

William G. Hundley Oral History Interview – RFK#1, 12/09/70
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Biographical Note

Hundley, (1924-2006) Chief, Organized Crime and Racketeering Section, Department of Justice. Department of Justice (1958-1966), and also briefly served as Robert F. Kennedy's special assistant. In this interview, he discusses Kennedy's strengthened approach against organized crime, disagreements with investigative agencies, the Bernard Goldfine case, among other issues.

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William G. Hundley – RFK #1

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Oral History Interview

with

William G. Hundley

December 9, 1970
Washington, D.C.

By James A. Oesterle

For the Robert F. Kennedy Oral History Program
of the Kennedy Library

OESTERLE: Mr. Hundley served as the Chief of the Justice Department's Organized Crime [and Racketeering] Section during the administration of President Kennedy [John F. Kennedy]. Mr. Hundley, I'd like to begin this session with a biographical statement by you.

HUNDLEY: All right. Let's see. I was born in Pittsburgh, August 16th, 1925. Then the family moved to Brooklyn, New York when I was about six years old. I attended parochial schools in Brooklyn. I went to St. Augustine's Academy there, high school. After that I went into the service in 1943 and I was discharged in 1946. After my discharge from the Army, I attended Fordham University in New York City. They had some provision at that time that if you were a veteran, if you put in I think it was three years in Fordham University and your marks were high enough, you'd become eligible to attend law school. So after three years of undergraduate work, I was accepted in Fordham.

OESTERLE: That's all right. You can relax, sit back. You were accepted in Fordham and were able to complete your education in three years?

HUNDLEY: The undergraduate work, and then I was accepted into Fordham Law School. I graduated from Fordham Law School with an L.L.B. in 1951. After I was admitted to the New York bar [Interruption]...I was hired by the United States Justice Department in Washington. I came down and joined the Justice Department I believe it was March or April of 1951. At that time I was assigned to the Criminal Division.

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That was the first time I ever met Robert Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy]. He had also gotten out of [University of] Virginia Law School at the same time, had been admitted to the Virginia bar. He joined the Criminal Division of the Department of Justice just about the same time I did. My recollection now is that, although we knew one another as a couple of young attorneys, we never really worked together on anything. And he stayed only for a very short period then. I recall when he left he told me he was leaving to help his brother Jack in his brother's senatorial campaign in Massachusetts.

I stayed with the Justice Department. I was in the Internal Security Section of the Criminal Division. The Internal Security Section was made a division in 1952 and I went with that division. I stayed with the Internal Security Division until 1958 at which time the then Attorney General Bill Rogers [William P. Rogers] appointed me as Chief of the Organized Crime Section back in the Criminal Division. I stayed as Chief of the Organized Crime Section until the Kennedy administration took over in 1961—I guess that's when they came in—when Bob Kennedy became Attorney General. At that time he brought his own man in, a fellow named Silberling [Edwyn Silberling], to be Chief of the Organized Crime Section. I stayed on as a Special Assistant to him [Robert Kennedy] for roughly about a year, and when Mr. Silberling left, I would say sometime in 1962, he then asked me if I would go back and be Chief of the Section again, which I did. I stayed as Chief of the Organized Crime Section again, until October of 1966 when I resigned from the Department of Justice and went into private practice.

OESTERLE: Why did Silberling leave?

HUNDLEY: Well, I never really knew the true story, but apparently there were some personality differences between Ed Silberling and Jack Miller [Herbert J. Miller Jr.], who was the head of the Criminal Division. Apparently, it reached a point where one or the other had to go, I suppose. So naturally, since Jack Miller was his boss, Ed Silberling left. In any event, he left after a year.

Then I had just come back from trying the Keogh [J. Vincent Keogh] case in New York, and, quite frankly, I was making plans at that point to leave the Department of Justice. I was considering either going with Bill Rogers' law firm up in New York or with the du Pont Company [E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Co.], in the counselor's office, of Delaware. So I remember that it did come, number one, as quite a surprise when he called me up to his office and asked me if I would take that job back. I told him at the time that I was about three-

quarters out of the Department of Justice. I had even talked to Bill Rogers and some of his partners and the people at du Pont.

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But I had developed a pretty close relationship with Bobby by that time. I worked personally with him on the Keogh case, and I worked personally with him on the Goldfine [Bernard Goldfine] case. So when he asked me to go back as Chief of the Organized Crime Section, I finally agreed to go back. I did tell him at the time that I had been Chief of that Section since 1958, to 1960, and that, quite frankly, although I found it to be rather interesting work, that I wasn't happy to go back into that same type of work. Then he asked me to take it for—I remember now he said, “Well, if you'll you do it for me for a couple of years, you know, then you can move on to something else either in the Department or pretty well what you want. After two years I won't hold you to the commitment anymore.” So I agreed to do it then.

OESTERLE: What were the initial differences between the Organized Crime Section under the Rogers' administration and the Kennedy administration, and again under your authority and under Silberling's?

HUNDLEY: Well, as I say, when I came over in 1958 to be head of the Organized Crime Section, we had all sorts of difficulties. That's really one of the basic reasons I didn't want to go back, because I thought they were difficulties that could never really be resolved. I always had, and still have, a very high respect for Bill Rogers. I consider him a good friend, and I think he was a good Attorney General. And we could never get the organized crime program off the ground at all, not because he didn't want to do it or not because I didn't want to do it. I think Malcolm Wilkey [Malcolm R. Wilkey], who was the head of the Criminal Division, wanted to do it, too.

We had all sorts of problems with the investigative agencies, jealousies among them. Very frankly, at that time the Director of the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] had no interest in the program; had no program of his own; and quite frankly did little, if anything, at that time in the field of organized crime. Organized crime drives had always been sort of a sporadic thing with the Department of Justice.

After the Kefauver [Estes Kefauver] hearings there was a great public interest in getting something done. This is before my time, but I knew the background. And after the Kefauver hearings the Department of Justice geared up, Internal Revenue [Services] assigned men, and they started grand juries all over the country. Then public interest in it lagged. The cases aborted. Then the investigative agencies always felt that, you know, they had wasted all this time and effort. The FBI never got involved in it, see, and maybe they were smarter.

