

J. Leonard Reinsch Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 1/05/1966
Administrative Information

Creator: J. Leonard Reinsch

Interviewer: Charles T. Morrissey

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Biographical Note

J. Leonard Reinsch (1908-1991) was the chairman of Cox Broadcasting from 1939 to 1973, executive director of Democratic National Convention in 1960 and 1964, and the media consultant for John F. Kennedy's [JFK] 1960 presidential campaign. This interview focuses on the coordination of televised appearances during JFK's campaign, the debates between JFK and Richard Nixon's, and the use of television and radio during the Kennedy administration, among other topics.

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with J. Leonard Reinsch

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Signed: _____

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Date: _____

3/24/71

J. Leonard Reinsch– JFK #1
Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	1956 Democratic National Convention
2	Vice presidential campaign
3	Call from John F. Kennedy [JFK] about preparing for the convention
4	Visiting JFK in Washington D.C.
5	Selection of Los Angeles for the 1960 Democratic National Convention
6	Concerns about space in Los Angeles
7	JFK's staff's arrival in Los Angeles
9	JFK's acceptance speech in the Coliseum
10	Richard Nixon's reaction to acceptance speech
12	Meeting with JFK about use of television for the campaign
13	Arranging the debate between Nixon and JFK
15	Negotiations about the debate
16	Nixon's appearance at the first debate
18	Second debate in Washington D.C.
19	Temperature in the studio
20	Insistence on reaction shots
21	Issue with notes in the third debate
22	Fourth debate in New York
23	Use of regional television networks
25	Receiving election results in Hyannis Port
26	JFK's speech to the Baptist Convention in Houston, Texas
28	Mood in the campaign on Election Day
29	Nixon's refusal to concede
31	Suggestion of a fifth debate
34	Focus of the first debate on domestic affairs
35	Sponsorship for the debate
36	Panel of interrogators
38	Arrival in Chicago for first debate
40	Effect of the candidates' physical appearances on the debate
43	Experience of JFK's campaign staff
45	Work with Lyndon B. Johnson's and Hubert Humphrey's campaign
46	Work on the inauguration
49	Radio broadcasts during the Cuban Missile Crisis
50	Handling filming of JFK's funeral
53	Meetings at the White House about the United States Information Agency
55	Unofficial meetings at the White House
56	Jacqueline Kennedy's exposure on television
57	Kennedy family's television appearances

Oral History Interview

with

J. LEONARD REINSCH

January 5, 1966
Atlanta, Georgia

By Charles T. Morrissey

For the John F. Kennedy Library

MORRISSEY: Why don't we start with the 1956
Convention?

REINSCH: My first major contact was with Senator
Kennedy in 1956 in Chicago at the
Democratic National Convention. We
had an interesting side light on the
result of the vice-presidency race.
We had introduced, for the first time
at a political Convention, what we called
a tote board. This was on the basis that
we would have a contest for the nomination

for the presidency. It turned out to be anything but a close contest with Governor [Adlai E.] Stevenson getting the nomination. The vice-presidency became an interesting scramble when Candidate Stevenson announced to a group of Democrats that he did not want to name his running mate, he wanted the Convention to have the freedom of action. This was the first time that a Convention had been given the freedom to choose the running mate of the presidential candidate. As a result, we had a free-for-all. [Estes] Kefauver, who had had an organization but had run out of money in striving for the presidential nomination, of course had the advantage because he formerly had had an organization even though they no longer were officially together in organization form. Senator

Kennedy captured the interest of the Southern delegations. It was quite a race. As a matter of fact, if the tote board had been left up for the vice-presidential race, conceivably the results would have been different, because the normal manner of checking results by pencil with rapid changing votes sometimes gives an incorrect total. We had intended to leave the tote board up but we had not so instructed the engineers at the Stockyard's Amphitheater, and we were quite surprised when we came in the hall for the nominating session to find that the tote board was down. Kefauver won the hectic contest and got the nomination for the vice-presidency.

In January of 1957, I received a call from Senator Kennedy who was then in Washington, asking, if he could send someone to Atlanta to

discuss with me the manner in which a candidate prepared for a convention. This was based on the fact that I had participated in national conventions in a management basis one way or another since 1944 and, theoretically anyway, had more experience in political conventions than anyone in either party. A man by the name of [Lynn] Johnson came to Atlanta and we spent the better part of the day discussing the means by which a candidate could best prepare for a convention, and the means by which he could be sure that he had the delegate votes that he needed at the time that he went into the convention city. At that time we did not know where the convention city would be located. Subsequently during 1957, at the Senator's request, I visited with him in Washington

on a half dozen occasions. On one of these occasions I said that it really didn't mean anything to me personally but some of the advice that I was asked to give might be changed somewhat if I knew whether he were running for the vice-presidency or the presidency. He smiled a little bit and he said, "We ran for the vice-presidency in 1956. In '60 we go for the big one." With that we proceeded with the discussion on how to prepare for the '60 Convention.

