin said that President Kennedy called Steve Smith after the New York trip, when Mayor Wagner failed to welcome him. He told Steve that New York was in a bigger mess than when we took over." New York is just a political madhouse, as you know. Incidentally, Corbin was the special man in New York. I guess you know that. He kept in constant touch with the county chairman. I

would receive written requests from Corbin for information and pictures and such to channel up to New York -- he was the man.

CAMPBELL: On what sort of basis did your research division decide how much effort to expend, for instance, for an individual candidate? I notice sometimes you seemed to get involved in preparing speeches and a great deal of work for sitting congressmen or candidates, and there seemed to be little effort maybe for other congressmen. Was it kind of a question of demand from the congressmen?

KEEL: A question of demand and a question of interest. For example, Varick Tunney [John Varick Tunney] -- he doesn't go by that name anymore -- he and others would come down and visit, and then we'd go back there and we would talk to him and ask him what he needed. And we did some special studies, for example, one for John [John Culver] -- Senator Kennedy's [Edward M. Kennedy] former AA who's now congressman from Iowa. We tried to respond to their requests, in addition to supplying them with general information on accomplishments and Republican obstructionism, the voting record of their opponent, money. If they had some acute need, then we could help them, because we had sources available to us and we would do it.

And one of the fascinating operations was that of Mutt and Jeff. That's my description of Jerry Bruno [Gerald J. Bruno] and James T. Corcoran. They dispensed public works projects from the national committee. They had a big map there with public works projects on the wall, and you could hear them all over that end of the building, calling this

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candidate and saying, "You can have such-and-such and such-and-such." Which is another example of the maximum utilization of this federal power. So the Kennedys -- there again, you get into this loyalty situation -- if they wanted to help somebody, they would produce for him.

CAMPBELL: How about Bruno? Other than that, what would he spend his time at the committee?

KEEL: Well, of course he was an advance man, and he was the President's favorite, as far as I know. I recall when he advanced the President's last trip to Texas, I had a call from -- who's that lady reporter out there?

CAMPBELL: Sarah McClendon?

KEEL: Yes, Sarah McClendon, saying that there were complaints that Bruno was ignoring the liberals, and Senator Yarborough [Ralph W. Yarborough], and all that sort of thing. But Bruno was a good advance man. The President liked bands, he liked crowds, and Jerry knew how to get both. He liked plenty of music and activity and people.

CAMPBELL: In preparation, for example, for that trip to Texas -- any presidential trip of political significance, and that means any presidential trip, I suppose -- how does the DNC get involved? What sort of input did you make to planning for a trip like that, or you in general at the DNC?

KEEL: I don't recall that we did very much. I would guess that they got their information directly from Southwick, you see, on federal accomplishments. We may have provided them some information on issues. But Sorensen was so well informed that, and he had such sources himself, that he really didn't call on us very much.

CAMPBELL: But then you of course -- Bruno's services were available to advance. Did you people get involved in the determination of what trip was political and what was not? A question of if DNC funds would be used -- that was decided at the White House level, I suppose.

KEEL: No, that would have been between the treasurer and the chairman, and we really didn't get involved in that.

CAMPBELL: Did you have the feeling that Maguire at times was operating at DNC almost autonomously, or at least not going through Bailey to the White House on questions

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of funds?

KEEL: As I say, there was that problem between the mafia on the one hand and Steve Smith and Bob and Corbin on the other. I have already referred to the occasion when Maguire and O'Donnell had decided they were going to appoint the coordinators and weren't even going to consult Steve Smith. And so I'm sure Corbin told Bobby and Steve, and one of the two of them called back over and told Maguire in no uncertain terms that they would appoint the coordinators.

CAMPBELL: We have a rough list of coordinators that's turned up, and I'm not sure it's correct. Next time, perhaps, you will have time to look at the list that I have, and know at what stage that list existed, and who made it up. It, for instance, lists Seigenthaler as the coordinator for Tennessee. Is that correct?

KEEL: That's correct.

CAMPBELL: He's handling one state; but then there were lots of men that had several states.

KEEL: Go ahead, I'm trying to find my notes on that situation about coordinators, just to give you precise facts.

CAMPBELL: Well, that's worth a lot of attention.

KEEL: I can throw that in, because...

CAMPBELL: Yes, the coordinator situation of course is.... Pat Lucey [Patrick J. Lucey], I think, very early came on to work.

KEEL: Pat Lucey was one of their favorite people.

CAMPBELL: Yes. Sent out to Ohio to look things over very early. I wondered if other people were active as early as he was, really on the scene.

KEEL: There were a number, yes, there were a number of coordinators that were working.

CAMPBELL: Let's digress...

