

**Robert Troutman Jr. Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 02/02/65**  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** Robert Troutman Jr.  
**Interviewer:** David F. Powers  
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**Biographical Note**

Joseph P. Kennedy Jr.'s roommate at Harvard Law, member of President Kennedy's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity. In this interview, Troutman discusses Kennedy's campaign for the Presidency, his decision to choose Lyndon B. Johnson as his running mate, and their work for equal employment during the Civil Rights movement, among other issues.

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Robert Troutman Jr. – JFK #1

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Oral History Interview

with

ROBERT TROUTMAN, JR.

February 2, 1965  
Washington, D.C.

By David F. Powers

For the John F. Kennedy Library

[Also present: Charles Morrissey and Postmaster Camp (from Atlanta)]

POWERS: Bobby, when, where, and how did you first meet Jack Kennedy?

TROUTMAN: I first met Jack Kennedy in the early summer of 1940. At that time I was a student at Harvard Law School and a classmate of his older brother Joe [Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr.] I had known Joe very well as a classmate, and had been out with him on a number of social occasions, during some of which I got to know his sister, Kathleen. The family called her "Kick" and we, as friends, learned to call her "Kick." Joe invited me to visit them in

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Hyannis Port in June of 1940, and on that occasion I met his brother Jack. Jack and I got along quite well, being of about the same age and having similar likes in sports, and so forth. So it was really only on that one day or two that I got to know him, but we became good enough friends then that when we were thrown together much, starting, I would say, in the late forties and then in the fifties, we had a pretty good basis of being friends. Nobody thought there would be anything big from that friendship at all either way at that time.

POWERS: Bobby, he was elected to Congress in 1946 and reelected in 1948 and reelected in 1950. Did you have any dealings during that period?

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TROUTMAN: Well, in the late forties while he was a member of the House, I called on him as a friend of ten years previously and had lunch with him once or twice. We just talked about things in general. Ted Reardon [Timothy J. Reardon, Jr.], who had also been a great personal friend of Jack's brother, Joe, when we were students in law school, Ted was working in his office, so Ted and Jack and I had lunch on one or two occasions. At that time all we did was talk about old times; talked about Joe and about "Kick", and that was about all.

POWERS: Did he seem to have changed much in stature?

TROUTMAN: I don't recall a sharp enough recollection of 1940 to have any real impression of change or not, but I was much impressed

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with him. He was a member of Congress and he was very happy in what he was doing, and we just became good friends -- there was nothing big about it.

POWERS: Bob, in 1952 he defeated Senator Henry Cabot Lodge by 70,737 votes while President Eisenhower was sweeping Massachusetts by 200,800 votes. Now, when was the next time you visited him? Was he a Senator then?

TROUTMAN: Well, after he went into the Senate I just changed the place of seeing him; instead of seeing him in the House Office Building, I would see him in the Senate Office Building.

POWERS: Did he seem any different to you?

TROUTMAN: Well, again, there is no great recollection of that. But I began to notice with much

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interest as I knew him in the Senate, seeing him maybe two or three or four times a year because I was practicing law in Atlanta and there would be things that would bring me to Washington that I was much impressed when I got to meet and know Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen], and later to meet and know Mike Feldman [Myer Feldman] and Goodwin [Richard N. Goodwin], as the men around him. I was greatly

impressed with how competent they were and how determined they were to help him to be an outstanding Senator. I had no more idea than a goose that they would ever be working for a man that might be President; I had no such thought as that. But I was particularly impressed not only with their competence, but that when Senator Kennedy wanted to take a

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position on a matter that was before the Senate, that not only would he have their talents available to him, but that they would -- and I never knew what arrangement, whether it was financial or not -- frequently get experts in respective fields that were interesting to them, maybe professors at Harvard or Yale or some other place, who would give them precise knowledge in fields that they were limited in. And oftentimes they would get people on both sides of the fence, and then Senator Kennedy would apparently let this sift through Sorensen and Feldman and then to him and he would make his own opinion on what his stand would be, based on articulate work of scholars in these fields. So I felt then that this was a very unusual Senator that

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he would go this far, because it had to be expensive, to get his position in these fields. With a staff as competent as Sorensen, Feldman, and Goodwin, I just had confidence that this man was going to do an outstanding job.

POWERS: Bob, in 1956 in Chicago, you did some work with the Georgia delegation in the vice president contest.

TROUTMAN: Well, that is a very interesting story because in about -- I don't know whether it was April or May 1956 -- Senator Kennedy phoned me in Atlanta and said, "I don't know how much about the South or Southern politicians, but I would like to ask you one question." (Or two or three months prior to that) I think I had better go back a little bit, Dave,

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to this. At some time while Kennedy was Senator I told him that I would like for him to develop a friendship with a politician in the South named Herman Talmadge [Herman E. Talmadge], who was a former Governor of Georgia and on his way into the United States Senate. I told Senator Kennedy that I felt that he was going to be a leader, if not the leader, of the North and that Senator Talmadge, once he came to Washington, would one day become pretty much the leader of the South. I thought they should be personal friends whether they could agree in politics or not, he told me that he didn't know much about Governor Talmadge, he had read a lot about his father who was very controversial, but I said, "Your father

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was a little controversial too.” Anyhow, he thought the idea was good, and told me he looked forward to it. So I had told the same thing to Governor Talmadge at that time, that I looked to the day when they would be in Washington because I thought it would be a good friendship. So this particular phone call from Senator Kennedy saying that he would like to know the answer to one question, and that would be what would happen among Southern delegates as far as their votes were concerned if the issue in Chicago got down to Kennedy or Humphrey for Vice President. I said, “This indicates to me, Senator, that you have about made your mind up to try to get the vice presidency.” He said,

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“Well, we are just thinking about it.” I told him then that I wasn’t competent to give him a good answer, but that if he really wanted one I would go to this source that I thought knew more about Southern politics than anybody I knew, who was Talmadge. I said, “I will go ask him the question if you want to know.” He said, “Please do.” I went down and asked Talmadge at his farm this simple question, and told him I had no interest in the answer but I would like to know his objective view. He said that in his opinion that if the Chicago Convention got down to the question of Humphrey or Kennedy for Vice President, the South would go immediately for Kennedy. I told

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him I didn’t understand how that would be, that Kennedy was a Catholic and a Yankee and he was rich, and that Southern rural politicians might not think much of that. Talmadge’s view was that the South developed a political antipathy for Humphrey in 1948 when he tried to read the South out of the party, and that he didn’t believe that Southern politicians would ever forget that. And that as far as Kennedy was concerned, that our people seemed to like to vote against folks rather than for them, and that in an issue between Humphrey and Catholicism, that the South would take a Catholic on that issue. So I then called Senator Kennedy up that afternoon and recited exactly what had happened and exactly what was told to me.

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He said, “Well, this is very helpful and very useful, and I will call you again shortly.” He then called me again, I would say in three or four days, and asked me if I would come to Washington and I did. He at that time told me that he was going to try to get the nomination, or rather, that his name was going to be put into the Convention, and he wondered if I could help to develop interest among some Southerners on his behalf. I told him I would do what I could, that I was not in politics, but that I would help if I could. At that time the Georgia delegation would be chosen by its Governor -- in our state the Governor selects the delegates to the Democratic Convention -- and our Governor’s name was Marvin Griffin.



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Also, a key member of the Georgia delegation, a rather controversial figure in the political life of our state and region, was Roy Harris, who is a lawyer from Augusta. Roy and I had been rather good personal friends, and I knew that he was going as a delegate to Chicago, and I knew that I would not be appointed as a delegate. So I flew over to Augusta to see Roy and told him, I being a Catholic, I told Roy that I came in the interest of Senator Kennedy's desire to get the Democratic nomination for Vice President. Roy and I talked a good while about it, and he said as far as he was concerned, that anything or anybody would be better than Hubert Humphrey, and anything or anybody would be better than Estes Kefauver. He told me, that he said,

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“Never make the mistake of believing that people vote from their heads. They vote from their emotions,” and that as far as he was concerned, he would do whatever he could to prevent Humphrey or Kefauver from getting the nomination and if Kennedy was the beneficiary of those efforts, it suited him fine. So from that then Roy, as a friend within the Georgia delegation... And I also went to see Marvin Griffin and talked with Marvin about Kennedy, and he said that he was very much impressed with what he had read about Kennedy. Although he didn't express it, I had the very definite impression that he felt about Humphrey Kefauver as Roy felt. So feeling that I had friendship from the Governor who would head the delegation and the working

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knowledge of how to maneuver in politics of Roy Harris, who would be the most effective member of the delegation, plus something that told me that maybe Governor Talmadge's friendship to me would have some benefit there, that Georgia would possibly do as well for Kenney as could be. Well, Georgia alone wasn't enough, and in politics for some years our people have had some degree of agreement with the people of South Carolina, and I called Roy and Roy and I felt we had better have a conference with the Roy Harris -- as you might call him -- of South Carolina. His name was Edgar Brown, known as Bishop Brown, Senator Brown from, I believe... Well, I can't remember the place in South Carolina, but he was a

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great friend of Roy's. So Roy and I then had a meeting with Edgar Brown and talked very much as Roy and I had talked. I then saw in Edgar a very definite agreement with Roy in principle, and a very definite favorable impression toward Kennedy, which sort of interested me. Kennedy was not any greatly known figure in the South, but they had read enough or heard enough that they weren't opposed to whatever they did working for his benefit. Roy and Edgar then -- I have never known in great detail how they worked, but by telephone and

otherwise with other Southern delegations. And Marvin Griffin have told me on several occasions since of the great impression that Senator Kennedy, who asked to be invited to a caucus of the Georgia delegation, the great

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impression that Georgians received from his visit in Chicago. Marvin, Governor Griffin, became much impressed with Kennedy and became a pro-Kennedy fan at the Convention; not just against Kefauver, not just against Humphrey, but a pro-Kennedy person. The Governor having that much feeling, and having a delegation appointed by him, Georgia started out and was one of the first states to throw all of its votes directly to Kennedy right from the beginning and stayed right through until the end. As I understand it from others, and I think from Marvin Griffin, he then with Roy began talking to Louisiana and Virginia. Roy had started this from the beginning because Roy just loves to be involved in

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politics. Sometimes it doesn't make any difference which side, so long as it is something to really enthuse him. They became pro-Kennedy fans and were greatly disappointed when Kefauver got the nomination.