During the period when we were selecting the city for the 1960 Convention all of the candidates of course kept close watch on these activities because the location of the Convention can sometimes be a determining factor in winning or losing a nomination. Los Angeles was selected. This met with fairly unanimous

approval of the Democratic National Committee and the candidates. The location of the hotels in Los Angeles presented a problem to me as Convention manager because the hotels were spread from Pasadena almost to Santa Monica. The Sports Arena itself was an ideal place in which to hold the Convention. However the lack of hotel suites made the allocation of space to the key state delegations very difficult. This becomes a political problem in a Convention because the proper relationship of states can help or can slow down a candidate according to the ability of them or their workers to contact doubtful states or doubtful delegates within state delegations where they have the predominance of voting. We did try to work out the Los Angeles housing as best we could

under difficult circumstances and provided buses to get to the Sports Arena, but this was the most difficult Convention with respect to housing in the history of our experience. I might say as an aside that the Philadelphia Hotel problem in 1948 was also difficult.

The Kennedy people were in Los Angeles early. They were the first candidate's representatives to call on me at my office in the headquarters hotel, the Biltmore Hotel, in Los Angeles, they were the first candidate's representatives to check the facilities in the Biltmore Hotel, they were the first candidate's representatives to check the availability of such items as typewriters, pencils, carbon paper, additional secretarial help, additional office space, and all of the extraneous, and that sometimes seemed

little, details that can make or break a candidate when they're in the pressure of a Convention and don't have time to take care of the details if they haven't been covered before the Convention opens. We had to provide, of course, headquarter space for each of the candidates. The Kennedy people, having carefully checked the Biltmore Hotel, requested certain space. Fortunately, the other candidates selected different areas in the hotel and everyone was reasonably satisfied, with the exception of the New Jersey governor. [Robert B.] Meyner came in at the last minute primarily to get an advantage in tickets to the Convention and suites in hotels. The people in his state did not consider him a very serious candidate but the Governor may have had other views.

The Convention is a matter of history. Over the objections of some of us in the Convention organization, the acceptance speech was made in the Coliseum. We preferred having the acceptance speech in the Sports Arena with an overflow crowd and provisions made to reach the people outside the Sports Arena. A ruling was made, however, by the National Committee that the acceptance speech would be made in the Coliseum. As a result we did not have a comfortable setup for Candidate Kennedy's acceptance speech. We had an additional and totally unexpected problem. Apparently someone in an exhuberant spirit had invited, over Kennedy's signature, everybody and their brother to sit on the platform with the candidate. We had a platform that should have been adequate but it became necessary

in my role as Convention manager to point out to several senators and governors and other important political leaders that they could not be on the platform because we had strained the platform beyond the point of safety. We could not take any chances. The reason I mention the Coliseum is that this was a key speech in determining Nixon's reply to the invitation to debate the Democratic candidate. Nixon watched this acceptance speech in the company of [William P.] Rogers and two other people. He remarked at the time Kennedy had finished his speech that, "I can take this man." This reaction, plus all the publicity about his great ability as a debater, I think, made it possible for us to mousetrap him into the debates. I had tried in 1952 to get Eisenhower

and Stevenson locked in debates. I tried again in 1956 but to no avail. As a matter of fact we never received even an acknowledgement from the Republicans. Kennedy was tired the night of his acceptance speech; he had gone through a difficult Convention. We did not have a proper setting or an ideal area in which to deliver an acceptance speech, and it was under the most trying circumstances that he delivered this acceptance speech. Nixon, however, overlooked all of these facts in his elation about his ability to debate the Democratic candidate. There apparently was no doubt in his mind at that point that he would soundly trounce Kennedy.

Following the Convention I went to Pebble Beach with my wife and daughter hoping to play golf for about two weeks.

