

**Walter Sheridan Oral History Interview—RFK#4, 4/7/1970**  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** Walter Sheridan  
**Interviewer:** Roberta Greene  
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**Biographical Note**

Sheridan, a Robert F. Kennedy (RFK) campaign coordinator in 1968, and a government investigator, discusses his work with Robert F. Kennedy on the Senate Select Committee on Improper Activities in the Labor-Management Field, including the committee staff, investigations of Jimmy Hoffa and the Teamster's Union, and the political implications of the committee's investigations, among other issues.

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Walter Sheridan—RFK #4

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Fourth of Six Oral History Interviews

with

Walter Sheridan

April 7, 1970  
Washington D.C.

By Roberta Greene

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

GREENE: We were just speaking about Mollenhoff [Clark R. Mollenhoff], so my first question is: What do you remember about the role and the importance of the investigative reporters like Mollenhoff, Seigenthaler [John Seigenthaler], Guthman [Edwin O. Guthman], both initially in the investigation and as a continuing thing?

SHERIDAN: Are you talking about the McClellan committee [Select Committee on Improper Activities in the Labor-Management Field] now?

GREENE: Yes, right. Oh, I'm sorry.

SHERIDAN: Well, Mollenhoff is probably the principal person responsible for starting the whole investigation. He had covered Hoffa [Jimmy Hoffa] and the Teamsters [International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Warehousemen and Helpers of America] out in the Midwest and knew about the prior abortive investigations and suggested to Bob Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] that it was a very fruitful area to get into, that nobody had ever taken him on, really, and that there was a lot there. So I think to that extent he was important. What Guthman did in Seattle and Portland and what Bill Lambert [William G. Lambert] did and what Wally Turner [Wallace Turner]

did, I think it gave the whole thing its initial strong push. Then, when that one was a success, it paved the way for the whole thing. So I think they were important.

And Pierre [Pierre E.G. Salinger] who is really a reporter.... A lot of people have different opinions of Pierre, but I think he made a major contribution to that committee. He was good. I mean he was quick, and he.... In that kind of work it's terribly important to be able to do two things: one is to synthesize a lot of information into a small memorandum that the chief counsel can read and know what it's all about; and the other thing is the ability to go through files, like subpoenaed files, like these files, quickly and just pick out what's important. Pierre was very good at that, and he was aggressive.

GREENE:           What were the reservations about him?

SHERIDAN:        I think he antagonized people all along the way. He would have antagonized me, except that I liked him, because I worked with him as a team through much of at least the first two years. I'd do all the work, and he'd take all the credit. [Laughter] But I understood him, see. I accepted him for what he was and I liked him. So we got along fine.

GREENE:           Was that what other people resented about him?

SHERIDAN:        I think that was one thing. He had a great ego and great flair. I just think he rubbed some people the wrong way. I think a lot of it was jealousy. He's just got that egocentric, aggressive way about him that does bother a lot of people. I happen to like him.

GREENE:           How was his relationship with Robert Kennedy and O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] at this point?

SHERIDAN:        Mine?

GREENE:           No, Pierre Salinger's.

SHERIDAN:        I think it was quite good with Bob because I think he understood him too. He called him the "Bashful Frenchman" because whenever there was a chance for Pierre to get in a picture Pierre was in the picture, whether he had to block Robert Kennedy or not. But Bob made fun of it, you know.

Kenney, I think, had some problems with him because of that. In fact, he remarked once, what I had just said, that I was doing the work and Pierre was taking the credit. But at the same time Pierre made it a point to tell Bob Kennedy, every

time, that I had done this and that I had done that. So it really wasn't the way it appeared.

GREENE: Was there.... Well, in fact, I think Salinger says this himself in his book [*With Kennedy*], the one on the President [John F. Kennedy] that Robert Kennedy had hesitated to make him an investigator because of his journalistic background. Was this generally a no-no, having journalists?

SHERIDAN: I don't think so. It might be some places. I don't think it should be, and I think Pierre proved that it shouldn't be. I think others have proved that it's really basically the same thing. A good investigative reporter and a good investigator do exactly the same thing, only one puts it in a magazine and the other puts it in the reports.

GREENE: What was the general attitude in the committee, and particularly Robert Kennedy's, toward press coverage? I've noticed in the files a great many articles written in his own name; I don't know whether he wrote them or not.

SHERIDAN: Written in Robert Kennedy's name?

GREENE: Yes.

SHERIDAN: You mean, "Robert Kennedy announced that..."?

GREENE: Well, even lengthier articles in *Life* and the *Post* [*Saturday Evening Post*] about the committee's work. And in many cases have...

SHERIDAN: But they wouldn't be "by Robert Kennedy," would they?

GREENE: Yes, "By Robert Kennedy."

SHERIDAN: I don't recall that. I remember a lot of them about Robert Kennedy.