So when we tried to crank it up again after the Appalachian

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meeting in New York—see, that was the catalyst in 1957 that kicked it off. We had all these top hoodlums meeting up in New York. Naturally the Attorney General and the American public wanted to get something going; but back in those days, you know, the IRS [International Revenue Service] would say to me, “Well, look, you know we committed a lot of manpower back after the Kefauver hearing and go nowhere.” They were very gun-shy about getting involved again. The same was true with some of the other investigative agencies. They seemed to sense that this was just another periodic thing and it was going to die down and that they’d be better off just working on their routine cases. The FBI just wouldn’t get involved at that time at all.

And with all due deference to Bill Rogers’ good intentions, Bill Rogers as Attorney General never had the clout that Bobby Kennedy had, because Bobby Kennedy had a brother who was President and Bill Rogers was just a very efficient, effective Attorney General. He was not in a position to get the kind of backing from the top that Bobby could get. So on the whole...I think we did as well as we could in those three years, but we really could have done a lot more had we been able to get the type of push right from the President on down. So, quite frankly, I had had enough of it by 1960 when Kennedy came in, although it did come as quite a surprise to me when he told me he wanted to bring his own guy in—but it was all right.

OESTERLE: Was this actually a step down, financially, for you, too?

HUNDLEY: Not financially at all. What he did actually is that...Under the Rogers administration, as chief of the section, I had been the liason man from the Department with the Committee [Select Committee on Improper Activities in the Labor or Management Fields], principally with him, since he was chief counsel of the Committee. And although I had known him when he was a young attorney, the only time we really had dealings together, close dealings, was when he was the Counsel of the McClellan Committee [John L. McClellan] and I was the Chief of the Organized Crime Section.

Quite frankly, they were not always harmonious dealings. He was Counsel of the Committee, he kept sending cases fown, and in a lot of instances I didn’t think the cases were too good. You know, he was a very strong-willed guy and we had many an argument about whether this was a good case or not. But in any event, I thought that I enjoyed his confidence. I think I did. So when he came in, he called me up to his office.

Oh, let me back up a little bit. If you’ll recall, he had written a book where he was quite critical of the Justice Department in their lack of a real coordinated effort against

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organized crime. He had written that book. In large measure the book was correct.

So when he came in, he called me up to his office. I think they came in—it couldn't have been more than ten days after he'd come in. He told me that....He said, "Look..." which I always appreciated. He was always a very candid fellow. I never really had any politics at all since I had been a government attorney since I got out of law school. He called me up and he said, "Look, Bill, this is no personal reflection on you, but as you know, I've been critical of the lack of effort in this organized crime field." He said, "You know, you've been a very loyal guy down here. I think you've done a good job, and I think you're a man of ability and integrity. And you were also very close to Bill Rogers. I just want to bring my own guy in to head up this organized crime program."

Quite frankly, if I had had a job to go to then, I'd have left, because I wasn't that happy with the organized crime program anyway. But I didn't. And he said, "You know, I'd like you to stay on as a Special Assistant to me." Now, don't get the idea that that was a big deal, because he had all sorts of Special Assistants. He said, "I really want you to because I think you can do a good job here." But he made it very clear he wanted to put his own people in to really activate this organized crime drive.

So that's what I did; I stayed. As I say, I stayed because I really didn't have any other place to go. I was quite surprised; I knew that I felt that I was being dumped. But in any event, I worked then on the Goldfine case with him, and I worked on the Keogh case. I went up and I personally tried the Keogh case in New York. So when all of the difficulties were brewing with Silberling, whatever they were, I was out of it. And, although during this year's sabbatical, as I refer to it, he would ask me about the organized crime thing, I really tried to stay out of it.

Believe it or not, I always felt that that was probably the happiest year I ever spent in the Department of Justice because I had my own cases, and I didn't have to worry about the FBI and all of this bureaucratic infighting. And as I say, after the Keogh case—well, we have six kids now; we had about three by then—I had pretty well made up my mind I was going to leave. I never discussed it with him, but I just made up my own mind that I would check out.

I was very surprised when he called me up and asked me to take the job back. He never said he made a mistake in dumping me in the first place, but he did. That got me, and I figured, well, you know....And by then I'd gotten to know him pretty

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well. So he just indicated things hadn't worked out too well down there and would I be willing to go back. So, oh, I hemmed and hawed and told him I didn't particularly—I'd had enough of that and I liked what I was doing and I was planning to get out anyway. So he put it on a basis of, "Well, if you take it....You know, just take it for two years," is the way he put it. And I agreed.

OESTERLE: You had not had any meetings with the Attorney General or Byron White during that interim period between the election and the inauguration?

HUNDLEY: Oh, no. None. No, not at all. See, my relationship with him was not that close, certainly not at that time. As I say, the relationship was he was Committee counsel and I was the liason guy at the Department of Justice and we would have business contacts. He kept sending cases down. We'd have to review them. He thought we could have been much more aggressive in some of the cases.

Wait a minute. Let me back up. There might have been one meeting. Pardon my. There was one meeting. You're right. There was one meeting on a Hoffa [James R. Hoffa] case, a proposed Hoffa case, that Bill Rogers had not made a decision on for the very good reason that it was a very close case and it involved Hoffa. He thought that the new Attorney General should pass on it. I had had some familiarity with that case. No supervision of it or anything like that, but you're right; there was a meeting.

It was up in the Attorney General's office, I guess. And that was before they took over. I'm sure of it. He was there. Byron White was there. I guess it's the first time I ever met Byron White in my life; I'm sure of it. Jack Miller was there; it was the first time I ever met Jack Miller. No, pardon me. I had met Jack before when Jack was active with the Monitors [Board of Monitors of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters]. But it was the first time that I knew that Jack Miller was coming into the Department. And then he was there, and then some of us holdovers were brought up to discuss this case. So you're right, but that's the only meeting before they actually took over that I recall having anything to do with.

OESTERLE: Would you discuss the Attorney General's particular interest in the Hoffa case?

HUNDLEY: Well, let me put it this way: When he was Committee counsel there were a lot of matters that were developed by the Committee that were potential cases against Hoffa. And what would happen is this, that as the McClellan Committee would develop information at their

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hearings or by way of investigation or what not that they thought had prosecutive potential, he would then refer the matters down to the Organized Crime Section of which I was the Chief. It would then become our job to run out the investigations either through the IRS or the FBI, get the information that the Committee had, and then ultimately make a prosecutive judgment as to whether or not we could proceed.