I had only gotten on the putting green when I had a call from Hyannis Port. I was asked if I could get to Hyannis Port as soon as possible to discuss some strategy in the use of television in the upcoming campaign. I said I could but my wife and daughter were with me and we had to get to San Francisco to get a plane. Arrangements were made to meet us at Boston with a private plane. We were flown over to Hyannis Port. Within less than forty-eight hours, I was in a luncheon meeting with [Henry M.] Scoop Jackson, the candidate, Pierre Salinger, and I believe one other person. I'm not sure. It was a small luncheon in the candidate's home at Hyannis Port. We were given ample servings of clam chowder. It was at this point that Pierre Salinger showed the candidate the wire that had been

received from [Robert W.] Bob Sarnoff offering time on the NBC television network for the debate between the Democratic and Republican candidates. The candidate turned to me and asked what we should do about the wire. I said I thought he ought to send an unqualified acceptance on the basis that at any time, any place, he would be glad to meet the Republican candidate. However, I suggested that the wire be released to television, radio, and the press prior to sending it so that it was given full publicity in the event that the Republican candidate did not choose to accept. It so happened of course that Nixon, thinking about the acceptance speech of Jack Kennedy, did accept, and we were off to the races. I had the feeling then that the Republican candidate had made a crucial mistake.

After the acceptance wire had been drafted and the candidate suggested that the Republicans get in touch with Leonard Reinsch to handle the details of the television debate, the candidate turned to me and said, "Now what sort of program will we have?" I said, "I'm really not concerned about the program. All I want is a picture of you and Nixon on the same television tube. We'll take it from there." But the candidate looked a little bit nonplused by my answer. About two hours later, he turned to me and said, "Do you always run your business that way?" I said, "What do you mean, sir?" He said, "We don't know what this program's going to be and we've already said we accepted the television appearance." "We'll work that out." was my reply. It took fifteen meetings to work out

the problems of the debate. I was very fortunate in that the candidate gave me full authority to handle the negotiations. He gave one directive, and only one directive, "Make sure that the Republican candidate doesn't get off the hook."

For some of these meetings. . . .
[Theodore C.] Ted Sorensen was available and joined in the discussions. Usually the Republicans were represented by four people. The networks of course were there. We tried to get the title changed from "debate" to "joint appearance", because actually the television programs were not debates. . . . All of us recognized that it wasn't a debate in the classical sense of the term "debate". The Republicans were tied down apparently by many instructions from the candidate. With the freedom

of action that we had we were able to make some arrangements that were much more acceptable to our side than that later developed were acceptable to the Republicans. We were fortunate too in that I was fortunate enough to win the draw for position. This was an extra advantage. The first debate was scheduled in the CBS studio in Chicago. I could not understand however, why the Republican candidate showed up in a grey suit for the first "Debate" when we knew on the day before (Sunday) that the background was going to be in the light shades. As a result of his grey suit Candidate Nixon appeared washed out and he didn't have the sharp clean cut appearance. We used about twenty-five per cent of the light on Kennedy that was used on Nixon -- they set their own lighting; we set our

lighting. Our candidate had a clean cut appearance. Our candidate made the impression on viewers that we expected. The debates have been discussed in detail so I will not go into any discussion of the debates other than to comment that we did at the last minute change from the shirt that our candidate had prior to the television to a pastel blue shirt because it gave us a little sharper appearance and we didn't have the bloom-out around the coat collar that was evident with the off-white shirt that we had first tried. The effect was there. We got the reaction shots we wanted. The impact on the voters is history.

The second debate was held in Washington, D.C. Let me pause for a moment. How much do you want on the debates?

MORRISSEY: As much as you want to give us.

REINSCH: Okay. The second "debate" was in the NBC studios in Washington. Originally we had tried to work it out in Cleveland. It should be understood that in negotiating for the time and place of the debate that you had to be very careful not to disclose where your candidate is going. Both sides are cautious about laying their cards on the table because political strategy may be exposed in the discussions to where you're heading a candidate at a certain time. As a result, we approached the discussions cautiously. We agreed on Cleveland. Cleveland did not have adequate television facilities; the Westinghouse Corporation studios were inadequate. They were the NBC affiliate and NBC was slated to handle the second debate. As a result we moved into Washington, D.C. When we showed up at

the NBC building, the temperature of the studio was about sixty-four degrees. It was quite obvious why it was this cold. Nixon was, what I would call, a psychosomatic sweater. He perspired frequently and as a result of the reaction shots we got in the first debate we were able to show a nervousness in the man that reflected against him and reflected favorably for our candidate. We were quite concerned about the sixty-four degree temperature. I finally located a janitor in the second basement below the studio and with a series of threats got him to locate the key to the thermostat buried in the bottom drawer of a desk. We turned the temperature up as high as we could but even so, at the conclusion of the second debate it was only seventy-two degrees in the studio.