The one sort of interesting sidelight after that: a day or two later -- because I was not in Chicago not having been invited as a delegate, and did not care particularly -- I called Senator Kennedy and told him that I was impressed almost to the point of being touched at the graceful way he had bowed out to Kefauver, and that I had seen a number of people who told me particularly of their wives and children's reaction on television, I felt Kennedy had come out the big winner because I felt that President Eisenhower was going to win, and that if

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Eisenhower won that meant that Stevenson lost, and whoever went with him lost. The American people find it much harder to help a loser to become a winner, and I thought that he was the big winner, and the way he had done it I thought would one day do very well for him in Georgia. He had become known and affectionately liked by Georgians on that occasion.

POWERS: I agree with you. We came out of the 1956 Convention with this great image of the all-American boy. He lost like a real champion, and they were waiting for the next time. What he did, Bob, he spoke in twenty-six states for the Stevenson-Kefauver ticket, and you sort of had the feeling after the Convention and after Stevenson and Kefauver lost that if he

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worked as hard for four years as he did in the short time to almost win the vice president nomination, that he could pick up all the marbles. Now, when is the next time you saw him in Georgia?

TROUTMAN: Well, in Georgia, I'll say this, that having working pretty hard with him for the 1956 vice presidential effort, that made us much closer friends than we had been before. I would probably see him in the interim at least once in six weeks because my law practice had me in Washington one way or another. I would talk with him periodically by phone. Sometime in the following year, I would assume it would be about February, I was having dinner with him, and it was possible at about that time Senator and Mrs. Talmadge and Senator and

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Mrs. Kennedy and I -- and often with my wife -- would have dinner together; one time at the Kennedy's and one time at the Talmadge's. This was merely establishing a sort of social friendship, if you would call it that, between two very outstanding young Senators. They got along quite well, as well as I had hoped and thought that they would. Something tells me that the rapport -- if that is the word -- that they developed had a benefit to Senator Kennedy when 1960 came.

Nevertheless, on an occasion at about February of 1957, I asked Senator Kennedy if he was going to run for president and if he was going to work toward that. He sort of parried the question and said he didn't know, and

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so forth and so on, but I couldn't help but believe it was somewhere in his thoughts and in his ambitions. One day a month or more later he asked me the very pointed question; did I believe that the friendship he received from the South in the Chicago Convention was true or if it was really just an anti-Humphrey and anti-Kefauver, or if maybe he did have some Southern good will. I told him that I felt that he did have much good will in Georgia, and that there was only one way to find out and that was for him to come there under an occasion where he could see with his own eyes. He said, "Well, I really would like to," and said that he would like to come to Georgia for the purpose of expressing his appreciation to the members of the

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Georgia delegation in Chicago for all that they had tried to do for him. He was aware that they had not only voted for him, but had worked to try to get other Southerners to support him.

So an occasion developed; the principal honor of the University of Georgia during the year is to invite a prominent person to speak to the graduating class of the college. So they invited Senator Kennedy to make this address in June, and it was to be, as I recall, on a

Monday. We selected that occasion to invite a number of people in Georgia in politics, education, business, even religion, to a gathering to see just how he and they got along. The details of it became very interesting because I don't think anything like that had ever happened in Georgia.

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A reception was given, if you could call it that -- it was a non-whiskey drinking reception -- on a Sunday afternoon in Atlanta in June. We tried to get up the most representative guest list we could, starting with the Governor and the Georgia delegation to the 1956 Convention, and then getting every senior elected official in Georgia, the Constitutional Officers, as we call them, plus the entire General Assembly, the judges of both the state and federal, the heads of all of our educational institutions as far as the higher educational institutions, and straight on through the leaders of Georgia's business and religious community. We invited 1,047 people to come to Atlanta. We had expected only about 250 to

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come, but we put R.S.V.P. on, and 850 roughly came to this reception. Several hundred wrote personal letters either responding to the invitation or after it was over saying how impressed they were with him. These letters were bundled together and organized and sent to Senator Kennedy in order that he and Ted Sorensen, who, along with you, Dave, came to this reception. The Senator later wrote me and said, "I'm greatly impressed because from these letters I get a rather good cross-section of what Southerners think of me." Nevertheless, at that reception, at which Senator Kennedy, Senator Russell [Richard B. Russell], Senator Ralbadge, and Governor Griffin of Georgia each talked for about two minutes, I think

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that I have never seen more goodwill in Georgia developed by one person than what Senator Kennedy said in those two minutes. I've forgotten precisely, but it was gracious, appropriate, and right to the point. I was also impressed because then he went on and made a fine speech in Athens at the University of Georgia, and then returned to Washington. Many times since then different people who attended that party and who signed the guest book told me how impressed they were on each succeeding Christmas to receive a Christmas card from Senator and Mrs. Kennedy. That made a deep impression on them, that a person they had only known so casually would take the time -- whether he did it or got his office to -- to remember

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that occasion. I felt, Dave, that he had Georgia pretty well locked up for whatever he might, down the road, desire to ask them to do in his behalf.

POWERS:            In 1958 he was reelected to the Senate by 874,608 votes. It was the

greatest plurality not only in the history of Massachusetts, but it was the greatest plurality in the Senate, given to any member of the Senate that year. We sort of thought he was on his way. He never talked about running for President, but he certainly acted like a man who was interested. Now, do you recall any incidents from 1958 right up until the time he ran?

TROUTMAN: Well, Dave, following his visit to Georgia in 1958, I would continue to see him every couple of months in his office, sometimes

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to have lunch with him, sometimes to eat dinner with him. It was not a lingering thing to ask him if he was going to run, but I just more or less assumed that he was. I don't think the pointed discussion ever came again until probably I began to see in 1959 all of this sort of focusing, and destiny seemed to be just working at that. I do recall sometime in 1959 we were having a rather serious personal discussion, and he was on the point of deciding whether to run in 1960, that he admitted that he wished his time would come at a little bit later age because he knew that the youth would be thrown at him. But timing was important, and now looked like it was going to be his time, and his point was that if the Democrats won -- and

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I think he was right in this -- if the Democrats won in 1960, they would have to go for that same man again in 1964, and that would mean his first chance at best would be 1968, and his point was that there will be another young, white knight -- if that's what he was -- by 1968. If he didn't go in 1960, he'd just as soon forget it. Maybe it would come back in his mind, but nevertheless I think he figured that was his time. So then having gathered he was going to run, the first time that he talked with me specifically and asked me again if I would take some interest in his political welfare was, as I recall -- and you could document it better, Dave -- about late October of the first of November in 1959. He called me and asked me if I

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would help him in two ways; he had decided that he was going to try to get the Democratic nomination, and would I help him to get Southern delegates for him again as we tried to in 1956; and, secondly, would I help him to accomplish the arrangements or organize the efforts, other than getting delegates, in Los Angeles. He told me that he had known that the Convention was going to be in Los Angeles, and he had some months previously sent an emissary to Los Angeles to gain facts as to hotels and rooms that would be possibly available, automobiles that would be rentable, meeting rooms that were available, to analyze the places that Los Angeles might decide to put this major thing, and all. I was greatly impressed

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that he had been that thorough so far in advance as to just learned about the physical facilities in which he would have to stage his fight. So I went to Washington at about that time and told him that I would undertake both assignments, and he asked me that if in the details of the arrangements I would work with his brother-in-law, Steve Smith, whom I had only met and didn't know really then. He later became a real close friend. As far as dealing with delegates, to work with him, and then later probably with Bobby, his brother. I told him I would be glad to do both. So then I made a trip promptly to Los Angeles and at that time reviewed the material from the earlier survey, stayed longer, and gained a great many more facts

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on what we might confront as far as operational aspects and made a written report to him and to Steve. Then, Dave, I would say three more times between that November trip and our actually getting set up, which as I recall was about six weeks prior to the Convention in Los Angeles, I made three more trips. I made these not only to begin to learn definitely about what facilities might become available, but to get to know the people who controlled the facilities and to establish some kind of a working friendship with the people who ran certain hotels, with the people who ran automobile agencies, with the people of the Pacific Bell Telephone Company because we knew that telephone communications would

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be important, with John Ferrara, the Commissioner of Police, or whatever his function was, and a number of others. I went even to George Murphy, a very significant Republican, whom I told that some way or other in this endeavor I needed somebody in show business, and he said, "I'm a great Republican. And I will help you to a limited degree if you promise you won't tell anybody about it." It was more of a friendship; George and I had been very close friends, and I did want to meet some people in show business and I was going to count on George. So during those trips the purpose was to begin to pull into focus what was possible and who could control the destiny of hotel rooms

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and this kind of thing. Then, Dave, about six weeks prior to the actual Convention we set up our office in the Biltmore Hotel, which had been nominated the headquarters hotel for the Convention. I went there and took two girls from the campaign office that Steve Smith was running, and established them in our office. We developed an agenda of our needs and desires along all of the lines that had to be done, from getting hotel rooms to lining up automobiles to beginning to develop a communications system because we realized that if you weren't able to talk to all of these delegations prior to the actual voting on the floor, and then if you weren't able to talk to each other during the voting on the floor, you could lose it all very quickly and

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never know when you lost it. So they were set up out there to begin to get those details lined up. I made one or two trips, and then a month before the Convention I went and stayed full time for thirty days and most of thirty nights and worked on these details.