It wasn't only Hoffa. It was a lot of other teamsters. I guess I had the basic responsibility on that. And frankly, I could never see any of the cases on Hoffa that were sent down. I could see that there were possibilities, and we would conduct investigations, but ultimately I always found myself in the position where I was saying to Bobby, "I don't think this is a case." And of course, I had the final say so; and in a lot of instances he just didn't agree with me.

OESTERLE: Can you remember any of the instances in particular? I mean did he really get angry, or was he just upset, thinking that the case had not been thoroughly enough prepared on his part?

HUNDLEY: Well, it's hard to recall specifics, but I know that he felt that perhaps we weren't doing everything that we should to try and make these cases. Sometimes there would be obvious instances of wrongdoing that wouldn't measure up to a federal case. And in a lot of instances, he would just say that, well, Goddammit, he thought that there was a case. And I remember on one occasion I told him, "Well, I'm sorry. You know, I've reviewed it, and I've had it reviewed by other attorneys here, and I just don't think it is a case."

I recall on one occasion he said something to the effect that, "When you admit to me that"—and you know, he had a pretty good temper—"there's obvious wrongdoing here and you tell me on top of that, you can't make a case out of it, it makes me sick to my stomach." And I remember one day saying, "Well, you know, I can't be responsible for your gastric juices," something I shouldn't have said, but I did. And I remember he hung up on me. He was really sore that day. He hung up, but he called back. He called back within, oh, it must have been maybe twenty minutes, and he said that he was sorry. I said I was sorry too, that there wasn't any point in saying things like that. He said, "Look, I know you're trying to do your best down there, but will you do a little better or something and bring some of these cases that we're working so hard on down here?" See, we had a lot of internal problems. I never thought that....Most of these matters we would get from the Committee. We'd refer them out to the FBI or the Internal Revenue

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Service for investigation, and I don't think at that time the FBI or the Internal Revenue Service was breaking their back trying to makes cases for Bobby Kennedy. I don't know.

OESTERLE: Was there any concern on the part of the Justice Department during the period of the McClellan Committee hearings regarding the publicity that the hearings were getting and also the articles that Robert Kennedy was writing?

HUNDLEY: Oh, yeah, there was concern about that. Even then Robert Kennedy was a potent force in the Democratic Party and I was working for a Republican administration. Actually, Bill Rogers and Bob Kennedy were pretty good friends. They got along pretty well. But there wasn't the all-out effort on the part of the Department of Justice to make Bobby Kennedy look good. I mean it just wasn't there. And yet, on the other hand, I don't want to convey the impression that Bill Rogers wasn't interested in what the McClellan Committee was doing or anything else, because Bill Rogers had a pretty good background as a prosecutor himself, and he was genuinely interested in this.

I think that Bobby always sensed that, certainly that maybe there was a little footdragging there because nobody wanted to make his Committee look that good. I don't know. Bobby never said that to me or anything like that. But certainly his actions when he came in, indicated that he thought that the Justice Department and the whole Federal establishment ought to play a much bigger role in the whole thing. And you know, he was obviously right on that, because everybody has picked that up to the point now where I think they're overdoing it, to tell you the truth.

OESTERLE: Were there any particular cases during this McClellan Committee period that you were able to work together on and follow through on?

HUNDLEY: Yeah, and unfortunately a lot of them had unhappy endings. I remember there were a couple of Teamsters officials out on the west coast that we worked together on. We got them indicted. Cross [James G. Cross] and Crosby [Clyde C. Crosby] were the names of the cases, a couple of teamsters out on the west coast. We got them indicted, and we tried the cases down here in the District of Columbia. Traditionally the Federal Courts have always taken a very hard look at any case that comes out of congressional committees. Unfortunately in both of those cases the judges in them—I guess Judge Jackson [Joseph R. Jackson] was the one judge and I can't think of the name of the other judge now. I think he's retired.

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In any event, both judges threw the cases out on the district level claiming....Oh, in one case they claimed that the Committee had set the witness up for perjury, vis-à-vis the Icardi case. And in the other case they had some quarrel with the way the Committee handled it, see. They went down the drain. Some of the cases that came over from the McClellan Committee that I worked on at that time ultimately were successful prosecutions. The Chicago case against Hoffa for one.

I think it's fair to say that there was always some sort of a feeling within the Justice Department that congressional committees are somewhat suspect in the way they handle things, that they don't measure up to the competence of the lawyers in the Justice Department. That's still there. A lot of the professionals down there then and the professionals now look upon congressional committees as being interested primarily in publicity and exposure, and that, quite frankly, they just mess cases up. And they certainly felt the same way about the McClellan Committee, so that there was a sort of that built in prejudice against cases that were referred from congressional committees anyway. I mean to a large extent I shared that view and still do. I certainly think that Bobby Kennedy became a much better lawyer after he came with the Justice Department than when he was with the McClellan Committee.

OESTERLE: You mean in terms of detail thoroughness?

HUNDLEY: Well, I think that one of his real qualities, particularly when he came with the Justice Department, was the quality of lawyers that he surrounded himself with. I can say that because he dumped me. I mean he really brought top people in. They were top lawyers. I don't think he was surrounded by the same quality of legal advisors when he was with the McClellan Committee because, for the most part, at that time his advisors—and this was something that was always a bit of a bone of contention— I mean his advisors then were investigators. I mean Kenny O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell]—a wonderful guy and I consider him a good friend—he's not a lawyer. Carmine Bellino [Carmine S. Bellino] is not a lawyer; he's a great accountant. Walter Sheridan's probably the greatest investigator that ever lived, but he wasn't a lawyer. And John McCellan I don't think, would hardly qualify as a great expert on what constitutes a Federal case.

OESTERLE: Would you also include John Seigenthaler in that group? Was he...

HUNDLEY: John was not with the McClellan Committee. I never met John Seigenthaler until he came to the Justice Department, so he was not with them. I never met him. But I don't think John—John was a newspaperman.

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OESTERLE: He served, I guess, as an investigative reporter during that period, became involved in the case against a judge in Tennessee, and got the McClellan Committee interested in that.

HUNDLEY: Right. Judge Smith. That was never a Federal case. I think they tried him in the state court down there. They impeached him, if I'm not mistaken. I don't believe that case was ever even referred to the Justice Department, but I know the case you're talking about.

