

Sid Davis Oral History Interview – 2/10/2003
Administrative Information

Creator: Sid Davis
Interviewer: Vicki Daitch
Date of Interview: February 10, 2003
Place of Interview: Washington D.C.
Length: 76 pages

Biographical Note

Davis was a journalist, a White House correspondent (1959-1968) and Washington News Bureau chief (1968-1977) for the Westinghouse Broadcasting; director (1977-1979), bureau chief (1979-1980), and vice president and bureau chief (1980-1982) for NBC News; and a senior Washington correspondent (1982-1987) and director of office programs for the Voice of America (1987-1994). In this interview, he discusses the 1960 presidential campaign, John F. Kennedy's assassination and Lyndon B. Johnson's swearing in, and the press coverage of the White House, among other issues.

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Sid Davis, recorded interview by Vicki Daitch, February 10, 2003, (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.



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Sid Davis

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Oral History Interview

with

Sid Davis

February 10, 2003
Washington, D.C.

by Vicki Daitch

For the John F. Kennedy Library

DAITCH: Why don't I just set up the tapes by saying that my name is Vicki Daitch, and I'm talking with Sid Davis. It's February 10, 2003, and we're talking about Mr. Davis's coverage of John F. Kennedy [John F. Kennedy]. So let's just sort of start at the beginning. You covered him as a senator?

DAVIS: No, I actually did not cover him as a senator. My first encounter with Kennedy was at the primary in 1960 in West Virginia. By that time I think he had already, I don't know if he'd won Wisconsin yet or was going to win Wisconsin. But the question, the religious question, was a big one in West Virginia, which is largely a Protestant state and semi-Southern to some extent. Of course most of the advance coverage said that Kennedy was going to have a hard time because he was a Roman Catholic, and a Catholic had not been elected president up until then. So, the press' focus on the religious question was very big in West Virginia. Of course everybody's clamoring to get interviews with him.

At the time, I was a correspondent with Westinghouse Broadcasting Company, and I'd just been in Washington—at that point I'd been here about nine months or less, and didn't know the town that well. I would be covering politics in the '60 campaign. I covered various primaries, but I had not covered one where Kennedy was going to be involved, and this was my first big one.

It was around May 1st because it was the time of the shooting down of the U-2 by the Russians, and I had just.... I remember the day that I went to West Virginia, they sent

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me over to the State Department to cover a hurried background briefing on an innocuous subject that had nothing to do with the U-2. But they were trying to leak a cover story to us saying a N.A.S.A. [National Aeronautics and Space Administration] weather plane was missing. It turned out to be the U-2 spy plane. The incident created a crisis between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. I was late getting to West Virginia because I had to cover this thing at the State Department. I got there late that night.

The very next day we started following Kennedy around the state. It was pretty obvious to me that he was very popular in West Virginia, and I was not buying the religious argument. I saw that as a straw man. It made him look like the underdog. And, of course, if the Kennedy staffers built that up enough and he won, then it was going to look like he'd climbed the highest mountain. We had arranged, Westinghouse Broadcasting Company had arranged for an interview with Kennedy, and I'd never seen him up close. Jim Snyder [James Snyder], who was the bureau chief at Westinghouse Broadcasting Company, myself, and another reporter, Jerry Landay [Jerry M. Landay], who had worked at WBZ-Boston, which at the time was owned by Westinghouse Broadcasting Company. So the three of us covering the primary were staying at the Kanawha Hotel. It's named after the river, the Kanawha River, or the Kanoi River. In Charleston, West Virginia, they call it Kanoi, I think. In any case, we were staying at the Kanawha Hotel, and we had an interview scheduled with Kennedy the next afternoon after I'd arrived from Washington. The thing that struck me was how many people were trying to get interviews with him and how busy Kennedy's people were. He was no longer what you'd call a regional candidate. He was now pretty much a national figure. He'd established himself pretty well in the primaries by that time, by May.

I'd read about Kennedy in *Life* magazine, and the picture spreads on the Kennedys were pretty broadly spread across the United States. Jack and Jackie [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] were a glamorous couple, glamorous wedding, the whole thing. So he was a prominent figure in my mind, as a journalist, and also as a celebrity. And I was struck by how thin he was. We were up on—I forget what floor of the hotel at this point 40 some years later—but we were up on one of the floors of the hotel waiting to get an interview with him, and we were in line with a bunch of other outfits that wanted interviews.

So he came out of one room. He was moving back and forth from room to room across the hall. He was trying to get ready for an appearance that night. When I saw him, I saw him in his skivvies, his undershorts. And it struck me how thin he was. He was skinny. He was not overweight by any means. But he just looked like a scrawny kid, really, even though he was 43. That may have been partly from the war injuries, the wounds, or whether he had Addison's or not, I don't know. But anyway, that struck me, and I said to someone, "Do you realize he's just a kid?" And they said, "Well, yeah."

But anyway Jim Snyder and Landay.... I had to go and cover something, so I just got to shake his hand in the hallway as he was moving back and forth across the hall. They said, "He doesn't have any time to meet all you guys. We'll try to do our best, and we're crowding everybody in." So that was my first encounter with him. He gave us the interview because we

were WBZ-Boston, and we covered all of Massachusetts and New England, which by then was not that important to him. He was well known in New England. He was now looking for broader coverage from the rest of the country.

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In any case, we did get the interview. Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy] was available. Larry O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien]. They were manipulating the press in and out of that room to get as many interviews as they could before he had to go to this speaking engagement. So that was my first encounter with John Kennedy in a hallway in his underwear. But it struck me that this was the guy I saw in *Life* magazine and all these things. I'm just kind of a young reporter from Ohio, awestruck by all of this.

What I did in West Virginia was that I decided to go off on my own and just visit people instead of writing the story given out of the politicians in Charleston or Wheeling or any of the other places. I was fascinated with the religious angle to the story. So I went down to where I would really find your hard-shell Baptists and your Protestants. I wanted to talk to people that were going to vote against this guy if they were going to vote against him. I traveled down some of the narrow roads. I went to a place called Six Mile Hollow. I'll never forget it. Six Mile Hollow is just a rutted dirt road that went up into the mountainside, and there was a coal tippie up there where there was a coal-mining operation. There were the old company homes that were built by the coal mine companies. You once had the general store run by the coal companies. And this was really hardscrabble country.

I went up there, and I wanted to interview these people, and some of them were.... It was in May, and it was kind of a pretty time of the year. I interviewed people rocking on a swing, you know, the swing on a front porch, porch swing. You don't see many of them now. This was sort of a bench that hung on chains that came down from the ceiling. And I'd see people sitting on their porches. When word got around that there was this guy in town, or in the hollow, looking to interview people, I found many families, people sitting on the front porches or on the front stoop waiting for me to come up the road.

I talked to them, and I couldn't find a single one that was going to vote against John Kennedy because of his religion. I couldn't find one of them that would say that. I interviewed this one fellow, and I said, "You know, I've been hearing all these stories that he's a real rich person from the East, and he's Catholic, and that he hasn't got a chance in West Virginia." The fellow looked at me, and he said, "Franklin Roosevelt [Franklin D. Roosevelt] was rich. Franklin Roosevelt was from the East. We loved Franklin Roosevelt, and Kennedy is another Roosevelt." That's what they said to me.

So I went back to Charleston, and I said, "Guys, I'm telling you Kennedy is going to win this state." And I wasn't the only one who felt that way. I think some other people who did some serious polling felt the same. But the magic, I think, of Kennedy was the way he talked to them. He also had some help from the Roosevelt family. Franklin Roosevelt, Jr. [Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr.] came down and campaigned for him. And I remember reading a newspaper ad in the Charleston paper that the Democrats had purchased, and it had a picture of FDR with his cigarette holder and a cigarette in it, and that jutting jaw, and it said, "Franklin D. Roosevelt's son says, 'If my father were alive today, he'd vote for John Kennedy.'" So, you know, putting it all together, I didn't see a problem for him. And the fact

is that I did go out with.... I stayed for several days, maybe a couple weeks. And I did go out with Hubert Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] when Hubert came down to West Virginia. And it was kind of pathetic. He didn't have the organization. He obviously didn't have the financial backing. But when you went out with Hubert, the press bus was maybe a quarter filled compared to what it was on the Kennedy campaign.

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Kennedy was the magnet down there, and he attracted most of the attention. I think Hubert knew it. This is a day or so before the election. I'm covering him down there. I remember he said, "Comme ci, comme ça." By that time I think that he knew it, too, even though the Kennedy people were playing up the fact that he barely has a chance here. I remember Hubert said, "How do you like my new coat?" His wife [Muriel Fay Buck Humphrey] had just bought him a brand-new London Fog. Here we are, he's in the race of his life, and he's talking about his new raincoat. So there wasn't much.... Hubert didn't have the spirit either. I think he knew it, too. Hubert was always an uplifting person, full of energy but I felt he knew he wouldn't win.

West Virginia was a turning point in that campaign for John Kennedy because what it did was subdue the religious issue: if a Democratic Catholic could win in West Virginia, he could do pretty well in a lot of the border states down in that area. So it worked. After that, after West Virginia, of course, then we had the regular campaign.

DAITCH: Before we move away from West Virginia, you said something that piqued my interest having to do with how he interacted with people. I grew up in West Virginia.

DAVIS: Oh, okay.

DAITCH: And people in West Virginia know that they're not regarded as a particularly important state politically, and they're sensitive to how they're treated by politicians, I think, national politicians, and not necessarily unaware of that.

So what was he doing?

DAVIS: Well, I think what he did was he talked about.... While Hubert probably was closer to West Virginians economically, Kennedy talked to them as though he knew all their problems. I don't think he made any bones about the fact that he was a patrician from Boston. But he did know their problems, he did know about unemployment, he did know about the coal problems, he knew about industry and the problems industry was having. He addressed those issues about employment and that sort of thing, and he talked about their being ignored by eight years of Republican rule and that sort of thing.

I think he captured them by talking about how he was going to help them. And what they were interested in was being helped and a better economic life for them. It was pathetic to go into the hollows. The hollow I went into, Six Mile Hollow, I don't know if it's still there or not. I think these things change over time. I think most of the people I talked to were

not employed. The coal mine that had been there was out of business. I remember a girl standing in front one of the houses, and I talked to her for a while. She must have been about nine or ten years old. She talked about her father being unable to work. He'd been injured in the mine, and they didn't have a lot of money. She told me this right out. An eight- or nine-year-old, she told me how bad things were. Kennedy was seen by these people as a savior. He was going to help them. And the Roosevelt analogy was something that really, that reverberated down there.

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DAITCH: Absolutely.

DAVIS: It rung out with these people. As I said, I didn't find anybody who was going to vote against Kennedy, number one, for his religion. That was so far down the list of where they were coming from. They wanted someone to come into West Virginia and find jobs. And that's what he was promising. Foreign policy was not the main thrust of his speech in West Virginia. It was domestic policy. And I think he did connect down there with these people. Along with what I've said about this little girl, I came back and told Barbara [Barbara Davis] about her—I don't know if Barbara remembers, my wife—and told her about her. And the next time I went to West Virginia, I bought some things, and I said, "I'm going to go down to Six Mile Hollow." I did go down there for the general election on the general election campaign. I went down there in September, six months later just about. I went to that hollow, and that family was gone.

DAITCH: Really!

DAVIS: I couldn't find.... Yes, I asked about the family that had lived in that house, and they said, "Oh, they move away months ago." So they were wandering looking for work obviously, and the little girl was gone. So I couldn't give her the gifts.

But I did follow Kennedy in the campaign. I spent about equal time with Nixon [Richard M. Nixon] and with Kennedy. I would say that during the course of it all, I spent probably six weeks with Kennedy and six weeks with Nixon beginning from June on, switching back and forth. What Kennedy did in the hard unemployment regions was to focus primarily on a better life. We can do better. The words "We can do better." You know, that rung out to these people. We can do better, and that would ring out. My opponent says this, but we can do better than that. And that was something that connected.

I remember well into October, as it started getting cold; by that time the campaign, the Kennedy campaign, was really on a roll. People were coming out in larger.... We saw larger audiences. Actually, the larger audiences started after the first debate. We noticed a difference, an overnight difference, in the size of the crowds after the first debate.

But I remember going into the anthracite region of Pennsylvania, eastern Pennsylvania, up around Wilkes-Barre. We were always late because the campaign never ran on time. You can ask some of the people who ran the campaign. They just couldn't.... He was delayed because of the crowds. He was delayed because his speeches might have run over.

And they were not the sharpest. . . . The campaign organization was not the sharpest on logistics. Nixon had a campaign that ran on the clock pretty much. Rarely late, as I recall. The Kennedy campaign was kind of a bedraggled campaign to some extent. It was not as well oiled. They got there, but you didn't know when.

I remember going through eastern Pennsylvania into the anthracite region. We were outside of, it might have been Scranton or Wilkes-Barre, a coal-mining area. Lots of unemployment in that area. I remember it was one or two o'clock in the morning. We were so late. This was a motorcade in through the mountains, and we were weaving in

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and out of these narrow roads, and obviously.... I think it was a largely Catholic area, and people had put candles out waiting for Kennedy to come down their street, come down their road. There were candles, and some had made little I don't know what you call them but they had statues of Christ on some of these things out in front with candles in them in some of those places, waiting for him to come and shake their hand and make a speech at the town square wherever it was, into two or three o'clock in the morning.

He would never put on a coat or a hat. He would stand in the back of that car and speak to the crowds. He always sounded like he had a cold because he was hoarse, his voice was hoarse. He was stuffed up because of the weather. This was October. You were starting to get into weather that was in the thirties and forties. But he kept his promises to go through these areas. But I could see the difference as we went into eastern Pennsylvania and the regions where that strength was going to come from for his campaign. These were all Democratic strongholds. And they turned out. My recollection is that he did pretty well in those areas.

DAITCH: Obviously there's a certain amount of this is campaign strategy, it's rhetoric, it's trying to get out the vote. But I've also been told that he very sincerely was pretty appalled by some of the conditions that he'd never seen before that existed...

DAVIS: I think that's true. I think that would be true. He certainly addressed their problems in West Virginia. Now, I never had a session with him where he talked about how appalled he was about poverty. But I think it did resonate with him, the fact that there were people that were in desperate need. And he made the case that he was going to help them with programs. So that "we can do better" theme was something that was always behind almost everything he said. It was a theme that ran through the campaign. Even in foreign policy he made the same promises that we can do better with our allies and that sort of thing.

But I do believe that he was sensitive and cared even though he'd never experienced economic problems himself. Humphrey probably was closer to that than he was. Well, Humphrey already had a record for being a champion of the poor. But if you look at Massachusetts, the Democrats were not the wealthiest party in Massachusetts. The poor were part of the Democratic legacy that Kennedy inherited, that was very important to him. He was aware of the problems. The crowds, you know the difference in the campaigns. The

Nixon crowds were better dressed generally. I'm not saying that you didn't have wealthy Democrats supporting Kennedy. But the Republicans were much better organized. Wherever you went, their people in the crowds were much better dressed. The Nixonettes were generally young women, I would say, twenties, thirties, housewives and others who would wear straw hats, the sailor straws, in red, white, and blue and that sort of thing. And there were Nixonettes many places you'd go, something like cheerleaders.

I don't remember any Kennedyettes, people like that with Kennedy. Republicans were people who had middle income or better, higher-income people than what you saw in Democratic crowds. When you traveled with a Democratic president, and my first campaign was '60 with Kennedy, you went to union halls, you went to greasy, grimy

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places where there was coal soot from the mills, you know. And this might have been an early experience for him, but I'm not so sure he didn't see some of that in Boston when he ran as a senator. These were union-hall people. They were work clothes people. And those were the people who energized him.

The one thing we learned in the campaign was that Kennedy had a way of, I don't know if "enthalls" is the right word, but he excited people. Perhaps you've heard of the jumpers? Have you heard of the jumpers?

DAITCH: No.

DAVIS: Well, it probably happens in other campaigns, too. The jumpers were people who when they get excited about a presidential candidate or the president coming down the street in a motorcade, they start—automatically, it's an involuntary muscle—they start to jump. Whether they were recognized under Roosevelt or Truman [Harry S. Truman] or Dewey [Thomas E. Dewey] or Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] in years past, I don't know because I wasn't there and I never saw anybody allude to it.

But we created something called the "jumpers" with the Kennedy campaign. We noticed that if you're on the press bus, and you see the candidate a couple of car lengths ahead of you, and you look at the crowd down that long expanse of that street you're going down, as soon as people could spot him or his car, they started to jump. They would jump up and down off both feet. The younger they were, the higher they jumped, but it wasn't limited to young people. Older people started to jump. This became a.... It was contagious. We started seeing this more and more as the campaign wore on.

As I said, the crowds really built after the first debate. But we saw it more and more as the campaign went on and as the.... Well, it just heated up as we were getting closer to the election. So much so that when I shifted over to Nixon, I don't know whether it was Herb Klein [Herbert G. Klein] Nixon's press secretary, or one of his assistants, that would get up in the front of the press bus with a microphone in the press bus and say, "Notice the jumpers up ahead." [Laughter] So Nixon wanted jumpers, too. Then they would say, "How do these compare to Kennedy's jumpers?" It got to be a funny story. Well, I'm not sure that probably Roosevelt and Truman and Eisenhower didn't see jumpers. Maybe no one paid much

attention to them at the time. I do think that it became a lot more noticeable and more vigorous under Kennedy. Young president, 43 years old, handsome guy, war hero, all of that. But I say, the minute they saw that car coming down there, they started to jump. And you could see it ahead if you were in the press bus. Then I guess some of the reporters made comparisons between whether Nixon had jumpers who jumped as high. It got to be silly after a while.

But he did energize people. He connected. He had a way of.... He had a staccato delivery, too, that lent itself to a campaign. There were no long, drawn-out, convoluted sentences. He said what he wanted to say, and he said it with a minimum of words. He was frugal with words.

DAITCH: Was he?

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DAVIS: Words counted. He didn't make small.... It wasn't small talk. But there was a lot of humor in the campaign. You know, he did most of it without Mrs. Kennedy because she was pregnant at the time. But Nixon always had Patricia Nixon [Thelma Catherine "Pat" Ryan Nixon] with him, his wife with him. To an unbearable state, really. I think to the point where.... I think that keeping her up until three and four o'clock in the morning and then being prepared to run out again.... But she was very much a part of his campaign. I don't think he leaned on her, but she was a part of the campaign because he alluded to her all the time in every speech. She became a part of the platform with him.

Kennedy didn't play the game that way. The family was pretty much kept out of it. Never bragged about being a war hero. Although it's very interesting: It got to be a joke after a while; it became rather humorous. Wherever he went, there were always guys who said they were on the PT boat with him. Now, I think a PT boat probably carried a crew of maybe 15 or 20 at most. So if all these guys who said they were on Kennedy's PT-109 actually were on 109, it had to have been the size of an aircraft carrier. It really could not have been a PT boat. But wherever we went, there were the veterans who came out. He connected with them. But never made a big thing....

DAITCH: I had heard that he never played the war hero.

DAVIS: He never.

DAITCH: That would have been almost irresistible for anyone.

DAVIS: No. I don't ever recall him saying, "I was in the war so I know what war is like." And his opponent had also been in the Navy and was an officer in the Navy and served. So that question of patriotism that never came up. Soft on communism did. I don't recall Kennedy ever addressing that subject frontally, but he did it in a way. He'd talk about being strong and would display his knowledge of the Soviet Union, the Cold War. He blamed Eisenhower for a "missile gap," that the Soviets had more missiles

than the U.S.. He didn't say, "Well, I was in the war, and I know something about it." Nixon did play on the soft-on-communism theme against the Democrats. Kennedy was able, I think, to shift that focus. It was pretty hard to pin a label on him as being soft when he'd been wounded in the war.

DAITCH: Right. He did talk about...

DAVIS: But they didn't stop trying.

DAITCH: He did talk about the missile gap, though, right?

DAVIS: The missile gap, yes. He did talk about the missile gap. He talked about the fact that we weren't as strong as we could have been, that we didn't pay enough attention to the strength of the Soviet Union. But at this date, looking back, I'm not so sure I recall any of the, as a part of the campaign, whether he

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discussed the space program in those terms. He did address it when we went to places where they were involved in the space program.

But he did talk about the strength of the United States: We can be better, we can be stronger. And we did face a powerful enemy in the Soviet Union. He did make foreign policy speeches, and he did talk about the fact that we had to deal with a very powerful adversary. He was well read on the international situation, as the debates showed, with Quemoy and Matsu, and that sort of thing.

I know that the missile gap never emerged. We weren't as bad off as he said. In the forty years that I've been in Washington, every campaign I'd been to, the guys on the outside said that the incumbent candidate or incumbent party had squandered our defenses. We have it now, today, as we did then. I think Kennedy handled the question very well. He really showed his.... The debates really were a defining moment in '60. They showed that this guy, even while he didn't have Nixon's eight years of experience as vice president that he knew what he was talking about. Nixon was an intelligent, formidable candidate.

DAITCH: You know, Hewitt [Don S. Hewitt] suggested that—and he said this in his book, it wasn't just our interview—but he talks about it as almost more of an image thing, the debates because Kennedy presented himself so much better on television than Nixon did.

DAVIS: Yes, yes.

DAITCH: But there was substance, too, so....

DAVIS: Oh, there was. Well, I would tell Don to go back and look at the transcripts. There was substance in those transcripts of those four debates. I looked at

those transcripts, and, you know, how clever they were both, Nixon and Kennedy, both were clever in that first debate. The first debate, as I recall, was supposed to be on domestic issues, and Kennedy was able, and Nixon as well, to suck in the foreign policy aspects to say that I'm, you know.... Kennedy was not going to let Nixon get away with saying, "I know foreign policy because I've been the vice president for eight years." He showed himself knowledgeable on it, and that was a surprise to everyone.