GREENE: In fact, I may have a couple of them with me. Let me check. [Interruption] My feeling was that some of them, at least, were designed to provoke public response. He indicated that after the initial outrage the public expressed, there was great apathy, and that was a problem to him.

SHERIDAN: I think that's right. I think that's why he

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went on the Jack Paar [Jack Harold Paar] programs and on the "Tonight" show and on the "Today" show and on "Meet the Press," because I think he did feel that. I think he felt strongly that this was a real problem and that the only way you could do anything about it was to keep the public aroused, which is always very, very

difficult. They'll get aroused, and then they let it go. So, I think he did make a pointed effort to do this any way he could.

GREENE: Was there any objection to that kind of publicity within the committee?

SHERIDAN: I think, I'm sure that some of the Republican senators didn't like it. I'm sure, maybe some of the Republican staff members didn't like it. I know that Senator McClellan [John L. McClellan], towards the end, didn't like it. The turning point there was an eight-part series that John Bartlow Martin did on the committee, which was really all about Kennedy versus Hoffa and very little about McClellan versus Hoffa. So, in the last Hoffa hearing, which was in 1959, what McClellan did was to back off. You didn't have his steadying chairman hand in there to stop Hoffa from going off on his tangents, so it was a very difficult hearing because he was the stopper of this. Kennedy would ask the questions, Hoffa would try to get off on a tangent, McClellan would bring him back. But without McClellan in that role, it was difficult, and this did happen in that last hearing. It's very obvious, if you read the hearing, that it happened.

GREENE: Is that the one with the fellow from the Boilermakers [International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Ship Builders, Blacksmiths, Forgers and Helpers] who was accused of attempted murder? Does that sound familiar?

SHERIDAN: No. It was a Hoffa hearing, Hoffa was the witness.

GREENE: On the UAW [United Automobile, Aircraft, and Agricultural Implement Workers of America]?

SHERIDAN: No, no, on the Teamsters. The first hearing was in 1957. Then Hoffa was elected.

GREENE: Oh, you mean the last Hoffa hearing....

SHERIDAN: I mean the last hearing where Hoffa was a witness.

GREENE: Oh, I'm sorry. I thought you meant the last hearing.

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SHERIDAN: Which would be in '59, the summer of '59. There was one in the summer of '57, the summer of '58, and summer of '59. And there was one after he left in 1960 which involved the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers [International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers] and the Communist connections that Hoffa had.

GREENE: I was thinking, actually, of the final hearing. Before we leave the subject



of the journalists, what was the personal relationship particularly with Mollenhoff, Guthman and Seigenthaler at this point?

SHERIDAN: I think, on the whole, it was excellent. I think it was partially because both John and Robert Kennedy tended to associate with journalists. If you went to a party at the Kennedys' you wouldn't find any socialites at all, but you'd find people from the staff and the working press and people like that. So I think they had a natural affinity towards each other and I think they cultivated each other.

GREENE: How did the close relations...

SHERIDAN: There were exceptions. I mean, there were some newspapermen who hated Robert Kennedy and who hated John Kennedy. The Gannett press was one that tended to—I wouldn't say they hated him, but they would take any opportunity to embarrass them. And William Loeb of the *Manchester Union Leader* just hated them with a— and still does. He's after Teddy [Edward M. Kennedy] now. He had his man up at Chappaquiddick this week fulltime.

GREENE: Yes, I remember in the campaign Robert Kennedy said the only paper that's worse than that are the ones in Indianapolis.

SHERIDAN: Yeah, those two are runners-up. Loeb is, the *Manchester Union Leader* is worse than the *Indianapolis Star*, which is really saying something because that one is incredibly bad.

But I think he got fair treatment from the papers. On one of the investigations in '58 or '59 we caught the *New York Times* and the *New York Daily News* paying off Teamsters—I did. The *Times* was very gallant about it and admitted it, and the *New York News* and the Hearst [Hearst Corporation] people tried to hedge and deny it. But I do think that that had a subtle lasting effect on both papers against Robert Kennedy for doing that, in the senatorial campaign and.... I don't think they ever forgave him for catching them. It was all my fault. [Laughter]

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GREENE: What about the attitude of law enforcement and other public officials? Was there any general....

SHERIDAN: I think at that time it was generally mutual admiration. The Hoover [J. Edgar Hoover] thing hadn't become a problem at that point. In *The Enemy Within* he paid tribute to Hoover and the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation], but he recommended the formation of a crime commission which Hoover did not agree with. He was also very friendly with Chief Parker [William H. Parker] of the Los Angeles Police Department, who Hoover hated, and that was mutual. Well, the Justice Department, at that time, I think, was upset because he would make public and private

statements that they weren't doing anything with all of the material that we were generating at the committee.

GREENE: You mentioned, of course, last time that incident in the transition period.

SHERIDAN: Which one?

GREENE: With Dowd [James Dowd], and the fact that the hearings were called off. Do you think their motivation and their laxness was political right through?