No, when I was talking about people he brought in when he became Attorney General, I'm talking about fellows like Byron White; and Oberdorfer [Louis F. Oberdorfer]; the fellow who was so good, took over the Civil Rights Division. You know who I mean. Nick Katzenbach [Nicholas de B. Katzenbach] and John Douglas [John W. Douglas]. Burke Marshall. Actually, John Seigenthaler was, I think, an administrative assistant to him in the Justice Department, like Ed Guthman [Edwin O. Guthman] was his public relations. Probably the best public relations fellow they ever had in the Justice Department, but he wasn't a legal advisor to him down there.

OESTERLE: Would you categorize the results of the efforts of the McClellan Committee? What came out of these hearings, do you think, that may have been of any lasting import?

HUNDLEY: Well, I would certainly credit them with exposing the real root corruption that there was certainly in several of the unions they looked into. And from the Justice Department standpoint we were able to prosecute some of the people that they had exposed. Dave Beck [David S. Beck], ultimately Hoffa, things like that.

OESTERLE: Was significant legislation forthcoming as a result of the McClellan Committee hearings that in turn helped the Justice Department in its work?

HUNDLEY: Well, to this extent: The McClellan Committee did do some investigative work into organized crime. One of the first things that Kennedy did when he became Attorney General was to really muscle through some bills that were helpful in that field. Now, I mean, they weren't bills that we hadn't thought of a long time ago. God, ever since I can recall being in the Organized Crime Section we wanted some interstate gambling bills, if for nothing else than to get the FBI in the battle. I mean they could always fall back and say, "You know, we don't have any jurisdiction," and there was merit to it. But when we would try to push those bills under Rogers' administration, you know, they would make damn sure they never got off the ground. So when he came in

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and there were the bills, he got them through. So I mean, I'd have to certainly give some credit to the McClellan Committee for pinpointing those needs. That's one example I can think of.

OESTERLE: Did Robert Kennedy's experience as chief counsel to the McClellan Committee seem to serve him well in dealing with the complexity of cases in the organized crime area especially?

HUNDLEY: It did because he was probably—I mean Bill Rogers was knowledgeable because he had been as assistant DA [district attorney] up in Frank Hogan's [Frank S. Hogan] office for years. But Bobby had both. I mean he had the knowledge from working with the Committee and the investigators up there and learning about corruption in labor unions, infiltration of big business. He pretty well knew who most of the mob guys were. You know, it was probably the area in which he was most knowledgeable, as far as the work of the Justice Department is concerned, when he came in. So not only did he have the knowledge, he had the muscle to implement what he wanted to get done.

OESTERLE: As Robert Kennedy came in as the new Attorney General and Silberling was appointed as Chief of the Organized Crime Division, was the mandate very clear that this would be a major effort of the Kennedy administration and that it would be an enlarged effort over the Rogers administration?

HUNDLEY: Oh, I mean he even told me that when he called me up and told me he was bringing all his own people in. He said, "You know I've been very critical of the lack of effort in this field. I want you to stay on as a Special Assistant and whatnot." He said, "I'm bringing all my own people in, and I'm really going to make this a priority project. I'm going to involve the Federal Government to an extent to which they've never been involved before."

As a matter of fact, I had written him a memo, what they call transition memos down there. All of the outgoing people, Bill Rogers and the Assistant Attorney Generals, asked us to write a briefing memo for the new Attorney General: "Tell him what you're doing and make your recommendations frankly and candidly for what you think ought to be done." And I did. I wrote it myself because I was Chief of the section. I recommended—I don't have a copy of it, but I was very candid in it. I told him that we had had problems and that our principal difficulty was getting all these federal investigative agencies to overcome their jealousies and work together, things of that nature. And I made a legislative proposal. He had obviously read it, because even though he was telling me he was dumping me and bringing another guy in, he spent a lot of time going over this memo with me.

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OESTERLE: Did this new effort in the organized crime area have an impact in terms of morale on the attorneys on down the line?

HUNDLEY: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

OESTERLE: I mean you had taken a step back...

HUNDLEY: Yeah.

OESTERLE: ...and I guess it took you a bit of a time to adjust. But apart from that, could you compare this with the Rogers period? Was there any difference? Did it seem that now that the Attorney General was a man that had a brother in the Presidency there was going to be a difference?

HUNDLEY: Yeah, because he brought them all up right away and told them all this. I mean he made personal trips over to talk to the Internal Revenue. He made it very clear that this was a priority project. The best people he could recruit, he was putting them down there. He started to expand. I think when I left we had something like twenty attorneys in the section, and even that was an inflated figure because we had a lot of things in the Organized Crime Section that we had to handle that really didn't relate to organized crime. We had to handle liquor cases and things like that. So, heck, by the time I came back, it was up to, I don't know, maybe seven attorneys. There's no questions about it.

OESTERLE: How did your unit go about this war on crime, if we can call it that, in terms of taking on all these new attorneys and taking on all these new cases? How did you go about developing these cases?

HUNDLEY: Well, what they did actually... Well, first of all, I mean it was a legislative approach. He pushed through the legislation that we recommended. He got all that through. They finally set up an intelligence unit down there that we had wanted for years, but the FBI never thought that was a very good idea because they wanted to be the keeper of all the information. You know, he set that up. But it was more—I mean I think you put your finger on it.

As I say, there was a traditional reluctance of the Federal investigative agencies to commit manpower and money to organized crime drives because they always came and went, you know. In the Kefauver days, they took a shot at it and spent a lot of money, and nothing came out of it. Then they go up before their appropriations committee and they get hammered. So we had tried to stir them up after it was very halfhearted. Well, just by the force of his personal interest and, of course, his relationship

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to the President of the United States, when he went over—and I remember I went with him because even though I was out, I'd go to some of these places with him as a Special Assistant. He went over and got everybody in the Internal Revenue in, the Commissioner, and he just made it crystal clear that this was an all-out commitment. And I remember that he told all of the brass in the Internal Revenue Service over there that one of the reasons why he appointed Mortimer Caplin as the Commissioner of Internal Revenue Service is because he had gotten Caplin's commitment that he was going to divert considerable resources of the Internal Revenue Service to an organized crime program. Caplin was right there; and then Caplin had to say that was so. If I could just cite the Internal Revenue as one example. The two biggest Federal investigative agencies were the IRS and the FBI. They still are. Now, the FBI, as far as organized crime programs were concerned, was always traditionally out of it. No matter what the Director [J. Edgar Hoover] says today, he would not—I mean Ramsey Clark is right. I don't know Ramsey that well. I worked for him for a while. But I mean Ramsey was right. I testified before a congressional committee one time that the FBI just did not recognize any Cosa Nostra [American mafia], whatever you want to call it. That's a fact. They just didn't. They stayed out of it. The Internal Revenue Service, you know, you could push a little bit. But there was always a tremendous reservoir of pulling back on the part of Internal Revenue because so many of the old pros down there felt that we ought not to be in this, see; what we ought to have is simply a totally balanced tax collection program, see, selective prosecution. This position isn't without some merit, see; and they had been involved in a couple of organized crime drives and had gotten burned. So it would only be some guy like Kennedy who could come along—he had his brother go over and talk to them, the President. He had the President tell them he was interested in it and that turned them around.