The Republican candidate did not want reaction shots. He asked that the lights be put on the camera so he could tell when the camera was on. He had a handkerchief in front of him on the podium and he figured he would wipe his brow when the camera was on Candidate Kennedy. The first half hour produced no reaction shots; reaction shots being the shots of the opposing candidate while the other candidate is speaking. I got quite concerned about the lack of reaction shots. I was in the control room and threatened the producer and the director if we didn't get reaction shots. I think we were about forty minutes into the program when I finally got about ten seconds of what I was after and that was a picture of Candidate Nixon rubbing his brow in nervousness. To the Democrats this picture was most important.

Candidate Nixon apparently expected to overwhelm the Democratic candidate in the last debate, but we had a maximum audience through the entire hour in the first debate. The second, third and fourth debates tapered off in size and attention value of the audience. The radio broadcasts did give the Republican an edge over the Democratic candidate but there was no doubt about the winner in that first debate. In the second debate Candidate Kennedy had an edge. The third debate was about even and the fourth debate was about even.

The third debate was the one where we used the split screen technique with Candidate Nixon in California and Candidate Kennedy in New York. This was the program where the famous row about notes came about. Fred Scribner

and I had an agreement that if we were giving quotations then we could use notes so that specific quotations would be given without any error.

Candidate Kennedy referred to quotations in the third debate. Probably an indication of the way the political race was going was Candidate Nixon getting so emotionally upset about seeing some notes on the rostrum of the Democratic candidate in New York. That was a storm that died down pretty fast.

The fourth debate took place in the ABC studios in New York and when I came in at the last checkup in the studio I noticed that the Republican candidate had been well taken care of with respect to make-up. I wanted to get some still shots but couldn't

get any photographers in the studio.

In fact the Secret Servicemen were surrounding the then Vice President and also we were told that the Democratic candidate would have to wait until he finished his camera checkup. We didn't of course pay any attention to those suggestions and when our candidate arrived he proceeded to the cottage that had been selected. ABC had set up two attractive cottages for use by the candidates.

During the campaign we used many regional television networks. One of the techniques was the question and answer program which Candidate Kennedy was so adept at handling. We did run into problems where he would be overwhelmed by the voters and would stop to shake hands.

We were on our way out to a television

presentation at one of the colleges in Los Angeles. Candidate Kennedy was attracted by a large crowd watching the motorcade. He stopped the car and shook hands with most of the crowd. This almost caused us to miss the opening remarks of the television network.

In Raleigh, North Carolina, it was raining. Candidate Kennedy rode in a closed car until he got to the city limits but then he insisted in getting in an open car despite the rain. That was a night we had questions from the audience. For a regional television network the candidate would make a speech and then answer questions. This evening a young lady asked the candidate what he would do if he were elected, and then re-elected. He would be retiring at a very young age. His reply of course, was that

first things first, and that he thought he ought to get elected to the first term before he made decisions about the second term or retirement.

The night that we were in Hyannis Port when the election results were coming in will, of course, always be remembered by everyone involved in that campaign. We did have an interesting day to lead up to an exciting night. We originally had planned to close the campaign with the telecast from Faneuil Hall in Boston. The program was fairly well organized but at the last minute it was decided that first there should also be two television pick-ups from Manchester [New Hampshire] Ted Sorensen and I flew from Boston, after watching part of the phone question and answer program that the Nixon people felt was going to overwhelm

the populace. The program was not a success to put it mildly. The Democrats, however, felt that we should have two additional television programs that night. Ted and I got in this one-motor plane that flew low over the trees and got into Manchester and then had to rush back to Boston to make sure everything was set for Faneuil Hall following the appearance at the Boston Garden.

Some of us were very confident that the Democratic candidate would win. We knew some of the religious problems. In fact, one of the interesting developments during the campaign of course was the candidate's appearance before the Baptist Convention in Houston, Texas. This was arranged with Marty [Underwood] who was handling the Texas advance work, and myself. He called and asked if the candidate would

appear before the Baptist Convention and I said, "I think that'd be great. Let's get a state-wide network and put it on video tape." We then cleared the program with the candidate and his brother. The program itself ran about forty-eight minutes. We made a video tape and played this program in Baptist territories in the South with great effect. It was one of the most difficult and yet one of the most successful appearances of the Democratic candidate during the entire campaign.

MORRISSEY: Some people have pointed out that that film was also shown in areas of heavy Catholic population. Do you recall any discussion of that point with the candidate?

REINSCH: There was no discussion about the showing in heavy Catholic areas. I

was handling the television arrangements for the placement of the film and there was tremendous interest on the part of the opposition press as to where it was being shown. We never released the figures. In some cases we were running it more frequently than was realized by the opposition but primarily we used it in the Southern areas. We also used it in some meetings. Unfortunately we didn't have the same type of film to try to influence the Mormons.