Pierre Salinger, whom I had gotten to know in November when he came to work under Steve Smith in what they called the Esso Building in Washington, Pierre came out once or twice, and then Larry O'Brien came. There were some cute stories, if you can ever get Larry just to sit down long enough to tell you, that Larry had two assignments. His important assignment, it seemed to me, was that of dealing with the delegations

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from all forty-eight states. Bobby Kennedy, who was managing the campaign, or who was going to manage it, was looking to Larry, and he gave him another one that was to also get the delegates from the state of California. I used to visit every day three or four times a day with Larry, and I wanted to talk about the question of getting the whole forty-eight states. He would say, well, he would tomorrow, but he just had this problem about California. I have never seen anybody work as hard or have as many frustrations; he could write a full book on just the story of his two weeks and why we almost lost all our marbles while he got involved in the problems of the factions of California. The point was that the

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Kennedy organization, in an orderly arrangement from Washington to California, came out there and when they arrived they found, I think, most everything orderly and waiting for them.

There are one or two points there that are interesting. I had gotten Senator Kennedy's approval to this. I told him that I felt confident -- I'll not discuss now, Dave, what was done with regard to trying to get the South for him. Now I am merely discussing the Convention itself because we would have to go back three or four months and talk about our competition with Senator Johnson, which is a right interesting thing within the South -- but as far as the Convention itself was concerned, I was rather confident, based on what he told me that we were going

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to win because even though Senator Johnson was a Southerner and by then was going to get the Southern delegation apparently enough of the rest of the country was going to support Senator Kennedy. So I told him that our big problem was going to be evidently not winning the nomination but winning the election, I hoped that we wouldn't have undue bitterness between us and particularly the Johnson delegates, and that if it was alright with him I was going to establish communications with the Johnsons when they got there, and do everything

I could to make available to them and to Symington's [Stuart Symington] group also, if we had extra rooms or extra automobiles, or help them anyway we could. He told me very quickly he thought that

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was a good idea; it wasn't something that took any calculated thought on his part; he just thought it was a good idea.

So when they came out there, Irving Imoff was acting on behalf of Senator Johnson as I was for Senator Kennedy, and I went immediately to see him. Later John Connally [John B. Connally] came out there, and I went immediately to see John welcome him and to establish a good friendship. We went so far as to select two occasions -- during which we were battling like hell for delegates -- but we selected two occasions and gave cocktail parties after work in which the Johnson staff was invited to have a drink with the Kennedy staff. Larry, Pierre, and everybody who was involved in both groups came there and

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they had a real good time. And I think that we had a much closer friendship so that when the voting took place and we had won, that they didn't think we were too bad and it was not as great a difficulty for us to work together when destiny later threw Johnson and Kennedy together. Nevertheless, from the standpoint of the arrangements end of the thing, Dave, I could talk at great length and detail, but that doesn't interest you. But the fact of our closeness with the Johnsons, and the fact that Senator Kennedy thought quite well of competing with them for delegates, but nevertheless to do it on the highest possible and the friendliest possible basis, that impressed me that he wanted very much to do that.

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because both the state of Texas and the state of Georgia were in the John F. Kennedy column when the votes were counted in November. In fact, Georgia had one of the highest percentages in the nation, of which you must be very proud.

TROUTMAN: I think, Dave, if we get the book out we might have beat you in Massachusetts. I'm going to check that very closely. It is only by a hair if you beat us.

POWERS: That's right. Two-tenths of one percent.

TROUTMAN: We'll break up this interview now for a few minutes -- I'm going to get the *World Almanac* when we resume it may be able to make my point

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]



POWERS: Bob, I am very familiar with the sacrifices

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and the work that President Kennedy made in his battle for this nomination. In fact, I do not believe that in the history of American politics any man ever worked as hard or made as many sacrifices to win. And as he carried primary after primary, and we came into L.A., we sort of felt we had it. But there were a few anxious moments, and one of them was this Johnson-Kennedy debate in front of the Texas-Massachusetts delegation. Can you tell me about that?

TROUTMAN: Well, Dave, I can tell you a lot about how it came about -- I think I would have to go back a little bit, but it is an interesting part of history. After Senator Kennedy had asked me and Bill Battle and Joe Tydings [Joseph D. Tydings] and several other of his friends in the South,

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asking us first individually and later we got together collectively, to see if we could help him get Southern delegates. I started again to see what the chances were in the area of Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, and Florida. This would have been, possibly, about February of 1960. We realized pretty soon that our real competition would likely be Senator Johnson from Texas, and this found us in direct confrontation with efforts of people on his behalf to get the Southern delegates lined up for him in Los Angeles.

So I think if there was a tactical advantage on our part, it was this: Senator Johnson's friendships in the South -- political -- were largely with Senators from the South.

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He was influential in the Senate, and those were the people he knew best. As best we could see, and we figured that he would try to do, would be for him to get the Senators of the South to try to get delegates for him. Well, in only two states of the South, Georgia and Virginia do senators have what you would call an organization that can deliver such things as delegates. Senator Talmadge in Georgia has an active organization that stays together and is a recognized continuing influence, and Senator Byrd [Harry Flood Byrd] in Virginia has one. Other than that I think it is rather true that in Southern states the Governors control such matters as delegates. So we started our efforts to get the Governors friendly to us. Bill Battle in Virginia

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took the assignment to try to get Governor Almond [J. Lindsay Almond]. Bob Kennedy and the President tried to get Governor Hodges [Luther H. Hodges], but more significantly, the new Governor Sanford [Terry Sanford] in North Carolina. I had the desire to develop South

Carolina, Georgia, and so forth. I called on the different Governors and people I knew were friendly to them, and we made a good bit of progress. In Georgia we had the difficulty that Governor Vandiver [Samuel Ernest Vandiver, Jr.], being a nephew of Senator Russell, and Senator Russell probably being about as good a friend as Senator Johnson could have, we knew that therein we had our limitation that Governor Vandiver would probably fall under the Russell-Johnson friendship, and we

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might not be able to get his help. But because of Senator Kennedy's long time friendships in Georgia, we figured that on his own he would get a number of the delegates' votes. We were right pleased that we were keeping Senator Johnson busy in the South and he couldn't wrap it up in his pocket and go to other places for some months. Those Southern friends of Senator Kennedy were talking among ourselves and through Bob or the Senator himself in Washington; we had a liaison, and we were right pleased that even though he was espousing some causes that might not make him too popular politically in the South, still we had enough of a toehold to deliver some Southern delegates and also to keep

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Senator Johnson from being able to go outside the South.

The clincher, however, in Johnson's behalf came when one morning I was in Los Angeles trying to get the Convention details lined up -- this must have been late June, I assume -- the telephone rang, and it was about four o'clock in California and seven o'clock in Georgia, and some of the friends who had been trying to help me get Georgia delegates and even South Carolina delegates, said, "Well, he has just blown us out of the water!" I said, "What?" He said, "I'll read you the headline of the *Atlanta Constitution* this morning." I didn't know what was coming; everything else was happening out there -- O'Brien was still trying to get the California

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delegation -- and the headline said, "Kennedy does not want South." So that was it very simply. Apparently he had, on the preceding evening, made a speech to the New York Liberal Party that newspapers wrote up as saying that he could win without the South, and they went further and said that he didn't want the South. Well, that was pretty hard for me to swallow in that I had been telling all these people he did want the South, and not only that, he liked us. So I called him -- I believe he was at the Carlyle Hotel in New York -- and I gave him a little more time to sleep than they had given me, and I told him that he had blown us out of the water, but I just wanted a little bit of a scoop. He

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said he hadn't said what the papers quoted him as saying. I told him that he didn't give any rebuttal to them, and what they had said, that was it. I didn't believe that henceforth he could count very much on the South. He said, "Well, there is apparently nothing we can do before we get to Los Angeles, and maybe we can do something out there." So we left this at that point.