OESTERLE: The FBI or Internal Revenue?

HUNDLEY: Internal Revenue. He was never able to...He probably moved the FBI more than anybody ever moved them. I mean he moved Hoover just as much as any mortal human being is ever going to move him. But I'd be less than candid if I told you he moved them all the way around, because he didn't.

OESTERLE: Why is it that with the clout of the President, as you describe it, he wasn't able to move the FBI more?

HUNDLEY: Well, I don't know. When Bobby first became Attorney General, of course the Director of the FBI knew that Bobby was going to have a strong commitment to fighting organized crime, so he sent him all types of memos

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and told him all the terrific things he had done in organized crime which, quite frankly, I told him just weren't true. He hadn't; we'd had problems with them, consistent problems. They're still having problems with them down there now. For instance, the FBI is no part of the task force approach. They're just not—independent of that. But I think what happened is that they were two strong-willed individuals [Robert Kennedy and Hoover]. And as I say, Bobby moved him pretty good, but not all the way. I think what happened is that—well, as a matter of fact, I can recall after I came back as Chief of the section, going up on occasions and perhaps complaining to Bobby because the FBI wouldn't do this or they wouldn't do that or wouldn't do the other thing.

His position became, "Well, wait." And it became very clear to me that what he was saying to me, and he was saying it in much more detail to people who were more intimate with him than I, was that they were just waiting until Hoover hit seventy. Then they were going to retire him. I think that that got back to the Director, and I think that was the reason why, you know, then it became a real hate relationship, see. He became convinced that that's what Bobby was going to do, that Bobby had convinced Jack. You know, "Let's wait until he's seventy and then we'll give him the Douglas-MacArthur treatment, maybe make him commissioner of boxing or something. We'll ease him out, and we'll put Courtney Evans in there or somebody a little more tractable." Now, I don't...You know, really I'm speculating, which I probably shouldn't do.

OESTERLE: Well, do you think Courtney Evans had a pretty good chance of being appointed as the new director if this did come up?

HUNDLEY: I would have been totally surprised if Bobby hadn't appointed him Director, because they had a very close relationship. Yeah, I felt in my own mind that that's what he was going to do: He was going to retire Hoover and then appoint Courtney as Director.

OESTERLE: I imagine at some point along the line the Director of the FBI began to look upon Courtney Evans as Kennedy's man rather than his own.

HUNDLEY: Oh, I'm sure he did, yeah.

OESTERLE: At what point would you think this occurred?

HUNDLEY: Well, I don't know. I always thought that Courtney did an outstanding job. It's a job I never would have wanted. He had to walk a straight line between Bob Kennedy and J. Edgar Hoover. I always felt that he did it without any disloyalty to the Director really, because I was

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in many a meeting where he would take the Director's view and put it forth and whatnot. He really had an impossible job. But certainly by that time I came back Chief of the Organized Crime Section, there was really no, or very limited, personal liaison between Bob Kennedy and the Director. It was all done through Courtney.

OESTERLE: In your unit how did you go about working or trying to work with the FBI? Was it all a matter of requests on paper with FBI reports coming back through the mill, or did you work directly with special agents?

HUNDLEY: Well, see, it was lot better certainly when Bob Kennedy was Attorney General. Even when Bill Rogers was Attorney General, there were an awful lot of individual FBI agents who really wanted to get active in the organized crime field, who had an interest in it.

When Bob Kennedy became Attorney General he did things that no other Attorney General ever did as far as the FBI is concerned. I mean like he would go out. I can never remember any other Attorney General going out into the FBI field offices. He would go out there, he'd have all the agents brought in, and he would go over their cases with them. And then, oh, about every three months he would have a mammoth three-day meeting up in his office where he would bring in all of the key personnel: supervisors, FBI, IRS, the United States attorneys. He might have three hundred people up in his office. So he forced them in, and he developed a personal relationship with an awful lot of FBI personnel. And so, as a result of that, we broke down the paper barrier more than it had ever been broken down before. You know, you could go over there, and you could go into their field offices and talk to their agents and get them informally to do more than they ever would have done in the past.

OESTERLE: You'd indicated before that on one or two occasions you went to the Attorney General and complained that you were not getting the cooperation of the FBI. Do you remember any particular instances? What

was the indication that you were not getting the cooperation from the FBI? Is it a matter of...

HUNDLEY: Yeah. I can't really think of specific instances. But there was always a...

OESTERLE: Was it a flat no from the FBI? "No, we can't work in this area," or "We can't do this," or "We can't allocate funds." Or was it just that they were dragging their heels and you were just not getting the results?

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HUNDLEY: I'm sure, you know, it was some specific situations where I had requested some type of an investigation and they wouldn't do it. Just to put it in position, see. Here, you know, there was a big change taking place. For the first time you had an Attorney General who really had a lot of clout, who was really, you know, personally interested in it, who would call you up all the time and ask you about it, who knew a lot about it and spent a lot of his own personal time on it. In the beginning when you were changing so many things....Maybe complain is the wrong word. You'd go up and say, "Now, you know, traditionally, it's been their position that they will do this or that they won't do that or they'll go this far, and now they won't, see." And he was the only Attorney General I ever saw—I didn't even know there was a buzzer connecting Hoover's office with the Attorney General. He said to me one day—I forget what we were discussing—"Should I get Hoover over here?" I never had an Attorney General say that. They always used to go over to his office. I was curious more than anything else, so I said, "Yeah." You know, he pushed this buzzer and he came over.

OESTERLE: You were present then?

HUNDLEY: Yeah, I thought I was sitting in on history, and I think I was.