Since I'm a child of television, I have been very much interested in the cosmetic factor. Yes, Kennedy did present himself much better than Nixon. His color was better. Nixon was not well. He'd had a staph infection [*staphylococcus aureus*] prior to the campaign. He bumped his knee and opened the skin, and he got a staphylococcus infection. I went out with him when he went out on his first foray out of Washington. He went to Baltimore on his first stop. He was feeling rotten, and that was in September of '60. The time of the debates, his staph infection.... You know, staph infections don't disappear easily. So he looked like hell, and he may not have been feeling well that night. But he didn't have.... I think there was also in Nixon's mind: I was a champion debater in college.

DAITCH: He was?

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DAVIS: I think he was. I think Nixon was on a debate team at Duke. I'm not sure. But it was well known around Washington, primarily because his people would tell us, and he sort of bragged about it, too. His skill as a debater, his skill as someone who could confront an adversary, as he did in the Senate when he was a senator in some of the hearings on communism, this is where he thrived. Because he felt he was.... He could deal with Helen Gahagan Douglas in the campaign in California, which was about the Red Scare and communism and that sort of thing. So he saw himself as quite a lawyerly guy who could debate anyone and take anyone on.

My guess is that he went into that debate somewhat over confident about how good he was and his background, and that he had not counted on Kennedy being as sharp as he was on his feet. And Kennedy may have been feeling better. The debate was at WBBM in Chicago, a CBS station. As I understand it, somebody else—Hewitt may have been better at this than I am—the Kennedy people, when they came into the studio prior to the debate felt the studio was too cold. Have you heard this at all?

DAITCH: I don't think so. Not too cold.

DAVIS: Well, that the studio was very cold, the temperature was very low. And that was because Nixon did not like warmth. He had a problem if he got too warm; he perspired.

DAITCH: Oh, right.

DAVIS: If you recall pictures of Nixon, he perspired a lot. It would just pour off his nose and his forehead. From what I was told, the Nixon people had come into

the studio in the afternoon and said they wanted the temperature down because the lights in those days in television studios were klieg lights; they were hot as hell. They got the temperature down.

Well, toward the evening, the Kennedy people came in and said that the studio was freezing. Apparently Kennedy had a problem with being too cold. The cold was something that did not suit well because of his condition, whatever it was. I guess it was Addison's or something like Addison's. I've read all the stories about it, and I still don't know whether he had it or didn't have it.

In any case, they said that we can't debate if this.... If this temperature doesn't come up somewhere, we're not going to debate. I heard that either Kenny O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] said that to someone or Larry O'Brien said it.

So they got the studio to turn the temperature up. And there was a big argument with the Nixon people and the station over this thing. So that by the time the debate took place, the studio was not as cold as it was earlier. It may not have been as warm as the Kennedy people wanted it, but it was warmer, and warm enough to make Nixon perspire. And Nixon had not been skilled in stage manners; I don't think Kennedy had any training in it either. But Nixon did have a very clumsy way of getting rid of perspiration, which was to use the back of his hand to wipe his nose or his face, instead of taking out a hankie and doing it daintily by blotting it or dabbing at it. If you look at the kinescopes of the

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debate, you'll see where he had to wipe his face several times. That's a distraction. And for people in the audience, it just wasn't a very pleasant experience.

But that and on top of the fact that he didn't look well, he looked almost green. Kennedy apparently had been in the sun and was tanned, as I recall. Now, there's a story that Kennedy had makeup, although he probably didn't need it. But Nixon did have, he had a—the word escapes me. He had a complexion that was not sallow, I would say, at best. And he had to shave. He was one of those guys, unblest, with a heavy beard, a heavy growth of beard.

But I've read accounts that said he did not have makeup. But I recall somebody saying that they did get makeup for him. They ran to a drugstore and bought some Max Factor pancake, and slapped some Max Factor pancake, which made it worse. Because it wasn't really television makeup. It was something that an amateur would do. So he didn't look.... He just looked awful. And that was a problem for him.

But if you look on points, they say that Nixon—well, I've heard it said—that Nixon won the debates. That may be true on points. He was skillful. There's no question about it. He was an articulate man. There isn't any doubt about that. I think that.... The stories I read at the time and afterward were that in polls that were taken, surveys that were taken after the debates, those people who heard it on the radio thought Nixon won, those people who watched on television thought Kennedy won. I'm sure you've heard that story.

DAITCH: Yes.

DAVIS: And that's probably true. I don't know. But I think if you read the transcripts

of both, I think it would be pretty close to a draw. I mean on how well Kennedy articulated the problems on education on budgets, on how much money was spent. Kennedy had all those things at his fingertips per challenger. I mean he wasn't tripped up on anything. It was Nixon on Quemoy and Matsu who had to come out later, as I recall, where Nixon said he would defend—I don't know if he said we would go to war, but he indicated that we would take on the Communist Chinese over Quemoy and Matsu—he had to pull back from that at some point, which was a red herring out there that they both got involved in, and everybody forgot about Quemoy and Matsu the day after the election.

But Kennedy held his own at that debate. There were four of them. I believe that I went to all of those debates. There was one in Washington. The first was in Chicago, then Washington, then New York. They were in New York and I think there was one where they did it.... Nixon was in Hollywood and Kennedy was in New York. But there were four debates. But they were the defining things.

DAITCH: Would you get to like sit in the audience?

DAVIS: Yes, that's right.

DAITCH: What did you do while they were actually filming the debate?

DAVIS: We sat in the audience. In the studio they put in chairs at the WBBM studio

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so we could sit in the back and watch them. I think that after the first debate it was a draw. This was going to be a close election. These guys were close. Well, they'd both spent.... Kennedy was in the congress for what? 14 years, I think, by the time he ran. And Nixon had had eight years as vice president plus his Senate and House time. So they were, in terms of background, they were pretty equal. But Kennedy had to come the greater distance because Nixon had been the vice president for eight years. As I said, I think there was an over-confidence in Nixon about how good he was at arguing with people. And he probably was brilliant on the Hill at some of those hearings. He knew how to go for the jugular. Kennedy was so deft that Nixon couldn't get it. I think that's what happened there. So they were evenly matched. But I never discounted Nixon's mind. I thought that he had a sharp mind.

DAITCH: Do you think he came across as.... Did Nixon come across as maybe a little more aggressive and Kennedy was more deft at caring?

DAVIS: Yes, I think. Nixon was a heavy, and Kennedy was more of a gazelle in this situation. He kind of danced around it. He could take.... Some of the charges against him were he could dance it off, you know, put it down as insignificant or something like that. He was able to.... Pretty much the criticism rolled off in the way he handled things because he used humor in a way that very few people use it in a political

campaign. Adlai Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] had humor, too, but it was a very intellectual humor. And Kennedy's was a little less that, but he used it as a weapon in the debates.

DAITCH: I guess it might've depended on what you value and what you admire as to who you thought won the debate almost.

DAVIS: What's that?

DAITCH: It might depend on what you value and what you admire in a person how you judged who won the debate.

DAVIS: Yes, I think that's probably true. But I think once Nixon agreed.... See, Nixon.... I would probably call it a fatal mistake looking back. His decision, his over-self-confidence in agreeing to debate Kennedy, was a fatal mistake for him in the sense that he elevated Kennedy to the same level. Once he did that, all Kennedy.... Kennedy didn't have to win any of the debates. All he had to do was get on the stage with him. In my judgment, that's what Larry O'Brien wanted. Just make him accept. Once he accepts and we're on the stage with him, we don't care. Once they get a chance to see this guy at the same....

Usually presidents and vice-presidents try to put themselves a step higher than their opponents, and Nixon gave away that one benefit that he had. It was one weapon in his arsenal that he handed over to Kennedy and said, "Sure, I'll meet you on the stage." Because he felt that he could take him, and it wasn't that simple to take him.

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DAITCH: It's an interesting thought, because if he had just skewered him right then and there....

DAVIS: Yes. Well, if he'd just said, "No one's ever debated before. I don't know why I have to debate you." He could have said that, and so there would have been a one day story saying Nixon refused to debate. That'd be it. Now Kennedy could have run around the country and used the empty chair technique, but that would have worn off after a while. But I do think it was a mistake for Nixon on his part to have accepted it, the challenge. And of course now no candidate for president can turn it down now. It's in concrete.

DAITCH: Yes, absolutely. So what things do you remember about the things that they were saying to one another and about one another? I mean there were lots of details back then, but now what do you remember?

DAVIS: I remember Quemoy and Matsu, and I remember the economy to some extent. And I think education. But I don't remember anything specific that jumps out

at you about the debates right now. I just know that I never felt that they were unevenly matched. I think that Kennedy was as good as Nixon was on the issues, even though Nixon had more experience. I think Kennedy was able to handle.... He was well versed. And maybe he might have been a quick study.

But here's a guy that had written a couple of books by the time he got to where he was, had been in the service, had lived in England, had had a very fine education. So he was somebody you don't trifle with. Plus the fact that he was a war hero, and he had a beautiful wife, and the Kennedy mystique didn't hurt him. As I said, in West Virginia they thought, in fact, his wealth was a benefit—was a plus for him, not a minus. For all those reasons, I just think he was not unbeatable, but he was a match for Nixon. I don't remember two races since then where the candidates were more evenly matched. I mean almost the same age. There wasn't a big age difference. They had experience in the Senate. They were both in the war. Had attractive wives and families, and that sort of thing.

Nixon was troubled pretty much by the fact that he was not rich. I think that bothered him all of his life, and I think that was one of the demons that danced in his head, that really contributed to a character flaw eventually. I think that was a problem for him. Just watching him the eight weeks that I covered him, that seemed to come out. There was a chip on his shoulder, even though it didn't have to be there. He'd made it. He was vice president for eight years. I don't know why he did that.

But he was an angry man in many ways. They tried to pick on the press a lot, too, that they weren't getting a fair shake in the press. Actually the thing about the media came, it probably started in '60, the liberal media against the establishment, it grew to greater proportions in '64 with Goldwater [Barry M. Goldwater]. But they made an oath out of it in the Republican Party, which is still there today to some extent. And there was some of that with Nixon that he didn't think that we were on his side. You know, the "You won't have Nixon to kick around anymore," thing that came out when he ran for governor in '62.

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That was all a part of his character, his makeup. He was poor when he was growing up in Yorba Linda. His father [Francis A. Nixon] was a streetcar conductor, and his father tried several businesses and failed. I just think that that all played on his mind 'til the day he resigned the presidency, and it got him into Watergate.

DAITCH: Do you think in sort of a funny way he was right, that it was a self-fulfilling prophecy: Because he carried the chip on his shoulder, maybe the media.... I mean it's not likable, a guy to walk around angry all the time.

DAVIS: Oh, yeah. I think so. Although I must say he won in '68, which was astounding to me after all he'd been through before that.

[END TAPE 1, SIDE 1; BEGIN TAPE1, SIDE 2]

I don't know how much you want to do on Nixon. But a friend of mine who would see Nixon privately, a journalist in Washington, who had access to Kennedy, too,

quite a bit, and to Nixon, said that when he met with Nixon, Nixon equated people with how rich they were.

DAITCH: Really!

DAVIS: He would say, “Oh, Joe So-and-So, he’s worth ten million. Oh, Joe So-and-So, he’s worth about 20 million.” But he identified everybody by how rich they were. The Nixon character is interesting. If you go back and read the Nixon tapes, the Watergate tapes, I remember one I read that still sticks with me. Willard Marriott [John Willard Marriott], the owner of the Marriott Hotel chain, by then he wasn’t as rich as the family is now and of course Marriott Senior is dead, but he was a big contributor to Nixon, and apparently had White House access, would be invited over to the White House. There is one tape, one transcript that I read where Nixon was—I don’t know why it was part of the Watergate collection—but Nixon had just met with Willard Marriott and some of his staff, and they’d met with Marriott and two or three other people. After Marriott left the room—now Marriott was a contributor and a big Republican—after Marriott left the White House Nixon turned to one of the aides and said, “Oh, Willard Marriott, he’s a Mormon. You know, made all of his money selling liquor. You know the Mormons don’t drink, and he made all of his money selling liquor to people.” Well, that tells you something about the way he thought. And I think it was a self fulfilling prophecy in that it was his undoing. It was a pettiness that the general public didn’t see in this guy who could debate Khrushchev [Nikita Sergeyeovich Khrushchev] or Brezhnev [Leonid I. Brezhnev] or any of them and hold his own very well because he was so good at that sort of thing. It just struck me as so small of him to pick on little things like how much money this guy owned.

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If you look at the friends he associated with, the people he associated with, they were all very rich: Rebozo [Charles Gregory Rebozo] and Abplanalp [Robert H. Abplanalp] and all those people. They were very wealthy men. And I think he made a decision once, if I ever reach a point in my life where I’m successful, I’m going to forget that I ever was poor. Because he was poor, and his wife, Pat Ryan, was poor.

A friend of mine said something interesting. I always admired Mrs. Nixon because I’d see her sitting on the stage at one or two o’clock in the morning at places or on the campaign trail in the cold, her legs crossed and in her hand she would be holding a bouquet of flowers that someone—I always gave the First Lady or the wife of the candidate some flowers. She’d sit there with this wan look on her face, just dead tired. And she’d be dragged—dragged is the wrong word. Maybe she wanted to be there. But she just looked.... Why does she have to be up on that stage every place we go, just sitting in that front row, watching him make a speech?

But I think he felt comfort in having her there. And he always wanted to turn to Pat. But I think there was something in his character that was.... There were demons in Nixon. Well, we find out now, if you look at what he said about Jews and that sort of thing in the administration and how he talked, I don’t think he said a kind word about anybody.

DAITCH: Yes, yes.

DAVIS: Now, there are no Kennedy tapes, but I doubt that.... Kennedy had a different outlook on life. Well, maybe with wealth you have a different outlook. He didn't have the hard knocks that Nixon had.

DAITCH: Well, an interesting counterpoint to what you're telling me is that—and I can't remember where this came from; I just read it or talked to someone recently that said it—but Kennedy was almost the opposite. He was curious about money in terms of what the average person, what a real working person made or what a real working person got paid for his work. I mean he knew that his life was different from everyone else's, but he was curious about it. He wanted to know, not in a morbid way, but he wanted to know. And he found it useful to know that, I suppose.

DAVIS: Well, it's my recollection he didn't carry any money with him. I don't know whether he was president or we were campaigning, but we were somewhere in a motorcade, and he stopped for an ice cream cone. When he had to pay for it, he put his hand in his pocket, and there was no money. Never carried any money. Somebody had to come up with a buck to pay for his ice cream because he had no money on him. He didn't have to worry about it.

But I think he was curious about people, though. If you look at the golfing partners and that sort of thing, they were reporters. He loved to have the.... He had certain reporters he enjoyed, Bill Lawrence [William H. Lawrence] of the *New York Times*, that he enjoyed being with. They were invited to the White House. A friend of

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mine, Hugh Sidey [Hugh Sidey] I don't know if he's been interviewed or not; Hugh wrote for *Time* magazine and had great access to Kennedy. But he loved to have people like that to talk to, and they weren't *all* successful millionaires.

If you look at Nixon's closest associates, they really were very successful businessmen. There was a different attitude, different outlook. Not that that's bad. But he was curious in a different way. No, Kennedy, he had a penchant for reading, you know, he loved to read.

If you were on the pool, if you were a pool reporter on the *Caroline* when he was a candidate, you always had to hide your newspaper or whatever you were reading; because when he came by where the press was sitting to go back to his compartment in the rear of the airplane, it was a Convair, if you had a newspaper in your hand, he'd just lift it out of your hand while you were reading it and take it to the back of the airplane because it might have been first thing in the morning and he hadn't seen a paper. So we used to say, "Hide the papers. He's coming on board."

Well, one day we tripped him up because we knew he did that. We tripped him up. We were in Palm Beach. He had been elected. This was during the interregnum. We're in Palm Beach, and we were going somewhere. That morning, to our consternation and disappointment, obviously Kennedy or someone had leaked to Bill Lawrence of the

New York Times that he was going to appoint Bobby as the attorney general. And of course at first everybody said, "It's preposterous! He wouldn't. It's outrageous. His brother's never practiced law. Why would he do that sort of thing?" Pretty soon we started to say, well, maybe it does. Who would you rather have as attorney general? Somebody you can really trust. So there was a rule on the *Caroline* that we were not—this is after he was elected—we were not to ask him any questions unless he opened the door to a question. Because we were just holding impromptu news conferences with him wherever he went. They said, "We're not going to take a pool on the *Caroline* if every time he gets on the airplane you buttonhole him and try to hold a news conference." So we had to agree that if we wanted to keep riding the *Caroline* that we would not ask him questions every time he got on the airplane about something.

So we had this rule in effect. Now the morning paper in Palm Beach, we're in Palm Beach. He was staying at the family house in Palm Beach, and we were going somewhere, and he's going to get on the plane. And the four of us: There were always two wire services, a broadcaster, and a print person. So Merriman Smith [Albert Merriman Smith] who was the dean of the White House correspondents, he was as shrewd as anybody could be, I mean he really was a wonderful person, best damned reporter I've ever known. Smitty said, "Before he comes on board, we've got to figure some way to stop him here so we can ask a question about whether this story about appointing Bobby attorney general is true." And Smitty said, "I'll do it. You have to join in later, but I'll start it. I'm going to hold the *New York Times* in front of me when he gets on the plane. And I know he's going to grab for the newspaper. And when he takes the paper, I'm going to say, 'There's something in the paper about you.' And we'll stop him there, and we won't be violating the rules because he'll stop and talk to us."

So it happened exactly the way Smitty said it would. He was sitting there, and he almost tripped him. He held the newspaper out as Kennedy got on the plane, and Kennedy lifted the paper. And Smitty said, "Did you see the story up in the right-hand

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corner?" Kennedy looked at it and smiled. And Smitty said, "Is that true? Are you going to confirm that story?" Kennedy, as I recall, said, "Oh, you know you can't believe everything you read in the newspapers." [Laughter] And he walked back. He didn't give us a chance to ask him more questions. But it turned out it was true.

But these are examples of how we looked at him, and it was always going to be very pleasant with him. There were times when things were sad, for instance, when his father [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.] suffered the stroke. That was really a very.... I think we were in Florida when that happened. But there were wonderful times, too. He would invite us out to the house in Palm Beach for a drink or a cocktail or something like that on an irregular basis. He didn't fall all over us. There was not a lot of that. But he did invite us out from time to time. But he played golf with Bill Lawrence; a fellow for the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* named Alvin Silverman [Alvin Michaels Silverman] was another golfing partner. And they would get a lot of insights, I'm sure, that they didn't print.

There was a magic about Kennedy, mainly because he was young, the youngest president ever elected, and seemed to be on top of it. After the election, after the

November vote, then he started conducting meetings in Palm Beach, where he invited Joint Chiefs of Staff and people to come down from Washington to talk about budget and that sort of thing.

There is a story that Johnson, Lyndon Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson], in his inimitable style told us about how sharp Kennedy was with the budget. And Johnson had no reason to puff him up at this point. But this happened after Johnson was president, he told us this story. That when he was talking about the military and budgets and how you have to be able to understand where they're coming from and understand what their interests are and what their disciplines are, and that sort of thing. Somehow the subject came up about General LeMay [Curtis E. LeMay] and the Air Force, and the difference between the roles that the civilian and the uniformed military play.

Johnson said they were in Palm Beach and they were going over the budget. I think this must have been.... I'm trying to place it. Kennedy must have been president for a while when this came up. Anyway, they were talking.... It must have been the first year because Kennedy was going over the budget, and McNamara [Robert S. McNamara] was there. So he must have had the Cabinet appointed at this point.

Kennedy got into an argument with LeMay on a certain part of the Air Force budget, whether a certain amount of money was earmarked for it. And LeMay carried on about he didn't have enough to do this or that. Johnson said that Kennedy remembered the page and pointed the page out to LeMay. LeMay turned red and so on. Then Johnson said, "Then Kennedy said to me, 'Let's take a swim.' So we jumped into the," they had their bathing suits, I guess, and he said, "We jumped in the pool, and I was at one end of the pool, and Kennedy swam over to me, and he said, 'What'd you think?'" And Johnson said, "Well, I told him he did a great job." He said, "It looked like you had hit LeMay in the face with a sack of shit." [Laughter] Lyndon Johnson's style.

But he did know. He had a way of knowing what was going on. He did do his homework. He had a good mine. And I think the military had respect for the fact that he knew what he was talking about. Surely that showed—that was shown to the military during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

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DAITCH: Yes, I think so. Can I stop you for just.... [Pause] Okay. So back to business. Well, do you want to talk about the Cuban.... Actually, before we get to the Cuban Missile Crisis, let's back up a little bit. I wanted to ask you.... I don't know why, I've always been surprised, maybe surprised isn't the right word, but were you surprised when the first thing that happened practically with Kennedy after he was inaugurated, was the Bay of Pigs? Was that astonishing to you? I mean....

DAVIS: Well, it was. But the genesis to the Bay of Pigs really predated Kennedy. The conception of it was during the Eisenhower Administration. I'm not a student on the Bay of Pigs. But I do know that Kennedy was assured that they could pull it off. This was a plan that had been thought about by the C.I.A. [Central Intelligence Agency] and everybody else, the military, and I think that Kennedy being a military person.... It really turned out to be his baptism by fire, that not everything they say is going to come

true. I think it was a great learning experience for him at great political cost to him. But it was something that had been on the books before he became president. I've got to believe that he was assured it would work. And, you know, the *New York Times* supposedly had the story, and he asked them not to use it. Then later he told James Reston [James B. Reston] or someone at the *New York Times* he wished they had. If they'd used it and broken the story before he did it, they might not have ever done it.

But the Bay of Pigs was a calamity for them. I think that they didn't; the reason.... And they were criticized for it because then they didn't send in the air power that they needed to start bombing people. My guess is that Bobby had a hand in telling his brother, "You're going to kill a lot of civilians if you start to bomb." They were not looking for a wider conflagration. And so they pulled out, and it was a disaster, and people were killed, and the Cuban Americans have been unhappy ever since.