When he arrived in Los Angeles, I went visiting him and we got on the subject of the South again. He said, "Isn't there something that could be done?" I said, "Well, Senator, there is one thing I'm sure, it is probably too late to get their delegate votes; these lines have been drawn and you may pick up an isolated one

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here or there, but not enough to really help you. But it is significant to get their friendship for the race against the Republicans, and it might be very good on your part to go call on some of these delegations and tell them you do want their support, if it is true, and so forth. He said, "Yes, I would like to." Bill Battle was with me at the time; he was sort of commiserating because the rug had been pulled out from under him too. The Senator said, "Well, how can we best do it?" I said, "Well, why don't we just send a telegram to the chairmen of the delegations and ask for an opportunity to come and speak to their caucus and tell them what you feel. If you want their

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support, that's up to you." He said, "Well, that's fine. Get up a telegram. Who would you send it to?" So Battle and I just started with Virginia and worked our way on around, and we got to Texas. Shall we ask the Texas people to speak to their caucus? Battle and I talked about it, and a fellow named Claud Houtin, who was a big friend of Teddy Kennedy's, he was around there then and we asked Houtin. He was just standing right there, so we said, "Shall we suggest Texas also?" He said, "Yeah, that's fine." So the Senator approved the telegram, and off it went to eight or ten Southern delegations, including Texas. Rather promptly the responses came back, and we noted with much interest

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a day later there comes on back signed, Lyndon Johnson, as I remember, Chairman of the Texas delegation. "You would certainly be welcome to come and talk to the Texas delegation." Of course, he did talk to each of the other Southern delegations, and there was nothing dramatic of national scope except he made, as far as Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina which I went with him to, he made a very favorable impression on our people and I knew that though he was not going to get their votes in Los Angeles, he would have their friendship later.

But the Texas Johnson-Kennedy debate at that delegation came about when Johnson and them not only accepted, they stated a time and place and we soon learned that

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when it took place, it would take place on national television. And another rather cute story -- I don't know whether Bobby Kennedy would want me to tell it -- that took place was this: our nerves were all getting a little bit on edge and we had been working hard and trying hard, and Bob Kennedy had almost as much in it as his brother from effort, desire, and so forth. I think Bob saw in this the possibility that a cataclysm could result, so he saw me in the hall and he said, "Did you send that telegram to the Texas delegation? Did you include them?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Well, that may have just blown us out of the water," or words to that effect. I noticed he was

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a little bit miffed with me for the moment, and he turned around and went on down the hall into his office. Just about that time a fellow named Jimmy O'Keefe from Chicago, who was Mayor Daley's [Richard J. Daley] sort of right hand, saw me in the hall and said, "What's Bobby upset about?" I told him, and I said, "You know, I'm not too worried. I guess he has his reasons for being worried, but if Senator Kennedy can't stand up in a debate with Senator Johnson, I would sort of like to learn it myself. We have been led to believe we are working for the Number One candidate. I have no worry about his performance." O'Keefe said, "I don't either. Let me see if I can't handle the situation." He

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knew that Bob Kennedy, who is a great respecter of practical politics, was quite interested in anything that Mayor Dick Daley of Chicago might have to think. Mayor Daley had a number of delegates at that Convention who he influenced, so O'Keefe, who is a very dapper, attractive, intelligent Irishman with that big Irish smile, charges into Bobby's office. He later told me what transpired, he said, "Did you all work this big debate up?" Apparently Bobby said, "Well, yes," and so forth. He said, "Well, I just talked to the Mayor, and the Mayor thinks it is a stroke of genius thinks it is the greatest thing that ever was. He thinks it is going to be a great thing." O'Keefe says that Bobby then smiled and thought

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well maybe the debate is going to be all right after all. Anyhow, O'Keefe came back out and said, "Everything is happy. Bobby is not going to worry too much about the debate." So that is the rather interesting part, and of course history knows how well Senator Kennedy did do in that debate. I think if I could do it over we might have excluded Texas, but on the other hand, our thought was that if you are going to ask for the support of one, you ask for the support of all. We went through and... Of course, we had no idea, Dave, that this kind of thing on national television would result. We thought it would be informal as all other talks between a candidate and a caucus turn out to be, as you know.

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POWERS: It was a sporting thing to do. It was sort of Senator Johnson's last opportunity, and actually he didn't quite measure up.

TROUTMAN: Well, I think that they did feel that this was a chance, and they had read statistics and they were in touch with different delegations, and they knew that it was pretty much in the Kennedy camp. I think Bob Kennedy knew this, and Bob thought, "Why risk anything when we've got it?" Well, we would not have risked it if we had thought it would be put on national television, and I do believe that Senator Johnson and his advisors thought that something might develop out of this that could turn this thing around.

POWERS: I agree with you. Senator Johnson's

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advisors at this time felt they had everything to gain and nothing to lose.

TROUTMAN: And Bobby Kennedy thought it was the reverse; we had nothing to gain and something to lose. I'm sorry that that took place or that I caused him the moment's disturbance, but I think that Senator Kennedy rose in his own and everybody's standing when the confrontation took place. He did so very well in front of the nation and the delegates, and everybody there.

POWERS: It was another profile in courage.

TROUTMAN: Yes, this is right.

POWERS: You never run away from anything. I was in the room when Bobby and Ken O'Donnell were there, and they were telling the

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President what had happened. All he asked was, "What time?" You know, it was mid-day, like three or four o'clock...

TROUTMAN: It was three in the afternoon.

POWERS: ... and he said, "Fine, I'm ready." As you recall, he was never better. In fact, when Senator Johnson was telling about the wonderful job he had done, standing by in Washington and getting these bills through, while a certain Senator was away campaigning and had a terrific absentee record, Senator Kennedy

said, "Well, I don't know exactly who he is talking about, but I do agree that he has been terrific in Washington, and when I'm elected President I'll keep him there. [Laughter]

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TROUTMAN: Well, it's true. It was one of the fine hours of Senator Kennedy's career because he was up against the pro himself; it was like boxing Jack Dempsey and coming out extremely well. I didn't worry about it, and I don't think he worried about it, but Bob Kennedy who had much responsibility on his shoulders was probably quite right in worrying about taking the risk.

POWERS: You know, Bob, President Kennedy was always at his best when he had to be.

TROUTMAN: This is right.

POWERS: I can remember I was with him in Chicago the day of the first debate -- the evening -- and as he was walking out the door, he had his T.V. suit on, he looked like a million dollars, and I said, "You look tan, fit,

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and confident." He said, "You know, this must be the way the heavyweight champion of the world feels going into the arena." I said, "No, it is more like the starting picture in the World Series because you are going to have to win four of these." He just smiled and took on Nixon.

TROUTMAN: Well put.

POWERS: I can remember an incident -- going back to the primaries in West Virginia -- where you showed up with a couple of fellows with memorable names such as "Jaxi" Smith [James Smith] and "Country" Johnson. Would you care to explain their presence in West Virginia?

TROUTMAN: Well, there was a lot of humor connected with different phases of our efforts on

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behalf of Senator Kennedy. He liked all sorts of people, he had that much Irish in him, and he like characters a little, I think, because he sort of had an affinity for some of them in Georgia. One of them was this friend known as "Country" Johnson who lived down near the Okefenokee swamp, and another one in Albany, Georgia known as "Taxi" Smith, a distinguished lawyer and quite a character himself. Whenever he got around a

Georgia group, Senator Kennedy and later the President, would always ask somebody, "Well, how is "Taxi" getting along? How is "Country"?" and so forth. But it seemed that during the West Virginia, I got a call one day from Senator Kennedy asking me if I knew anybody

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in West Virginia. I told him not much. He said, "Well, get to know somebody and come up here and see if you can help." He was sort of joking, he was more or less asking me about other things, but nevertheless "Country" Johnson called me within a day or two and said that his brother-in-law was, as I recall, the Speaker of the House in West Virginia, and that the -- "Country" -- would be glad to do anything he could. He liked Senator Kennedy, and "Country" and I were friends; in our section it is "Love me, love my dog," you know, so he would be glad to help Senator Kennedy if he could. "Country" had a great friend down in the area of south Georgia known as Billy Langdale, and "Country" gets Billy

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and then fly to Washington and meet me in Washington. We spent the night at Senator Talmadge's house, and "Country" began to describe to Mrs. Talmadge how he and Billy were going to go over to West Virginia to help Senator Kennedy however he could. I must admit the Talmadges got a great kick out of the discussion of that evening. Anyhow, the next morning we went by automobile to Morgantown where "Country's" brother-in-law lived. "Country" made an impression on him, and we picked up a pretty good workers. Incidentally, that night I was greatly impressed that the students at the University of West Virginia in Morgantown -- and Bob Kennedy was there -- put on a typical convention. They had their

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own candidates; one group was for Kennedy, some were for Senator Humphrey, some for Johnson, some for Symington. A mock convention was conducted, and Bob Kennedy was there and it was one of the most impressive things of that sort I had seen. That again impressed me of the Kennedy organization, that they would go to this much effort, that the Senator's brother would even come there and add dignity. I even believe that Teddy was there -- I'm not certain. Nevertheless, the following day or two we did whatever little we could do in Morgantown, and "Country" had delivered the brother-in-law. We then went to Charleston to see what we can do in that section of the state. We arrived down there and at the Kanawha Hotel, I believe, Kenny

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O'Donnell and them were holding headquarters. Lou Harris was there, and they were counting statistics and people. Then they didn't have the perfected organization that later grew, and they were just struggling as much by desire as by intellectual development and how you get set up. Nevertheless, it was functioning, and functioning all right. This particular

evening "Country" and Billy and I felt sort of like fish on land; we don't know anybody or what to do, and we are just there with the desire to do something. So "Country" says, "Let's go by Humphrey's headquarters." I said, "Well, that will be alright." He said, "Let's see what the enemy are doing. So we walked on over to Senator Humphrey's headquarters

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and "Country" and Bill looked on the wall and they saw a picture of... [machine cut off] So we went... "Country" and Billy looked on the wall from the outside window and they saw some very sizable pictures of Senator Humphrey in two groups, each of whom were colored Negroes, one in African regalia -- he [Humphrey] was obviously meeting an African delegation -- and the other with several prominent colored athletes and others in the country. "Country" and Billy had a theory, and that was that Senator Humphrey was doing his best to create the religious issue against Senator Kennedy, and that people get emotional on it and that they will vote against Kennedy because

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of it. "Country" and Billy, who live in an area where they have also seen emotional aspects of politics and are aware of the race thing, their notion was you that to fight fire with fire, and if Humphrey was going to raise the religious issue against Kennedy, the best thing to do was to being a counter-issue that was equally as emotional, which would be the race question. They said there were parts of West Virginia in which the race issue would be paramount as against any religious thing. So they though there was a chance to develop a little of the race question there. They walked on into the place and saw this lady and told her that they were much impressed with what they saw, and would like very

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much to get a number of those photographs, they that would like to try to help them get them distributed, particularly the ones with Senator Humphrey with this large group of Negroes, and the ones with the African group. She said that she didn't have many workers and she would be very grateful if they would take a large number and get them distributed. So they took a stack about a foot thick or more -- I guess five hundred of them -- with the idea of seeing if they couldn't just get the literature spread around a little bit and....