OESTERLE: Was it your first meeting with the Director of the FBI?

HUNDLEY: Oh, no. I had met him, but always at very sacred functions and whatnot. He came over—and this was early in the game—and they had their discussion, whatever it was. So when you wanted to get things done in the beginning, you'd go up and you'd tell him. He'd just pick up the phone and he'd get them done. And then gradually Courtney Evans came in as an intermediary. And then towards the end, if you were really trying to move the Bureau in a big matter, Bobby might say, and he did say on occasions, "Wait. Wait. I'd rather not do it now," or, "I can't do it now," or something like that.

OESTERLE: Even if you don't recall the details of that meeting when the Director of the FBI was in the Attorney General's office, can you categorize the attitude or the spirit in which they discussed the problem at hand?

HUNDLEY: Yeah. I'll tell you what it was, as a matter of fact. As I say, it was early in the game. I was out as chief. I was an assistant to him [Kennedy], and the first case I worked on for him and with him was a case, in which he was interested, the Goldfine case. This is one of those cases that may present a problem, but I'll tell you now

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anyway. What had happened is that Goldfine had indicated a desire to cooperate with the government. He was in lots of trouble up in Botson. I think it was failure to file tax returns, and the Committee [House Committee on legislative Oversight] hearings were bad and....He was in trouble in any event. Ed Williams [Edward Bennett Williams] was representing him, and through Williams he had indicated a desire to cooperate with the government. Williams had told Kennedy that Goldfine had some information on Sherman Adams, you know—should I mention these people?

OESTERLE: Sure.

HUNDLEY: Styles Bridges [H. Styles Bridges], Senator Cotton [Norris Cotton] and whatnot. Bobby asked me to handle the case for the government. I came over. As a matter of fact, Ed Williams at that time was in the tenth floor in this building [the Hill Building]. I came over with Bobby Kennedy and we talked to Goldfine right up in that office up there. Goldfine gave us certain information on Adams and the people I mentioned. And Bobby was interested in it, interested to the point that he came over here. And I was working on it. We had asked the FBI to initiate an investigation on the allegations, and I'm not saying this critically, but traditionally the FBI had always been very cautious about getting overly involved in sensitive political investigations, see.

I remember I was sitting in Bobby's office and we were talking about it. I agreed that even at that point we'd had enough information from Goldfine and Mildred Paperman, and we had some documentation, which I can give you in more detail if you want later on, that warranted an FBI investigation of the allegations. I had made the request to the FBI and, naturally we were talking about people like Sherman Adams.

I think what I said to Bobby was, "If you agree that we ought to start this FBI investigation, you know they're not going to...." You know, I think I said, "They're a little nervous down"—see, I was on the second floor—"on the second floor, see." I said, "It'd probably be helpful, you know if you personally discuss this with the Director." And that's when he came out and said, "Do you think I ought to get him over here?" He [RFK] pushed the buzzer, he [Hoover] came over, and they discussed it. And my recollection is that Hoover agreed.

Even then it wasn't a cordial relationship at all. The Director came in, you know, Bobby in his shirtsleeves and the Director with his coat and vest on, or whatever it was. He

kind of was very stiff and “What do you want, Mr. Attorney General?” And he said, “I want something done on this Adams case.”

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“I’ll look into it.” You know, it was really kind of, even then, two very independently powerful guys sort of sizing one another up. And I just didn’t say a word; I just sat there, you know. And then the Director left.

OESTERLE: In the meeting that took place in this building regarding the Goldfine case, was there a stenographer present to take the details?

[BEGIN SIDE II, TAPE I]

HUNDLEY: No. I’m sure there wasn’t any stenographer there. What actually happened—so you’ll understand some of the background—is that Ed Williams, who was, in my judgment, the finest criminal lawyer in the country, he and Bobby had been somewhat antagonistic to one another during the Committee days because Ed Williams represented Hoffa. And it was never any secret what Bobby thought about Hoffa. Williams was the attorney who got Hoffa acquitted on one of the Committee cases where Bobby said, “If Hoffa gets acquitted, I’m going to jump off the Capitol roof.” I don’t know if you remember that. Then Williams, who isn’t totally unlike Bobby, came back with some comment. They clashed rather repeatedly up at the Committee when he was representing Jimmy Hoffa. They subsequently became pretty good friends, and I think the Goldfine case was one of the things that kind of brought them together.

As I say, Ed Williams had indicated to Bob about Goldfine’s willingness to cooperate. He [Bobby] called me up and asked me if I would handle the case. He was interested in it. He said that we were—it was on a Saturday morning—going to come over to Williams’ offices and we were going to meet Goldfine for the first time. He said, “I’m just going to come in with you, see, and talk to him briefly so I can look him over and be sure that Ed Williams isn’t pulling my leg or something like that. Then you stay with him and get him rolling.”

So we came into this building. There are two of us, Kennedy and myself. We came up to the tenth floor, and Williams came out to meet us, see. And I knew the feeling between them even then. Williams has very, call them luxurious offices. Ed came out and he met Bobby. And when Bobby got off the elevator, the first thing he looked at his lavish office and he said, “Am I responsible for all of this?” [Laughter] So that started it, you know.

We went in the back. Williams had a conference room right off his main office on the tenth floor here, and he had Goldfine back there. We went in, Ed came in, Bobby came in, and there was Goldfine. It’s the first time I’d ever met Goldfine in my life. Bobby talked with him a little bit and gave him, I guess, a little pep talk and told him that he would appreciate any

cooperation that he could give but that it would be carefully evaluated and things like that. The thing would be kept in confidence, but if anything, you know, developed, he would expect Goldfine to cooperate and possibly testify and things like that. He sat there for a little while; we went through some of the questioning and then he left.

Just to follow through on that thought—and he was very interested in it, see—Goldfine always took the position that he had given substantial amount of money to Sherman Adams, Bridges, and Cotton. They were the three that he talked about. Well, he's dead now—God rest his soul—but it became rather obvious to me in the first instance that, number one, if this was true, we couldn't just proceed on his word. Secondly, it became pretty apparent to me that, you know, he just wanted to talk about three prominent Republicans, because he figured that a new administration would be interested in that, see. So if it was true, it was probably, you know...I knew enough about political corruption then that, when you corrupt, you work both sides of the fence. So it just couldn't be these three, if it was true. And I remember going back and telling that to Bobby, that number one, "We can't make any type of case strictly on Goldfine's word." He said it was all cash, couldn't fix any dates or anything like that. And you know, I also said the latter. So he pretty well agreed. He said, "Well, you know, keep working on it. It's an interesting case."