SHERIDAN: No, I think, first, they weren't used to Robert Kennedy, because they had never encountered one. They weren't used to somebody who dug that deep, generated stuff that fast, and wanted something done about it yesterday. So a fellow like Bill Hundley [William G. Hundley], who was head of the organized crime section at that time at Justice, you know, Bill Hundley is as good and honest and able a man as you can find. He ended up being reappointed by Robert Kennedy after a while, but he blamed Hundley because it was Hundley's area. So I think Hundley was doing what he could. But I think there was a political damper to some extent on it as time went along. The higher-ups were really not pushing until he forced them to. That's when they brought in Dowd. But it wasn't anything like it was after we got there.

GREENE: How much would you depend—you as an investigator—on the local law enforcement officials? Was it just a....

SHERIDAN: Again, it depends on the place. Some cities you couldn't go near them because they were corrupt. Ordinarily there would be a key

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contact. Even sometimes in a corrupt police department there would be a key honest fellow. The test usually was whether the police department had what they called an intelligence group, or squad, or division, whose sole purpose was to cover organized crime. The good rule of thumb was that if they did have one, and if it was a good one, then they were really doing something about it. You could really work closely with them because they wanted to do it as much as you did. The St. Louis Police Department at that time had a good one. I don't know what they do now. I doubt if they do now. The Detroit Police Department did not at that time, but subsequently did. See, it depends on who's in power and whether they're corrupt and whether they really want an honest police force. So it was different in different places.

GREENE: Robert Kennedy said in *The Enemy Within* that in Detroit the prosecuting attorney was financially supported by the Teamsters and had said that if Kennedy came to the city he would have him arrested. Does that sound familiar?

SHERIDAN: Yeah, it does, and he was.

GREENE: Was this a unique attitude, or did you find that in a lot of places?

SHERIDAN: Again, it depended. Of course, that's Detroit and that was Jimmy Hoffa's home ground. He had a great deal of influence with the police department, the judges, the sheriff's department.

There were other areas where he had similar problems, like in Tennessee where they had Judge Schoolfield [Raulston Schoolfield] who was disbarred because of information the committee came up with about his involvement with the Teamsters. Payne Ratner [Payne H. Ratner].... It depended, it depended on the area. New York with Hogan's [Frank S. Hogan] office at that time was very cooperative, very helpful. Chicago had a good intelligence squad, off and on. When they were there, they were very helpful. Most of the time they weren't there, but there were still two guys you could usually call upon.

GREENE: How much assistance could you expect from the U.S. attorney's offices?

SHERIDAN: Same answer again, it depends. It depended on who the U.S. attorney was, and at that time.... See, I think so much more in terms of the later period, when I know who they were and who were good and who weren't. Most of them were, for the most part, when we were in there in the Department, but back in the committee days it was a Republican Administration. I would say most of

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the United States attorneys were Republican, which doesn't mean they were corrupt. I just don't remember enough about each one to pin it down more than that.

GREENE: Anything come to mind about Internal Revenue [Internal Revenue Service] or Bureau of Narcotics?

SHERIDAN: Well, in Internal Revenue, sorry the answer is always the same on these, it depends on the area. For instance, in Detroit as the fellow in charge of intelligence—opposed to collection, because it was intelligence that would be involved in criminal investigations for tax evasion and who would be interested in organized crime and the things we were doing—we had a fellow named John O'Shetski, who is still there and who is just a real honest public servant who you could work very closely with. In another city it might be a fellow that you were a little leery of.

So it's the same thing, again, with Narcotics. We had people on the committee from the New York Police Department like Jim McShane [James J.P. McShane] and Sherm Willse [Sherman S. Willse] and Jim Kelly, and some from the district attorney's office in New York, like John Constandy, and Aaron Cohen in New Orleans, the head of the crime commission. I think he was helpful, and I think he's honest. I don't think Bob Kennedy thought he was all that great—not from an integrity standpoint, but from really having

information.

GREENE: Does anything come back to you about Harry Anslinger [Harry J. Anslinger], the commissioner of the Bureau of Narcotics? Was there much dealing at that level?

SHERIDAN: I guess I don't know because I think that would have been more between he and Bob Kennedy or he and Kenny O'Donnell. My only thought on Anslinger is that he convinced the American people for thirty years that marijuana was a very bad thing. We're going to take a long time living that down.

GREENE: Okay. Then what about the Senate leadership, Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson], Mansfield [Mike Mansfield], Kerr [Robert S. Kerr]? How much cooperation did you get from them? How interested were they in the first instance?

SHERIDAN: Again, I guess I really don't know. This would be something that John Kennedy and Robert Kennedy and Kenny O'Donnell would have been more interested in. All I really had first-hand experience with were the senators on the committee, I don't even remember

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what the President's attitude, if any, about the whole thing was. That would have been Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower].

GREENE: What about problems regarding staffing, difficulty in finding enough good men? What type were you looking for, and what type did you reject?