[END OF SIDE I, TAPE I]

So with that large batch of photographs, they spent the next day or two seeing what

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they could do to help them get distributed in an area of southern West Virginia that they felt the people would balance religious prejudice against racial prejudice, and just see how it



came out. I have never seen the statistics of the area in which Senator Humphrey's photographs were distributed, but I have often wondered just exactly whether there was any result or not.

The only interesting point, Dave, of that is Senator Kennedy did appeal to all sorts of people. There were all sorts of people who in their desire to help did what they thought might be helpful, and I am certain if Senator Kennedy had known about this that he would have stopped it at the time because that was not his way of really

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doing something. And later when I told him about it after he was President, all he would say is, "Thank goodness I didn't know about it at the time!" So that was an interesting aspect of....

POWERS: Oh, that's a great story, actually. At that particular time, you know, with about ten days to go, the Harris poll showed neck and neck in West Virginia. Senator Kennedy was deeply concerned. Then it sort of took a turn. I never saw him work so hard. He just shook more hands and met more people. You know, Bob, if you were trying to describe or explain his success in two sentences, they might be: "To meet him was to like him;" and "to know him was to help him." And he met more people and they liked him and

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they helped him, and that added up to a great victory.

TROUTMAN: I believe this is true, and he got many people who, as you say, like to help him and once they started, you know, Dave, by nature people work for the things that they have worked for in the past. I'm trying to put it this way, that you love your children because you have constantly done things for them. There was so much more that people could do for Senator Kennedy than he could ever do for them, but the more they did the more they became interested in him and the more they would want to do. He knew very little of it, and he could show no appreciation because he didn't have knowledge, but he developed

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this thing. I saw it in so many instances in our state. Ladies, girls, men and women who had no knowledge of him but they liked what he stood for and they started working for him, and then once they started they could do enough. You understand? There was nothing he did for them in return and nothing they expected, but it was purely because they loved what they were doing, if you know what I'm saying here.

POWERS: Exactly. I can remember town after town, city after city, standing on the

Court House steps and talking to a group of unemployed miners, just standing there, and then that great Harvard-Boston-Irish accent saying with his arms out, "I need

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your help,' and these men looking up, they believed him. And they gave it him, and he won.

Actually, in West Virginia -- well, in all states -- but in West Virginia they admired his courage. You know, West Virginia percentagewise sent more boys into World War II and into Korea than any other state, and they are real fighters. And they admired the fight that this young Senator was making. It finally got to them. For a while they thought the Catholic issue would be the most outstanding one, but he rose above it and actually...

TROUTMAN: He did. He dissolved it in West Virginia.

POWERS: He did, he really did. The world loves a fighter, and no one fought harder than he.

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TROUTMAN: Dave, I think there is one facet of Senator Kennedy's or President Kennedy's relations with the South that we have not discussed here and I think should be brought out, and that is the question of Senator Kennedy and the South's role in his selection of Senator Johnson as his running mate. I have never seen what I will now tell you in print, although there were a number of people involved, and I do believe it is a very interesting part of history and a very interesting side light on Senator Kennedy, and really also on Senator Johnson.

It came about this way: we talked a little bit ago on the point of the efforts of some of us in the South to get delegates for

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Senator Kennedy, and our inability to do so. And we had talked about the point that Senator Kennedy had created the impression with the liberal party in New York that he was not interested in the South. Well, some of us felt very strongly that though he did not need the South in July to get the nomination, he might need the South very definitely to win against the Republicans in November. As I recall it, the voting for Presidential nominee at the Los Angeles Convention was to take place on Wednesday night, and as early as about Sunday it seemed rather definite that the Kennedy forces were going to get enough delegates for him to win. It was only a matter then of just holding what you

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had, so some of us began to think in terms of the election in November -- and I again refer to Bill Battle and Joe Tydings, principally Griffin Bell, who was from Georgia and we got into the discussion of vice presidential candidates. We did not expect to be able to influence Senator Kennedy's judgment, and didn't want to try to influence him, but we felt he would like to know our views. Griffin Bell.... [machine cut off] The discussion had developed that Senator Kennedy was giving serious consideration to Hubert Humphrey as his vice presidential running mate. There was also conversation about Senator Jackson [Henry M. Jackson] from Washington, and some speculation about Senator Symington,

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maybe, and others. But we were receiving rather pointed evidence that Senator Humphrey was going to be chosen. We didn't know whether this was true, but Battle and I - and Joe Tydings was in it principally because he had been given the assignment of trying to get Florida's delegates, although he lived in Maryland, he was given Florida, and a fellow whom I didn't know named Ben Smith had been given Alabama, and Ben came from good old Massachusetts. So they were struggling a little bit in the South, and we who did feel we knew something about the South felt very keenly that if we were right that the South would be needed in November, then the South better express itself as to the running mate because there is no doubt that Senator

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Kennedy at that time, a Catholic, with the liberal civil rights planks in the platform that he had to run on, that of itself would not be appealing to the South. He was seeing that when he found that he couldn't get any Southern delegates in Los Angeles. So I wrote a memorandum on yellow paper listing why those of us who were rather close friends of Senator Kennedy and who had worked for him for some months felt that it would be disastrous in the South for him to select Hubert Humphrey, and then said that the South would probably be apathetic at best toward Jackson or Symington, and quite frankly, that we in the South felt that he would have to have Lyndon Johnson as vice president. Battle

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and Tydings agreed with this because they too were mixing among Southern delegates. We also had learned very clearly from Griffin Bell, who was Governor Vandiver's of Georgia's chief of staff, and had been a strong Kennedy friend, Griffin had talked with Governor Vandiver, and Governor Vandiver had said beyond all question that he felt that even in Georgia, very Democratic Georgia who had never left the Democratic fold, would need Johnson on the ticket even to carry Georgia.

So with this paper in hand, I went on Wednesday morning -- the day of the voting -- and at breakfast I met with Irving Hoff, who was doing for Senator Johnson the work that I was doing for Senator Kennedy. Most

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mornings at breakfast the three representatives of Symington, Johnson, and Kennedy would breakfast together, which looked rather strange, I'm sure, to some people, but we kept our working relationship good, competing all the while. But we had good communications and worked very well together. So I saw Hoff and John Connally, who was doing for Senator Johnson what Bob Kennedy was doing for his brother, pretty much in overall charge, and told them that we in the South, though we were very strong for Kennedy and expected to win that night, felt very keenly on the question of the vice presidency and we would be as bullish for Johnson for the vice presidency as we had been for Kennedy for the presidency. Both John and Irv Hoff, who I saw at different times that

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morning, were very receptive to the goodwill of the thought, but of course they didn't want to say they didn't expect to win that night, and certainly didn't want to indicate that Senator Johnson would at all be receptive to the thought of vice president because the press had said he would not be. Our interest was to let the Johnson forces know that there was an interest among some Southerners in this because we didn't want a big cleavage away from Kennedy in the South. I do believe that both John Connally and Irving Hoff appreciated the fact of our frankness and candor with them.

After lunch that day, and before going out to the Arena for the voting efforts to do what we could there,

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I talked with Senator Kennedy. I told him that it was not my business or our business, but that I assumed we were going to win that night and that if we did his question would be choosing the vice presidency, and I thought he might be interested in how a few of his friends in the South felt. I gave him this memorandum to read -- it was in longhand -- and he read it. That was the one saying that we would probably strongly oppose Humphrey for political reasons, and would urge for Johnson. He said, "Well, I'm very much impressed with this." I didn't know what he meant by that, and I then suggested to him, I said, "Senator, you've got all your marbles involved here, and I wouldn't want you to take my statement as

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to the way these Southern governors that I have listed in this memorandum feel. I would much prefer you talking with them yourself and then evaluating whatever you want." He said, "Well, it wouldn't be necessary, but it would be all right. When could we get them together?" I said, "Well, assuming we win tonight, I will try to get them together the first thing in the morning." I've forgotten the time, but I think he maybe said, "Can you have them at my room here at eight or eight-thirty?" or some such time as that. I said I would try.