MORRISSEY: Could you describe that night at Hyannis Port when the election returns were coming in, give me something of the mood of the gathering?

REINSCH: Usually along at the end of the afternoon on election day there is a tremendous amount of enthusiasm. Of course,

the networks were covering Hyannis Port at the Armory. We were getting the returns from across the country from the various states. At 1:30 in the morning I went back to the house to discuss what we at that time figured would be the new President's appearance before the television cameras at the Armory in the wee hours of the morning. Nixon refused to concede, and actually never did personally concede. You may recall that [Herbert] Klein was the one that had to make the concession the next morning. As the night progressed [Theodore H.] Ted White talked to me about it and said, "A lot of the people are getting nervous about the results." I said, "Ted, we're going to win. It's close but we're going to win. Just look at the key figures."

Mathematically it looked close but it looked fairly good. You never know about a national election however and you like to have the other fellow concede and have the figures confirm that concession. Along about one, two, or three o'clock in the morning, of course, there's a feeling of tiredness -- the strain begins to tell. The expectation that the final result will come in keeps you going but when Candidate Nixon didn't concede at 1:30 or two o'clock some decided to get a few hours of sleep figuring that the next morning would be the critical period, which it turned out to be. I had about an hour and a half's sleep that night and rushed back to the Armory early. As soon as the concession was made I made arrangements

with the family to come to the Armory. The new President and his family were presented to the American people on television. This of course is the most thrilling moment in any political experience.

MORRISSEY: Could you tell me about some of the negotiations about a fifth debate?

REINSCH: The fifth debate became a very interesting ploy in the '60 campaign. Candidate Nixon was not quite sure what he wanted to do and there was an advantage in suggesting there be a fifth debate, particularly since the Republican candidate continued evasive. This gave Candidate Kennedy some interesting ammunition. The issue was very popular. "How come the Republican candidate is bragging about his arguing with [Nikita] Khrushchev when he's afraid to

debate with me? I'll go any place, any time, and debate with him." The candidate used this challenge very effectively. Finally about ten days before the election -- in Milwaukee, we got a wire from the Republican candidate which was filled with more "whereases" and "wherefores" than any two lawyers could dream up. At that point our candidate suggested that I go into Washington and meet with Fred Scribner representing Candidate Nixon and discuss the arrangements for a fifth debate. At three o'clock in the morning I was on my way to Washington, D.C. Hours mean nothing during the campaign. Fred Scribner and I met for the entire week. Fred is a good conscientious negotiator but we had got the feeling that the Republican

candidate wasn't sincere in his desire to have a fifth debate so that we decided to call the bluff. By arrangement I released a wire to Pierre Salinger and the Washington Press Corps traveling with Kennedy to the effect that we didn't think they were bargaining in good faith and we had done everything that was possible to bring about the fifth debate but it was quite obvious that the Republican candidate was still ducking. This caused, of course, the Republicans to send some other wires. The net result was negative for the Republican candidate.

MORRISSEY: Scribner's side of that story which is in this book, The Great Debates, by Sidney Kraus

REINSCH: Which I haven't read.

MORRISSEY: . . . is that he was negotiating with you when you dispatched that telegram to Salinger and that telegram disrupted negotiations which he felt were progressing.

REINSCH: There were probably many nuances in those negotiations I cannot get into print.

MORRISSEY: Do you recall the origin of the decision to devote the first debate solely to domestic affairs?

REINSCH: Yes, this came about in one of the fifteen meetings between the Republicans, myself as the Democratic representative, and the networks. The formats were agreed upon in these meetings. They, meaning the Republicans, thought they pulled a fast one because they were going to put Nixon out in front. Actually the sequence of subjects was exactly what we wanted. At no time did we

indicate so but we came out in accordance with what our candidate planned.

MORRISSEY: Do you recall any discussion about the question of sponsorship for the debates?

REINSCH: Yes, there was a lot of discussion about that. As basically a television executive my extracurricular activities in the political field sometimes puts me on both sides of the street. Frankly, I think that it wouldn't make any difference if it were sponsored or not sponsored if the advertising were handled in good taste. In 1960 we had two candidates. True, one of the men happened to be a vice president, but neither man had held the high office of presidency and neither man was subject to the limitations of security that are part of the presidency. As long as it was done in good taste and

good faith I think that it really didn't make too much difference one way or the other about sponsorship, but the question occasioned a lot of discussion.