I thought that Kennedy was very shrewd at what he did afterwards, and that is that he went to Camp David, and he had Eisenhower come up to Camp David. There's that famous picture of Eisenhower and Kennedy walking at Camp David. I think it was Kennedy giving General Eisenhower a report on what had happened. But it was also a political move to say this was a joint operation, folks. I don't know whether that was 100 percent the purpose of the meeting, but I think I would've done the same thing, saying, hey, wait a minute. There were some other people involved in this thing. Because it happened shortly after he became.... What a...?

DAITCH: Within a couple of months.

DAVIS: Within a couple of months. It's the same thing.... You saw something like that with Janet Reno and the situation in Waco. The plan for Waco was conceived long before Janet Reno became attorney general. She sat around the room. She's a prosecuting attorney from Florida, and she comes up to Washington, and she's been reading about the F.B.I. [Federal Bureau of Investigation], and all these big muckety-mucks in Washington. They obviously know what they're doing.

They're sitting there at this table saying: You let us handle it. We know how to get these people out of there. We can do it safely. We won't kill anybody, David Koresh

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or whatever his name was, we can handle it. And so she buys it. When you're sitting around a table, and you're fairly new, and you say, well, these guys have been around longer than I have, they must know what they're talking about. So she buys it, and they kill children and that, and she gets blamed for it. To her credit, she took full responsibility, and Kennedy took full responsibility for the Bay of Pigs.

But it was a learning experience for Kennedy. After that, it may have been, in a sense, a contributing factor to the coolness he showed in the Cuban Missile Crisis because then he sat around the table with the same guys again, and he said, "Wait a minute, I've got some questions to ask you fellows." And if you read the transcripts of the 13 days, the so-called famous 13 days, of October '62, you can see that his questions were probing. I mean he was not a patsy in that room. He played a big role in that. I'm sure that what.... Look, I think

there's probably nothing like having your brother in the room with you as someone.... If you want to totally trust an official in the government and he's your brother, you can't do better than that.

DAITCH: Right.

DAVIS: I think that Bobby was a great support to Kennedy when they sat in those ExComm [The Executive Committee of the National Security Council] meetings talking about the Cuban Missile Crisis. So in a sense the Bay of Pigs was his baptism by fire. He learned a lot after that, and he demonstrated he learned a lot when he went into the Cuban Missile Crisis. I've often said—I've looked at the thing because I was a pool reporter in the room when Kennedy made the blockade speech. So I had a particular interest in the Cuban Missile Crisis. When I lecture, I talk about.... You talk about courage and coolness under fire. If you go back and look at that period from I think it was October 15th through the 28th, here's a guy that there's no briefing book. It's all off the cuff. You're sitting there one on one with McNamara and Maxwell Taylor [Maxwell D. Taylor]—he had the greatest respect for Maxwell Taylor—Dean Rusk, all of these people sitting around the table.

If you look at the exact transcript of what Kennedy said during that whole period, it's brilliant. And what he was thinking.... And then what do you do after you do this? And then what do you do? And what does Khrushchev do? And the probing mind that he had in asking these questions. You know, there are not many.... I can look back over my experience covering presidents, including the President [George W. Bush] today, and I wonder whether some of them could have been as sharp in those questions.

I don't mean to put Kennedy up on a pedestal. I don't mean to do that at all. I certainly didn't feel that way when he was president. But looking back and reading history and reading some of the transcripts.... I always had confidence that he was a pretty sharp guy. But looking back at that period and what he went through and the testing of him by Khrushchev was severe. I mean the stakes then were big, big-time. They had thousands of nuclear weapons, not one or two. And they had the delivery systems.

But those 13 days were a textbook case of how a president ought to behave, really, in the questions he asked these people, including LeMay, who wanted to go and bomb. I would think that the Bay of Pigs was a leveling experience for Kennedy. So he

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didn't do it. He did it without bloodshed really. No, I think every student of history in America ought to read those transcripts. They're exciting reading.

DAITCH: They are.

DAVIS: They really are. They're vivid. I hope.... My children were, one of them wasn't born yet and the other one was six months old when it happened, but I would hope that someday he'll go and read those transcripts to see what that period was like. Most people today don't understand how close we came to nuclear war. I

was at the White House. We called it Ground Zero. I had this son [Larry Davis] who in 1962 he was six months old.

But I remember calling Barbara and telling her—we're from Ohio, and we lived about ten miles from here close to the 270 which goes up to Pennsylvania. And I told her that if I called her from the White House.... I was going to the White House every day then as a White House correspondent; I had a little desk and cubicle there. I said, "If I call you and tell you that it's bad, you get in the car, put Larry in the car, and his bottle...." We bought bottled water from a dairy, a local dairy sold sterilized water in case there was a bombing. And we had bought five-gallon containers of water, and I said, "There's a container that's right near the carport. Put it in the car, and you get in the car, and you drive to Ohio. Just don't ask any questions. Just go if I call you."

It later turns out, I spoke at the JFK Library in October with Bob Pierpoint [Robert C. Pierpoint] of CBS, and he gave his wife [Patricia Adams Pierpont] the same instructions, although he had done one better than I did. He and his wife had picked the spot in West Virginia in the mountains where they were going to rendezvous. She was to go there, and he was to rendezvous with her. We came that close.

One of my friends at CBS, it was either Bob or George Herman [George E. Herman], was selected to go with the President if there was an evacuation. They were going to evacuate the President to a place in Virginia. It was one of the secret places where the President would go in case of a nuclear attack. It's since been made public so it's not secret anymore. It's called Mount Weather. I've been there. There's a little booth in there for a broadcaster. It would be radio. No television at that time. Well, there was television, but they weren't equipped for it. Where they would use a familiar network voice to broadcast to the American people what the President was doing, what the President was saying, to keep the American people informed. One of the CBS correspondents, it's a rotation, so it changed every month but it was CBS's turn that October in '62, and this reporter had to bring his little flight bag with him every day in case they were going to evacuate Kennedy and take him to Mount Weather. So we came that close to war. And I felt it then, and so did Pierpoint, who was one of the CBS correspondents. The other one was George Herman. And I was in the room.... The President had gone to Chicago, as you know. He went to Ohio and then to Illinois on a campaign trip, make a speech. It was on a Saturday morning, Kennedy left on Friday; Saturday would have been the 20th of October because I know his missile speech was on the 22nd, which was a Monday. Kennedy left on Friday, he went to Ohio and then Illinois. Then on Saturday morning Salinger [Pierre E. G. Salinger] summoned the reporters to tell them the President had a bad cold and they were going back to

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Washington. Of course by then they knew. They had pictures, satellite pictures, that there were missiles in Cuba.

And it's really interesting. A friend of mine, Warren Rogers [Warren J. Rogers, Jr.], who was with the *New York Herald Tribune*. Warren was really wired to the Pentagon. He heard about this thing and actually he did print the story in the paper before Kennedy announced the missiles were in Cuba. The White House did ask reporters who knew not to print the story. But they missed Warren.

DAITCH: Oh, okay. And he knew before he was in Chicago?

DAVIS: Warren Rogers learned over the weekend on the Sunday.

DAITCH: And you guys knew, the press pool?

DAVIS: I didn't know, no. There were some reporters.... The *Washington Post* started getting on the story over that weekend that there were some missiles in Cuba or something was going on in Cuba. Warren Rogers was the reporter who.... He was not asked not to use the story, so he did use the story on the Monday morning in the Monday morning *Herald Tribune*. It was the *Herald Tribune*. I guess he was the one that told me the story that.... This is a very funny story. The Press Club bar is a gathering place for reporters in town. Reporters had a reputation for enjoying the grape, as you might want to call it. Drinking around the Press Club bar before you went and wrote your story made for a better story by the time you'd finished. But Warren, apparently, came back from somewhere where he'd been briefed on something, and went to the Press Club bar, and talked to the bartender. I'm sorry; this is after he had put it in the *New York Herald Tribune*.

This was after the 22nd, after Kennedy announced there were missiles in Cuba, that Warren had covered something. I think he'd talked to Kennedy or talked to someone at the White House. Came back to the bar that night and told the bartender.... Oh, I know what it was. I remember now. He had been to the White House, been to the Pentagon, and they were getting ready to name a pool of reporters to go to Miami or go to Florida to cover the troops. This is after Kennedy announced the missile crisis. Warren was selected to be one of the pool reporters that would go with the Marines or the Army to South Florida and be one of the.... If we were going to invade, he'd be one of the invasion reporters.

So he gets to the Press Club bar, and he tells his buddy the bartender, "I need some money, and I'm waiting for my boss..."—his boss's name was Bob Donovan [Robert J. Donovan]; he was one of the great reporters were in town—"...to come in here because I need some money. I've got to get to Florida tonight." His boss shows up. He says, "How much do you need?" And Warren says, "I need \$400 to get to Florida and so I have enough money for some spending money." The bartender overhears all of this. Down at the end of the bar there are two T.A.S. [Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union, TASS] reporters; there were two Russians. And as you may know, the T.A.S. reporters were all K.G.B.

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DAITCH: Sure.

DAVIS: They were all spies. So after Warren left and Bob Donovan left the bar, the bartender went down.... The bartender was, I think, he's Ukrainian or Lithuanian. He hated the Russians. So he walked down to the end of the bar, and he said to the two Russians: "Our President is going to kick your ass." [Laughter] And they said, "What do you mean?" He said, "I just mean what I said. I just heard that we're going to kick your ass." So the two Russians left the bar. The next day the Soviet Embassy

was trying to arrange meetings with some of the reporters here in town. And one of them they arranged a meeting with was John Scali [John A. Scali] of ABC News. The Russians started feeling out reporters on what Kennedy's plans were, on the basis of that little tidbit at the Press Club.

But to go back after Chicago. They put out the story, the phony story that Kennedy had a cold. In order to make the story look kosher, when Kennedy came back from Chicago, they had him wear a fedora. He never wore a hat. And if any of us had been smart enough.... We didn't know on that Saturday before he made that speech that there were missiles in Cuba. We didn't know.

But when he came back that Saturday morning from Chicago, if we'd seen him wearing a fedora, someone would have said there's something funny here. Because he refused even in the campaign; when they tried to put hats on him, he refused. When Johnson tried to get him to wear a ten-gallon hat, you know, in Texas, and he said, "Lyndon, that's ridiculous, something like that!" This was the week that he was killed, you know, he got the ten-gallon hat and he just carried it. He didn't put it on.

But anyway, the story of the cold was a phony. As I said, I was green to Washington to some extent. I'd been in town now two years. So I was surprised when Salinger picked me as one of the pool reporters to be in the Oval Office when the President made his speech, at I think it was seven p.m., I thought what an honor, you know. I'm going to be in the room when he makes this big speech tonight on this crisis we've got. We weren't sure exactly what it was. You know a lot of us thought it was Berlin. We didn't think it was Cuba.

I remember being in the room when he walked in, and there was no teleprompter. He had a sheaf of papers in his hand, and those papers were quivering in his hand. I thought to myself at the time, he's really nervous. But I have to tell you that when the red light came on on the camera, he was as cool as a cucumber when he started to read that script. I mean it was tough, and he didn't wince at all. He just, "Mr. Khrushchev, you get those things out of there, and no monkey business." It was very interesting. I raced out after. I took notes on what he looked like and all of that. I raced out into the briefing room where the reporters usually wait for the pool report, because you can't take all the reporters in the Oval Office. They took two or three of us. I was standing on the right side behind the cameras. As you faced the President, I was on his left in the Oval Office behind the cameras.

I raced out after the speech to brief all the other guys, and there was no one there. Then I suddenly realized why Pierre picked me to do this pool, because there wasn't going to be anybody to give a pool report to. All of the reporters went to their offices to

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watch the speech in their offices because they wanted to be right at their typewriters so they could file the story immediately, and they took it off television.

So it was not a great, to the seasoned reporters, this was not a place they necessarily wanted to be that night. They wanted to be in their offices. So now I figured out what that big honor was.

DAITCH: But, you know, you saw something that they didn't see.

DAVIS: Yes, I did. Yes, absolutely. In hindsight, looking back, you know, yes.

DAITCH: I can't imagine how it would have sunk in. I mean could you feel your heart beat faster?

DAVIS: Oh, yes.

DAITCH: Did it take a few minutes to sink in, what he was saying?

DAVIS: Oh, sure. Yes, yes. I mean he was saying there's a blockade. Oh, it did, indeed, you know. We were more frightened then than we were before because now we knew what it was, and we knew that, we could face nuclear war if Khrushchev was going to be as reckless as he was. The fact is that apparently he went nuts over there when Kennedy made the blockade speech. "What have I done?" I think that he had grave second thoughts.

First of all, I did not go to Vienna when Kennedy went to Vienna. But I do know that it was a sobering experience for him when he met Khrushchev and he saw that Khrushchev thought... Khrushchev really thought he was a pushover. Khrushchev thought he could do this to him, and he got an awakening on that October 22, '62 when Kennedy made the speech. He said, "Who's this guy I'm dealing with?" And of course they made the deal to get the missiles out of Cuba.

Then we eventually took missiles out of Turkey. The fact is, as we were told then, the missiles in Turkey were a good poker card, but they weren't worth much. They were liquid fuel. They were leaking. They were toxic at the time. They were worthless to us. They were going to come out anyway. But it was a great poker game, and Khrushchev had a greater admiration and respect for Kennedy after that. But I don't think any president has faced that kind of a situation since.

[ASIDE CONVERSATION]

DAITCH: I don't know why, but I'm fascinated with that moment in history. Well, sure I know why. It was an incredibly tense moment.

DAVIS: Oh, it was. Well, I remember going back from the White House that night to the office on K Street to tell everybody what it was like over there. And we carried the speech live. Of course everybody did. My boss built a bomb shelter in Bethesda.

DAITCH: Really?

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DAVIS: Yes. He went home that night, and they decided to build a bomb shelter. So it was a very real thing. That's why I would love for my sons to know how

really close we came, and how it was averted by sensible people. And you have to say that Khrushchev had more sense than his, [than] whoever convinced him to put the missiles in there. The fact that Kennedy was lied to by Gromyko [Andrei Andreevich Gromyko], right there in the Oval Office a few days before Gromyko said there were no missiles in Cuba. Yes, there's a similar situation with Iraq today, to some extent. I don't think it's quite the same.

But, no, it was very real. I don't think Kennedy was given enough credit for that. When you think of what happened just a year later in '63 in Dallas, they're calling Kennedy an appeaser, you know. Signs were saying.... When we came into Dallas with Kennedy.... Well, I think it was Houston the day before. I remember there was an airplane flying over the motorcade in Houston trailing one of those banners, those signs they carry behind these airplanes. It said: "Coexistence is surrender." You know, they never gave him the credit that he deserved for it. I don't think he could have ever won them over. They might have been happier—some of them would have been happier if we'd launched a few missiles against the U.S.S.R.

DAITCH: That's crazy.

DAVIS: But, no, I think that the one thing that will live forever in Kennedy's history, the history of the Kennedy Administration, is how he handled that. That's why those 13 days are so important. I think every college student reading history should read that for how good it was and the way he handled it diplomatically. It wasn't an immediate conclusion either. It took time to win everybody over. They were meeting over it almost every day, sometimes twice a day, and then on the phone. And he was up against some of the most experienced foreign policy people in the country.

DAITCH: Absolutely. One of the things that has struck me over and over when I review that material is Kennedy's mastery of history. I think he took a broader perspective than a lot of his contemporaries. I was told or read once that he was very taken with Barbara Tuchman's [Barbara W. Tuchman] book, *The Guns of August*. You can see why that would have influenced him. He was so determined not to have another major world war over some miscalculation, or some misunderstanding, or some accidental thing, incident.

DAVIS: Well, he did know history. He would quote—I wish I could remember the quote—he would quote Bismarck [Otto Edward Leopold von Bismarck]. There was a quote on Bismarck about young people, I think. For those who didn't understand history, they'll live to regret it, or something, words to that effect. But he was full of quotes, he was full of that sort of thing off the cuff. He could do that. He had a good mind for that sort of thing. He interlaced a lot of his speeches with his knowledge of history. Well, he was very well read, as far as I could tell, and apparently he was a pretty good student at Harvard.

DAITCH: But he absorbed it, it seems to me. I mean a lot of people.... It's easy to read these things and then regurgitate it from a speech or something. But it seems to me that more than the average person he absorbed the lessons for a leader.

DAVIS: Yes. Well, and I think he used it, he used everything to his advantage, too. He used these things in his speeches and his talks. He knew that was important. The thing is he didn't.... The small things never bothered him because he had the big picture. I think that's what was interesting about Kennedy. He could take the abuse and the criticism. He knew what was a passing thing, he knew what was permanent, it struck me. And that was his strength. He was able to see around corners, and that's important, certainly in a president.

And he was not doing that well, really, at the point of his assassination. Things were not going terrifically well. Texas was going to be a problem. He could have been tougher, stronger on civil rights. It was not an easy time to be so. I wasn't personally disappointed, but I was a little surprised that he didn't go over to the Lincoln Memorial when Martin Luther King [Martin Luther King, Jr.] made the great speech. I think, looking back, he probably regretted it, too, because it was a success. They were afraid it was going to turn into a disaster of rioting and that sort of thing, and that never happened. But the fact is that the black leaders came to the White House through the back door instead of the front door that day, because Kennedy's people were scared there was going to be an inferno of some kind. It was too volatile. But I would have hoped that he'd have gone to the Lincoln Memorial that day. But he didn't, probably on the advice of the political side saying it's too dangerous for you to go there.

But things in the South were not terrifically well. He was on the side of civil rights. There was no question about where he stood. And I think if Kennedy had lived, we would have pushed some of the social welfare programs that later came to pass. He may not have been able to do it as easily as Johnson because Johnson was a Southerner. The civil rights thing didn't come easy to Johnson either. As a matter of fact, if you look back today, you can see how much the Democratic Party has suffered because of what Johnson did. He himself said, "We lost the South" the day he signed the Voting Rights Bill.

But there was a lot of courage in what Kennedy did, his behavior with the Congress sort of thing. He was under tremendous pressure from the Republicans. You had the Ev and Charlie Show, which was Everett Dirksen [Everett M. Dirksen] and Charlie Halleck [Charles A. Halleck]. After Kennedy held a news conference, they would hold, the Republicans, held a news conference and they would put down whatever he said. It became known as the Ev and Charlie Show. You don't have so much of that today. If you do today, you don't hear anything from the Democrats. Of course you have a president, George W. Bush, who doesn't hold news conferences.

DAITCH: Right.

DAVIS: Public news conferences, televised news conferences. But that's another thing that Kennedy did, and that was to televise.... He was not the first to

hold a televised live news conference, Eisenhower had held one in '56. But Kennedy did regularize them, and he held them at the State Department, and they were really great thrills to go to a Kennedy news conference. Every reporter in town wanted to go, and there wasn't a place in the White House or EOB, Executive Office Building, to hold it. So he held them at the State Department auditorium where you could seat 400 people, 300 or 400.

DAITCH: Oh, really! Could anybody go, or was it sort of by invitation?

DAVIS: Well, you had to have credentials, you had to have press credentials, to get in. Not necessarily a White House pass, but you had to have a.... Maybe you had to have a White House pass. I'm not sure. But you had a credential to get in, and then we had what you call a lot of ringers. These are people who are, they're reporters but they're kind of part time, or their husband's a reporter or the wife's a reporter, and they got a pass some way. So you had a lot of people who came as spectators just to watch because they were wonderful.

DAITCH: Yes. Oh, I've seen them on film.

DAVIS: And they held them at ten o'clock in the morning. I think he held some in the afternoon, but primarily like ten. And it changed Washington to a great extent. Whereas news conferences were rather dull, and they weren't carried live—as I said, Eisenhower held the first one in '56—and that was a big news story. We were in San Francisco at the convention, Republican Convention, and Eisenhower had decided to keep Nixon on the ticket. So they decided to make an announcement. The networks probably had their cameras there, so they just carried it live.

But then Kennedy regularized it when he came in, and everybody said, well, you can't really, you've got to be careful if you're the president and you're going to go on live television. If you make a mistake and the Russians hear it, they might send the rockets over here if you screw up.

Because Truman once goofed at a news conference. Truman once indicated he would use atomic weapons in Korea, and our allies overseas went crazy. They went insane. And rockets flew all over. I mean missiles, messages, not real rockets. Messages back and forth, are rocketing back and forth between London and Brussels and Paris and Washington saying, What the hell are you doing? And Truman had to back off. He didn't really mean it. And then Eisenhower, in the early days of his administration, his news conferences, the transcripts were not cleared for direct quotation until well after the news conference because of his syntax problem.

DAITCH: Oh, really!

DAVIS: So Jim Hagerty [James C. Hagerty], his press secretary, would then read the transcript, or read the news conference, and then clear it for direct quotation sometime later in the day, and they'd make some corrections in it. With Kennedy going live, a lot of people were worrying, what if he makes a mistake? There's

no way to recall it. He's already out there. But he handled it well, and they knew he could handle it well. And I'm sure that some of the questions in the audience that he knocked clear out of the ballpark were probably planted questions, where he knew they were coming, and he already had the answer. I think Pierre Salinger was probably guilty of doing that. I'm not sure he's the first one that ever did. But they were real shows in the way Kennedy disarmed people with an aw-shucks answer to something, where he might have been on the spot. It's like, I think I told you the story about, I think it was G. Mennen Williams who, Undersecretary of State for Africa [State Department, Undersecretary of State for African Affairs], had said, "Africa is for Africans," and it raised a lot of hell at this country for some reason. "What does he mean by that? And there are white people in Africa." Whatever. I don't know what, looking back. But when Kennedy was asked about it at a news conference, it was on the front pages of everywhere, and Kennedy said, "Well, if Africa's not for Africans, who is it for?"

