

FOREWORD

Transcript Warning:

All written transcripts are imperfect abstracts of spoken conversation. Variations in sound quality and in the aural acuity of listeners can and do produce wide variations in what is heard. Even though transcripts may be prepared at great effort and with great care, many points of ambiguity are inevitable, and erroneous interpretations from transcripts are always possible. Therefore, to ensure full confidence in any and all quotations from the presidential recordings, users are strongly urged to check all transcript renditions against the actual tape recordings before publication.

Copyright:

The donors assigned copyright that they might have in the recordings to the United States; however, copyright of the donors does not extend beyond statements uttered by John F. Kennedy, his minor children, and the donors themselves. Statements uttered by officials of the United States government in the course of their duties are considered to be in the public domain. Users of this material are cautioned, however, that not all persons recorded were members of the Kennedy family or government officials. A number of the people recorded were, at the time of recording, private citizens. Therefore, those intending to quote from this material beyond the accepted limits of fair use are cautioned to determine the copyright implications of any intended publication.

Punctuation:

The following conventions are used throughout the transcripts:

- * * * To indicate a pause in the recording while the speaker listens to the person speaking at the other end of the telephone. Used when only one side of a telephone conversation is recorded.
- [?] When the transcriber is not certain of what is said on the recording.
- To indicate a sentence which the speaker trails off without completing it.
- . . . When a speaker is interrupted before a sentence is completed.
- _____ To indicate the speaker's emphasis.
- [/] Used to enclose editorial comments of the transcriber such as /Meeting appears to be breaking up/ or /Several speakers speak at once and none of the words are intelligible./

Names:

The first time a name is mentioned, the full name is provided whenever it is known. "JFK" and "RFK" are used for President Kennedy and Robert Kennedy, respectively. When the identity of a speaker is unknown, "Speaker?" is used; when the identification of a speaker is uncertain, a question mark follows the name. The heading of each transcript gives the names of all participants listed in the President's Appointment Books as scheduled to attend the meeting.

Preparation:

These electronic documents were created from transcripts available in the audiovisual research room in the John F. Kennedy Library. The transcripts were scanned using optical character recognition and the resulting text files were proofread against the original transcripts. Some formatting changes were made.

Papers of John F. Kennedy

Presidential Recordings

Dictabelts

Dictabelt 17B

Conversation #3: President Kennedy and Louis Harris

President: Hello.

Mr. Harris: Mr. President.

President: Yea, Lou.

Mr. Harris: How are you, sir?

President: Good, how are you doing?

Mr. Harris: Well, just fine. I talked with those people up in Canada yesterday and also got a report from [Oliver] Ollie Quayle up there. He, uh, and on this BOMARC thing. Apparently it isn't . . . it isn't coming through very much at all. [inaudible] It's their strong feeling that if nothing is said about it, it would allow them to push their . . . their theme of the last week, which is give Canada strong government, a majority government, otherwise you are going to have weak, divided minority government.

President: Fine. Well, we won't . . . I will be asked at the press conference and I am just going to say nothing about it.

Mr. Harris: Their . . . their strong feeling was that if you said much about that they would have tough security issues in the last week. They are very confident. I must say, I don't know if they are just suffering from, you know, the last minute optimism, but they think that they will get the 145.

President: Do they. How does Quayle think?

Mr. Harris: Uh . . . oh, somewhere between 126 and 133, something like that.

President: That is not a majority, is it?

Mr. Harris: 133 is. It is going to be just right on the razor edge, I'd say. They'll probably be sweating it out Yukon district, you know.

President: What about a . . . They don't think that it will be [John] Diefenbaker.

Mr. Harris: Oh, no, not at all, not at all. He has not caught fire at all. These Social Credit fellows, as Nixon would say, have peaked too early. They are going down. I would say they got a real chance up to now to pull it off. They have, uh, it's Quebec province where this fellow [Jean] Lesage, the Premier, is finally out working for him. And he might be able to pull it off.

President: How are you doing?

Mr. Harris: Pretty good. This is totally between us. It won't be announced for three weeks, but I saw this mutual friend of ours, Phil Graham, yesterday, and we came to an agreement on the thing in Newsweek and the column.

President: Oh, is that right? For Newsweek or for a . . .

Mr. Harris: Yea, I will do a thing for Newsweek once a month and a . . .

President: . . . newspapers.

Mr. Harris: Newspapers once a week.

President: That's damn good, isn't it?

Mr. Harris: That'll begin in June and it is a good deal, because I will be able to do a poll a month, and then we will really have a lot of stuff. At least keep Gallup on it and make a lot of news.

President: Yea, I think that is a good thing for both of those reasons.

Mr. Harris: I will be able to, Mr. President, be able to talk to you a good deal. I cleared this with Phil and he said, uh, and I know it is alright with CBS people, you know we can talk about all this well before it ever comes out. Got to keep it very, you know, quiet, so that no other press people will pick it up.

President: This is a better deal than a . . . than a, your other one, it seems to me. But, I mean, this would then combine with your commercial stuff at CBS. This will give you a pretty good deal, won't it?

Mr. Harris: Yes, it will. Yes, it will. It will about make up for all the private stuff and, frankly, you see, you know, I could have gotten involved with some people in Chicago. We are talking about a primary against [Richard] Daley and in California they wanted me to get in against [Jesse] Unruh, and, frankly, I saw no future to that.

President: Yeah, yeah.

Mr. Harris: I don't know if you do, but I don't, do you?

President: No, I think that was uh . . . I think you're . . .

Mr. Harris: I mean, if I wanted, you know, to hold, uh, or run for office, it would be one thing, but I think just in the end I would end up in some ash can in an alley, you know.

President: You haven't gotten any polls lately, have you.

Mr. Harris: No, sir, but we will have . . . Quayle is doing something in Kentucky now, and I will have something on Cuba next week.

President: How does it look, like Happy [A.B. "Happy" Chandler]/?

Mr. Harris: Well, no, it's pretty close. We got a hold of one of his polls and he is only ahead 53 to 47. And [Edward T.] Breathitt, his opponent, is unknown, you know. So I think it might be pretty close.

President: Well, what does Quayle think about his poll? Who are you two polling for, the other fellow?

Mr. Harris: For Breathitt, yeah. [Bert] Combs, you see, uh, Combs has always been our client until Earl Clemons shifted and he wanted, uh, I know he talked to me about that last fall, and I said I just couldn't do that.

President: What does Breathitt, uh . . .

Mr. Harris: He is a young fellow, about 37.

President: You say that he is at 53 to 47.

Mr. Harris: He is behind 53-47.

President: That's all. Is that according to Chandler's poll or yours?

Mr. Harris: By Chandler's.

President: How about yours? You haven't taken one yet?

Mr. Harris: I will have the results on that next week.

President: Oh, yea, give me a call.

Mr. Harris: I sure will.

President: Ok, good, thanks, Lou.

Mr. Harris: Right, Mr. President, thank you.