MORRISSEY: Was the idea of conducting these debates in the style of the so-called Oregon debates ever really taken seriously by either side?

REINSCH: No.

MORRISSEY: How about the question of the panel of interrogators? As I understand it some people wanted newsmen entirely and others wanted representation from the radio and TV industry.

REINSCH: This got to be quite a fight. Obviously, those of us in the television field felt, one, that we were providing the facilities for the debates, that we were entitled to the stature of having

representation in the panels and that the newsmen that we had in television and radio were adult enough, sophisticated in their fields, and experienced, and could ask even more intelligent questions than some of our print media people.

The printed media people did however feel that there was some discrimination.

The magazine people had their own feelings.

I would say that the way in which it was worked out was satisfactory to all and it was a good cross-representation, and, I might add, quite a concession on the part of the television people.

MORRISSEY: This is asking quite a bit of your memory but do you recall a meeting at the airport, I think in Chicago, with John Kennedy just before the first debate, a brief ten or fifteen minute discussion of the situation?

REINSCH: Oh no, we went to Cleveland [Ohio] the day before, on Sunday. The first debate was on Monday. We flew to Cleveland in the morning and flew back in the evening. I went on the mother ship with the candidate. We went into the short airstrip in Cleveland. As a matter of fact, the DC-6 plane carrying the press and the photographers was the largest that had ever landed on that airstrip. On arrival in Chicago we went directly to the Ambassador-East [Hotel]. I believe the candidate was staying in there. The understanding that we had worked out with the candidate and the campaign managers was that the candidate would have no appearances on Monday. This was broken in that he went to the Morrison Hotel for a short meeting at noon with a labor group but

he did come back and rest at the hotel. He had his briefings with Kenny [O'Donnell] and Ted [Sorensen]; and Bobby [Kennedy] asking him questions and he was giving answers. But he was relaxed; the phone was cut off. This was most important. Where most of the candidates run into trouble in television is that they had a strong schedule before they get to the television appearance. One of the problems Candidate Nixon had on that Monday was, I am told, that he had been busy all day. It is very much more important to be rested and relaxed and alert for seventy-five million people than it is to talk to any one strong political leader or groups of political leaders. These people are important and have their place but not on the day when you have a big television show.

MORRISSEY: I've heard some people say that, in terms of debater's points, Nixon should be called the winner of the so-called debates, and, as you pointed out and as others have pointed out, the visible contrast between the two candidates is what won for Kennedy. Did Kennedy ever comment on this to you?

REINSCH: Kennedy never made any comment but I go back to my original comment to the candidate in Hyannis Port when we first set up the television appearances. As a television technician I was interested in only one thing, and that was the appearance at the same time of the two candidates on the same television tube because we had every advantage at that point, and I knew we had. The manner in which Candidate Kennedy answered the questions was excellent. Nixon

did not understand the television technique despite the staged deal he did with his "Checkers" speech in the '52 campaign. His appearance, his alertness, his brightness, and the ability to answer questions quickly on his part gave the Democratic candidate a tremendous advantage. The voters came away from the debate with the impression "This man is well informed. He is a tremendously alert man and he had a breadth of experience that we had no understanding that he had before." The Southern governors meeting in the South were undecided about the Democratic candidate. They watched that debate. When that debate was finished they sent a wire endorsing the Democratic candidate. That was the first time they acted as a group.

[Richard J.] Dick Daley came in and he said, "Leonard, I don't know what you're going to do about some other debate but -- if you have to buy the time -- let's have some more of these. We've got it made." The reaction was good all the way through. And then, of course, we made a great to-do about the fact that we didn't need any make-up on the Democratic candidate and by the fourth debate the Republican candidate was a little bit on the heavy side with make-up.

MORRISSEY: There had been a debate between John Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey during the West Virginia campaign. Had you gotten involved in that?

REINSCH: I was not involved in the West Virginia campaign. I was busy working on the Convention.

MORRISSEY: A lot of the Kennedy people who went to Los Angeles were termed amateurs and a lot of them were young enough to be amateurs and yet they carried it off in a very professional manner. It seems strange that a bunch of amateurs should do so well.

REINSCH: They weren't amateurs. They had been tried by fire in many other campaigns. They had learned that if you work twenty-five hours out of twenty-four, eight days out of seven, and are willing to take care of ten thousand details, that you can lick the other man because usually the opposition will not work that hard. They just outworked, outmaneuvered, and took care of every little detail.

MORRISSEY: Were the Kennedy people pleased or displeased about the selection of Los Angeles as the convention city?