During the rest of the day I saw our Southern friends Battle, and Tydings, and Griffin Bell, and so forth, and we set the wheels in motion to bring to the Senator's room

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the following morning the various governors. We won that night, and arrangements were made around midnight to have each of them come. I didn't know how the meeting would go, and having a group of Southerners and not wanting to accidentally embarrass Senator Kennedy any further, having done enough with the Texas debate, I thought we had better get a witness to whatever was going to take place. I went to Governor Abe Ribicoff [Abraham A. Ribicoff] from Connecticut, who was staying at another hotel, and told him that I would appreciate it if he would come and attend a meeting as a witness. He said, "Well, what kind of meeting and where?" I told him generally that the subject was going to be to discuss the vice presidency, and

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it would be a group of his friends who were Southern governors, and that I would just consider it a favor if he would come. He said, well, it was sort of a strange invitation, but he would come. I told Senator Kennedy the next morning, a minute or two before the rest came, that I had been a maverick enough that I would like to do this. He said, well, this was fine. It was sort of jocular, but he was happy he had won, and he was now just sort of choosing which way he was going to run from there. So anyhow, the meeting took place, and as I recall it the following people were present: Governor Almond from Virginia, and Bill Battle came along with him;

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Governor Terry Sanford from North Carolina; Governor Fritz Hollings from South Carolina, and Edgar Brown, who had helped us for years before came along with Governor Hollings; Governor Vandiver from Georgia, and Robert Russell, his general advisor and the nephew of Senator Russell from Georgia; and I don't recall if Governor Bryant [Farris Bryant] from Florida was there -- I know Governor Collins [LeRoy Collins] was not because Bryant was the one who was controlling Florida at that time; Governor John Patterson from Alabama was there; Governor Bert Combs [Bert T. Combs] from Kentucky was there; Governor Howard Edmonson [J. Howard Edmonson] from Oklahoma was there. We had not invited the Governor of Texas, didn't think there was any need to because we felt sure that that would be received well

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by the Democratic there. We had invited Governor Ellington from Tennessee, but Governor Ellington, who was a great buddy of Senator Johnson's had been sort of hurt at losing the night before -- we had seen him right afterwards and he was very friendly -- but we had been

told that he had headed home. So he would have been there and he would have been the most articulate supporter of our position, but nevertheless, he was not. However, Senator Albert Gore from Tennessee, not having been an invitee -- we had no desire to exclude him, but it was a meeting of Governors -- having learned that the meeting was taking place, had come in also. The meeting got underway, and just before it started, unknown to almost everybody in

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the room, Governor Mennen Williams [G. Mennen Williams], apparently looking in -- it was in the bedroom of Senator Kennedy's suite -- Governor Williams, apparently seeing a group of his co-Governors in there, came in too and sat on the side of the bed right near the door, pretty much unknown and unobserved. A little bit later, during the course of what took place, Governor Mike DiSalle from Ohio came in. As I recall it, Bob Kennedy may have come in once or twice, in and out, during the meeting.

The discussion started, and Governor Vandiver of Georgia told Senator Kennedy -- we had first said the reason was that a group of Southerners felt rather strongly on the matter of the vice presidency, and would

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like to tell Senator Kennedy what they thought. Governor Vandiver started and told him that the Catholic issue was a heavy issue in his state, maybe not as great as in the days of Al Smith in which Georgia went for Al Smith. But now added to this was the civil rights planks that politically have been difficult in our state and section, and that if he added Hubert Humphrey to that that as far as he was concerned, he, the Governor of Georgia was going to vote Democratic, but that might be all you could count on. Then one by one each Governor talked to Senator Kennedy in very straight, frank, practical words about their state's attitude toward this campaign if it should be Kennedy and

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Humphrey, and then they gave their reasons for wanting Senator Johnson. Of course, I imagine Senator Kennedy knew they wanted Senator Johnson because they tried to get him for the number one spot, but nevertheless, it was very impressive. Senator Kennedy did most of the listening, and once in awhile, maybe asked a question or gave a little response.

After the last Governor from the South had talked, Governor Williams stood up, as I recall it, and said, "Senator, I am embarrassed; I have no business being here, and yet it wouldn't be right if I didn't tell you what I'm thinking." He then said words to the effect that he was greatly disturbed at what he had seen. He said, "You know, there is a group of us

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who since 1948 have been working to get the civil rights planks in the platform. We have now, after twelve years, succeeded, and we are sort of rejoicing a little bit at this. What I see

here disturbs me greatly because I'm afraid that it is never going to take place and that it is going to just be nothing but words, and create a notion that it was all window dressing, or something."

It became a very tense room. I guess you know how it is to be in a room with tremendous human tension. I had felt that Governor Williams was very proper in what he had said, and from his viewpoint I thought he had spoken well what was in his mind and in his heart. There I began to think, "Well, we've got

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another rather serious situation here" when Ribicoff spoke up and said very much this: he said, "Governor," or "Soapy" I believe he called him, "I'm glad that you said what you said. I don't have any more business being here than you do, but now I'm glad we are both there, and I'm glad you put this matter right up on the table." He then turned to Senator Kennedy and said, "Senator, I don't believe that you have many people who have worked any harder than I have to help you get the nomination, and I plan to work just as hard to help you get elected, but I would like to bring out exactly what the true situation is from what Governor Williams has said. I more or less gather from what he has said

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that he expects you to have your mind or your heart open particularly wide to some people, and maybe closed rather narrowly to others. I'm very much interested to know that if, as President, your mind or your heart is going to be closed to anybody who speaks for large numbers of American people. I would like to know it. Anybody who comes to you speaking for the Mormons, or the Catholics, or the Baptists, or the Jews, or the people from Michigan or Mississippi or Minnesota, or any other large groups of people, and if their fact of coming they either have some preferred or some excluded position, this is very fundamental to me." He put it in about as fine words as I have ever

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heard, to determine whether or not Senator Kennedy had prejudices that were so deep that they would work for or against large numbers of American people. I thought it was a magnificent statement, and I've told Abe two or three times since that I was terribly sorry that there was no tape of what he had said. I said, "Governor, you couldn't say it again as you did to save your life, and you couldn't recall it precisely, but I thought that coming out from you then was really what was in the innermost core." And it had a great effect on that meeting because the tension did begin to lower immediately. Senator Kennedy responded in a very sort of simple way that he certainly hoped that he would carry no

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prejudices into the presidency, and he certainly hoped that his mind and heart would be open to all the American people. He satisfied everybody in the way he responded to this.

Then following that, we told him that we had accomplished what we wanted, there were ten Governors there -- or however many there were -- and that he knew how they felt on the subject of the vice presidency, one speaking for himself and for his state, and with that we went out. Of course, whether it had any influence on his choice, there was no way to know. I never asked him what the relationship was, but nevertheless, within a matter of minutes, I gather, he went down and saw Senator Johnson.

There was one

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interesting aftermath, and I think you probably ought to get Justice Arthur Goldberg to tell you what apparently happened following this. I gathered from him that Governor Williams was still disturbed when the meeting was over and went to another part of the hotel and visited with some of the people who had been competing, apparently, with the South in politics -- I gather maybe Walter Reuther and certain others -- and told them that the Southerners were trying to talk Senator Kennedy into Lyndon Johnson. From what I understand, all hell broke loose in that particular part of the hotel, and some very emotional outbursts were made. Arthur Goldberg has since told me that he listened

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to that and then got Mr. Reuther off to the side and had very pointed discussion with him to the effect that if Senator Kennedy decided that he wanted Senator Johnson as his running mate, that all of them should join in with him, that they knew what Kennedy stood for, that if they had the faith that he would do the things he had said, then he had more at stake than they did, and if he felt it was to his gain in trying to get elected to get Lyndon Johnson, that they would probably do well to put their smaller stakes in beside his. Apparently some of the people heeded that advice, except on the evening, if you recall, of the voting for vice president, a maybe rump effort against both the

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Kennedy and Johnson forces was undertaken to prevent Senator Johnson from getting the nomination, and Governor Williams had a rather forceful part of that. I do recall that everybody who had been working for Senator Kennedy and those who had been working for Senator Johnson got together calling on delegates, doing everything we could. "Now this is the joint decision of both of them. Let's accomplish it if we can." That was about the last thing I had to do of much interest with the Convention, Dave.

POWERS: Well, Bob, at that morning meeting, did any of the governors have any doubt as to whether Senator Johnson would accept the vice presidential nomination?



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TROUTMAN: This matter, Dave, was mentioned by one or two only in passing, and it was virtually said, we don't know whether he would be interested or not. I think this was stated very clearly, and that there was no indication of anybody that they had any knowledge. I don't think there was anybody in that room who had any knowledge whatever that Senator Johnson might be at all interested.

POWERS: They felt he should be offered the opportunity to decline if he wished?

TROUTMAN: This is right. And the way they felt they would hope that Senator Kennedy would become a champion of the notion and go try to do a selling job. This is what they felt because the press had indicated that Senator Johnson would not be interested in the vice

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presidential spot.

As I mentioned before, in talking with John Connally and Irv Hoff on the preceding morning of Wednesday, I had prefaced my remarks as, "I gather that Senator Johnson is not interested in the vice presidency, but John and Irv, I want you to know what some of the people in the South who are close to Senator Kennedy feel about this, because we feel it very strongly and I want you to see what we are going to present to him -- this is assuming that we win tonight and quite frankly, we do think we are going to win." And each of them indicated back in a very nice fashion that they didn't know whether the Senator would be at all interested, but they were not going to pre-judge the voting. But I do think they

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appreciated the gesture on our part of taking them into our confidence on what we were going to show to Senator Kennedy.

POWERS: Do you feel that any other ticket with any other vice presidential candidate could have won? Like, say, John F. Kennedy with Symington or John F. Kennedy with Jackson?