SHERIDAN: This was the crucial problem in whether the committee's going to be any good or not. I think, at the peak, we had something like forty people. There were some who were the professional-type Hill [Capitol Hill] investigators who were there when we came and there when we left, and some of them are still there. Among them there are some that are good and some that are just putting in time. I think the ones that came on with Robert Kennedy and the select committee and left about the time he left were, generally speaking, the best investigators.

The girls, I think, for the most part, were just exceptional. I think they tried hard to get girls and men who would work, oh, long hours without any regard for overtime or Sundays or travel. It was a gung-ho operation and the right type people would respond to the job. The wrong type person wouldn't last very long, except for the regular professionals who were just going to stay until he left anyway.

GREENE: Did you favor FBI and other ex-law enforcement people?

SHERIDAN: In hiring?

GREENE: Yeah.

SHERIDAN: Well, Don O'Donnell [Donald F. O'Donnell] was kind of the original screener. He was an ex-FBI agent. He's one of what I call "the professionals who will always be there." I consider him very ineffective. I suppose he favored ex-FBI agents because he was ex-FBI. But they seemed to come from.... I don't know where the New York police came from. I think this was more Bob Kennedy's doing, directly through the Hogan office people.

Of the federal agencies, I suppose there was a favoring of FBI, but they did have a couple IRS and a couple through them. GAO [General Accounting Office], there was a lot of accounting work, so you needed accountants, and we got most of them from GAO. The ones, again, who came and could keep up to the pace were very good and absolutely indispensable.

GREENE: I made up a list just from the book of some of the people that he mentions frequently. I

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wondered if there was—just looking at that—anything that we hadn't discussed about these people that we should get down.

SHERIDAN: You mean, what I think of them?

GREENE: Yeah. You don't have to run down the whole list, but if....

SHERIDAN: Well, Bellino [Carmine S. Bellino] was the expert accountant, invaluable. I think his only fault is lack of imagination. He went at things from a figures standpoint and did it probably better than anybody else can or has done.

GREENE: Was lack of imagination in that particular job a problem?

SHERIDAN: Oh, I think it was. I think he did what he was supposed to do very well. I think if he was supposed to run the whole investigation, or had been in that role, which he almost was at times...

GREENE: Oh, really?

SHERIDAN: ...then I think we would have missed a lot of the things we got because he just wouldn't have reached out for them. That's strictly an imagination thing, I think.

GREENE: Why do you say he might have ended up in that position?

SHERIDAN: Well, because he was an expert. He'd been at it for years. He'd been with the FBI for years. Bob Kennedy trusted him implicitly. I trusted him implicitly. And I think at the beginning Bob intended to lean on Carmine's experience as an investigator. But I think as other people came in he realized that there was more to it than Carmine's bag, but that you still very much needed what Carmine did. That's what I mean.

GREENE: That's interesting.

SHERIDAN: Jerry Adlerman [Jerome S. Alderman], again, who is now the chief counsel, was good because he'd been around in that kind of position for a number of years. He had good judgment, he had good knowledge of the Hill, and he had basic good investigating sense. But, again, he was not the kind of person who would go charging off and probably come up with the imaginative thing again. But he was a good, sound, steady guy.

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Walter May was one of the better ones, again, good judgment. I think this is one of the things that Kennedy emphasized more than, not more than others, but I think he demanded good judgment if he was going to trust a person in a responsible position.

Eddie Jones [Edward M. Jones] was a good what-do-you-call-it, oh, utility man. He was just an old undercover man who had been around for a long time. You could send him out to subpoena somebody and he'd stay out all night until he subpoenaed them, but he wasn't the kind of person you'd put in charge of anything. He was more a follower. Calabrese [Alphonse F. Calabrese] was an old steady workhorse. He's a plodder, but a good plodder. He's something like Bellino. Paul Tierney [Paul J. Tierney] was more the imaginative type.

GREENE: He was one of the early people wasn't he?

SHERIDAN: Yeah. He's an ex-FBI agent. He'd been up on the Hill for a while, and was just a very competent, good man, one of the better ones. Constandy came from Hogan's office.

Arthur Kaplan was the kind of guy who was very industrious but couldn't synthesize the memo. He'd hand in a fifteen page memo, and Bob would say, "Well, go back and give me three pages." He couldn't do it, he was incapable of doing that. And yet, he'd work until 3 o'clock in the morning every morning, as would Bellino. But it was awfully hard to take what he had and put it into a hearing.

Vern Johnson and Jack McGovern were the Republican representatives who really were, in effect, trying to scuttle what Robert Kennedy was trying to do.

GREENE: Yeah, Vern Johnson is the name we didn't come up with last time. You know, I...

SHERIDAN: They were dishonest with him. They were representing that they were doing one thing and actually were doing another.