DAITCH: Right. Exactly.

DAVIS: It worked out. He had a way of disarming adversaries with words, doing that.

[END TAPE 1, SIDE 2; BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 1]

DAITCH: ...just charm or whatever. I mean these tapes are 40 years old, and watching him on tape, he's incredibly charismatic. I mean just smart and funny, easy, at ease with what he's doing.

DAVIS: Well, he was good. There was a reasonable amount of humor in his news conferences, too, which made them great television. The fact that you're watching the president of the United States with his hand sometimes in his suit pocket, and the gestures, the choppy gesture, and his speaking style was, I don't know how refined it was or how much he practiced it, but it was interesting. His command of the language was good. And he could put down a reporter if he had to. Sarah McClendon, the woman who worked for several newspapers in Texas and became kind of a character at news conferences, I remember once she got up, and she asked about two men at the State Department whom she described as security risks. I'm trying to remember whether she mentioned their names, I believe she did, at the news conference, which was live television. It was the only time that I saw Kennedy bristle. And sternly Kennedy said, "Miss McClendon, you do a great disservice to two people who are dedicated public servants." I mean that really hit hard. He was prepared for the question, probably knew who would ask the question, but he didn't hesitate making a point like that if he had to.

But as I said, he used those news conferences to great advantage because he knew he was good at it. And the fact is that a president's in great command anyway. He can slough off a question, he can not answer, he can play games with you. He chose to answer most of the questions because he knew the answers to most of them. But he was disarming, at least to the press corps.

The print reporters were suspicious of live television. Television was now encroaching on their world. We were changing their lives. They were the top dogs in Washington, they were the stars, the *Times*, the *Post*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *L.A. Times*, the *New York Herald Tribune*. These were the guys who were the premier reporters at the time, and then suddenly you have these television people intruding on them and the President playing to that, the President playing more to television than to the newspapers. So they were sort of left out to some extent.

Then the newspaper readers started to realize the power of this thing. When they walked down the street after a presidential news conference or two, and people started to say, "Did I see you on television?" They started recognizing that this was something to contend with. So they started going to the barbershop and getting haircuts and buying better clothes to look good on television. I remember two or three of them that actually became fashion plates because they were getting dressed up for the news conference. Before that they didn't care what they wore.

They were very interesting in the transition to television, which then became a fundamental part of American politics, you know. It changed the rules, a primary change in how we campaign. It's a primacy of personality over issues. And I think Kennedy recognized that and knew he was good at it. I think he took advantage of it wherever he could.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. But he was strong on issues, too.

DAVIS: Oh, he was. No, that's right. He backed it up. No, he did. He was very good at it. He didn't have to hide behind any subterfuge because he could answer the questions pretty well. I think that if he'd run in '64, I don't think he would have been defeated. I think he'd have been all right because the Missile Crisis was behind him, and he had a good record on that. And I think he could have used television to greater advantage than he used it in '60. And if Goldwater were his opponent, it would have been a no-brainer to me on how that would have played out with television becoming more dominant, which it was. In 1964 it started to take a commanding lead in where the candidates were putting their speeches and stuff.

But the news conference was a great institution, and sadly, with the current president, George W. Bush, and with the attitude of the networks now, they're not necessarily happy to give the prime time. In my experience as bureau chief at NBC News, we wanted to hold news conferences. We would encourage Reagan [Ronald Reagan] and all the others to do news conferences. And that isn't the case today. Now the networks ask, "Are you going to make any news?" Which would have been an outrage. I never would have dreamed of asking the White House if the president's going to make news at his news conference. We would just say, "Come on ahead. Here's our air time. Please do."

DAITCH: Of course.

DAVIS: The situation has changed greatly.

DAITCH: It's a shame.

DAVIS: It is. Oh, I think it's a crime. As I speak to you on February 10th, 2003, our current president's been in office over two years, and he's held seven formal news conferences. Only seven. Only one of them in prime time television.

DAITCH: Right. Yes. I think it suggests something that.... We won't bore people with this. But it does suggest something about...

DAVIS: We'll its changed. But the Kennedy news conferences were an event in town, you looked forward to them. He may not have always looked forward to it, I mean Laos and tough, we were getting into Vietnam, those were tough questions on Laos. He used visuals for the first time, on Laos. I remember the charts on the stage where he tried to explain where Laos and Vietnam were. I vaguely remember that, where he used show-and-tell things to try to explain the situation. A lot of the questions that he had, that he was asked, derived from the Ev and Charlie Show, where reporters would go to see Ev and Charlie. Then they would come down, and the next day or whatever they would go to a Kennedy news conference, well, "Ev and Charlie say this.... Congressman Halleck and Senator Dirksen are saying this. What do you have to say about this?" So it became a battle of mimeograph machines to some extent, back and forth, which I thought was pretty healthy. I thought it was good. We don't seem to have that today, don't have that relationship today.

DAITCH: Well, and it's a means to educate the public, which is something again that's not happening today. But people could see, if they chose to watch, they could see what the issues were, they could see what both sides of the issues were, and they could learn. I mean you can see a map of Laos and the president of the United States trying to show you where this is and why it's important to the United States' interests or that sort of thing.

DAVIS: Yes. I want to skip back for a second. I just thought of one other thing, and that was the election of '60. I was in Hyannis on Election Day and night. The only thing I wanted to point out about it was that the closeness of the Kennedy clan the family and the involvement of the family in this thing, the Kennedy compound, this was the father, Joe's house. I think that that's where the compound was. But I think it was also Jack's house, I'm not sure, at the time.

But they had set up a command center in there where they had telephones and people manning the telephones upstairs to key precincts around the country. Polling, samplings, and exit polling was not something that had come of age yet. As a matter of fact, I don't think they did any exit polling to speak of. So the political operators for both

campaigns had key precincts that they watched, and the key precincts will tell you how it voted before and how it might vote today. They were always very solid. A key precinct is one you could always count on. And if you called your key precincts around the country and they were going against you, you knew you were in trouble. So they had people manning these telephones.

Election night we were at the armory—I think we were at the armory in Hyannis, where they put the press. Then Kennedy came down at some point early in the morning. But Nixon had not conceded. Nixon wanted to—it was so close that Nixon wanted to wait for more results. Nixon conceded about mid-morning the day after the election, as I recall.

We were invited to the Kennedy compound the morning after, or the day after. Maybe it wasn't morning. It was the day after. And I remember all of the Kennedy sisters and sisters-in-law, whatever they were, sitting.... They were not allowed to come downstairs while Kennedy held his news conference in the, I guess it was the living room or family room on the first floor.

But the stairs were filled with all the Kennedys: Eunice [Eunice Kennedy Shriver] and Jean Smith [Jean Kennedy Smith] and all the Kennedy girls, and Ethel [Ethel Skakel Kennedy], the daughters-in-law of Joe Kennedy, sitting on these stairs. And while we were asking Kennedy questions, the women were throwing suggestions as well from the stairs. Well, tell them about this. Well, tell them about that. And he was talking about the peanut gallery sitting up there getting involved in the thing. But it was kind of an interesting family night. Ethel was the most mischievous.

DAITCH: Really!

DAVIS: Yes. She was the one who was really, she was really outspoken, and she was leading the pack; Eunice and Ethel were leading the pack up there, shouting the questions during this news conference. Of course they were elated because they had it in their hands, and Nixon conceded. But I remember that as one of the nice moments of the period for the Kennedys. Then, of course, there were some tough periods for them too. Legislatively, he was not doing that well. And, as I said, I was disappointed that.... He was not wishy-washy on civil rights. But he was concerned about being too strong on the thing because he didn't have all the support of the white folk in this country, [they] were not 100 percent in favor of civil rights, not now and not then. But less than now. So I think that he should have gone over there for that, and it was rather interesting that he didn't.

DAITCH: Sure. Apparently this was one of the problems, that he didn't have the legislative support. He didn't have the support in Congress.

DAVIS: No, he didn't.

DAITCH: He didn't feel like sticking his neck out over something that he couldn't have accomplished anyway, even if he'd wanted to.

DAVIS: Yes, that's right. No, he didn't do it at that point. They were very sensitive, Bobby and Jack were very sensitive about that. But then, you know, Bobby changed 180 degrees by 1968 when he ran. He became a devout supporter of civil rights. Today he's revered in the black community for that. He was one of the President's advisors back in '62.

DAITCH: And he was advising caution certainly. It's interesting how those things played out. And you have to wonder. I mean certainly I think both of them were sincere about it.

DAVIS: Absolutely. There was no question about it. No, there was no question about where he stood. It just politically, they were better judges politically about how they were going to do in '64. He saw the problems. He went to Texas because that was going to be a problem for him even with Lyndon on the ticket. But the South, the Democrats in the South, were just not going to be willing to go with it. If you look at what's happened, history proves that they were probably right. The Democrats all became Republicans.

When I hear Republicans today say, "Well, Johnson couldn't have gotten the Civil Rights Bill through if it wasn't for the Republicans in '64, '65, for the Voting Rights Bill of '65 and the previous one in '64," the fact is that those Republicans wouldn't be Republicans today. Jacob Javits [Jacob K. Javits] and those people would not be Republicans, Rockefeller [Nelson A. Rockefeller]. Those people would be Democrats.

DAITCH: Right.

DAVIS: They would not be. So it's a specious argument really. Those are Democrats he couldn't carry, Congressman Mendel Rivers [Lucius Mendel Rivers] of South Carolina and some of the greatest racists of our time in the Congress at the time. It was tough. Some of them were wonderful statesmen in a sense in terms of defense and loving the country, good legislators. There were many of them who were not great libertarians on civil rights who were good senators. But it would have been political suicide for them to vote for a civil rights bill, Richard Russell [Richard B. Russell, Jr.] of Georgia and, I think, Sam Ervin [Sam J. Ervin, Jr.] was one of them, all these great, wonderful Democrats that could not vote for civil rights because it would have been the end of them. So they had a serious problem.

DAITCH: Sure. And, you know, they grew up in a different time, too. And so who knows what that....

DAVIS: Do you want to talk about the assassination day at all?

DAITCH: I do. Absolutely.

DAVIS: Okay.

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DAITCH: These other stories are wonderful. Let's go ahead and talk about that as long as you're bringing it up. And then if there's anything else....

DAVIS: Okay. I'm not being chronological. I'm sorry about that.

DAITCH: That's okay.

DAVIS: Is that a problem for the person who does the notes or keeping it in chronological order?

DAITCH: No. I don't think so. I think that we get better stories and more sometimes things that just come to mind.

DAVIS: Well, the reason why the assassination, I'm trying to give you insights that you might not.... I'm sure you've interviewed or someone has interviewed people who were on the airplane when Johnson took the oath. I have no idea.

But I was on.... In going to Texas it was fraught with all kinds of dangers, we thought, because of some things that had happened in Texas prior to his coming there. The story of Adlai Stevenson was hit on the head by a placard, and Lyndon Johnson and his wife [Claudia Alta "Lady Bird" Johnson] were spat on in a hotel lobby by some people who thought they were soft on communism or not conservative enough, and so on. So there was some concern about going to Texas.

We went to San Antonio first, and then we went to Houston, and the crowds were warm and wonderful in both places. Kennedy met with the Spanish community at LULAC [League of United Latin American Citizens], I think it's called. It's an acronym for a Spanish group. So when we got to.... But there were some signs of a conservative element not liking him. "Coexistence is surrender!" as I think I pointed out was carried by an airplane. There were some signs, anti-Kennedy signs in the crowd.

I remember flying into.... I was a pool reporter on Air Force One going into Fort Worth the night before the assassination. I remember we were just about to land, and Dr. Burkley [George G. Burkley], Admiral Burkley, who was the President's physician, was sitting across from the press table. The press table was slightly forward of amidships. It was about almost the middle of the airplane but not quite the middle going to the back of the airplane. There was a row of seats for staff across from us. The press table was a table with two seats on either side on the right side of the aircraft as you face the front of the airplane. On the left side we had a row of seats and Admiral Burkley was sitting just across from us.

Just before landing, Dave Powers [David F. Powers] came up to Dr. Burkley and whispered something into his ear. And Burkley got out his medical bag and got some pills. He gave Dave Powers a little bag full of pills to take back. And we were assuming the President needed some medication of some kind. He took it back there. Smitty said, "How's

it going tonight?” And Dave Powers said, “Great.” Meaning they had a great day in Houston and the day before.

We landed in Fort Worth, and of course Kennedy was supposed to speak to a breakfast group. There was a group of people outside the hotel. He was supposed to

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Speak to two groups, and there was a big crowd gathered outside the hotel. He went out and talked to them. I forget what time, it might have been eight or nine o'clock, he came out and talked to them.

But Jackie wasn't there and he said something about it takes Jackie a little longer, but she looks better than all of us once she gets here. And the crowd went into a big roar. But he said, “No one cares what Lyndon and I are wearing.” Something like that. Made some jokes about it. But it was a very jovial, upbeat thing. The presidential party was not concerned one whit about anything but having been through San Antonio and all of that where the crowds were very good, big, warm.

Then we flew to Dallas. The story is I was on press bus #1, about ten car lengths behind the presidential limousine. We were approaching Elm and Houston Streets when we heard the shots. The first shot, I wasn't sure what it was. But Bob Pierpoint was on the bus—he was a CBS correspondent—and he said, “That's a shot.” Or “Somebody's taken a shot.” And we looked up ahead, and we saw the presidential limousine just dart forward, just take off. And I can see a pink blur on the car, and that was Jackie standing up, stunned by what had happened. Then, you know, she tried to get out of the limousine. She didn't know what to do, and she was trying to get out. She was pushed back in by Secret Service Agent Clint Hill [Clinton J. Hill].

We asked the bus driver to speed up so we could follow the limo, and we couldn't get.... The bus just was one of those city buses that doesn't move as fast as a car could move. So the bus took us to Parkland Hospital. By that time I was convinced it was shots. I had actually heard what I thought were three, and Pierpoint said there were three.

I got to the TradeMart where the President was going to speak. The bus driver didn't know where to go. All he knew was that the speech was at the TradeMart. We didn't know where the presidential limousine went. But when we got to the TradeMart, the presidential car wasn't there. That was the first I suspected that something really bad had happened. I didn't see anything.

So we went into the hall. We thought maybe they'd pulled around the other entrance. Went into the hall, and there were two or three thousand people, I think, sitting in there at tables, prison-style, facing each other at these tables, having lunch. There were 20 or 30 of us just raced in there and raced out into the hall, asking people, “Where's the press room? Where's the press room?” No one could tell us. It was upstairs.

When we got upstairs, it's a cavernous building, got upstairs into the press area, and I got to a phone, and I called Washington, and they'd already had the flash on the wire from Merriman Smith who was in the pool car saying that shots were fired into the motorcade. Didn't say at that point that he was hit. Just said: “Flash! Shots fired into the motorcade.” A flash is the most important thing you can put on a wire. It's more important than a bulletin. You don't use a flash unless it's really important.

So the office in Washington told me they had that. I gave what I had, that I heard the shots. I filed the story immediately. And I said, "I've got to get out of here and get to wherever they've taken him." My notes say somebody told me Parkland Hospital. I ran outside and tried to flag down a car, and I did get a car. A guy stopped for me, been listening to the radio, and he stopped for me, a black gentleman. He put me in the back seat of his car, a Cadillac, and he said, "Let's go!" So we raced....

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DAITCH: Really! Just a stranger who had nothing to do with anybody?

DAVIS: A stranger, yes. He said, "Let's go!" Oh, I found everybody to be just very cooperative and helpful. I said, "You know where Parkland Hospital is?" He said, "Yes, I do. I'll take you there." We crossed some railroad tracks, as I remember. We crossed the railroad tracks, and he was doing about 70 or 80 miles an hour. I said, "We're not going to get there if you go this way because we're just going too fast." I said, "Slow down a little bit." He said, "Okay." So he got me there, I thanked him, got out of the car.

I went in through the emergency room entrance. I saw the limousine sitting outside; I looked in the back and I could see blood on the seat, but I didn't tarry. I didn't stay there. I just decided to get inside. The bubble top was not on the car. They put it back on later. You know, the Plexiglas bubble top that Kennedy didn't want it on there because he wanted the crowd to see him and Jackie. And that's true. But we were always under the assumption that that bubble top was bulletproof, and it was not. I learned just in the last few years, listening to the Lyndon Johnson tapes, in a conversation Johnson had with Edgar Hoover [J. Edgar Hoover], several days later Hoover told Johnson that neither the presidential limousine nor the bubble top are bulletproof. And he said to Johnson, "I've got two or three bulletproof limousines. You should use one of them." But we always thought the bubble top was bulletproof Plexiglas.

DAITCH: Did Kennedy know it wasn't?

DAVIS: I don't know.

DAITCH: Even if he did, it wouldn't have made any difference.

DAVIS: But I didn't know that. I didn't know that until almost four years later that it was not. But I went inside. Somehow I got to the second floor, and I commandeered a phone at a nurses' station. I offered to pay the woman if she'd just hold the phone for me while I ran around because phones were at a premium. She said, "Nonsense!" She'd just hold it. So she held the phone for me while I tried to find out information.

There was Jerry terHorst [Jerald H. terHorst] of the *Detroit News*, who later became press secretary to Gerald Ford [Gerald R. Ford], was standing near me. I called the office, by that time we knew the President had been shot, and he was in the hospital. I filed another

story or two. Actually it was a continuous story because they just kept me on the phone doing what I'm doing now, just talking.

After a bit a priest showed up on the second floor near where I was standing. Jerry ran down and said, "There's a priest there. He says he just gave the President the last rites." So I had the nurse hold the phone for me and I ran down. I heard this priest say, "He's dead all right." I didn't want to tell the office that on the air because I know a priest knows if he's dead, but he's not a doctor and it's not official. So I didn't say he's dead. I just said the President was shot, and he's being treated in the hospital. We don't know the extent of his injuries, he's been given the last rites, and that sort of thing.

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Shortly after that, within probably minutes, it would seem like hours, they said there's going to be a statement made by Malcolm Kilduff [Malcom M. Kilduff], associate press secretary, in a nursing station which is just down the hall. So Kilduff came in. I talked to him later, and he told me later that when he had first opened his mouth, nothing came out. He could not get himself to say the President was dead. So then he got it out. He said, "President John F. Kennedy died today in Dallas of a bullet wound in the brain." That's what he said. Then, of course, I couldn't believe it. I just wrote it. It's in my little note pad here, "Bullet wound in the brain." And ran back.... Kilduff said, "I have no further information." I ran back. I got my phone. And thank God I had this wonderful woman there holding that phone for me. They were waiting for me on the line and we put it right on the air. They counted me down to go live and I put it on the air. Then I started to recreate what happened and said we didn't know where Johnson was. We didn't know what they were going to do now, or where Mrs. Kennedy was or any of that.

While I was broadcasting, a White House transportation officer guy, Jiggs [Edwin Fauver] grabbed me and said, "You've got to come with me right now." I said, "I can't come with you. I'm on the air." And he said, "No, you must come with me right now. I haven't got any time to waste. We need a pool, immediately."

So I said to my boss, Jim Snyder, a wonderful bureau chief in Washington, actually my best friend, I said, "I'll call you later. I'll be in touch with you. I'll call you whenever I can. I've got to go. They need a pool for something." I suspected I knew what it was. Fauver grabbed me and took me; I grabbed my typewriter and left with him. On the way we picked up Chuck Roberts [Charles W. Roberts], who had already been contacted by "Jiggs." His name was.... We called him Jiggs Fauver. I think his real name was James Fauver. Roberts was waiting while they grabbed me. They needed a broadcaster. They had a wire service downstairs and they had a magazine. Chuck Roberts was *Newsweek* magazine. They needed me.

So I went with him and went downstairs. There was an Associated Press reporter that was trying to write his story, and they tried to get him. But he was too busy writing. So we left him. Roberts and I went with Fauver, went downstairs through the emergency room. There was a hospital lorry in the hallway with a bunch of sheets on it, and some with blood on it. Now, I don't know whose they were. It could have been Connally [John B. Connally], it could have been the President's, or it could have been somebody else's, you know. But that was an area where there was some commotion going on as we went through there.

They took us out in the back, and the car that we were supposed to go to the airport in had left with Kilduff. The associate press secretary didn't want to wait any longer. So there was another police car sitting there, an unmarked police car, and Fauver said, "Get in that car and go." So we got in this car with this cop. They told him, Fauver told him, to take us to the airport. I guess it was Fauver, sat in the car and said, "Get to the airport as soon as you can."

So we raced to the airport. I had written in my note pad, I had written the telephone number of my office. I had written down on my note pad, "Call Jim Snyder, Washington. Sterling38542." Just call that number. I handed this to the driver, the cop that was driving the car. And I said, "Would you call on your radio? Have your office call this number and say I'm on the way to the airport, and they'll hear from me shortly." He

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said, "We're maintaining radio silence. Like, nothing is being broadcast in Dallas right now. We can't do anything for you right now. Besides that, we don't know whether there's other people involved in this."

So they never did call him. But we raced to the airport; got to the airport. I remember the casket, it was bronze, very heavy, 800 pounds I was told. Air Force One was sitting there. There were three telephones that were placed there for the White House. I did have little time to use the telephone at that point, but I did file a brief story. So I must have gotten back off the airplane. When I saw nothing was going to happen immediately, I got back off then because I called the office and said, "I think they're going to swear the Vice President in on the plane."

Then I went back aboard. I got back into the compartment. This is a gold upholstered room. I'm afraid to give you dimensions. It's probably 10 or 15 feet long; maybe the width of an airplane, 12 feet or something, of a 707. But there were a lot of strange people in there. I knew Albert Thomas, the Congressman from Houston. I knew him. But I didn't know some of these others. One of them was Jack Valenti [Jack J. Valenti], I'd never seen him before. People who were Johnson's friends. They hadn't worked for Johnson, but they were helping with logistics. They were LBJ Texas friends.