KEEL: But not as much -- as I say, they were late in appointing coordinators. They were trying to get this done, they were having this problem about who did it. [Interruption]

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I'm referring to my notes here. This is undated, just my recollection. But this was the time they were appointing, discussing the coordinators, and I said, "Much friction during this time because Steve Smith and Bobby Kennedy on one hand and the mafia on the other. Actually it seemed at times as if we were going to have two campaign organizations. There was constant maneuvering and shifting. For example, the Irish mafia attempted to appoint all state coordinators. Maguire announced at the breakfast that coordinators would be named, and Bobby and Steve knew nothing about this." And I told him. Bobby called Maguire and said they would be selected by himself, the President, and Steve Smith, and really chewed Maguire out, according to my notes.

CAMPBELL: Generally, about when would this have been? Probably in the fall of '63? Since they seem to follow your notes in September.

KEEL: Right. This was during that period. Later we'll get into this big rhubarb I had with Senator Gore [Albert Gore], who called me before the Finance Committee. Yes, this was in September.

CAMPBELL: That gives light on the whole function of research at the Democratic National Committee. What roles, almost -- or at least the published accounts seem to suggest it's a question of what role you play.

KEEL: You don't want to get into that today.

CAMPBELL: No, let's wait on that. Let me ask you this, and shut it off for today. I notice that you got interested in coordinating the efforts of various organizations, such as COPE [Committee on Political Education] and REA [Rural Electrification Administration.]

KEEL: Yes, I set up the board.

CAMPBELL: Yes. How successful was that?

KEEL: I think it was working well. The White House tried to do it initially and I found out about it and Paul Southwick was already moving on it. I went to Steve Smith and told him what was going on, to the point that I felt he would have to step into it. He said, "Do you want me to get in?" I said yes. He said, "When?" and I said, "Now." So he picked up the phone and he took care of that, and I was chairman of that and from then on made arrangements to call these people together. And

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it was Mary Zahn of AFL-CIO [American Federation of Labor & Congress of Industrial Organizations] and Ted Henshaw [Edmund L. Henshaw] and maybe Matthews [Matty Matthews], and Walt Hasty [Walter Hasty] and these people from the Farmer's Union, Bill Phillips [William H. Phillips], who's a most capable guy from the Democratic Study Group. We were really just getting this operation underway effectively when the President was killed.

CAMPBELL: Again, how did it attempt to avoid duplication of effort? Was it....

KEEL: Yes, well, that was my whole premise when I suggested this. What is the point in everybody doing the same thing? Let's get together since we all want to accomplish the same objectives, and have a division of labor here, and use each other's material and coordinate our campaigns. In other words, here was the way it worked. I would get the line from the President through Sorensen, and I would call these people together and give them the line, the things the President wanted to emphasize.

CAMPBELL: Who was good at it? Did you compare the work fo REA, Farmers Union, COPE? Whose stuff did you like?

KEEL: COPE was excellent. They each had their areas. REA was excellent. That

was the beautiful thing about it, you see. COPE was labor, and REA had their connections right down to the grassroots to the individual rural electric cooperatives. When you put all these people together -- the Farmers Union, with all its members -- you really have an effective operation there.

CAMPBELL: Something you could count on and the REpublican National Committee couldn't.

KEEL: Well, it made up for manpower they had which we didn't. But there were a lot of things like that that we were doing and getting -- oh, professors. Let me get my file on professors. We wanted to utilize -- this is what I call Operation Brainpower. I named all my things something or other. Operation Brainpower. And this was to utilize the Democratic professors throughout the country. So we arranged.... There was a political science meeting up in New York so we had a meeting there. Dick Scammon [Richard M. Scammon] went along -- I was relatively inexperienced at that time -- so he chaired the meeting. And we had John Roche and other leaders. And we discussed -- this is a memo I wrote to Steve Smith on September fifth, '63: "We had a productive luncheon session in New York City with some of the leading Democratic political scientists. The consensus there was that the role of academics in the 1964 election

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should be at the state and district level. Their feeling -- and this coincides with Ted Sorensen views on the subject -- is that they are simply not needed now, that the President is in power and has his own White House advisors and the resources of government at his command." In other words, they weren't needed here -- we had all this -- they were needed down at the local level. "The consensus was that we should prepare for each state a list of Democratic professors who would be willing to help candidates at the local levels by writing speeches, preparing position papers, and so forth. Further consensus was that we prepare a national leader to the editors operation -- Operation Penpoint." I'm sure these names tore those pros all to pieces. "This would involve setting up a nucleus of volunteer writers for each state" -- and here the professors would also fit in -- "to prepare letters to the editors to be used to promote the President's program, blasting the Republicans, respond to wild charges. A nucleus in each state would send these letters to trusted individuals in cities and towns for submission under their names to the newspapers. The fourth idea that we had in the discussion was, since TV debates were becoming more and more common, we should give our congressional candidates a booklet on how to prepare for such a debate and on good techniques during the debate."

CAMPBELL: How did you make up your list of professors?

KEEL: We got lists from various sources and wrote them and utilized them. We would send them a letter saying, "We need your help." May 11, 1964 --

this was later, we were still utilizing them. We were just in the basic stages. We asked their evaluation of the issues in their own areas and things of that sort. And also assisted in getting professors together with candidates if we were requested to do so.

CAMPBELL: Well, I thank you for this.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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