GREENE: Now, he says in the book that McGovern was the only political appointment, that he was a Goldwater [Barry M. Goldwater] choice. He doesn't really explain it, but he indicated that he accepted this one concession and none of the others, which is why I was kind of surprised to see how conciliatory Johnson was when it came to the Reuther [Walter P. Reuther] investigation. There was no indication, according to Robert Kennedy, that he was also a political appointee.

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SHERIDAN: You mean, why he teamed up with McGovern?

GREENE: Yeah, why he was....

SHERIDAN: I really don't remember that. I just know that today they are very friendly, they've maintained that. Now, whether there was an earlier relationship, I don't know, but they've been seen together as recently as last week.

GREENE: Did they have much of a reputation with the committee before the Reuther thing, or was that....

SHERIDAN: No, McGovern was kind of a Don O'Donnell type who was always there. He didn't go out too much, but you knew that he was a Republican appointee and that he was kind of there to watch their interests. But Vern was just another one of the staff. Then all of a sudden he was off on this Reuther thing. I don't think that Bob minded that so much as the fact that he was dishonest when he did it and lied to him. They both lied to him.

GREENE: Well, Kennedy does say that he appointed Johnson to work with McGovern. He didn't indicate that he took off on his own.

SHERIDAN: Well, he may have, he may have. Maybe McGovern just mesmerized Vern Johnson, because Vern seemed to be a very nice guy. I had never worked with him. I ended up in that situation working kind of against him. I had to go out and undo what they did.

And Jim McShane was charming, a great fellow. Did you ever hear the umbrella story?

GREENE: I don't think so.

SHERIDAN: He was in the New York Police Department. He was a detective and he'd been cited for heroism. But he was a great boxing fan and he used to chum

around with the boxers. There was a front page picture in the *New York News* [*New York Daily News*] of McShane holding an umbrella over the head of—I don't know if it was Rocky Marciano or, I think it was one of the earlier fighters. So the police department was embarrassed and they transferred McShane up into the boondocks someplace. So the first year he was with the committee at Christmastime Bob Kennedy gave McShane an umbrella for Christmas. We gave Bob Kennedy a little piglet which they kept for a long time.

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GREENE: What was the significance of that?

SHERIDAN: Ralph Knowles was a plodder, ex-FBI from Tampa, Florida, very short. I'm trying to draw.... There is a distinction; I guess one is the more mechanical, methodical type person, where the other is, I guess you might say, a little more swinging. I think the swingers got a lot more done than the plodders. Among the swingers I'd put Pierre, Walter May, Paul Tierney.

GREENE: Were they generally the people who were closer to Robert Kennedy?

SHERIDAN: I think they were the people he relied on. He relied on their judgment.

GREENE: Was he accepting of the limitations that the other people had?

SHERIDAN: Yeah, and he understood them very well. He had a great grasp of a person's good points, bad points, what they could do, what their weaknesses were, and then went from there.

GREENE: I was wondering if you had a lot of pressure—I'm not sure you're aware of this—for political appointees? You know, if this was a problem, resisting that kind of thing?

SHERIDAN: I don't know. I had nothing to do with that. There's another fellow who came along who kind of took over the Republican Reuther, the Kohler [Kohler Company] hearing, named Bob Manuel [Robert Manuel]. He was a very sneaky type. I had a slight altercation with him.

GREENE: Do you remember anything about the confrontation, of sorts, where Mundt [Karl E. Mundt] called a meeting to protest Robert Kennedy's failure to report pressure and threats? Apparently he spoke of it publicly without having brought it to the attention of the committee.

SHERIDAN: Yeah, vaguely. It seems to me that Bob Kennedy brought it up during one of their meetings to offset something that one of them had said. It probably



was about the UAW situation. Then I think Bob brought up all the things that had happened. Then Mundt, instead of being sympathetic or saying how awful it was, went public with it just that his whole problem was that Bob hadn't reported it—you know, kind of typical Mundt.

GREENE: He also said, which I found rather interesting,

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that traditionally there's a lack of loyalty among the members of the committee towards the staff.

SHERIDAN: Towards who?

GREENE: Towards the staff, between the senators on the committee and the staff, that this was not peculiar to this committee, but that it's generally to be expected on all committees.

SHERIDAN: Oh, you mean that there's going to be Republican staff members who are going to be....

GREENE: Well, I think even broader than that, that the committee members are going to protect themselves and they're not going to worry about...

SHERIDAN: By "the committee members," you mean the senators?

GREENE: Right. That they're not going to worry about the staff.

SHERIDAN: Oh, yeah. I think that's generally true. I think it was equally true on this committee, depending on the senator. But you didn't have to worry about that because of Bob Kennedy, because you knew he would back you up. The big difference—it was just a phenomenal difference to me—of going from the FBI to work for Robert Kennedy was that with the FBI you knew that J. Edgar Hoover would never back you up, and with Robert Kennedy you knew that he would. It was all the difference in the world. You talk about nervous stomachs, you know, a lot of FBI agents have ulcers and what they call "Bureau" stomachs. And I did. I didn't realize at the time, I don't think, until all of a sudden I didn't anymore. I just attribute it to that one thing, the personal security in knowing that as long as you do a good job and do your best that you're going to get backed up, as opposed to being constantly afraid that if you embarrass the Bureau you're going to get transferred, or whatever, censure and all that crap.