TROUTMAN: Dave, I don't know enough about the national politics. I'm pretty much satisfied that in the South with Humphrey, Kennedy would have lost because it turned out that he won by only a hair against Nixon anyhow, and obviously each of those Southern states became a necessary part of his victory. Now, I can't believe that in the final analysis Johnson's presence on the ticket cost Kennedy any states. It may be that some expert analyst.

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could show you that had it been Jackson or Humphrey on here that Kennedy would not have lost it, and this I couldn't say.

POWERS: It was an odd election, Bob. Although out of sixty-nine million votes cast, President Kennedy won by two-tenths of one percent, electorally it wasn't close. He had 303 to 219, and there were 15 for Senator Byrd. Now, how do you measure Senator Symington coming from Missouri, with these Southern governors? Do you think a Kennedy-Symington ticket would have cost him any states?

TROUTMAN: At that time, Dave, of course, those governors had been sort of riled up to get very pro-Johnson for the occasion of the California voting in the Convention, but I must say

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Governor Hollings of South Carolina was a close and great admirer of Kennedy, and had been our friend certainly up to -- and he was straight through but he was not a champion at the Convention after this liberal party pronouncement, so to speak, in New York. Terry Sanford was a Kennedy fan. Governor Almond was a Kennedy fan. Howard Edmundson was a Kennedy fan. John Paterson was one. So as far as I could tell they wanted Johnson very much, and I think they would have accepted Symington. And I expect, we being very strong Democratic states down there, that very likely our people would have gone for Symington. But you know, Kennedy became much better known to the South in the next three months

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because on the television and wherever he came -- when he came to Georgia and went to Warm Springs, I went there to that gathering. That was the summer home, as you know, of President Roosevelt and Senator Kennedy said that if he came to Georgia during the campaign, and he planned on coming to Georgia, he wanted to come and make his speech where President Roosevelt had been, and on the steps of the little White House. And he came. And if you get Senator Talmadge on tape, he will tell you as he told me that the crowd that day he had never seen anything like it, and he was asking me and Sandy Vanocur [Sander Vanocur] "What in the world does Kennedy have? What is it?" I mean, it was something unknown to him, and

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he was very informed on Georgia politics, and he was as amazed as could be at the great crush of people. And these were his people; this was in Georgia, and it was not only in Warm Springs where they were there by the thousands, but from there to La Grange, Georgia where a motorcade went, and along every road in the rural parts of our state and in every little

hamlet. Senator Kennedy in each place would stop and want to shake hands with just a few from the whole motorcade and on to La Grange. Senator Talmadge would tell you that he had never seen anything like that in Georgia.

So my point is, to answer your question, Dave, that I believe that Kennedy and Symington would have carried the South, but he had no basis for believing

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that in July with those governors sitting there talking Lyndon Johnson. They didn't say anything about Symington, they didn't say anything about Jackson; they said, "We want Lyndon." Although I must admit that it was stated and maybe he asked, "Well, what about Symington?" I think some of them indicated that was alright as number two, but they made quite sure they would like to get Lyndon number one if they could. I don't think of any of them had the notion that Kennedy had the personal appeal that he later showed when he came to their respective states. In each state -- for instance; when he left Georgia, he had fallen two hours behind schedule to go to South Carolina, and I couldn't resist calling

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Hollings because Hollings had been holding a crowd in Columbia by whistling, singing, or whatever you could do to hold people who had been gathered for two hours. And I called and sent the message that Senator Kennedy may be a little late; that he decided he might play nine holes of golf. That was all that Hollings needed at that time.

But nevertheless, the point was these delays took place, there was no way to stop them because the crowds forced you to stop; there was no way to move through them. So I do believe that he, with virtually anybody except Humphrey, and by that, Humphrey, you see, Dave, among the people of the South because of his... Senator Talmadge had told me in 1956 that Senator Humphrey in 1948 created an image to

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Southerners that probably would not go down in the lifetime of anybody who was in politics then. So without him on the ticket I expect Kennedy would have carried almost any of the Southern states. But Johnson helped him. There is no doubt of that, as I see it.

POWERS: Well, he won, and that was the big thing.

TROUTMAN: Yes, that was the big thing.

POWERS: Speaking about the crowds, do you know that the last two weeks thousands of boys and girls, teenagers, eighteen, nineteen, twenty years old, would greet the President at the airport carrying signs saying, "You elect him now; we will reelect him in 1964." Even the newspaper men traveling with us were amazed. I don't believe we have ever had a President that

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so many people knew.

TROUTMAN: Who thought they knew, that's right.

POWERS: I notice now, going around with these exhibits, that... I usually pay particular attention to the people filing through, and they seem like people who lost someone they loved, and are trying to recapture some part of him as they walk through the exhibit. In many cases they look like they couldn't afford to make the trip to Washington to visit Arlington Cemetery, and they might never get up to Boston to visit the Library, and this is one way of paying tribute. Did you notice that?

TROUTMAN: Yes, very generally. There are one or two things, Dave, I want to remark while we are just chatting here. I'll have to say on the

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question of profiles in courage, and I'm sure that he might not have been in one of the tip-top spots, but when you look at something from Lyndon Johnson's standpoint, it took a lot of courage for him to come into the South promptly after this Los Angeles Convention, after having had to become number two to a younger man number one, and less influential Senator, to come there and to have come to a place like Nashville, Tennessee... Senator Kennedy had called me and said, Lyndon is going to open his campaign in the south in Nashville, and he is going to take the position of supporting this party platform which is an anathema, I gather, to a good many people in the South, and asking if I would help

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to get some of the leaders, if I could, from other Southern states to go to Nashville to hear this. I felt that I should, and we did. We got three or four or five governors and other people to come. Senator Johnson came that night and spoke forthrightly, and I'm sure it was a difficult thing for him knowing that that crowd felt very strongly on this issue, and yet he had by accepting the nomination of the party said, "I'm going to support this platform." Measure it any way you want, it was a good measure of courage in standing up there and not knowing whether he was going to have tomatoes thrown, or insults hurled. I'm pleased to say that at Nashville that night -- it was the occasion of the Junior Chamber

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of Commerce or some such large gathering of comparatively young people -- he was rather well received. Of course, he came to Governor Ellington's capital and his home state, and

Ellington helped as much as he could. But I thought it took a good bit of courage, and I was much impressed with that occasion.

POWERS: Bobby, I agree with you. From Austin to Boston, it was strictly a Kennedy-Johnson team effort.

TROUTMAN: Yes, I think this is true. And I think it had to be that way or neither would have won. I think each of those men probably sensed that they were in a tougher battle than most of the rest of us felt because they were evidently seeing figures and understanding

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them better than many of us because many of us thought we were going to win this thing now, and then when Senator Kennedy got the better part of the debates, we felt this just wraps it up. It turned out, however, when you started counting those votes in November, that they were right and that every ounce of effort of everybody was a needed thing during the course, despite the electoral votes. Still, in all, it was quite a...

POWERS: It certainly was. And right down to the final day when you were traveling along with the President you would get confident. You spoke about that great big crowd in Georgia; if saw them day after day, but then as you look back and analyze them,

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about one-third of our crowds were too young to vote for him then. But we just looked at crowds. We were outdrawing Nixon, but he already had his vote. We had to get ours, and it was an amazing thing that we didn't believe that it was going to be close. I can remember right up to the last day, the President saying, "This is a very close fight." And he was right.

TROUTMAN: He was right, yet. You know, when you get into public adulation of things like that, its, well, you see, Senator Kennedy was a little bit more than a political leader to a lot of these people. He was a political leader, and he was Bobby Jones, and Ted Williams, and Bing Crosby, and Clark Gable,

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and all of them. You could get a big crowd on Broadway, as you know, for Bobby Jones. One of the great crowds of all time when he came, you understand? That didn't mean these were all going to vote. They want to see him and be near him. So he had many things; he could have been elected movie star of the year, or the athlete of the year, or most anything he wanted. His toughest job was probably to be elected President at that time.

POWERS: I agree.

TROUTMAN: But oh, how I would like to have seen him in the days of running against Senator Goldwater on this occasion. Dave, I think I've told you in the past, but after he became President I kept my visits with him.

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They were unofficial. He asked me if I would come to Washington to take a job with the government, and I told him no, but I came, I guess, pretty near once a week for two or three years. I would drop in and we would chat. One of the times, though, in the latter part, I asked him once, I said, "Mr. President, I know it would be sacrilegious for a Catholic -- you and I are Catholics, and I trust reasonably good -- for you to pray to the Lord for something as to who your opposition might be in the next time, but I wonder if you don't ever, every now and then, just pray a little bit that you would have Goldwater." He said, "Just a little bit every night." [Laughter] That was real cute. The point

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was, I think, he did hope that he could present what he was standing for and what he was trying to do against this, and let the two come head-on, and let him be the spokesman for his cause and let Goldwater be the spokesman for his cause and let Goldwater be the spokesman for his. And I think that really, as I saw it, gave him great exhilaration whenever we talked about it. The Irish smile and all would come up; and I think that was the fight he would loved to have had.

POWERS: You know, Bob, if he ever had had the good fortune of running against Senator Goldwater, it would be the first time in the history of America that instead of counting the votes, they weighed it!

TROUTMAN: I think that is largely true. [Machine cuts off]

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POWERS: Bob, after the Convention in L.A. and all this about picking the President and Vice President, you went back to Atlanta, Georgia. Then when did you see Senator Kennedy again?