The airplane was hot and stuffy. As we walked back there, the shades were drawn. It was humid, sultry. It was probably 90 degrees in there, at least. The President, Johnson, was in there. I saw Johnson. And I saw this woman I'd never seen before in this brown dress with these huge polka dots, enormous white dots. I couldn't figure who she was. And Johnson says, "Is the press here?" And Malcolm Kilduff says, "Yes, they just arrived." Then Johnson says, "Do you want to ask Mrs. Kennedy if she wants to stand with us?"

Mrs. Kennedy was with the casket to the rear of the airplane, a compartment to the rear, which is.... We were in the conference room amidships. Behind that is the presidential quarters. And then behind that there's a row of seats where Secret Service usually sit, near the back door, near the rear door. Two or four seats were removed to accommodate the casket. And Mrs. Kennedy sent word that she wanted to come up for this oath. But she asked for a few minutes to compose herself. That was the word that was used by.... I forget who came up and said she would like to "compose herself."

So Mrs. Kennedy eventually, it was only a matter of minutes, Mrs. Kennedy came into the room. And of course everybody just dropped their mouths. This beautiful woman

wearing this pink, it was a raspberry-colored wool, two-piece suit. I know it was a two-piece suit because I asked one of the women reporters to describe it for me later when I had to write a story. The pillbox hat. I don't think she had the hat on at the time.

When she came into the room, I just gaped at her. It struck me that she was overcome by grief but trying to endure. She was just in a.... She knew what she was doing; she knew where she was; she knew what had happened, but so bewildered. The saddest face I've ever seen and will ever see, standing there. Johnson took her gently by the hand and had her stand to his left and Mrs. Johnson was on his right. Then I realized that this woman in this brown dress with big dots [Sarah T. Hughes] is going to do the oath. She told him to put his hand on what looked to be a Bible.

It turns out, later I found out, it was a Missal, which is different from a Bible. A Catholic Missal is a collection of prayers. Kennedy apparently, apparently he carried

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some on the airplane and gave them as gifts, I'm told. There was a story that went around that the Missal was lost, that someone took it as a souvenir, and it never was returned. The fact is it does exist. It's at the LBJ Library. But she said, "Place your hand on there." Johnson, before he did that, he said, "May I have a glass of ice water?" And someone brought him one of these Air Force One tumblers. They're handsome gold-rimmed glasses that say "Air Force One" on them. We always wanted to steal one of these if we were on the airplane as members of the pool. Johnson had a glass of ice, it was full of ice, I remember. And I remember he just chugalugged it down. He had a way of drinking his soda pop that way. He didn't swallow; he just took in gulps. He took it down, and then she delivered the oath.

I remember I was wearing a chronograph, and I remember hitting the stopwatch on my chronograph to clock the oath. Then she finished the oath. She said, "So help me, God." And he repeated, "So help me, God." And it took 28 seconds to do the oath. Probably two more seconds to say, "So help me, God." Then I heard him say, at one point, "Let's get this plane back to Washington." They were under some pressure to get out of Dallas. They didn't know what was going to happen, if there were conspirators. There's been some dispute over the years as to Johnson's taking the oath in Washington or Johnson staying there to have the oath delivered there in Dallas. The story that I heard was that the President, Johnson, had talked to Bobby, who was at Hickory Hill, and that Bobby told Johnson to take the oath in Dallas. Another Justice Department official also told Johnson to take the oath in Dallas. And that's why.... It was not an interminable wait. You're talking about a matter of minutes anyway, no great delay to have Judge Hughes administer the oath. The words that Roberts and Smith used were, "Let's get airborne." Now I think he said both. I think he said, "Let's get airborne. Let's get this plane back to Washington." After the oath, I remember Johnson kissing Mrs. Johnson and then kissing Mrs. Kennedy. Roberts said later that he embraced Mrs. Kennedy, but he kissed Mrs. Johnson. Little things like that you start to fight over. I wrote in my note pad that the oath was given at two thirty-eight Central Standard Time. The oath was over, and Malcolm Kilduff came to Roberts. He had to talk to me and to Roberts, and he said, "There are only two seats on the airplane for the press. Smitty stays because he's a wire service reporter. You or Roberts has to get off."

He said, "I want you to flip a coin." And I said, "I'm not flipping. I'm getting off. My office is waiting for me to file the story. Roberts doesn't have a deadline 'til tomorrow night and he needs more of the color than I do. I want to file. I'll get off and do the full pool report and I'll file." So I volunteered to get off. I got off the plane with Judge Hughes, the woman who swore the President in. Judge Hughes was in tears as we left the plane.

I got off the plane, and we stood there. I tried to get off the airfield to go back into Dallas to give the pool report. Because the rule is you don't give the pool report—you can't use it yourself until you give a pool report. So I tried to get into Dallas. I couldn't get into Dallas. No one would let me off the field. The cops said I can't go. It's secured. "The field is secured. You cannot go. No one moves off this airfield right now. You just stay right where you are."

DAITCH: Oh, no!

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DAVIS: So I went over to Judge Hughes. I said, "Can you tell me about yourself?" She gave me a brief history. I said, "Can you get me off this field?" So she went over and talked to the sergeant. He wouldn't let me off the field. So I interviewed her, and I found out that she was appointed by John Kennedy to the federal court. She's 67 years old. I'll never forget, we talked and that sort of thing. She was just doing her normal routine that day when they called her and rusher her to the airport. They got her to the airport. She never would have worn that dress, I'm sure, if she'd known she was going to swear in the president.

DAITCH: She of the polka dots.

DAVIS: Yes. But she was a lovely lady, as I recall. I stood there. It was unbelievable that all this had happened. That big beautiful airplane. Jackie had had something to do with the design of it. Before that the airplanes were military looking airplanes with a great big orange nose. They were 707's. This was a brand new airplane that Kennedy had just had delivered. Jackie and Jack had some say-so in the color design. I think it was designed by Raymond Loewy, the guy that did contemporary art deco stuff of the forties period. He designed railroad engines in a streamlined way and all that. I think it's the same guy. I'm not sure.

But just looking at that "United States of America" across the fuselage. I knew the pilot pretty well because I'd flown in it enough. I knew Jim Swindle [James B. Swindal], and he got to know my children eventually, my kids, because we would go to Texas with them. But I knew him as just a ramrod straight, good looking Air Force colonel. He was just a wonderful guy.

I just wondered what it was going to be like, as I stood there, taking that airplane back to Washington with the president of the United States and a fallen president of the United States in the back in a casket. I mean you had to stop and.... Nothing like that had ever happened. It was the first time that we'd ever had a president sworn in with the dead

president right in the same proximity. Usually it's a day later when something like that happens. But just the awesome nature of this whole thing.

It was such a hot, humid day that Swindal turned the plane around, and he went down as far as he could get to the other end of the runway. We were standing near the runway. He took the airplane down. Well, I guess it was an apron of the runway. I remember he took the airplane as far as he could get, and I assumed he was doing this because he wanted.... The casket's an extra load on the airplane, and because of the humidity, to get that thing off the ground in record time.

Years later I realized why he did that. He needed speed, and he wanted to get up as fast as he could, as vertically and fast as he could to get out of sight of any shooting at the airplane. He took it up to 41,000 feet. I learned this later. He went up to 41,000 feet as fast as he could to get up there. I watched it disappear as a speck. I watched the contrails from the engines, four contrails. Actually four engines, the contrails going out the back of that airplane disappearing into a speck in the east. I just thought, you know, the awesome nature of what happened that day.

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But it also crossed my mind the strength of this country. The fact that automatically.... Lyndon Johnson really didn't have to take the oath. He became president the minute that Kennedy's heart stopped beating. But the fact that it all happened in the way it did. Then, of course, I wasn't there for the trip back, but I talked to Chuck Roberts at length about that. He wrote about it, too, you know. Some criticism of Johnson on the airplane going back to Washington. He was boorish and that sort of thing. None of that was true. Absolutely none of that was ever true. I mean if I had to pick a time when he had his most shining hour that would have been it—his behavior that day and the next 24, 48, 72, whatever hours it was, his behavior in pulling the country together. He was gracious to Mrs. Kennedy. He kept the Kennedy staff. He took command with resolve and compassion.

I got back to Washington—I went back on the press plane that night. The body had been taken.... Jackie went to Bethesda Naval Hospital where the autopsy was done. You know there was some dispute in Dallas. The local authorities wanted to keep the body in Dallas. I don't know if you're aware of that or not.

DAITCH: Yes.

DAVIS: The Secret Service just took command and took it to the airport. We waited for the body to come back to the White House, and it didn't come. Every minute they were saying, now it's on its way, but it was not. It was about four a.m., as I recall, sometime early in the morning hours, that the body came back. I was asked to.... Well, let me step back for a second.

I got back to the White House, and by that time Merriman Smith of UPI, who had shouted to me when I got off the plane that the oath-taking took place at two thirty-seven p.m. Central Standard Time, he was always the dean and whatever he said went with the press. But I remember when I got off the Air Force One, he shouted down that ramp. "The swearing in took place at two thirty-seven Central Standard Time. I want you to call my

office and tell UPI I'm on my way back to town." I did do that. When I got to a phone, I called UPI, and I told them that Smitty was on his way back. "He's on Air Force One, and you won't be able to hear from him for two and a half hours."

But when I gave my pool report.... I finally gave my.... The airplane disappeared into the sky, and then suddenly the press buses appeared at the airport where I was standing. They'd been brought to the airport. I was lifted up on the back of a car, and I gave my pool report. I gave the time as two thirty-eight P.M. Central Standard Time, which was in my note pad. Not thinking of what Smitty had told me. And I stood there until everybody finished every question they had. I was dying to get on the air with the story.

The last guy asking me questions was Tom Wicker of the *New York Times*. Naturally he needed more detail than anybody else. I didn't know Tom very well at the time. He was fairly new to Washington and the White House. At the end of his questions he said, "And how long did it take to give the oath?" I said, "Twenty-eight seconds." He was so impressed. He never forgot that I had the time.

When I got back to the White House that night from Dallas and I walked into the press room, the first guy to greet me was Merriman Smith. He put a hammer lock on my

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head and he said, "You sonofabitch! I said two thirty-seven." What happened was that my story was filed, my pool report used two thirty-eight." [ASIDE CONVERSATION] My emotions came into play once or twice. I closed a broadcast saying: [BREAK]Sid Dallas. I tried it three or four times. And I said, "This is Sid Dallas in Davis." I said, "Let me do it again." And I said, "Sid Dallas in Davis." And you know what? When they did the tape, when they.... That was taped. Because I repeated it to correct it they cleaned it up. And I wish they would not have done that because it was really.... It might have been better the other way.

But when I got back to the White House, I was really exhausted. I don't think the full weight of the thing had hit me. And after the Smitty episode, he forgave me after a while; it took about a month or so and he forgave me, but I just said, "It was in my book, Smitty. And I was on the air, so I know I was accurate. My chronograph is accurate. And I'm sorry...."

[END TAPE 2, SIDE 1; BEGIN TAPE 2, SIDE 2]

My office said they wanted to go on the air live when the body came back to the White House. So I was joined by another member of the Washington Bureau at Westinghouse Broadcasting Company, Ann Corrick [Ann M. Corrick]. She was an old-timer in Washington. As a matter of fact, I think in her early days in Washington that she did date John Kennedy. She was gorgeous. She was a very beautiful woman, and she was a real buddy. They sent Annie over, and both of us were to do the broadcast when the body came back.

We waited through the night. I think it was about four a.m., and we were about the only ones left. Everybody else had packed up. I was standing there with her, and Westinghouse then could cover the whole country. We had clear channel stations, radio stations, across the country. It was a great broadcasting company. It's been bought, and it's

owned by Viacom/CBS. But there were some wonderful, it was a wonderful place to work back then in the sixties. They said, “No, we’re going to go the distance. We’re going to cover everything.”

So we waited, and Jackie stayed at the hospital until the autopsy was over with. Then she rode back in the ambulance with the body from the U.S. naval hospital. As she did in Dallas, you know. Jackie rode in the ambulance to the airport in the back with the casket. When the presidential limousine arrived at Parkland Hospital, she helped push the stretcher into the hospital. She was pushing faster than—she was pushing it fast to get to the doctors to get to the operating room. She had her wits about her the whole time. And she was the one who told the Secret Service that she wanted that body to go back to Washington. She said she wasn’t leaving without it. Dallas authorities had wanted to do an autopsy in Dallas.

Anyway, Annie and I did the broadcast. I remember the military district of Washington takes over on something like that. They do all the presidential funerals in

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Washington. They had a ritual. It looked like someone had already planned it, I remember. They told us that they were going to put the casket on a catafalque in the East Room, and it was similar to the catafalque that was used for Abraham Lincoln.

The night air was crisp, as I recall. But it was clear. They had placed in the driveway, to add to this somberness, they had placed these little construction lanterns. I don’t know if they use them today still. But they were little pots with a wick. They’re kerosene lanterns with only a wick on top. So they burn like a candle.

They had placed a row of them on each side of the driveway leading up to the North Portico, and the smoke was coming from each wick, in the eeriness of the night. And then when the hearse came up through that, it denoted something very special and very sad. And I just wondered, who could have thought of that, adding to the somberness of the night, but also the religious aspect of it to some extent? They had already notified priests who were to come to the White House to stay and keep, they kept a 24-hour vigil at the casket.

I remember the ambulance, a gray navy ambulance, coming up the drive, and Annie did a beautiful job of describing the scene and that sort of thing and recapping the day. I didn’t know who was listening at four o’clock in the morning across America. But I’d traveled with Kennedy so many times in the campaign, it just seemed appropriate that Robert Frost, who was at the inauguration with him.... Kennedy used to quote this poem in the campaign a lot when we would appear at one or two o’clock in the morning, and he would say: “The woods are lovely, dark, and deep but I have promises to keep and miles to go before I sleep, and miles to go before I sleep.” I don’t know how many times I heard him say that in the campaign, as a closure to his speech. It just seemed like he had a premonition.

So as the ambulance came up.... We’re closing off as they took the casket into the White House. The Honor Guard took the casket into the White House with these little flames there. I decided I would do Robert Frost’s “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening.” I started to say, “The woods are lovely, dark, and deep,” and I started to cry. And I remember Anne put her hand on my shoulder, and I signed off. I couldn’t get my name out. And I was so angry with myself for trying it because I knew I couldn’t get through it. I tried it, and I was embarrassed. I really felt terrible about it.

So I think probably five or ten days later I started getting these letters. And I hadn't heard from most of these people I'd gone to college with had heard this broadcast at four o'clock in the morning. So what in the hell were they doing up all night like that? They had no idea we were going to go on the air. But we had these wonderful, powerful stations coast to coast, and they carried this broadcast. But it told me something, really, about how.... I suppose people would feel that way about any.... We have something about our presidents, whether we agree with them or disagree with them.

But it was the dumbest thing, to some extent, that I ever did. I mean one thing in broadcasting is you.... You know, there's an old expression that if you have any doubts, don't do it, don't say it, don't play it. I knew that I might have a problem, but I didn't think I'd have that problem. And of course the next four days were unbelievable.... The next three days until Monday, the funeral. The fact that she had thought about doing an old-world type funeral with walking to the cathedral, to St. Matthew's, behind the casket.

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Just imagine if you were there at the time and knowing the power of the people, the personalities of the people involved. But you're standing on the street, and there is the casket of the president of the United States. The president of the United States, the president of France, Charles de Gaulle [Charles A. de Gaulle], six feet what? Four or five? Towering over Haile Selassie, the emperor of Ethiopia, Ludwig Erhard, Prince Philip representing the queen of England [Elizabeth II, Queen of Great Britain], walking down the street and it's colder than hell, to St. Matthew's Cathedral. It was just an unbelievable time. If you read, the White House books would tell you that. Chuck Roberts of *Newsweek* was very moved by this. He knew Kennedy well. He said.... I remember him coming to the White House one day during this four-day period, Roberts said, "You know, I have a neighbor that hated Kennedy's guts. She used to complain all the time." This was a woman at that time in her thirties, a contemporary. "She hated him." And he said, "She has not stopped crying." That's how it hit the country.

Well, I wrote a letter to my son that night, and I looked at it the other day. I haven't seen it in 30 or 40 years. Not bad. It's just about what happened and that sort of thing. But the last thing I ever anticipated covering was the murder of a president, the assassination of a president. But it tells you the strength of this country and the fact that the country pulls together when something like that happens. It's been said that even Khrushchev cried. I've heard that story. I think the Missile Crisis changed his opinion of Kennedy immensely.

DAITCH: It strikes me that it was.... You know, there's grief for any fallen president or any fallen public figure.

DAVIS: Yes. Oh, sure.

DAITCH: But Kennedy, I suppose the very fact of his—the thing that marked him off more than anything was his youth and his vitality.

DAVIS: The age, yes. Absolutely. Yes. The age factor. The vigor of the man, the boat,

the sailing, the pictures of him sailing, the children in the Oval Office. John-John [John F. Kennedy, Jr.] climbing under the desk. I was so taken when John-John died; I could not believe it. I'm pretty sure I flew back to Washington when he was born. He was born.... Was it around Thanksgiving? I forget. We flew back on a DC-6. We had to hurry up and fly back to Washington. We were in Palm Beach, and we flew back in a hurry to Washington, and president-elect Kennedy sat up in the front of the airplane. What is it about this family? They were chance-takers, they were all risk-takers. Danger didn't bother them.

DAITCH: Which is something that again....

DAVIS: What a future he had. I told Barbara if he got into politics, I don't have any doubt that he'd run for president. Well, anyway, I'm sorry I bored you. You've heard this story many times, though, everybody's experience with the assassination, I'm sure.

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DAITCH: Everyone's different.

DAVIS: I'm the last of the three that were on the airplane. Smitty's dead, committed suicide. Chuck died about seven or eight years ago. God, what a great reporters they both were! I wish I could be.... They were good! I mean they didn't miss a thing. They were senior to me, they'd covered national politics longer. But they were good.

Well, the White House correspondents were all, to be a White House correspondent then, and I really would take myself out of this picture because I was new to Washington. I got there in '60. But they were all older. It's not like it is today with these young people, good-looking, handsome, television people and all that. The old-timers didn't know my name for a year or two. They didn't care who I was. I mean these were curmudgeons. These were guys, two-fisted drinkers. But they were great reporters. It's different now.

DAITCH: Those guys probably knew as much about foreign policy and domestic policy as your average congressman.

DAVIS: Yes.

DAITCH: You know, these were.... They'd been there, they knew it all.

DAVIS: That's right. Well, these guys, they'd been around. They knew when to be cynical and skeptical, and they were good at it. Bob Donovan, I don't know what his condition is now, but he's one of the great reporters. He wrote.... I did a program a month after the thing at Westinghouse. I thought of it, and Jim Snyder, my boss, was the moderator. It was called "Dialogue on Dallas," and a lot of what I've said is in

there. And Bob Donovan, myself, Jerry terHorst, and Malcolm Kilduff did the thing. terHorst later became President Ford's press secretary for a short time.

It was on that broadcast a month later that Kilduff disclosed that Johnson, when he, Kilduff, had to go and talk to Johnson after he made the announcement that Kennedy was dead, and he went to him, and he said, "I was the first person to come to him and call him Mr. President. It was the strangest feeling." I've forgotten my train of thought. Oh, on this program, Kilduff said, "Mr. President, do you want me to announce that you're going out to Air Force One? They're taking you out to Air Force One." And he said Johnson said, "No, Mac, don't announce it until I arrive there, until I've left. Because we don't know whether this is a conspiracy."

So Johnson said that right off the bat. I guess in later years he started to say he thought that it might have been a conspiracy. I don't believe that. I think that the Warren Commission [Earl Warren] did a pretty good job.

DAITCH: We'll have to talk to President Ford. He's the last living member of the Warren Commission.

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DAVIS: Oh, is he? Have you talked to him yet?

DAITCH: I'm working on making an appointment. I haven't talked to him yet.

DAVIS: Well, yes, he is. I thought they did a very good job.

DAITCH: Yes. You know, just the question about.... It's easy to focus on just, looking back now, just focus on the assassination and the events that followed. But you don't think of it so much anymore, but at the time it must have been desperately hard to not only absorb that the President's been killed, but also the fact that there might be more things about to happen out there that they have to be careful about.

DAVIS: Yes. Well, I never, I did not focus at all on the assassin. I just focused on the.... I wasn't interested in the police aspects of the story. I knew that.... As a matter of fact, as I recall, the police radio in the police car that took us to the airport was broadcasting the police calls from around that theater where they caught Oswald [Lee Harvey Oswald]. And I think that the cop, driving the car, did say something about a policeman being shot. We didn't know he was dead, but we heard a policeman was shot. That came over the radio as we were on our way to.... So they thought they were chasing two people, you know. They didn't know at the time. So the cop was pretty sensible when he said, "I'm not going to interrupt radio silence to pass that phone number on for you." I focused mainly on the fact that the President was dead. I was afraid of screwing up. And my emotions really caught me at the time when I got back to the White House.

Back at the White House, looking at those little flares in the driveway, seeing the casket, and thinking, you know, it's so permanent, he's dead, he's gone. That's where I really felt it. Bob Donovan in this broadcast we did a month later said that he gathered at the press,

he went to some press club or something down in downtown Dallas. Dallas was dry or something. I don't think they served liquor except in private clubs or something. That was not unusual in those days. Donovan said that they were having dinner, and they were all exhausted. These were the reporters who decided to stay overnight. They had a wonderful gentleman as a black waiter, and Donovan or somebody said to the black waiter, "Can we get a drink somewhere here?" And the fellow said, "We don't serve liquor here." And somebody said, "If we gave you some money, can you break the law and get us a bottle of scotch?" And the guy said, "We've got enough laws broken in Dallas today." What a great line.

DAITCH: Oh, yes.