GREENE: Yeah. That's too bad. Was there anyone on the committee, I mean among the senate members, who stands out as not fitting this pattern, who did have a sense of loyalty to the staff?

SHERIDAN: Well, John Kennedy, of course, backed up Robert Kennedy, who backed up us. I think McClellan

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did. I think McClellan, for the most part, except at the end when he did get a little irked because Bob was getting all the glory, generally speaking backed up Bob, who backed us, and would back up us in a tight situation. I think Goldwater was fair.

GREENE: Their personal relationship...

SHERIDAN: I mean, I think he was honest. I didn't agree with him, but I think he was honest. I don't think he would have been spiteful. I think Mundt and Curtis [Carl T. Curtis] would have been spiteful and petty. I don't think Goldwater was quite that way.

GREENE: According to the book, his relationship with and opinion of McClellan was very high at this point. Is that the way you remember it?

SHERIDAN: Yeah, and I think it was. I think he realized that there was this rupture at the end, which was really just McClellan's ego because Bob was getting all the good press and was... [Interruption]

GREENE: I was going to ask you about the significance of the switch from McNamara [Patrick V. McNamara] to Church [Frank Church] and Ives [Irving M. Irving] to Capehart [Homer E. Capehart]. What effect did that have on the tone of the committee?

SHERIDAN: Ives was a pretty honest guy and a Republican. In most situations he would go with Robert Kennedy and seemed to be genuinely concerned about the whole thing. He was replaced by who? Capehart?

GREENE: Yeah.

SHERIDAN: Capehart was about as bad as you can get, just absolutely a corrupt senator who was in Jimmy Hoffa's pocket and made no bones about it. McNamara came out of Detroit, came from a laboring background. He was with the Plumber's Union [United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada]. So, I suppose, was susceptible to pressures by them, but never too overtly. I can remember him asking friendly questions of Hoffa, but nothing near to what Capehart did.

Then, Church was great. Church was just a young fresh-blood who was terribly incisive and much the mentality of John Kennedy in asking questions and cutting through.

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GREENE: So, generally, the pattern remains much the same.

SHERIDAN: They kind of balanced each other out.

GREENE: Do you know of any efforts by Robert Kennedy to prevent McNamara from resigning? As I remember, it was in protest, feeling that the committee was blackening labor's name.

SHERIDAN: You mean McNamara felt that way?

GREENE: Yeah, he resigned after....

SHERIDAN: I didn't realize that, or remember that. But I suppose that's why he was resigning, because that wouldn't be very good publicity. We were a little publicity conscious.

GREENE: Well, we talked last time quite a bit about the Reuther thing, and I've read a little bit more about it.

SHERIDAN: That was funny really.

GREENE: What?

SHERIDAN: That whole thing was just funny. They came up with an imaginary guy. I don't remember all the details, but there was no such guy.

GREENE: I think it was one of the more fascinating parts of the book.

SHERIDAN: They were attributing all their information to this nonexistent fellow.

GREENE: And one that had died about two years before?

SHERIDAN: Yeah, I guess he'd died.

GREENE: Well, one just didn't exist and the other had died. He said that there were "unnamed, but reliable sources" who kept egging the press on to treating this as a confrontation between the Kennedy brothers and the committee to protect the UAW and Reuther. Do you know who it was? Well, it was obviously the Republicans, but was there anyone in particular?

SHERIDAN: No. I would say that it would be Mundt and Curtis, or their friends, and Hoffa because it

was very much in Hoffa's interest to exploit this rift in the committee and to play up the go-easy-on-Reuther allegation.

GREENE: Did you ever get involved in any discussions with Robert or John Kennedy about how to handle this so that...

SHERIDAN: The only time Robert Kennedy ever got mad at me was during that episode, when McGovern came in one day and asked me who the witnesses were going to be. Without thinking I told him. And, of course, this was just giving the enemy in advance your information. He quoted me and said, "I have enough people around here trying to screw me without you doing it." That's the only time I could ever remember him being made at me.

GREENE: Did he regard McGovern as the enemy at this time?

SHERIDAN: I think at that time he did, sure, because he'd had run-ins with him and had accused him of being dishonest. That Reuther thing was strictly a political fight, with Mundt and Curtis and Goldwater on one side and the Kennedy brothers on the other.

GREENE: He also mentioned that there was a particular commentator who gave nightly reports on the developments in the so-called Kennedy-UAW conspiracy. Do you remember who that was?

SHERIDAN: Golly. No.

GREENE: I couldn't figure it out.

SHERIDAN: No.

GREENE: But he indicated that that contributed significantly to the furor.