REINSCH: I would say that all of the candidates accepted Los Angeles as a pretty good compromise. Some of the candidates, of course, would have preferred Chicago politically. I would think that would apply to Kennedy as well because Mayor Daley had announced he was backing Kennedy and [Michael V.] DiSalle had gone all out in Ohio for Kennedy and [G. Mennen] Williams was beginning to look in that direction. There would have been advantages in Chicago but, I can say with assurance, there was no political motivation in the selection of Los Angeles. It was not designed to help any candidate. I know some of the Stevenson people were inclined to say that Paul Butler had helped them to get Los Angeles. I sat in on the meetings in the selection of Los Angeles

and it came down to the question of money as it does most of the time.

MORRISSEY: Had any emissaries of other candidates come to you after the Kennedys had approached you?

REINSCH: Oh yes, I did considerable work with the Johnson people and with the Humphrey people. An indication that they were getting there first in most instances is the fact that the Kennedy people were the first on the scene, and they came in greater numbers and they were checking limousines and all the little details that you can't bother about after you get to the city. They were casing the place. They were casing the hotels and they knew where they wanted to be. The Johnson people came in later and the Humphrey people came in still later. They did their work

but there were not as many of them
and they didn't go into as much detail.

MORRISSEY: Was the gentleman named Johnson who
came down to Atlanta to see you in 1957
named Lynn Johnson?

REINSCH: He's the man that worked at the Merchandise
Mart and is now in Rochester.

MORRISSEY: Right, that's the one I had in mind.
Let's move on from the election. Did
you see much of Kennedy when he was
President?

REINSCH: Yes, I worked, of course, on the inauguration.
I handled the television arrangements
and radio arrangements and newsreel
arrangements. I don't think any of us
who participated in that one will ever
forget the snow and the cold and the
problems of weather that we had all the
way through. I achieved some degree
of fame for a trivial item. You do a

lot of work on some things and people never know about it. Then you do some little trivial thing and everybody knows about it. That was when the rostrum started to smoke and I went down there to handle that problem with [James] Jim Rowley, the head of the White House detail at that time. I knew it was an electrical short. There were about eight wires there, eight plugs, and all of them were tangled, you don't have a tag on any of them at a place like that. You had a P.A. system; you had heating; you had lighting, and a lot of other things. I just took a chance and pulled one of the plugs. I was lucky enough to pull the right plug and that eliminated the short that was in the rostrum for the raising and lowering the speaker's part of the rostrum.

About the time, Eisenhower turned to Kennedy and said, "You must have a hot speech." The candidate, about to be sworn in as President, was quite anxious for the program to proceed. We were in a rather delicate position because actually the House and the Senate control the swearing in of a president. I was there as a representative of the President-to-be to keep things moving along and coordinate without any authority except the personal authority from the new President. Every detail had to be handled diplomatically. After the smoke cleared away the newly elected President asked if everything was set. I replied, "Yes, sir." He said, "Well, let's get going." We got going.

MORRISSEY: When did you see him again after the inauguration?

REINSCH: I saw him a number of times at the White House and then he named me to the Advisory Commission on U.S. Information and later named me Chairman of the Advisory Commission on U.S. Information. As the White House would have television or radio problems I would be called on. At the time of the Cuban crisis I was called in to work on the radio propaganda part when we arranged with American stations for continuous broadcasts in Spanish immediately after the President's message to the American people. This was only a small part, of course, of all the activity that took place that day, preceeding days, and subsequent days.

MORRISSEY: Were you able to carry that off without any leaks to the press?

REINSCH: Yes, security was tight. We operated within the White House. All the phone calls that were made were made on a guarded basis. Then just minutes before the President was to make his speech we made the final arrangements. It worked out beautifully.

At the time of the funeral, I came to Washington at eight o'clock on Friday and went directly to the White House. I was given the responsibility of handling television and newsreel and stills of all of the funeral arrangements at the White House, the church, and the cemetery. No one of us got any sleep for the next three nights. That was probably the toughest period in my entire life. The entire television industry and everyone connected with the media were extremely cooperative. I was

operating out of Pierre Salinger's office. At the church where it was necessary to make a decision about the placement of all cameras I decided that one television camera could be facing the family from the choir loft but that no still photographers should face the family. We got cooperation from everyone and were able to mask the location of cameras in the church so that it did not detract from the service. The big problem of course, was trying to decide where history left off and the family privacy set in. We were making decisions constantly and weighing these facts in our mind and determining to the best of our judgment what was right for the family and what was right for the country. At the cemetery we located the cameras in areas we hoped would turn out to be

in good taste with respect to the funeral services. We eliminated obvious microphones. We tried to balance the coverage so the country could participate and yet the family could have some privacy. It was a tough period.