DAVIS: Donovan used that in this broadcast we did. He probably used it in the story he wrote for the *Herald Tribune*. But Donovan had written book called *The Assassins* on the three previous assassinated presidents. So think about a coincidence that he was on the trip.

DAITCH: Yes. Oh, my gosh!

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DAVIS: Anyway.

DAITCH: That had some perspective. He had perspective.

DAVIS: Yes, he did. Well, he's really.... Kennedy had some great journalists covering him, and he was personal friends with a lot of them. Hugh Sidey, for instance, would be invited to the White House. I'm sure that's Sidey. Sidey had a lot of insights with Kennedy. He was invited to a lot of the things at the White House. We're friends. We have lunch once a month with a group of correspondents who covered the White House.

DAITCH: You know we have an interview—I think I have it on my desk now, but it's not very.... The transcript it not very thick, and I'm thinking, did they really cover everything that he could have covered with Hugh Sidey?

DAVIS: With Hugh? Well, Sidey knows, he has a lot of the private stuff because he talked to him at length.

DAITCH: Yes. Speaking of private, well, this is not really private stuff. But I was going to ask you more about Mrs. Kennedy.

DAVIS: We didn't see her much. They separated the two of us at the White House. By the two of us I mean the lady's side and the president's side. And you had had

the East Wing and the West Wing. The East Wing was the lady's side. In those days the women reporters were sent to cover the lady's side. Helen Thomas [Helen A. Thomas] used to resent having to go to the lady's side.

DAITCH: Oh, yes!

DAVIS: Well, she eventually did cover the president, and then she became, she's a legend now. Helen was great. But we thought of the east side of the White House as the lady's side. But we would be told if Mrs. Kennedy was holding a news conference or briefing. "Anybody who wants to go over to the East Wing can go cover it." And of course we would say, "We're covering a war, you know, we're not going to go over there. We don't want to cover that."

But we saw her at almost every cultural occasion. She was just a lady that was so full of grace and so pretty, you know. She was mysterious in a way, too, because she didn't say a lot, and she had that quiet way of talking. There's a great story that Ted Clifton [Chester V. Clifton, Jr.], who was one of the president's military aides, Major General Ted Clifton, he was a great guy. He had a lot of wonderful stories. But he told me a story once that Kennedy enjoyed the people that Jackie brought. She was in command of the state dinners and who would be the entertainment and that sort of thing. And of course Kennedy was getting tired of conductor Leonard Bernstein's musical selections. So Clifton told me about this story, that he had this state dinner. I don't know

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who the leader was, who the foreign leader was, but Leonard Bernstein was performing, and it was one of those things, one of those nights, when the music was something JFK didn't appreciate. Kennedy called him over to his table and said to Clifton, "Can you get Bernstein to play something else, something lighter." And Clifton said, "I had a real dilemma there. I'd been ordered by Mrs. Kennedy to arrange this kind of music and all of this stuff. And now the President doesn't like it. And how can I be diplomatic here? I've got to go back and tell Leonard Bernstein to play something else or play something lighter." Kennedy thought the music was too somber.

So he went back to Mrs. Kennedy. He solved it by saying I'll go and tell Mrs. Kennedy the President doesn't like these songs. He'd like something lighter. So Clifton went and told Mrs. Kennedy, and he told me that Mrs. Kennedy said, "Oh, just get them to play 'Hail to the Chief.' He just loves that." [Laughter] I thought that was a great story. But she had a great sense of humor, too.

DAITCH: Yes, yes.

DAVIS: The thing about Dallas was that most people who'd covered her during the campaign.... As I said, she didn't campaign much. I don't think she liked politics that much. Most of the stories were that she didn't really enjoy it. The fact is that in Dallas she really was having a good time. It was obvious.

DAITCH: I've seen photographs, and she seems to have a real genuine smile.

DAVIS: Everybody, we all remarked about it. We talked about how happy she seemed to be. She was really in a great mood, and she was smiling and laughing. And she loved the people, and she loved them giving her flowers. At the Dallas Airport I think I remember she almost led him over to the fence to shake hands with the people at the fence. She'd gotten really into it. But I never had much exposure to her except for photo-op with the family and that sort of thing. She had a great sense of who she was, the importance of being first lady, and she had a sense of history as well. Look what she did with the White House. And what she did with the burial and everything, the eternal flame and all of that. She had a great sense of it.

Look, when I was on Air Force One and I saw her come into the room, and I think I forgot to mention, when I looked down at her dress, her right stocking, it's in this book, her right stocking is saturated with blood. By the time the swearing-in took place, it was congealed, caked. And it was also on her right hand. That's where she'd cradled his head. I saw the blood, it was on her wrist, on her hand. Actually caked blood was on her hand. You can imagine what she went through. And of course, you know, she didn't clean up. She's supposed to have said to someone, "I want them to see what they've done."

DAITCH: Yes. Wow!

DAVIS: The courage she showed I think was magnificent.

DAITCH: There's no question.

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DAVIS: Her behavior and all of that. And since... I suppose I was disappointed in, as most of us were, her marriage to Onassis [Aristotle Onassis] We still saw a little bit of Camelot there, I suppose. And if she was to remarry, we thought it might be someone more like Jack Kennedy. Instead it was someone totally opposite, this guy; that was a disappointment. But who am I to tell Mrs. Kennedy whom to marry, you know? She knew what she wanted, what kind of life she wanted to lead.

But she still remained magnificent through it all, the way she raised those children. I mean you have to really give her credit. They grew up to be human, normal, sensible, ordinary kids, really. Dedicated, too. That's one thing about the family. I get a lot of criticism from people about the Kennedy family, this and that, and I ask them what they've done for the country. I mean look at that family and what it's done. Were they a little wild? Of course. Did they do some things you wouldn't approve of? Of course. But with all their wealth they could've sat on the Riviera and done nothing for anyone. Look at Teddy [Edward M. Kennedy], you know. I will guarantee you this. I'm willing to bet the mortgage on this house. That if you went up to the Senate and talked to people who know how to cover the Senate, who've been there for years, who know Washington, know politics, I don't care who they are, and you said who is the best out of 100 senators, who is the best senator up there? I will guarantee you that every one of them will say Ted Kennedy. I will guarantee it. Even with

the baggage he has from Chappaquiddick and all of that, the fact is he's got the courage of his convictions.

DAITCH: And he does his job.

DAVIS: He's not afraid to stand up.

DAITCH: He's good at his job.

DAVIS: He is good. But I tell that to people, and a lot of people, oh, Chappaquiddick. They don't like him because he cheated on his wife [Joan Bennett Kennedy], whatever, whatever happened there. But the fact is he's good at it and he has not lost a millimeter of that commitment to helping people. That's where he stands. And I say... I just brought it up the other day to our group, to a man. No coaching.

DAITCH: And they all agreed?

DAVIS: Yes. And they know his frailties and all of that. But he is a good senator.

DAITCH: Right. Absolutely. I like him. I wish he was from New Hampshire.

DAVIS: Well, yes. Sometimes I see he ought to take better care of himself. Maybe he's lost some weight. I don't know. He's way overweight. But what that family's been through. He broke his back in a plane crash. All of the things that have happened. His son [Edward M. Kennedy, Jr.] had cancer.

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DAITCH: Yes. Well, they have a daughter [Kara Kennedy Allen] that has cancer now, right?

DAVIS: Well, you know, I've been over to his house. Once I went over with a group from WBZ, our radio station in Boston. I don't know. This is not about Jack Kennedy. We were invited over one night because of WBZ in Boston. He invited the station management and some of the reporters were in town. Westinghouse stations had to come to town once a year, meet with their congressional delegations, to talk about poverty and housing for poor and what the legislation was like. Because all of our stations were in metropolitan cities. And this one time WBZ-Boston was in town, and we were invited to his house to have a drink with him. Is it Teddy, Jr. that had the cancer? I forget which one.

DAITCH: I'm not sure.

DAVIS: Anyhow, we heard this—it's a beautiful, gorgeous home overlooking the Potomac River in McLean—we heard this thumping upstairs. And we heard

this [THUMPING] THUMP THUMP THUMP. And then we heard thumping come down the stairs. There's this huge staircase at one end of the house and a long foyer going to the other end of the house; well, the kitchen's at that end and another porch here. We hear this THUMP THUMP THUMP. While we're sitting in the living room, this huge living room, we could look out the archway and see that this was the kid who had one leg. He was not using his crutches. He was hopping on one leg down the hall. About ten minutes later we hear the thumping coming back. And this is a kid, and he's got a plate with a big sandwich on it and a bottle of soda, and he's thumping back, going back upstairs to his room. They've been through it.

DAITCH: Yes, they have.

DAVIS: God! And you wonder how much one family can bear.

DAITCH: It's funny how we take such an interest in them as a family, almost like they're our national family. There's a picture in the museum. You've been up to the museum?

DAVIS: Yes.

DAITCH: You've seen the big family picture that they have on one of the walls, and it's everybody, and it's just.... I remember thinking when I first looked at that picture, it's like looking at your own family album.

DAVIS: Yes.

DAITCH: I think a lot of people feel that way. Somehow they're our family.

DAVIS: Well, I think that's true. Yes, I think so. In so many ways it was magnificent

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that Bobby became the attorney general but then ran for the Senate.

Everything that they tried to do was to help somebody else, to help the others. To a person. I remember, you know, the father had a mixed background and that sort of thing.

I remember we were brand new to Kennedy, and we were in the Oval Office or he was still in Palm Beach during the interregnum. We had a guy who was a lighting man for the networks. The White House used one guy, and he served all the networks. His name was Cleveland Ryan. He was a short little, I'd say fat little fellow, with a wonderful Boston accent. Smoked a cigar. He was one of the old school guys. He had pretty colorful language.

In one of our first photo ops with Kennedy, it might have been in the Oval Office, I've forgotten now. It might have been after he was inaugurated. But anyway, somebody in the room said, "Mr. President, Cleve Ryan is from Boston." [Bahston] Kennedy said, "Right. What'd you do in Boston?" He said, "I worked for your father." And Kennedy said, "What'd

you do for my father?" Cleve said, "I ran rum." [Laughter] "I was a rum runner." Kennedy got the biggest kick. Guffawed all over, started to laugh. Cleve was saying the father was a bootlegger.

DAITCH: Oh, my gosh!

DAVIS: But Kennedy would josh with us from time to time. If he didn't want to answer a question, he'd give you a kind of an aw-shucks type, or poor me, I can't respond to that, or whatever. It was interesting. It was an interesting period. And Johnson was so different, you know. But we don't.... I don't know that you'll ever get a president and get that same mix again of a Jackie Bouvier Kennedy and a John F. Kennedy. I mean they were the stars, you know, at this point in time that this happened, having children in the White House again, the brightness of that, really. I remember once Kennedy came back from—I'd not traveled with him someplace and he had come back. And his back pain was excruciating, the pain was terrible. He got off the helicopter. They wouldn't let us go out. Usually they let us go out near the Rose Garden to watch the helicopter come in. This time they didn't. They kept us in the Cabinet Room where you could look out on the lawn. They took John-John out there. This is probably '62, late '62, where John-John could walk. They took John-John out there to run, and he ran toward the helicopter. They handed Kennedy his crutches at the foot of the helicopter and helped him off the chopper, and he had the crutches. He wanted to lean down and pick him up, and he couldn't. He couldn't bend over.

DAITCH: Oh, that's sad.

DAVIS: So there was so much, you see, that you saw of this. The worst thing you want to say as a reporter is you got too close to him. I don't think I did; I tried.... It was very hard not to, really. There were so many interesting things that went on. But we were critical when we had to be and things. He got tough questions at his news conferences. It wasn't a pushover.

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DAITCH: Oh, definitely. But in some ways being a little bit close to him allows you that, too.

DAVIS: Yes. As I said, there were certain reporters that they cultivated. I mean Bill Lawrence. Why not, if you can get the guy on the *New York Times* to play golf with you. There was a mutually beneficial thing where Lawrence got stories he wanted, and the White House may have gotten in the *Times*. But having Bill Lawrence on your side was important. They cultivated certain people who had access. The *Times* has access to this president, even though they don't agree with him. The *Times* gets.... Look at what the Bush, I mean the *Post* and the *Times* get a lot of, a lot of the big military leaks are in the *Times* and the *Post* because they know they've got the authority and power. If it's in the *Times*, everybody else is going to pick it up. They're not stupid.

So presidents will cultivate wherever they can. And Salinger was good at that. Pierre Salinger was the right press secretary for John Kennedy. He had a sense of the social aspects of power and enjoyed it, enjoyed every minute of it. Salinger told us a story that.... Salinger was not clued in on Cuba, on the Missile Crisis.

DAITCH: Oh, really?

DAVIS: No. He didn't know. He did not know. I think he learned it just about, he was one of the last officials to learn about it. And it probably was wise because then he didn't have to lie.

DAITCH: Right.

DAVIS: But he said that at some point before the Missile Crisis erupted, Kennedy and he were talking, and Kennedy asked him if he knew—Salinger was a cigar smoker—Kennedy asked if he knew where he could get Cuban cigars. Salinger said, “Yeah, I know how to get them.” It was illegal to buy Cuban cigars at the time. There was an embargo. Salinger knew where to do it. Kennedy gave him the money, and they bought a humidor. I don't know how big a humidor it is, but you can store it somewhere.

At Dunhill Tobacco Shop in New York, rich people have a place in the cigar store. It's like your own safety deposit box except it's your own—you pay, you probably pay pretty good money for it—that keeps your cigars at the right temperature. Cigars have to be a certain moisture and that to be good, especially good, expensive Cuban cigars. I think the Rothman's, which are one of the best Cuban cigars. And Salinger was able to get Kennedy a bunch of Cuban cigars. And this was before Kennedy ordered the blockade. Salinger said that he would have known the crisis was Cuba, if he'd been smart enough to realize what Kennedy was doing. He couldn't figure out why he got these cigars, but he did get him a humidor...

DAITCH: Oh, good grief!

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DAVIS: ...of cigars. Kennedy did enjoy a cigar. Well, he was fun to travel with. He went to nice places, Palm Beach and California. Whenever we were west of the Mississippi River on a trip, he would always try to spend part of the weekend in LA. I think it was planned that way, we would end up in Los Angeles, and he would go out to Peter Lawford's house where there were dinners, usually on Saturday night. When we covered Kennedy in L.A. there wasn't much business to be done. I think he stayed at Lawford's a few times. I'm trying to remember. He stayed at Bing Crosby's house down in Palm Springs on more than one occasion, as I recall. We would go there with him.

DAITCH: When he stayed at someone's private residence, did you go there, too?

DAVIS: We stayed a hotel.... But rarely did you go to a private.... We were never invited to Bing Crosby's. He had a place up in the canyon. When he was in L.A., we would stay at the Beverly Hilton, and we would have a midnight departure Sunday night. When we were out in the West, it always seemed that we would leave for Washington at midnight, have a midnight departure. There's a three-hour time difference. That's three a.m. here, a little more than four hours flying time. So, he'd arrive at Andrews at seven a.m. or seven-fifteen. He could get some sleep for four hours, and then he'd go to the Oval Office right from the airplane and go to work. That way we didn't arrive in D.C. in the middle of the night. So they would schedule midnight departures.

DAITCH: Oh, neat!

DAVIS: Colonel James Swindal, I told you about, the pilot, his regular, permanent pilot. You know Air Force One is just a designation of the airplane the President's on. If he's not on it, it's not Air Force One. But Swindal told me Kennedy could fall asleep easily, which is something I can't. I know I can't do it; some people can. But in order to give Kennedy a full four hours.... And if he had tail winds, meaning he'd get back to Andrews before seven.... They always wanted to schedule arrival at Andrews somewhere between seven and eight, maybe it was eight a.m. Swindal would take Air Force One, and we'd go circle over Wyoming where there's no air traffic. And we'd circle Wyoming or Montana. The press plane went along with him, too. So we'd be 1,000 feet above or below him, and they would take him up there to get an extra hour of sleep because they didn't want to come in at six a.m., an hour with nothing to do. He wanted enough sleep. So they would fly in a circle so he could get enough sleep, and then we'd come into Andrews promptly at, it might have been eight a.m. Eight a.m. arrivals. And Swindal would take him up there and give him a full night's sleep, or at least four and a half hours of sleep. If you have ever flown the red eye commercially you can appreciate having Air Force One at your disposal.

Well, it was a fascinating period. I think I've covered about everything on the assassination and the campaign. Well, it became really the first television campaign, and it changed politics. Fortunately, for Kennedy, he was good at it. It creeps up if you're not. Look what happened to Gore [Albert A. Gore, Jr.].

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DAITCH: Oh, yes.

DAVIS: You know, television was no help to Gore. Well, it was the advice he was getting was part of it. He could've done better on television if he had had some better coaching on the thing. But you can't get elected without television today.

DAITCH: No, that's right.

DAVIS: Enormously expensive. I think that the broadcasting industry should provide free time, a certain amount of free time, to candidates. I don't think that charging the amounts of money that they do.... In the 2000 campaign a billion dollars was spent just primarily on television. That's outrageous.

DAITCH: It is outrageous. Hewitt said the same thing. I mean he's one of the people that was behind these first.... He thinks actually that the debates were one of the worst things he did. Because, he said—not that he was personally responsible for them, but he was involved—he said it's where T.V. came to be the most important aspect of getting elected. And the thing about T.V. time is that it costs money. So now money is what gets you elected.

DAVIS: Thank God for the debates, though. Because if we didn't have the debates, how would you know whether a guy can think on his feet? It's the only way you're going to know now. I'm glad we have them. But I do think that the candidates should not be asked to pay the kind of money they do. Here in town, on one of the three network stations, which are the most expensive, I think a 30 second spot runs close to nine or ten thousand dollars. You know how many candidates.... And that's only one, one spot. And that's maybe not in a good time period.

I think that those airwaves, in my judgment, the airwaves still belong to the public. But that's not the thinking of the industry anymore. Or to a great number of people in Congress. We gave it away in the 1996 Telecommunications Act. They almost said that it's yours. You can have as many radio stations.... When I was at Westinghouse, we had seven radio stations, five TV. That's the limit. We made a lot of money, lots of dough. Very successful. And today you can own.... There's one outfit, Clear Channel Broadcasting out of Texas, owns 1,200 radio stations.

DAITCH: It's outrageous.

DAVIS: And the concentration of media power into just a few units.... Rupert Murdoch [Keith Rupert Murdoch], General Electric, Viacom, Disney, ABC; that's frightening controlling all of that television, all that power. And now they're going to get rid of, looks like they're going to get rid of the cross-ownership rule which is that newspapers can't own television in the same market. It looks like they're going to throw that out. So I don't think that's good because it ends diversity. I think it'll

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be a tragedy if ABC and CNN merge because you know what they'll do, they'll combine the news departments so you'll lose the network news department. I think it's bad.

DAITCH: Yes. Right. I don't think anybody would argue that it's good except the people that are making money from it.

DAVIS: That's right.

DAITCH: There's nothing good about it. Right. Anyway. This is perfect.

DAVIS: What have I not covered that you want covered?

[END TAPE 2, SIDE 2; BEGIN TAPE 3, SIDE 1]

DAITCH: ...at American University.

DAVIS: Well, what I remember about that American University speech was that it was the first time that we really, we took the initiative, and we said, "We're not going to test, as of this speech, we're not testing in the atmosphere anymore." And that was really a bold step. Surprisingly, well, I don't remember, looking back from this vantage point, that there was a great deal of criticism of him from the Right on that, but there could have been. And that was before the Missile Crisis. That was like in the spring of '63. It was in the springtime, June, 1963.

DAITCH: I think it was after.

DAVIS: Was it?

DAITCH: Yes.

DAVIS: I remember it was a commencement? But the fact is that he took this bold step unilaterally. That was gutsy. At the same time we were negotiating with the Russians, we're going to start the Test Ban Treaty talks. That was a profound change, really. That's where a lot of this.... I went to a lot of summit conferences after Kennedy was president where the negotiations were over throw-weights. I think back, it seems like the 19th century to me now, that we were in. And I didn't understand all of it, it was so complicated. Because you were talking about multiple warheads versus single warheads. It was very complicated. But Kennedy started the ball rolling with the simple thing of saying, "From this day forward, we will not test in the atmosphere, and we're asking that nobody else to do it."

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Now I think that.... I don't know whether anybody has.... There were suspicions of atmospheric tests because of atmospheric samplings they've done, but nothing of a major sort since then. I mean that was one bold move. Politically, I mean he could have gotten creamed on that. But the speech was accepted, really, worldwide. That was the kind of thing that a young president could do. He didn't have any barnacles at this point in his presidency. So it was a bold step. It was great—I remember the speech as a great speech. It was a great speech.

DAITCH: Was it well received?

DAVIS: Yes.

DAITCH: I mean among the people who were there?

DAVIS: Yes. The audience recognized it was a great speech, yes. The way it was delivered, the day of it happening. It was a great speech. But you're right. This happened in '63, before his death, so it came after the missile crisis. Yes, that's right. The other thing that was.... There's not much more I can say about it because it was no violated in his time, and we did get a Test Ban Treaty eventually.

I went to the summit conference with Ford and Brezhnev, and before that the negotiations between Nixon and Brezhnev and the others. It was too much for the American people to understand, even for the Soviet citizens to understand, because multiple warheads were five or six nuclear warheads on one rocket versus one. The bargaining over which of these are going to be a part of the agreement and which are not a part of the agreement and all of that.

And we survived that whole period when both of us had enough to kill each other many times over. What did we have? 15,000 warheads at one time. The way the world is, you know, if someone else had been president, if you'd had a Hawk in there, a LeMay-type person in there, would we have gotten away without a nuclear bomb going off in some country somewhere? I'm surprised we haven't had an accidental one. We're probably due for an accidental one.

DAITCH: Don't even say that.