SHERIDAN: Unless Walter Winchell was on the air at that time. It would be the kind of thing he might do, but I can't think of any local one that was doing it. I'm sure there was.

GREENE: Well, anyway, I don't think we have to go into the details of that investigation, except perhaps for your own role, because Robert Kennedy...

SHERIDAN: Which one?

GREENE: ...spends a lot of time on that. On the UAW investigation.

SHERIDAN: Well, he just sent me out to find out what.... He'd gotten all this information back from McGovern and Johnson which seemed kind of fishy, and he just sent me out to find out if it was true. That's why I went out to find out about this fellow who was giving them all this information. There was some connection with a union in Detroit called MESA [Mechanics Educational Society of America.] I can't think of the name of it. But then, as you moved into it, you found Hoffa's attorneys in the background feeding the stuff in. It was very much a Hoffa-Republican scheme to do in the UAW and to do in the Kennedys in doing in the UAW.

GREENE: Was he very concerned about how to use the information you came up with so that it didn't look like a whitewash?

SHERIDAN: I think so. I think he was very concerned that it not only not look like a whitewash, but not be a whitewash. And it wasn't. The UAW, with the exception of Richard Gosser [Richard T. Gosser] in Toledo, was, as far as I know, to a man an honest union. They had none of the racket connections you had in the Teamsters.

GREENE: Yeah. As an investigator, where would your responsibility stop? Would you simply hand over what you had? Would you make recommendations? Would you actually sit in with him on decision making as well as how to use it?

SHERIDAN: Well, you'd go out and you'd get the facts. You'd put them in the form of memos which would go addressed to him—from me to him—but which would really go to Kenny O'Donnell. Kenny O'Donnell would screen out, or get down to the real important things. He would give those to Robert Kennedy. Although I think Kennedy really ended up reading anything that was important. Then, after enough information had been developed, they'd schedule a hearing. Then it would be really the investigator's responsibility to schedule the tentative witnesses, send out the telegrams or the subpoenas, arrange for whatever accommodation had to be arranged for and make sure they were there, and then prepare witness sheets of the tentative questions that they should be asked with the answers, which by this time he had already absorbed. You were just kind of pinpointing the whole thing for him. Then before the hearing you'd go over this.

GREENE: When you say—excuse me—“the answers,” do you

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mean the anticipated answers or the answers you were looking for?

SHERIDAN: Well, it depends. If you knew the answer, which the witness may or may not give, you would probably put what the real answer was down there.

Now, he might either lie or take the Fifth Amendment, but this was really what the facts were.

GREENE: And that's what you gave to Kennedy?

SHERIDAN: Yeah. Then the day before the hearing, or sometimes the noontime before an afternoon hearing, you'd go over these with him. Of course, he had already been over them. He would change the order sometimes; he would add or subtract questions. If he had problems with the facts, he might want to know again what the facts were and what you had to back them up.

You'd have all this in exhibit envelopes. Like if you said, "There was a check for \$5,000 that went from X to Y," and he was going to ask X, "Did you give Y a \$5,000 check?" and the answer is, "Yes," and Y might say, "No," you had the check right here. He'd say, "You got the check," and he'd have the check or the document, whatever it was, in folders numbered by exhibit numbers. Then these would go in the hearings as exhibits. That was basically the way it went.

GREENE: Would you, for instance.... Well, specifically on this UAW thing, do you have any idea of how he felt about his going into the hearings, about how it was going to be politically and what John Kennedy's concerns were?

SHERIDAN: I think he knew eventually he would have to do something with the UAW because Goldwater and Mundt and Curtis were pushing so hard to do it. And I think he was confident that they wouldn't find anything. So, I think he resisted it as long as he could, mainly because he thought the other was so much more important. Then, when he had to really go ahead, I think he just made sure that he had the facts because he knew if he had the facts, that they then really wouldn't have any effect, meaningful effect.

In the Kohler situation, there's a good example where, when you got all the facts, it was very obvious that the Kohler Company was a paternalistic, tough, union-breaking company and that the workers were really owned by the Kohler Company. They owned all their houses; they didn't give them lunch hours when they worked in these baking rooms. It was just a terrible story.

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GREENE: Yeah.

SHERIDAN: So, he knew that, I think. So I don't think he was particularly concerned about it except that it could get out of hand or that it would be not handled right. I think it was handled well.

GREENE: So, he was reasonably satisfied?

SHERIDAN: Yeah, I think so.

GREENE: Then at the end of that.... The hearings ended March 29, 1958, and then almost immediately thereafter Johnson and McGovern resigned. Was this under pressure?

SHERIDAN: I'm sure it was. I don't know that for a fact, but I'm sure that he had expressed his great displeasure at their presence on the committee.

GREENE: Well, the only other thing I'd like to ask you about is that I'm a little bit confused about how this thing wound up. Robert Kennedy tells of a six-day final hearing on the UAW dealing with an intra-union argument in Toledo involving a Boilermaker who was accused of attempting to kill....