TROUTMAN: Well, after getting back from Los Angeles we began to set up the program in Georgia. At that time, of course, the Governor was going to be the chairman of the situation, and we organized Georgia in a rather interesting fashion because, realizing that Talmadge is the most influential factor there, we set up an organization which was using the close friends of the Governor in co-posts with a close

friend of Senator Talmadge. We sort of set up the whole state knowing that if we can get Senator Talmadge's people, in effect, for Kennedy,

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that we are going to carry Georgia because we had the liberal groups.

Well, the Senator called me once and asked how we were doing, and I was reporting because I figured most of our role had been accomplished in the South at the Convention. I went up to report to him and maybe to have lunch. This may have been in August sometime, the latter part. The occasion was -- as you know, Dave, he had an office in the Capitol at that time, as well as his in the Senate Office Building, and he was there. He had probably been speaking too much, but he couldn't talk very much and he was again doing a good bit of the listening. This was a group of the staff and some of his consultants, and as I recall it, the meeting was to discuss agricultural problems

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and the position that he should take. He asked me if I wouldn't just sit in with him while he listened to this. They began to talk about the great agricultural concepts, and he took a piece of paper and pulled his chair over there and wrote down on there words to this effect -- and I kept it just because I think it is very interesting. As you know, Martin Luther King, who comes from my town, is somewhat controversial in various parts of the country, and quite controversial in Georgia. Senator wrote down, he said "Martin Luther King will endorse me if I will go South to talk with his group. This would be of tremendous potential benefit to me in the North; how much damage in the South?" Words to that effect. He

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handed it over -- obviously he didn't want to discuss this before the group. I took another piece of paper and wrote back, "I can't tell all the damage it would do to you in the South, but you would start by losing me." I then, after it was over, told him that I felt that for him to come to the South to speak to any group, or to go anywhere, for that kind of thing as far as I was concerned would be beneath his dignity. I don't think that he was seriously considering it, but nevertheless he may have been sticking the needle in me. As you know, he had a pretty cute side to him. But in any event, I told him that he and I could still be friends, but our political relations would sever on

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that day.

Dave, there is a very serious aspect that I don't think you and I have ever talked about, of President Kennedy and the race situation that interests me greatly and I spent the better part of a year, nearly two years of my life, and it was this -- I don't think it has ever been fully told. He was keenly conscious of the great problems of the white and Negro races

being in this country and trying to get along and to have the Negroes who had been down economically and otherwise get up -- you know the problem. He had talked to me often as a Southerner, and this was in the years before and then in these periodic visits, I would see him

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in the White House, and at times when he didn't have anything pressing and just wanted to bull, we got into different approaches to it. He was aware of it as one of the major problems. I don't know whether he ever thought it was the number one problem; I think he probably felt that defense and international relations were far greater maybe, but nevertheless it was something that he was always aware of, and as President he had the responsibility to do something about it. He had very early in his administration gotten on the subject of the FEPC, and that approach to the problem. Under his platform that he had to run on -- and I'm assuming that he wanted to run on -- there was something to do to

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benefit the Negro. That was something that the Democrats had declared that they would do, and this was his thing. I felt that not only did he feel that he had to get the civil rights laws enacted, but the question of beyond that; getting a law on the books and then getting real benefits for the Negroes were two different things. He and Vice President Johnson had agreed apparently on setting up this Equal Employment Opportunity Committee. He had called me -- as I never yet got into -- In November and I went down to see him in Palm Beach in December. I had to come to see him in November and again had dinner after he had been elected, and he had asked me frankly if I would be

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interested in coming to Washington, and I told him so. There were some right interesting discussions here, but the point was that after he got this Equal Employment Opportunity Committee started, he asked me one day if I would -- he and Johnson felt they needed some middle-of-the-road Southerners to get into this field with him -- would I be willing to just take a position as a member of the Committee on Equal Employment Opportunities. I told him that if I wouldn't take a major job with him of coming up here, I didn't think too very much of getting into a controversial subject, because I said, "Call it whatever you will, Mr. President, you ain't talking about anything but the

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FEPC, and that in itself is just about as excitable a subject as you could get into." He then said, "Now I'm very serious about this. It won't take much of your time, but unless I can get some middle-of-the-road people to help me a little bit in this, I will end up with extremists, which I don't want either way." I told him that, well, I would have to -- because he asked me if I got into it if I would really be constructive -- and I told him I would have to go talk to two



people before I would give him an answer. They were Ribicoff and Talmadge. He said, "Well, why do you want to talk with them?" I said, "I just... I wouldn't come up here to do something in a major role, and

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now you are wanting me to do this." So anyhow, I went and talked to Ribicoff -- he was then Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare -- and we got into a big discussion and he said, by all means, please do it. Then I listened to him awhile, and said, "Well, if I decide I'm going to do it, it will only be if you will also get on the Committee." He started telling me all the things he had to do, and so forth. I said, "Well, it is just that simple, Abe, as far as I'm concerned." And I went and saw Senator Talmadge and asked him what he thought, and he said, "Well, you can't turn down the President too easily, but I'll tell you that you probably ought to stay out

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of this field because it is impossible to satisfy either group. The Negroes will not appreciate what you do if you beat your brains out, and instead the whites will feel that you are tainted for some reason or another for ever having gotten into it." Well, the upshot was that Vice President Johnson got appointed and asked me to, and President Kennedy asked me to again, so I got on it. The point was this: that then he asked me, he said that the place to start helping the Negro was jobs and that once they got into the jobs and got good jobs and became good members of the community, that then his notion was that a lot of these other things would fall by the wayside. If I could help with some

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imagination to develop a more effective means of getting jobs, that he would be grateful and thought a real public service would be rendered. So I took him quite seriously at this, and then Dave, devoted really one year -- and nearly all of it became at my expense because there was no means in the federal government to reimburse me -- and it cost many thousands of dollars and more than a year of my time. He always encouraged me to do this in this fashion: to see if the major companies of American industry -- and he started off and said to see if you can get ten, and then ten went on until it became a hundred -- the largest employers to pitch the whole subject of the Negro in American life statistically,

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not in a lot of vague concepts, but to get something which would impress a businessman who was not a "do-gooder" but who could see really what the problem of the Negro was. So I spent three or four months getting the figures up, and I said to the President -- and the Vice President, who was in charge of the Committee, but my closeness was always to the President, and so I was seeing him weekly, maybe to discuss this and seeing the Vice

President less frequently, but the question was to get the job done. I got up many, many thousand of statistics and put them on simple things and let President Kennedy see them. He became fascinated. At first I showed them to him in his airplane -- to show him just how

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little progress had been made in the federal government itself. He agreed to take a census... and he took a census of the federal government... and I showed him the figures that the ten largest defense contractors had of their roles, and let's say for the fun of it that they had nearly a million people employed themselves... a half a million, and the federal government had two million. And yet, he looked and after twenty years of FEPC approach under the federal government, that the Negroes didn't have enough dignified work to count. All they were doing was sweeping floors, cleaning toilets -- and this kind of undignified work, and he looked at it and he couldn't believe it. And I said, "these are

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your figures, Mr. President." It was carefully and beautifully documented, so he asked me if I would take this pitch and try to get the leaders of American industry. I could say to the presidents of the companies that I was coming at the suggestion of the President of the United States and the Vice President, who was Chairman of this Committee. I went, Dave, to see the presidents of a great many of these companies and we developed a plan that we called a Plan for Progress. That was wherein these companies, seeing the problem on their own with no pressure from anybody, purely because they thought it was good and proper, would make progress and as against the approach where it was the FEPC saying, "dang your

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soul, this is what you are going to do." I showed President Kennedy that here you had an FEPC for twenty years, and here is where you are today. He said, "Yes. they haven't got enough jobs in either the federal government or industry of dignity to count." He was smart enough to know politically that if he could make progress against those base statistics, this could sound awfully good in 1964. Well, also, he wanted to start a new approach and see if the American people, out of just sheer goodwill of industry, would do this. So the point was that we started and he would see each six months the progress, and was tremendously impressed. Yet, for reasons unknown to me,

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at the end of about a year or a year and a half, the thing had evidently become quite controversial because I was trying, really as his emissary, to do voluntarily this thing and was getting thousands and thousands of jobs. There it was. And yet there were others who apparently felt that my approach, or I being a Southerner, either I was evil or my approach was evil, or my friends in Southern politics were evil, and they apparently told President

Kennedy that if I stayed on and continued to do this work for him, that he was in danger of losing the leadership of the Negroes and maybe the leadership of certain labor leaders. He asked me a very sort of strange thing,

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would I get out but still watch and see that this thing kept going forward. I told him this was about the strangest request that could be, because he said, "These people one day will see that all of these jobs from these great companies -- because the federal government can't employ them all -- but all of these jobs from these great companies -- because the federal government can't employ them all -- but all of these jobs from these great companies will be a great thing to be done." So about a month or two before he was killed, I told him that I would do this, so the whole program was then put under a sort of committee within the Committee, and yet until he died.... I stayed with it until he died. Since then I haven't done anything with it. But this way of attacking the problem has prevailed.

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People like Walter Reuther and Whitney Young have endorsed it. But as a white Southerner I was hindered in my efforts to encourage this approach to the problem. A white Southerner simply can't be associated with this type of approach. So I stayed away from this program but at the President's request I kept an eye on it. Its progress had certainly been astounding.

[END OF SIDE II, TAPE I]

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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