DAVIS: I remember William Colby [William Egan Colby], the C.I.A. director, telling me in an interview—this was in the seventies—that he thought in the next 20 years, when he told me this, that some country actually will fire a rocket into another country accidentally, and it'll be a nuclear warhead of 20 kilotons, which would be about the same size as the one on Hiroshima. He said, "I don't know which country it'll be. But it's going to happen in the next 20 years." Well, I'm glad to tell you that the 20 years have come and gone. [Laughter] It's been more than 20 years since he told me that, and it hasn't happened.

So maybe we can keep doing this. But it's bound to happen somewhere, which is another subject with Kennedy, on space. The fact that he realized that while.... The argument today in the wake of the disaster with *Columbia* is do we have to send men out

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there? Do we have to spend all this money on men? Is this kind of a charade? It's kind of fun, it's Buck Rogers. We could do it all with robots and stuff.

But the argument on the other side is a very strong one, and that is, the inspiration of this thing, about the fact the United States would give up exploration and looking ahead, looking beyond our own universe, the fact that we would give that up would not be a good thing. It may be worth the 15 billion or whatever it is we give N.A.S.A. to do these things.

And here's where I think you have the vision. Kennedy's not the only one who had such vision.

I'm not sure Eisenhower had the vision because, while I think the Space Agency was founded under Eisenhower, it was not called N.A.S.A. at the time. But he was smart enough to know that he ought to do this. Because I remember *Sputnik*. After *Sputnik*.... Being a military man, he didn't see the military potential in it. He derisively said they'd put a "grapefruit" up into space. I'm sure he regretted saying that, but that's what he said.

When Kennedy came along, being younger—and I'm not saying that a Republican president of the same age wouldn't have done the same thing—but Kennedy saw the fact of what an inspiration it could be. Or the fact that you could not not explore the universe and space.

And I know, I think from just knowing how much he knew; I don't think he was a great scientist either, and I'm not, surely. I don't think when he said "We will land a man on the moon in this decade," I don't think he knew whether we could do it or not. I covered the space.... I covered the launches before they were sending men. I covered them when they put a chimp, I covered the chimpanzee.

DAITCH: Did you?

DAVIS: Yeah. I wasn't silly enough. We had a reporter with us who tried to interview the chimpanzee, tried to talk to it.

DAITCH: Oh, no!

DAVIS: The chimpanzee's name was Ham. But I covered Alan Shepard's [Alan B. Shepard] first flight of an American in space, suborbital flight. I covered John Glenn [John H. Glenn, Jr.], which was the first orbital flight. I covered the landing on the moon. And, you know, what a thrill that was, to hear Neil Armstrong [Neil A. Armstrong] say, "One small step for man...." But I don't think Kennedy—it's sad that he didn't live to see it.

DAITCH: Oh, sure.

DAVIS: Because he had the courage to say we're going to do it. But I don't know whether he knew we were going to do it. I remember the day before he died, before the assassination, we were in Houston, and we were speaking at this place that was going to be the space center in Houston. Or speaking somewhere in Houston. And, you know, it was a big political thing to get the contract for the manned

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space operation into Texas. Kennedy slipped, he said, "We're going to send the biggest payroll into space." And he caught himself, and he laughed, and he said, "I mean payload instead of payroll." But the audience got it. The audience roared with laughter when he said we're going to send the biggest payroll into space. Because it was fabulous for Texans to get

this contract for the manned space program, which is named now after Lyndon Johnson. But, no, he just had good vision to do something like that, and that's what you needed. It came at a good time for us because after *Sputnik* we were wearing a hair shirt in this country. We felt decimated that the Russians would beat us into space, not only with the first satellite but then they put the man. They put Yuri Gagarin [Yuri A. Gagarin] up there. That was really a setback for us.

I remember when we launched Alan Shepard, I was at the Cape. And the greatest headline of that period.... But I mean after all I was—it was a suborbital flight. It wasn't even an orbital flight. But the best headline came from England, our great mother country that can always be counted on, I think, but the headline in one of the tabloids was: "GOOD OLD AMERICA!" You know, that we could do it.

DAITCH: Can do, yes.

DAVIS: They can rely on us to do it. I think that that was a part of what happened with Kennedy, and, you know, the Alan Shepard flight was in '61, May of '61. Then you had Grissom [Virgil I. Grissom]. I can't remember all of them. Carpenter [M. Scott Carpenter], Grissom, and then Gordon Cooper [Gordon Cooper], who did 22 orbits. I remember that, I covered Gordon Cooper.

Then Gordon Cooper came to the White House. I have a picture at the White House where Gordon Cooper had a parade down Pennsylvania Avenue. The limousine was parked outside the North Portico and I believe that Vice President Johnson was going to ride in the parade with Gordon Cooper. Because Johnson had been a big promoter of the space program before he was vice president. And Jackie brought John-John out to the car under the North Portico. I have this picture of her carrying John-John out to meet the astronaut.

DAITCH: Oh, nice.

DAVIS: But Cooper came to town, and he was honored at the White House. So those were heady days. It almost seemed like for Kennedy nothing could go wrong. Things were kind of going in his direction in certain areas.

DAITCH: Yes. And it doesn't appear to be blind optimism. I mean he was very.... My understanding is that he was very up to date. He relied on Wiesner [Jerome B. Wiesner] and the President's Science Advisory Committee, and he had some idea of what was feasible.

DAVIS: Well, yes. I agree with you. But I'm not sure anybody thought we could do it by the end of the decade.

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DAITCH: Right. It was a guess.

DAVIS: I was a little unhappy when the lunar lander landed and they had this little metal plaque on it that had President Nixon's name on it, on the lunar lander. And I thought, you know, Kennedy's dead. He can't compete with you now. Why not have put two presidents? Put Eisenhower's name on there, too, the three presidents who were involved in space. But it was a part of Kennedy's legacy that he had the guts to say we're going to do it.

I mean when you look back at how they did it, that this lunar lander had to rendezvous with this other vehicle and hook up again and these guys are going to climb out of that. That flimsy crate, the lander, was a flimsy piece of machinery. If it didn't get back in orbit up there, these guys were gone. They were going to be left on the moon. I mean there were a lot of gambles in this thing. That's still dangerous, as we learned just recently, last week. But Kennedy was a visionary in that sense. I think it came in those Kennedy genes. They were gamblers. They're going to do it.

DAITCH: And workers, too. I just get the feeling, and not just John Kennedy, but Robert Kennedy, hard-working people.

DAVIS: Yes, oh, yes.

DAITCH: Especially to have come from a background where they never had to.

DAVIS: Yes. They had to deal with people they were unaccustomed to dealing with, too. Democratic politics is a lot grubbier than Republican politics because you're down to the lowest common denominator in terms of income and people, and you're going into the slums, you're going into the poorest areas to tell people there that you're really going to help them. And we did that with Kennedy. As I said, in the anthracite regions where people were unemployed. West Virginia and the hollows and hills, in the inner cities and that sort of thing.

You've got to go to the Ladies' Garment Workers Union. I remember the two presidents, one ex-president, one.... He was speaking in the Garment District in New York, and Tony Curtis [Anthony Curtis] was there, and his wife, Janet Leigh, was there. And these two Garment Workers' presidents, one was in and one was out, or something. One was the ex and one was in. I forget what it was. But they were accusing.... These two Jewish guys were having a feud up there on who is the better president. And Kennedy's up there on the stage being amused by this. Before he can get up and speak, these guys are trying to have it out with each other on who was the better president of the Garment Workers Union. That was Democratic politics.

DAITCH: Yes.

DAVIS: It seemed to be a lot more fun because of the characters that were involved in it.

DAITCH: Well, speaking of characters, that's actually one of the questions that I was going to ask you because there were a lot of interesting characters. There were interesting people on his staff and around him, interesting media people.

DAVIS: Well, you had Larry O'Brien, who was probably one of the best nose counters politically that ever lived. He was really shrewd and a great patriot who went to work for Johnson afterwards, and a lot of the Kennedy people didn't like that. They thought he shifted loyalties from Kennedy to Johnson. But he said we had "one president at a time, and I'm serving the president." O'Brien really had the respect of everybody in this town, Democrat or Republican, all the reporters. You could trust him. He didn't lie to you. There was no baloney with Larry O'Brien. He's a very decent man. Kennedy surrounded himself with people like that.

I don't know of any person that was more of what you would picture as a confidante of the president than Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen], I mean as the loyal aide. I think that Ted Sorensen.... I don't know him well. I never got to know him real well. But the alter ego, probably a great advisor in many ways and sympathetic to a lot of things. But I think he was the kind of person who could tell Kennedy "no," when he had to. That was one of the good things about the people around him, none of them were afraid.... Larry O'Brien would not be afraid to say "no" to him. They wouldn't flatter him if they didn't have to or didn't want to or whatever. I think that they were very honest with him. Kenny O'Donnell, I remember him as kind of a gut fighter. You know, you don't want to mess with him, he was tough. I liked him and I found him to be a pretty honest guy, but he was.... You need a guy like a Kenny O'Donnell in a political operation. You know, you need someone who can pull fingernails if he has to to get the job done and that was what Kenny did. You're with us or you're against us. That was his philosophy in politics.

There was a lot of that with the Kennedy people. I remember campaigning in Ohio with Kennedy. It was after midnight when we arrived at a motel in Painesville, and Kennedy was supposed to make a speech in one of the Cleveland suburbs. He needed Ohio. And they weren't sure on whether Senator Frank Lausche [Frank J. Lausche], the former governor.... Lausche was kind of an independent Democrat, garnered his votes from both sides, from Republicans and Democrats. He had been a five-term governor of Ohio. The Kennedy people wanted him on board and he was not a big Kennedy man. I don't know whether he was a Symington [Stuart Symington II] man or not.

But I remember Ohio Governor Mike DiSalle [Michael V. DiSalle] was worried about getting Lausche's endorsement of Kennedy. They needed him because of the big ethnic vote in Northern Ohio. They wanted Lausche to appear on the stage with Kennedy. DiSalle was then the Democratic governor. It was about one or two o'clock in the morning, and I walked outside the motel, and DiSalle was out there all by himself walking around the motel. I had known DiSalle personally. I think I said, "Governor, what are you doing out here? It's one o'clock in the morning." He said, "I'm worried about tomorrow."

They didn't know whether Lausche would endorse Kennedy. I think what Lausche.... The way Lausche did it in, I don't want to say the name of the town because

I'm not sure. It was one of the larger suburbs to the west of Cleveland with a large ethnic vote. Kennedy's speech was in an outdoor stadium. The crowd was huge. And Lausche did get up, and he said, "When Frank Lausche goes into the voting booth, Frank Lausche will vote for John F. Kennedy." That's as strong as he would make it. He didn't say, "You vote for John F. Kennedy." But "When I vote, I will vote for John F. Kennedy." He didn't go all out, but he did get on board.

But I remember that the story after that was the Kennedy guys told DiSalle, either you're with us or you're against us. They laid the law down to him, and that's why he was pacing outside the hotel that night. Later on I learned that they laid the law down to him.

DAITCH: And DiSalle was...?

DAVIS: To DiSalle.

DAITCH: Who DiSalle was?

DAVIS: Mike DiSalle. He was the Ohio governor at the time. He did not want to be out of step with Lausche.

DAITCH: Oh, okay.

DAVIS: I remember a John F. Kennedy expression, "You can forgive your enemies, but never forget their names." Lausche was not an enemy, he just had to be brought into the Kennedy fold. And Lausche was by that time a senator.

DAITCH: Okay. So Lausche wasn't still the governor.

DAVIS: No, that's right.

DAITCH: He'd moved on.

DAVIS: DiSalle was governor. But the Kennedy campaign wanted Lausche on board for the ethnic vote. Lausche was an Eastern European, an extremely popular governor and now, senator. I'm trying to remember. But they needed Lausche and Lausche was playing games with the Kennedys. And they told DiSalle he'd better.... DiSalle was responsible for these rallies because he was governor. And I think that's the way it played out. But Lausche did say, I remember him saying, "When I vote, I'll vote for John Kennedy." That was as strong as he was going to make it. The speech was in a football stadium, open bleachers and stuff, and I remember Kennedy speaking there.

But I understood they played hardball wherever they went. They were tough. Well, Hubert Humphrey would tell you how tough they were in West Virginia. They just took over in the state. And they used every weapon they could find, including Franklin Roosevelt's son writing this ad.

DAITCH: That's inspired. I mean I could have told you that.

DAVIS: Yes. They did what they had to do. I always said that when he made that missile speech, when he made the speech on the embargo, the blockade really, he was not then at that moment the son of a wealthy Bostonian. He was like a dead-end kid, like he came out of the streets of Boston rather than Hyannis Port. He was tough. When he had to be tough, he could be tough. And they played hardball.

DAITCH: Yes, I've heard that about Kennedy. You know, you hear more about Bobby Kennedy.

DAVIS: Bobby, yes.

DAITCH: But I've always also.... You know, the things that I've also heard and read about Jack....

DAVIS: Well, it was good cop/bad cop maybe. But Bobby got the reputation for being the real gut fighter between the two of them. But John Kennedy was no slouch. But he wore velvet gloves, probably, when he did it. He was a little classier, I suppose. Bobby was tough.

DAITCH: Yes. Less so in later years, you think?

DAVIS: Yes. I don't think he would have had the following in the press that he had in '68 had he been.... If he had been the same tough person he was when he was working with Joe McCarthy [Joseph R. McCarthy], I don't think that.... I knew hard-nosed reporters in this town who became not sycophants, but who became really, they boarded the Bobby Kennedy bus, really. They were so moved by his civil rights positions, his humanness and what he said on that campaign trail that he just won people over. I know one reporter—I won't mention his name, he was with one of the big, big papers—who confessed afterwards that he was very partial, that his stories were very partial to Bobby Kennedy. So he got carried, well, he admitted it. He said, "I got carried away I just was so taken with how honest I felt or he was on these issues. That I really was writing stories very favorable to him."

I was not on that. I was covering the White House. So I was not on the Bobby Kennedy campaign. I was covering Lyndon Johnson at the time. So I didn't go out. I was not in California covering him. My experience with Bobby was in '60 and then as attorney general. And, you know, he was probably the best advisor the president had in terms of being honest, above-board with him, telling him what he ought to do and ought not to do.

DAITCH: I just find it interesting that he.... I've heard this from several people, that he, not that he became a different person, but that he really changed.

DAVIS: Oh, yes. He softened. Oh, yes, he did. There's no question about it. Even the tone of his voice in speeches, everything. There was a physical change in him, like he just got carried into it. Well, if you go listen to the speeches of '68 and the speeches he made, you can feel it. It was not the same guy that we knew as attorney general or before that. At least that's the way I felt, and I think a lot of reporters felt the same way.

DAITCH: There's another case where you just—there's so much what if...

DAVIS: Oh, yes. Well, Johnson had his problems with Bobby. They didn't like each other, and I don't think they made any secret of it.

DAITCH: No. But that was another story, too. I was going to ask you about the convention. I don't remember if you told me you were there or if there was anything special that you remember.

DAVIS: I was at the '60. The convention was at the Los Angeles Sports Arena.

DAITCH: Yes. We're totally out of chronology now, but let's go with it if there's anything.

DAVIS: All I remember was that.... I forget the name of the convention hotel. Was it the Hilton in L.A. or the Biltmore?

DAITCH: Biltmore.

DAVIS: The Biltmore. The Hilton, I guess, is in Chicago. The Biltmore Hotel. Of course Kennedy's worked every angle. He'd given it up in '56, and now it's '60. The stunning thing was that Lyndon Johnson agreed to be vice president. I told you about Anne Corrick, this young lady who worked at Westinghouse. Well, she'd been around Washington for a long time, and had kind of been adopted by some of the Democrats. She went to school in the South, and she had a slight Southern accent. She had worked for WDSU in New Orleans as a Washington correspondent. So she knew the Southern delegations, Eddie Hébert [F. Edward Hébert] and some of the powerhouses in the South. She also knew Sam Rayburn. "Mr. Sam" she called him. And Sam Rayburn kind of adopted her as a little daughter. She came here in her twenties.

So we're sitting around, and of course we're debating who Kennedy is going to pick. Is it going to be Symington? Who is he going to pick as vice president? We're sitting around in the room talking about it, and no one comes up with an idea. I don't know what day of the convention it was, but on the day that Kennedy announced, they announced it was going to be.... There was a big confrontation between Rayburn and Bobby. Bobby didn't want Lyndon on the ticket. Apparently in a hotel room at the

Biltmore, Rayburn kind of said, “Stuff it!” in so many words to Bobby. He said, “You need him. And if your brother wants him, that’s the way it ought to be.”

I don’t know how much of an argument Jack and Bobby had. I have not delved into that. But we’re sitting in our broadcast headquarters in the Biltmore, and word is splashed around the building that it looks like its Johnson. And we couldn’t believe it. Annie stands up, and she says, “Well, I’ve known that.” [Laughter] And the boss says, “You’ve known that? When did you know it?” She said, “Well, I knew it yesterday or the day before.” “Well, why didn’t you tell us?” She said, “Well, Mr. Sam told me I couldn’t tell anybody.” [Laughter] But she had known it. She did a great inside story on the selection of LBJ as vice president.

That was the running thing. When we heard about it, I remember running.... I remember, it’s foggy in me now, but I remember trying to get down to this.... We were in the same hotel. And Kennedy was on one floor and Johnson was on another floor. Kennedy went.... Part of the way it happened was, after the deal with this Rayburn-Bobby thing then Kennedy went and personally asked Lyndon to be his vice president. I remember running to the stairwell because he used the stairwell to get up to Johnson’s room. I remember running to the stairwell, and somebody said, “You just missed Kennedy.” I don’t know whether he was going up or down, whether Johnson was on the floor above him or not.

But the stunning thing about L.A. was the fact that—and we didn’t think Johnson would take it, being a very proud man. But he saw it as something that he ought to do. I think that he really did it as a patriot. That’s my judgment. He knew that vice presidents die. They just go to funerals and they do a lot of junk stuff. But I think that he, I think he did it because Kennedy told him the country needed him, and he needed him, and so he did it. I don’t think he was happy as vice president. You hear these stories about all vice presidents say, “It’s the most miserable job I ever had.”

DAITCH: Especially for a man like him who had been in a position of great power in the Senate and now...

DAVIS: Yes. I mean he’s a very proud man and he had helped Eisenhower get legislation through Congress. He was a power factor and now he was not.

Except he did have the legislative skills that Kennedy didn’t have. He really had—he was probably the best parliamentarian we had as president. He was probably, in terms of the presidency, his parliamentary stuff was probably his greatest skill, and what he could get through that Congress, and how he worked the Congress. He was a genius at doing that. I don’t think he enjoyed being vice president. I think he would have enjoyed it better if he had had more access. But the story we got during the time was that Johnson really didn’t have the access to Kennedy that he wanted. And it was Bobby that barred the door. Bobby didn’t think much of Lyndon.

Well, you can see that in all the things that happened since, when in ‘68, Johnson always figured that Bobby was going to run against him. But I think that Kennedy himself treated Lyndon Johnson well. I don’t think that he was mistreated by the President. You know, you don’t hear that about some relationships. Some vice presidents had no relationship whatsoever with the president. Truman certainly didn’t have a great

relationship with Roosevelt. I doubt that Quayle [James Danforth Quayle] had a great relationship with George Bush [George H.W. Bush].

I know Nixon and Eisenhower, well, they tried to make it look like they had a great relationship; I'm pretty positive that they did not, just on the basis of what I heard. I just heard the other day that when Nixon had his staph infection [staphylococcus aureus], and the doctors told him he couldn't go on without hospital treatment, that he needed to be in a hospital, that they suggested, why don't you use the presidential suite? And Nixon had to go personally to Eisenhower and ask for it. They said "We can't do it unless somebody tells us from the White House." And the White House wasn't about to tell them. So I heard that he personally had to ask. I can't prove it, but I heard that.

So the relationship between presidents and vice presidents over the years have never been.... Because each of them have.... The vice president is usually a guy who thought he ought to be president.

DAITCH: Right.

DAVIS: So, you know, what do you expect? But I did think that Kennedy treated Johnson well.

DAITCH: But again, you know, Lynda Robb [Lynda Bird Johnson Robb] says that that was the case.

DAVIS: I do think that. I know that Johnson did not have the access that he wanted. I've heard that from Johnson people. But it wasn't Jack Kennedy's fault. I guess Kennedy could have said, "Anytime he wants to see me, he can see me." But I think Johnson did have to go through Kenny. I think O'Donnell and Bobby controlled the door. That would be my judgment now unless somebody tells me otherwise.

But I think personally John Kennedy was a far more gracious, understanding guy than Bobby. Bobby just could be tough as nails. But as I said, in '68 there was a mellowing process that had taken place. And I know guys who covered him who told me that. Guys who thought he was a SOB in his earlier years up in the Senate and when he worked for McCarthy, just caved in when he ran for president, when they heard the speeches he made. He won them over with the speeches he made on the campaign trail and going to the poor neighborhoods and that sort of thing.

DAITCH: I was going to say, it must have not been just the speeches. It must have been....

DAVIS: It's what he did.

DAITCH: The sincerity, where he was, what else he did.

DAVIS: Yes. Where he went. Yes.

DAITCH: It's just such an odd thing.

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DAVIS: Well, I guess it was an epiphany of some kind that occurred. Who knows what might have been in '68? Sixty-eight we, Democrats, ended up with Humphrey. But, you know, Humphrey lost by 550,000, I think. It wasn't that much. That was a very close election. If LBJ had been more supportive.... I have friends who worked for Humphrey who told me that if LBJ had been a little more supportive, Humphrey might have won. Humphrey could have won, I think if Humphrey had come out and said that the Nixon people had prevented the Paris Peace Talks. The Nixon campaign apparently.... It's been reported. Johnson was trying to get the peace talks going in Paris before he left office, before the election. Ky [Nguyen Cao Ky] and Thieu [Nguyen Van Thieu], who were the South Vietnamese leaders, President Thieu and Prime Minister Ky, were being urged by the Nixon people that they would get a better deal....