I remember coming back. And Ed Williams suggested that we talk to Mildred Paperman. Now, Mildred Paperman was very close to Goldfine, a very smart gal. I talked to Paperman. She took it a step further. She said that the way this thing would work is that, let's say, Sherman Adams was coming to Boston. She kept a petty cash box. Petty cash: she said they kept, you know, literally hundreds of thousands of dollars in it. And if Goldfine was going to meet Sherman Adams in the Parker House, he would come in to her and say, "Give me ten thousand dollars; I'm going to meet Adams," or something like that. So I remember telling Mildred that, well, you know, that really didn't add much because we just needed some documentation or some corroboration or something like that. Well, we needed dates, times, you know, all the things you have to check out.

I remember she came back then and she had a sheet of paper, and with Adams and Bridges and Cotton—still the three Republicans—she had precise dates and precise amounts, see. So I recall saying to her, and Ed was there, "Well, where did you get that information?" And she said, "Well I looked around the house and I had it written down on some match covers." "Well," she said, "I didn't keep them, you know." I said, "Look, you know, Mildred, one of two things happened. I mean you either made this up

or there is documentation and you have it, see, in which case tell me which it is. Otherwise there's no point in continuing with this thing." Well, she started to cry and whatnot, so I left.

But in any event, about three days after that, Williams called me. He wanted to have lunch at the Metropolitan Club. He said, "I've got it. I've got the Paperman diary." Now, what she had done is every time Goldfine had come to her for money, she made an entry in a diary, because she was afraid that as time wore on and she got a little older, maybe Goldfine might lose interest in her and might even accuse her of taking all this money. So she kept a complete diary. And every time Goldfine came for money, she wrote it down.

Well, as we had suspected, the diary was just as bipartisan as anything you ever say. Anyway, without getting into detail on that, it covered Democrats, Republicans, labor leaders, Internal Revenue agents. You know, it was a complete picture of total corruption. So I remember taking the diary down to Bobby, and we went over the diary. I always remember that there was one prominent Democrat on it. The diary would have, you know, an entry, let's say, October 21 to this very prominent Democrat, then thousand dollars. So I remember Bobby looked at it and he said to me, "Well," he said, "could have been a political contribution in October." So we go on down. There's another one, see, about November. So he said, "There, I know this guy. I'm sure it was just a political contribution." So I went down and there were three others in July and August. Bobby looked at them and he says, "Oops." [Laughter] So, in any event, he was very good, you know.

I said to Bobby, "Look, the only way we can do business with Goldfine now is we'll confront him with this diary. We just can't make a deal with him or accept anything he has to say unless he's willing to tell us about everybody on his list, see." And there were some quite prominent Massachusetts Democrats on the list, see. Bobby said, "You're right. You know, we've got to go all the way." And Goldfine never would go all the way. There were a couple of judges, and he just would never go all the way.

OESTERLE: So what developed then?

HUNDLEY: What developed is that it ended up he went to Danbury [Federal Correctional Institution]. Let's see, he went to jail. I think he got a year's sentence on the tax evasion. He went into Danbury. He had a stroke and they took him over to the hospital in Staten Island. And I think we paroled him because he was so sick.

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OESTERLE: Was this a special pardon or parole?

HUNDLEY: I think the...I went up to see him. I remember that. He was in terrible shape. He couldn't stand confinement; you know, he just couldn't. And the doctors' reports were very bad. So I forget whether it was a quick parole or what, but we got him out; and I remember that we got him out in a hurry. I guess he stayed in about three or four months or something like that. And he lived; he lived for three or four years after that. Died I don't know how many years ago, Goldfine.

We continued the investigation. Ultimately the Internal Revenue Service turned up quite a bit of the cash that Sherman Adams had gotten from him, so I was always convinced he was telling a pretty straight story. It's an interesting thing—as long as you're sealing this anyway. They followed through. They tried to make these investigations independently of Goldfine in any event.

He had always said that he had given so much money to Sherman Adams. One of the things the IRS agents did is they went out and they interviewed Sherman Adams' landlady. And it turned out that Sherman Adams used to pay his rent in cashier's checks. The landlady for some reason didn't like him so she wrote down the numbers of the cashier's checks, and the agents then traced the cashier's checks back to the banks. They located maybe a hundred thousand dollars. What Adams would do is he would go into these banks with, let's say, a thousand dollars or five thousand dollars and buy cashier's checks. So Adams ultimately admitted that he had received cash, but never from Goldfine, that he had received the money from unremembered donors and considered it as gifts. So we never could make a case on it.

OESTERLE: What was the background? I haven't seen the brief, but just fill me in a little bit on why Goldfine was giving this money away.

HUNDLEY: Well, he was giving the money away because, you know, he thought he was buying favors in the future. See, that's one of the reasons why he got so mad at fellows like Sherman Adams and the others. Apparently he had been giving them the money all over the years; and then, when he got in trouble, he went to those people and they wouldn't do anything for him. Now, my own opinion is they never had any intention of doing anything for him. And when he got jammed up before the Committee [on Legislative Oversight] down here—remember on the vicuna coats and the labeling problems?—there were several IRS agents up in the Boston area that he had given money to that were fired, see. He figured

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he had all of those avenues blocked off, that he gave these people money and they'd protect him. Well, it turned out that they did catch up with him, particularly tax-wise. When he went to these various people and they wouldn't help him, I'm sure what he figured is that, well, he'll give Sherman Adams and Styles Bridges and Cotton to Bobby Kennedy, and you know, Kennedy will be so grateful that he'll let him off the hook, see. But Kennedy would never do that. He always insisted, to his credit, that Goldfine had to go right down that list. He never wanted to do that.

OESTERLE: I guess he was quite surprised that Paperman had kept the diary?

HUNDLEY: Oh, he was. He never forgave her for that. She turned it over to Williams and authorized Williams to run it over to the government to help him. But he never forgave her for that. But until we got the diary, we were about ready, you know, to wash it out. I mean we weren't going to accept just his say-so against

people like this. And even with the diary, we didn't have a case. I mean we needed independent investigation. But any chance of.... You know, with all of this, you still would have needed Goldfine, and he kept getting progressively worse, hardening of the arteries and things like that.