MORRISSEY: Was there one specific member of the family or representative of the family that you were dealing with?

REINSCH: Most of the time, we had to make our own decisions. Fortunately the family had confidence in my judgement. With a few exceptions I was pretty much given a free rein in the three areas I described. We did change the lighting arrangement in the driveway at the White House the first night about five times as different members of the family had different reactions as to how it

should be covered. No media representative complained.

MORRISSEY: In the White House appointment books I noticed that you came in twice to see the President for formal visits, the first on October 4, 1961, 4:30 to 4:45 in the afternoon. I think that was with Mr. [Edward R.] Ed Murrow. Do you recall that?

REINSCH: Yes, Ed, as director of the USIA [United States Information Agency], and myself, as chairman of the Advisory Commission on U.S. Information, worked together. We in the Advisory Commission had the responsibility of reporting to the Congress and the President about the activities of the USIA. The annual report was leather bound, and we presented it to the President. I believe that was probably that occasion. But

October. . . . That wouldn't indicate it was.

MORRISSEY: I have another meeting that was scheduled on August 2, 1962, 5:45 to 6:00 p.m. but I don't have any information about what the meeting was on.

REINSCH: I don't know either. I may have been asked to do something. I enjoyed working with President Kennedy. He stimulated the imagination and was a great inspiration. I think that all of us who had that opportunity cherish it because we're better people today as individuals for having worked with him.

MORRISSEY: Any other trips to Washington during the Kennedy presidency that you'd like to talk about? Were you up there, for example, when he was preparing

to go on TV on the Sunday of the riots in Oxford, Mississippi?

REINSCH: Could be, I don't recall. I was in and out of there unofficially. I'm surprised that I was on the books officially a couple of times.

MORRISSEY: Just those two times.

REINSCH: I didn't know that I was on official visits. We met over in the residence several times. Then I had the Advisory Commission in to meetings with the President several times. Ed Murrow and I worked out a presentation for the broadcasters -- that may have been the occasion -- that worked with us on the Cuban crisis. Ed and I very carefully worked out the language, particularly Ed, and we reviewed it with the President and gave him a copy. He listened to our outline.

Then he went to the garden to meet the broadcasters and ad libbed remarks better than what we'd suggested. He had a great faculty for taking the sense from a discussion and then putting it in his own words.

MORRISSEY: Do you recall that he ever mentioned to you that he was concerned about Mrs. Kennedy's overexposure on TV?

REINSCH: No. During the campaign, we did a couple of programs with the family. Mrs. Kennedy appeared on the "Today" program with Dave Garroway, and did beautifully. I called her and complimented her about it and said we wanted her to do a couple of other programs. She was rather reluctant. She didn't feel that she had done a good job. On the occasions that we worked with her, I gave her the assurance that if she would just be

herself she would go across beautifully. Once she was on camera, she was natural and we had no difficulty. We did do a taped show at the house one time during the campaign, on a Sunday, and I wasn't too happy about part of it. I don't think the candidate was, but he didn't want to bother about a re-take because he had promised to take Caroline over to the park at 5 o'clock and at 5 o'clock he concluded the broadcast and took Caroline to the park. We did a telecast with the whole family in the house one time. We had Caroline in the bedroom and Mrs. Kennedy was a little bit concerned about how she would react. I chatted with both of them. We had to take the rugs up from the floor so we could dolly the camera in. It worked out very well. They were natural and easy going. But

the one show that Mrs. Kennedy did for television was on the networks when her husband was in Syracuse. The Candidate was scheduled to speak, as I recall, at 10 o'clock. Mrs. Kennedy was going to be on this program which had all the family in it between 9:30 and 10. Her program was scheduled to finish just as the President was scheduled to speak. He came into the hotel suite and wanted to watch the television program before he went upstairs to the big dinner. The television set in the suite wasn't working too well and he had to come down to the small bedroom that I had down the hall. But he was determined to watch that television program with Mrs. Kennedy on it before he went upstairs to make his speech on television. He was well pleased with Mrs. Kennedy's program.

MORRISSEY: It seems to me I recall some discussion about the extent to which the Administration should allow coverage of these missile launchings lest there be an error and our errors consequently be presented to the world. Do you recall any discussions?

REINSCH: No, that would have been in Pierre Salinger's area.

MORRISSEY: Unless you have some other isolated recollections I think I have run out of questions.

REINSCH: No.

MORRISSEY: Thank you very much.

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