SHERIDAN: This must be the Dick Gosser matter. Dick Gosser was the only bad apple they had. I think this is probably what they were saving till last, and what he was putting off till last. I think that's the hearing they're talking about.

GREENE: Now this conflicts with something I've heard. Actually, what Kennedy says is that it ended with this intra-union argument in Toledo which goes back to the 1940s. However, I've heard elsewhere that he was actually kind of pushed into, by Pierre Salinger, going into the Boilermakers' thing and that that was the concluding hearing.

SHERIDAN: I just don't remember.

GREENE: You don't remember. Well, there was some conflict about that because that was considered damaging politically that there was no need to go into that if they didn't have the case.

SHERIDAN: That's probably true, but I don't know.

GREENE: But you don't know?

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SHERIDAN: I don't know.

GREENE: Okay. The only other thing is, what repercussions do you know of, both in the '60 campaign and during the administration, as a result of this pressure, let's say, on the candidate and on Robert Kennedy?

SHERIDAN: I think I mentioned before there was a lot of pressure on John Kennedy during the committee hearing, and particularly as it got closer to 1960, to, you know, get his brother off this whole thing. I know of no instance where he just didn't send the person to Robert Kennedy and Robert Kennedy went ahead. I

think there was an awareness on both their parts as it got nearer and nearer the election, and particularly as Republicans kept zeroing back in on Reuther, that there was nothing really to be gained by going any farther, that they'd had three hearings on Hoffa, and Hoffa in the beginning said he would clean up the union, second time said he hadn't had time, and the third time said he wasn't going to. So, there was really not too much more with the election coming up that they could do. Actually, I was thinking... [Interruption] More, really, of during the campaign, pressure from or requests from supporters to come in and exonerate local unions. I know Unruh [Jesse M. Unruh] requested Robert Kennedy to come in and say nice things about the Teamsters in California, which he did.

SHERIDAN: Well, the Teamsters in California were pretty good overall. I told you about the luncheon in Pittsburgh which was an effort to keep Robert Kennedy out because they considered him disruptive of a smooth situation. I think John Kennedy's statement that Hoffa should be in jail was a mistake. I think it cost him some union votes that he didn't have to. But the kind of thing you are saying specially, I don't.... I'm sure it happened, but I can't place it in Pennsylvania which was where.... Except for that Pittsburgh situation, I don't recall any terrible resentment on the part of labor in Pennsylvania to either Bob or John Kennedy.

GREENE: And you wouldn't have been in touch with the situation elsewhere.

SHERIDAN: Not really. [Interruption]

GREENE: This won't go on the transcript. I was just going to ask you.... I think I told you Larry [Larry J. Hackman] is going to California. Among others, he'll be interviewing Salinger and Guthman [Edwin O. Guthman]. He wondered if you had any specific ideas on areas he might question them on, as far as the committee.

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SHERIDAN: Pierre, on the Shefferman [Nathan W. Shefferman] investigation, which we did together. The Hoffa thing that he went into right after that. The meeting between he and Bellino and Hoffa in Detroit, which was quite volatile. Hoffa was screaming and hollering and knew every place they had been that day.

GREENE: This was very early, wasn't it?

SHERIDAN: Yeah, this was '57.

GREENE: In terms of the kinds of things we've been talking about...

SHERIDAN: Well, Guthman was strictly out in the northwest, as far as the committee went, the Western Conference of Teamsters and Dave Beck [David S. Beck] and Frank Brewster and those people.



GREENE: Did Seigenthaler become close in the next couple of months?

SHERIDAN: Well, Seigenthaler...

GREENE: He must have gotten very close, because he did that book.

SHERIDAN: Yeah, he did. It was a result of the Tennessee investigations, which were in Nashville with Don Vestal, who ended up being our friend. At that time, Seigenthaler just drove him right out of town with publicity. Then, there were a lot of violence investigations in Tennessee, of Teamster violence in Chattanooga and Knoxville with Judge Schoolfield.

But it's true, they did become very close at that time. When it came time to do the book, John was helping him on it. In fact, he and I proofread it together.

GREENE: In terms of the kinds of things that we've talked about—relationships with the different agencies and senators—would Salinger know just about what you do, do you think?

SHERIDAN: I think maybe a little more towards the end, because he was moving in towards that press secretary's job, was trying to get it, really, at that point. I think he felt he was competing with Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] for it.

GREENE: For press secretary?

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SHERIDAN: Yeah. He really was not that confident he was going to get an offer and considered taking a similar job with the National Democratic Committee. The next thing I knew, he had the other one.

GREENE: Was that Robert Kennedy's influence, do you think?

SHERIDAN: Yeah, I think a great deal, probably, of his influence.

GREENE: Well, that's all I've got. Next time, I think we can hopefully do some of the stuff in the briefcase....

SHERIDAN: Okay.

[END OF INTERVIEW #4]

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