OESTERLE: How long did you work on this case?

HUNDLEY: Oh, I would say off and on—well, full-time maybe three or four months, and I was still following the IRS investigations for a year.

Interestingly enough—and this really bears on Bob. As I say, we worked on Goldfine—Ed Williams too—to try to get him to go down the whole list. And we sort of had a joke among ourselves. You know that cartoon where Lucy holds the football for Charlie Brown to kick it?

OESTERLE: Yes.

HUNDLEY: And then she always pulls it away saying, “Not this time.” You know, we'd sit him down. He'd say, “I'm ready to go down the list.” It was always just like pulling the football away; he'd never go down the list, see. And Bobby's interested in it, you know. And he always considered himself a real good investigator and lawyer; and he was. It reaches a point where Goldfine tells Williams that the only one he'll go down the list with, with all these prominent Democrats and Republicans, is Bobby. You know, no more Hundley. He wants to move up, wants to move up, wants to go to number one.

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The number two, as he calls me. Needless to say, I was never overly fond of Goldfine anyway. So we told Bobby, and Bobby said, “All right, I'll see him.” So he flew all the way in from Chicago, Bobby. He was out on some affair—I forget what it was—but he flew in. I think it was a Sunday night around 11 o'clock, something like that.

We were all down on the fourth floor in Byron White's office. Bob came in and he looked at us. He didn't have to say anything. His expression was, “God, here I have all you guys, assistants, and whatnot. I have to come all the way back to break the case.” This is terrible, you know. I figured he's going to punch Goldfine right in the nose if he finked out to this guy. So then Williams brings him in and the three of them meet up on the fifth floor office. Well, I didn't know what happened up there, but all I knew is that Bobby came down and, boy, he was mad. So I knew it didn't work. He got the Lucy treatment. They pulled the ball out. He'd screamed something about that miserable—ah, you know. And out he went.

I saw Ed Williams later on. And he told me, well, he was mad too because Goldfine had made him look pretty bad too, bringing him in to the Attorney General and whatnot. So he told me what had happened. Bobby confirmed it later on that he brought Goldfine up there and told him, you know, “Let's go.” Apparently then Goldfine started with his usual,

“What’s in it for me?” and all this sort of stuff. And apparently Bob told him, “I’m not here to talk about what’s in it for you. I understand you’re going to go down the list.” And I understand he was somewhat stern with him, which he should have been. And apparently Goldfine—now this is typical of Goldfine—turned to Ed Williams and he says, “Huh. He doesn’t have any class like his brother.” So I understand Bobby then read him the riot act and told him that it wasn’t a personal affront to him, but it was an affront to the Office of the Attorney General. And that was the end of that.

OESTERLE: As things turned out though, he didn’t plead guilty to a lesser count, did he? I mean no deal was worked out.

HUNDLEY: Well, the only thing that was worked out is that he did plead guilty before Judge Sweeney [G.C. Sweeney]. We did tell Judge Sweeney that, although he hadn’t cooperated to the extent that we felt he should, you know, that we had gotten some cooperation. And I think we indicated to Sweeney that he was having certain physical problems even then. So Sweeney only gave him a year, sent him up to Danbury for a year. If we hadn’t done that—well, we told him the truth, you know—I’m sure Sweeney probably would have buried him.

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So he got something out of it, yes. Of course, he always denied that he had ever cooperated to any extent. Publicly, he never wanted it known.

OESTERLE: Did Williams and the Attorney General develop a closer relationship through all of this?

HUNDLEY: Oh, yes. Through that and other cases that they worked on.

OESTERLE: And they became friends?

HUNDLEY: I think they became pretty good friends. Bob had a lot of confidence in Ed’s ability. I mean I had been in Bob’s office when he would call him up. He’d give him a hypothetical set of facts; he’d ask Ed what he thought about it. So he had a lot of respect for him.

Then, of course, Ed had the falling out with Hoffa too. So that kind of helped too, I’m sure. But I don’t think they ever would have become friendly if he continued to represent Hoffa, because Bobby had such a strong feeling on that.

OESTERLE: Do you think they ever discussed Hoffa after they developed a better relationship?

HUNDLEY: I don’t know. I just don’t know. They were never...I don’t want to convey the impression they became intimate, but they were friendly. They were friendly. I mean he came up to the funeral and everything like that. I

don't want to convey the impression that I was intimate with Bob. I wasn't. I knew him and we worked pretty closely together. I campaigned for him. It's the only time I ever went on a political campaign in my life, in Indiana when he asked me. But there are many, many people who, you know, were really close to him. I was never in that category. I didn't play touch football, things like that.

OESTERLE: Was the Goldfine case unusual in any way or was it typical of political corruption?

HUNDLEY: Well, it was bigger. It was the biggest political corruption case I had seen certainly. You see, it was that case and it was the Keogh case that I really got to know him and really to admire him an awful lot, because, after all, Bobby Kennedy was a political animal too. I mean nobody knew politics or was better at it than he was, and yet when it came to his official duties in the Department of Justice, I mean he was right down in the middle. He'd have been better advised, I mean if he were a real....

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I mean if he wanted to view this politically, he never would have come back from Chicago to try and help make this case, because this case was going to—I'm not going to mention these names, but it would have been devastating to people who were politically helpful to him. And then the same way with the Keogh case. When he decided to prosecute Judge Keogh [J. Vincent Keogh], you know that was a tough decision: first of all, because it was a close case, and second of all, I mean Gene Keogh [Eugene J. Keogh] had swung the whole New York delegation to Jack Kennedy and he....I mean he did everything he could, I am sure, to....Bobby had a lot of guts. That was a tough decision. I would not have wanted to be in his position, certainly not in the Keogh case.

OESTERLE: Why don't you discuss that? How did that come about? How did the Attorney General...

HUNDLEY: I'll tell you, can we hold that because I've got 12:30 now. Would you rather....

OESTERLE: Okay. Would you like to have lunch now and we'll continue this at another point?

HUNDLEY: Can we do that? I'd rather do that.

OESTERLE: Sure.

HUNDLEY: Yeah, because it's 12:30 now. Then we can come back.

OESTERLE: No problem

[-25-]

[END OF INTERVIEW]

William G. Hundley Oral History Transcript – RFK #1
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