DAITCH: No kidding!

DAVIS: If Nixon were president, that Humphrey would sell them out. And so they didn't go to Paris. The Paris thing was killed. One of the people reportedly behind it was supposedly Madame Anna Chennault [Anna Chan Chennault], who was, she was the widow of U.S. General Claire Chennault [Claire Lee Chennault], who was a hero in the fight against communists in China for us, in the 1940s. She was a factor in working for Nixon; she was working behind the scenes for the Nixon campaign. She was a prominent Asian. It was alleged that she urged Thieu and Ky not to go to Paris before the election.

But Humphrey knew that. And there were people on the Humphrey side, a staff member on the Humphrey staff, who told me that they were urging him to go public and condemn Nixon for doing this and Humphrey refused to do it. A meaner guy would've said the peace talks are being sabotaged. The story's been written here and there. Humphrey would not go public with the charge. He could have accused Nixon of delaying peace, prolonging war.

DAITCH: Yes. It's an interesting story. Wow! Well, you're probably ready to have dinner.

DAVIS: Well, it doesn't matter because.... I'm trying to.... I'm disappointed that I jumped around.

DAITCH: Oh, no!

DAVIS: It's not chronological. Are most of yours chronological?

DAITCH: No.

DAVIS: Are there some people who do it and see it through?

[-64-]

DAITCH: No. Hardly ever.

DAVIS: I did not give myself a road map and I thought that if I wrote a bunch of notes for myself that that would not be a smart idea.

DAITCH: No. Hardly ever. And I think very often we end up with more stories that are interesting anecdotes or just thoughts that come to you at various times. I write my.... I write a series of questions. I do it chronologically when I'm thinking about it.

DAVIS: Oh, sure, yes.

DAITCH: If I need to guide an interview more, I will do it that way. But otherwise....

DAVIS: Well, let me look at some of my notes here. I jotted down something yesterday or the day before.

DAITCH: Great!

DAVIS: Let me see if I....

DAITCH: See, you've hit on just about everything that I wanted to ask anyway, and you did it in your own way.

DAVIS: Yes, if there are any areas.... I wish I could do more on American University, but I can't because I'm not that well versed on violations to the Test Ban Treaty, if there have been any. I think India-Pakistan, there might have been some suspicions. And I think that some scientists with very sensitive equipment have maybe tried to determine that the Russians may have cheated. I'm not sure. But overall, by and large, yes. These treaties were not violated. And that was a courageous move on his part because politically the Goldwater people could have killed him on it. They had no faith in the U.S.S.R. The policy of containment was all right, but some of those people were ready to go to war if they had.

DAITCH: Right. And it had to be us containing *them*.

DAVIS: Yes, that's right.

DAITCH: Not peaceful coexistence.

DAVIS: Absolutely. Well, we covered the debates; I put the debates down. Election night. I covered election night. Not much there. I just found the family to be so fascinating with Ethel yelling down from the stairs. It was such a happy time. Because you knew about the son [Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr.] being killed in the war, and you knew about the daughter [Rosemary Kennedy] who was in an institution, you knew those and.... And, God, you think back and

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you say, “What more could have happened?” You thought those were terrible tragedies befalling this family. And then look what’s happened since.

DAITCH: Oh, yes.

DAVIS: Three violent deaths.

DAITCH: And Joe Kennedy, Sr., having had a stroke, still outlived at least one son. I can’t remember if he was still alive when Bobby was killed.

DAVIS: I think he was alive when Robert was killed. I think so.

DAITCH: Can you imagine!

DAVIS: You don’t know whether he understood when they told him that John was dead; we don’t know whether he acknowledged. We don’t know much about his condition then. He couldn’t talk. But not being able to talk doesn’t mean he didn’t understand, so I don’t know. Imagine having.... And she lived to be what, 104 or something?

DAITCH: Over a hundred, yes.

DAVIS: Let’s see. Oh, I read somewhere—I didn’t see this or hear this, but I read somewhere—where Kennedy was speaking someplace in Wisconsin or something, and a kid came up to him and asked him how he became a hero. And Kennedy said, “It was involuntary. They sunk my boat.” [Laughter] He had a great sense of humor. Well, you know, I think I’ve covered just about everything. Of the inauguration, I’m sure people have told you what you remember about that: It was so cold. Barbara and I, we lived in Southwest Washington not far from the Capitol at the time, and I remember going up there with two pairs of socks and everything. I was right behind JFK when he took the oath.

DAITCH: Oh, really!

DAVIS: In a little booth we had, right behind him, looking down on him. Imagine! Nineteen sixty-one. I'd been here a year and a half. Imagine coming out of Ohio where I covered city councils, the state legislature, and the police station and morgue. And now I'm standing there behind the president of the United States as he takes the oath of office. The Marine Band is playing, and Robert Frost is reading poetry. Imagine what a thrill that was. It would have been true of any.... And Eisenhower sitting down in the crowd. It was great. It was one of the most exciting periods I can remember. And Barbara and I went to the balls.

DAITCH: Oh, you did?

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DAVIS: Oh, yes, we did. Yes. It was fabulous. I mean just the excitement. This 43 year-old president, war hero, all of that. Articulate, handsome, and that. No one could have foreseen what would happen later. But he lifted the spirits of the country with that remarkable speech. And as I said earlier, while it might have been written by Sorensen or somebody else, you know he could have written it.

DAITCH: Sure. And probably did participate. I get the impression he was very hands on.

DAVIS: Oh, I'm sure he did in the final. Oh, sure. No question he probably.... I don't see how a president could possibly write the speeches that he has to make. There's no way that he would have any time to do anything else.

DAITCH: Right. Yes.

DAVIS: One of the toughest things I have.... I don't write speeches. I ad lib everything. I can't write a speech. It's hard. Writing a speech is tough.

DAITCH: Oh, yes.

DAVIS: It's the toughest thing.

DAITCH: Well, to write something down and then make it sound spontaneous and engaging.

DAVIS: Yes. Well, I had just the notes. Some of these notes I did before I went up to the library in October when Deborah [Deborah Leff] had the correspondents talking about the Missile Crisis. But how the White House.... Well, Kennedy's was not the best organized press office in the world, on the Missile Crisis story they really were on the shtick. I mean Salinger never ventured off message. Ordinarily during a briefing, you know, you can josh or you can harrumph or say things that may be peripheral to the subject. On the missile crisis thing, he never once veered off of what they told him. He had to stick to the official language because it was such a delicate, sensitive situation. That any

wrong move, any wrong statement could change the nature of this whole crisis. It could have caused a war. So Pierre was very careful in everything he told us. Every word was measured. And things were happening so fast that there was no margin for error or making a mistake. And they really pulled themselves into shape there. Because it was kind of a rinky-dink operation for a while, you know. Salinger was not a trained manager but he ran a pretty good press office and the access was wonderful.

That was one of the nice things about it was that you could walk into the press secretary's office if the door was open. If it was closed, you knew he might be on the phone. But when he was not on the phone, the door was open. And he'd be in there working and smoking a cigar. And without hesitation you could walk in and say, "Pierre,

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I've got this thing I just picked up. Is there any truth to this?" And you'd talk to him. I'm told that doesn't happen today.

DAITCH: Oh, no.

DAVIS: Hasn't happened for years. The press secretaries have become a lot more imperial. You go through several doorkeepers before you get to him, the way the press office is configured now. See, we were on the same floor with....

[END TAPE 3, SIDE 1; BEGIN TAPE 3, SIDE 2]

Oh, yes, sometimes the President would have a visitor or a guest, and he would walk from his office. The press lobby was the West Wing lobby. So they would go out the door. They came in that way and went out that way. A White House usher sat—a White House usher appointments person would see the people come in if they were coming in through the West Wing. Now presidents did have visitors who were secret. They brought them in through the backdoor underground, through the Treasury Department or something. But Kennedy often, when he'd finish with some celebrity or some person that we all knew was on the record, the appointment was on the record, he would walk them out to the door. So we had a chance to see him, and he'd say, "Here he is, folks."

DAITCH: Throw him to the sharks. [Laughter]

DAVIS: So we would see him from time to time when he'd walk through. Or sometimes he would walk through—there was a circuitous route that he could take through the press lobby in Salinger's office. Come out one door and go in through the press lobby to see Salinger. He might do that. But at all times.... He was never.... While he was casual and that sort of thing, he was always fairly formal about it, too. He knew who he was.

DAITCH: Presidential.

DAVIS: Yes, at all times.

DAITCH: I just find that fascinating. The man is, you know, not much older than I am now, and it seems that he....

DAVIS: Well, he'd be older than you are now.

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DAITCH: Not a whole lot.

DAVIS: He would be what.... He was ten years older than.... He'd be in his eighties.

DAITCH: Yes, he'd be in his eighties now. But I mean when he was president.

DAVIS: Oh, yes, right. That's right. That's correct.

DAITCH: When he was president, he was a young guy.

DAVIS: That's right.

DAITCH: And to assume that mantle of power so—I mean it seems effortless. Maybe it wasn't.

DAVIS: But he was well read, too, so he knew what that job meant. He had a sense of history, he knew it, probably more so than most presidents since then. And he'd lived in England with his father and had been to Oxford. A very erudite guy, and he knew what it was all about. The interesting thing is that Jackie knew, too.

DAITCH: Yes, and she was even younger.

DAVIS: She had a great sense of history.

DAITCH: She was a very young woman.

DAVIS: Yes, but she had a sense of history.

DAITCH: I love the stories about her working on the White House. Did the press have much to do—I suppose probably it would have been the women's side?

DAVIS: Yes, we didn't mess with that stuff. That was on the east side; that was the ladies side of the White House.

DAITCH: Were there any women in Washington that seemed to you to be more—well, I don't know, to have a little more power or access or, you know, that they

weren't relegated to the ladies' things.

DAVIS: You mean women...?

DAITCH: Women at all in Washington that were...?

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DAVIS: Oh, sure, no, there were columnists. There was Doris Fleeson, who was a columnist, and she's long gone. Doris Fleeson was an influential columnist. Helen Thomas was just earning her stripes. She was No. 2 and No. 3 at the White House in '60 to Smitty. But by the sheer guts of her personality and ability, she moved herself in there. She would come over and ask the tough questions. Also, Frances Lewine of AP. There were several excellent women reporters assigned to the White House political side. Helen was tireless.

DAITCH: Good for her!

DAVIS: Oh, Helen was, yes, she was aggressive, and she could get right.... She's a great pal. She's a terrific person.

DAITCH: I want to talk to her if I can.

DAVIS: Oh, yes, you should. Helen was great. You know, she's a great success story. But there were some. There was Mary McGrory, who was writing for the *Washington Star*. There was the woman who wrote for the *New York Herald Tribune*, Higgins, Marguerite Higgins, who was a war correspondent in Vietnam and in World War II. No, there were a lot of women who were not on the ladies' side, women that were emerging. And there were a lot of young ones coming up.

DAITCH: Did they have the same kind of access to the president?

DAVIS: It depends on who they worked for. There was a woman for Hearst, Marianne Means [Marianne Hansen Means], who covered the White House; she had access, she had some access, she covered it. Muriel Dobbin [Muriel Isabella Dobbin] of the *Baltimore Sun*. Both are still around, both still working.

DAITCH: No kidding!

DAVIS: Muriel Dobbin is Scotch. She has a wonderful Scotch accent and is a fine reporter. She now works for McClatchy newspapers. I'm trying to think of other reporters who.... Well, Bonnie Angelo of *Time Magazine*. I don't know whether Bonnie covered—she is an expert on first ladies and terrific on politics. She covered Johnson and she went to London and was—she's *Time Magazine*. She's written a couple of books. Bonnie wrote a book on presidential mothers. She's still writing books.

DAITCH: Oh, that's interesting.

DAVIS: You want to talk to Miss Means, Marianne, and Bonnie Angelo, Muriel Dobbin. Bonnie is still very active. She's retired from *Time*, but she's got lots of—I think she's got another book. The book on presidential mothers, I think, reached pretty close to bestseller. There were others. Some of them are dead, now,

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you know, Dorothy McCardle [Dorothy Bartlett McCardle] of the *Post*. I can't think of any offhand, any more. But there were five or six women that would travel with us and that covered the West Wing.

DAITCH: Yes, I'm interested to hear. Because mostly all you hear is the story—and again, it's the same stories, just from a different point of view. And I think it's important to try to....

DAVIS: Yes. Well, Frannie Lewine of the Associated Press did both. And she's still around. She works part time. She was with CNN. Now she's part time. She's in town. Frances Lewine. She was Helen's nemesis. Or Helen was her nemesis. She was Associated Press. They would never be seen without each other, you know why?

DAITCH: So one didn't scoop the other.

DAVIS: That's right. They were like Siamese twins. They were stuck together. They would not leave each other because they were afraid the other one would get something. So we always saw them together. And they're still buddies; they're big buddies.

DAITCH: Oh, that's great.

DAVIS: There are some other people. I can give you a bunch of names you can use as resources. But Bob Clark [Robert Phillips Clark] of ABC is still around. Warren Rogers. He worked for the *Herald Trib* and he worked for the Cowles Publications.

DAITCH: I don't know if the Library needs or wants every single person.

DAVIS: Yes. I would only make the suggestion to this Library and any library. It's very easy to get caught up with celebrities of today.

DAITCH: Right.

DAVIS: Fifty years from now the people who read this stuff are not going to know whether they were celebrities or not. And there are some people that I find that we don't recognize their names in the lights, but they know a helluva lot. And that's a tough job for historians.

DAITCH: That's right.

DAVIS: Because you've got to know where to go to get the info, and there are some people like that around that really know some things, that may have been lesser lights. I think you've probably hit on all the good—with Kennedy, I

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think you've probably gotten most of those people. I was surprised from what Debbie told me that some of the oral histories—that early on, that they didn't really hit some of the people they could have hit. And now some of them are gone.

DAITCH: It's very tragic in some ways. But at the same time, it's wonderful that they got what they got.

DAVIS: Yes. See that's where the LBJ Library went at it. As soon as that library was taking form, they came around to me. They came to me in—I think I did my first one in '89 or '90. Then they kept coming back. They'd go back and say, "Well, we'd like a little more. We've got some more questions." If you can get a trip to Austin, it's impressive the way they've done it. I saw the JFK Library when I was there in October, and it's beautiful. It really is very nicely done. I don't know how many visitors they get up there. Is it pretty good? Do they get good traffic?

DAITCH: It's pretty good. It's hard for me to tell because I'm not there all the time. I mean it would be impressionistic. I don't know what the numbers are. There are days when I come in, and there seem to be lots of people, and days when I come in and there's not.

DAVIS: It varies.

DAITCH: It's a little isolated on Columbia Point there. But on the other hand, for Boston it's very easy to get in and out of and easy to park there.

DAVIS: The problem I have is it's going from the airport out there is a mess because of the construction and driving.

DAITCH: Yes, it does get bad. They keep telling us it'll get better.

DAVIS: But I think that.... On the human side of it, there are some people that worked in the press office: Sue Vogelsinger [Sue Mortensen Vogelsinger]. She lives

in Utah right now. She worked for Pierre, and I think that she was pretty close to the Kennedy Family because she then went to work for the Bobby Kennedy Foundation, which gives the journalism awards every year. Incidentally, I'm a judge this year. They called me and asked me if I'd be a judge this year.

DAITCH: Great!

DAVIS: So I said I would, for the Bobby Kennedy Memorial thing. But Sue Vogelsinger ran it, so she was close to Ethel and the family. If you wanted more Bobby, she could.... Well, she would know a lot more about these inside relationships.

DAITCH: Right. Yes.

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DAVIS: Because she was right there in the press office, and she also went into the.... When she left the White House, she established a PR firm, and she did work for Hillary [Hillary Rodham Clinton], too. She's very talented. She's worked for some other White House people, for Hillary. Mostly Democrats, she's a Democrat so she worked for Hillary. But Vogelsinger lives in Utah. No, no, Idaho.

DAITCH: Boy, that would be a hardship to have to go to Idaho to do an interview.

DAVIS: She's on a lake looking at a mountain and a lake both. I envy her.

DAITCH: Oh, that's great.

DAVIS: And there was Connie Gerard. Connie was a career.... Sue Vogelsinger was more of a political type who worked for the campaign. Connie Gerard is here in town, and Connie was a career—she worked for several administrations. Sharp as a tack. Whether she'd tell you what she knows, I don't know.

DAITCH: What did she do for the different administrations?

DAVIS: She just worked as a—she was like a secretary in Pierre's office and then in Lyndon Johnson's. She was there for every president. I think she retired after Reagan.

DAITCH: Wow!

DAVIS: And highly loved by everybody who ever covered the White House. Connie could get you anything you wanted. She was one of these career people who knew how the ropes of government.... Now I'm trying to think of whether she was there with Jack. I think she was, with Kennedy. These are people who would....

They were kind of on the inside. They would know stuff on the inside.

DAITCH: See, one of the things that I like to do with oral history is getting a history from the people who were not, as you say, not necessarily the famous guys, the guys who were up here. But the people who just sort of watched it all and did their daily business.

DAVIS: Sure. But there were a lot of guys like that that helped.... I'm sure they got people like Joe Califano [Joseph A. Califano, Jr.] on legislation. My God, he would be a gold mine.

DAITCH: Although you know what? I'm not sure if we have.... I know he's—either we've done him or he's on the list to be done.

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DAVIS: Califano, did he come in after Kennedy? I'm trying to think whether he would....

DAITCH: No, I think he was there.

DAVIS: I'm trying to think of where he started.

DAITCH: Because he is on the list of people to be interviewed.

DAVIS: Well, even if he was with Johnson, he was on the inside. He was the education guy with Johnson, the domestic guy. But he might be interesting because of the closeness of these two administrations. But if you want to talk about philosophy on legislation, Califano is the guy.

DAITCH: Really?

DAVIS: Well, he put together Lyndon Johnson's, a lot of the educational programs and welfare programs for Johnson. I think he was there for Kennedy.

DAITCH: I think he was.

DAVIS: He was hired by Cyrus Vance [Cyrus R. Vance]. If he's on the list, he might have been there. I'm trying to think back to when I first met him. I'm trying to think of anybody else in the legislative area with Kennedy. Kennedy had people who worked the Hill well, and Johnson was his big help there. But Kennedy understood the Congress. He probably worked some if it himself. But as I said, he had this, the Ev and Charlie Show. I'm sure it amused him. But it was also a pain for him, too. These guys, they had regular news conferences, Senator Everett Dirksen and Congressman Charlie

Halleck. Both were Republican leaders who tried to compete with Kennedy for news coverage.

DAITCH: Yes. He constantly had to be reacting to something that somebody else puts on.

DAVIS: Yes. They tried to keep his feet to the fire on everything. I don't think the Democrats are doing that today.

DAITCH: No, not at all. But okay. Anything else that you.... I was going to ask you some more questions about when he was a congress person, but....

DAVIS: What's that?

DAITCH: I was going to ask you some more questions about when he was in Congress, but you weren't covering....

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DAVIS: No, I didn't—I came in '60, actually late '59. But I didn't know him at all in Congress. This guy Spivak [Alvin A. Spivak] would. If you ever get enough funding for Spivak. Al was also one of the questioners at the second debate. He covered the Hill. I'm trying to.... Bob Clark, former ABC guy, who's retired to, you'd have to feel him out. But he might be someone that covered him on the Hill. I think you need that to sort of—the Hill aspect, the role.

DAITCH: Yes.

DAVIS: Warren Rogers has been here long enough that he would have known him. Warren Rogers is extremely close to Teddy.

DAITCH: Oh, really!

DAVIS: Extremely so, yes. He's a great storyteller. And I think he would have known Jack on the Hill. I'm convinced of it.

DAITCH: And it's even possible that we have some of these people, but I'll bet not.

DAVIS: Yes, try Warren Rogers. He is a big Kennedy person.

DAITCH: Good. Okay. Those are some things to work on. I mean I have to float all this through. Spivak's name is out there. So, it's trying to...

DAVIS: And there's only so much you can do. I understand that. It costs money, number one. Number two, you've got to have priorities.

DAITCH: That's right. Yes. You have to figure out which ones are important.

DAVIS: But if you want Hill, I think Spivak or Warren Rogers. There aren't many left, Vicki. I can't think of anybody else that comes to mind.

DAITCH: Well, those are good. I've got tons of wonderful things, and I've probably held you up long enough.

DAVIS: How many of your interviewees have broken up when they've talked to you on tape? Many?

DAITCH: You'd be surprised.

DAVIS: Really?

DAITCH: You'd be surprised. Almost every one.

DAVIS: I'm glad I'm not the first.

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DAITCH: Almost every one.

DAVIS: Really?

DAITCH: Yes.

DAVIS: I'm glad I'm not the first to do it.

DAITCH: Yeah, no, almost every one. I think it's something specifically about Kennedy. I mean it's a terrible thing to be witness to or involved with that kind of political assassination. But it also has to do with him personally.

DAVIS: Oh, yes, you couldn't help; I don't care who you were. You couldn't help but be—stand there and admire this guy. I mean now that we know how much pain he was in. We didn't know that at the time. I did see him on his crutches, as I told you, where he couldn't bend over. That really hurt when I saw that. I had a son just about the same age. So I know what it was like. He couldn't bend over and pick his kid up. He wanted to. But you couldn't know. And knowing.... Even then we thought the family suffered enormous tragedy with the loss of a brother and sister [Kathleen Kennedy Cavendish] and then, God, what's happened since.

DAITCH: You know, we need to talk to Caroline [Caroline Bouvier Kennedy] at some point, and it's almost....

DAVIS: Oh, yes. You have to.

DAITCH: But what can you say?

DAVIS: Just let her talk, I guess. That's it.

DAITCH: Yes. Okay. Well, I'm going to....

DAVIS: Okay.

[END OF TAPE 3]

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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