

Peter B. Edelman Oral History Interview – RFK #3, 8/5/1969
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Biographical Note

Edelman, legislative assistant to Senator Robert F. Kennedy (RFK) (1964-1968), discusses Robert F. Kennedy's (RFK) 1968 Washington D.C. presidential campaign, RFK's farm program, and RFK's California 1968 presidential debate debacle with Eugene J. McCarthy, among other issues.

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Third of Eight Oral History Interviews

with

Peter B. Edelman

August 5, 1969
Washington, D.C.

By Larry Hackman

HACKMAN: All right. Let's just continue with the D.C. primary. Last time you'd said that you got involved in the D.C. primary because you'd worked on D.C. things before. How much was Robert Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] interested in District problems? Was this primarily because of the Committee or did he get involved in local politics, have a lot of relationships with local leaders and....

EDELMAN: Certainly not from a political point of view. I mean there's not politics to be involved in here yet. He had been interested in the District, of course, as you know, all during the time when he was Attorney General and had seen to

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it that a number of swimming pools.... There was one time when there was a swimming pool that existed that hadn't had any water in it in some months and it's one of the schools. And it came to his attention and he saw to it that the water was filled—very interested in playgrounds and recreation and always interested in Junior Village and after President Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] was assassinated he was helpful in getting the John Kennedy playground organized and off the ground. So he'd always taken an interest, gone around to schools a lot to urge kids not to drop out of school and talk to them about how important education was and so on. And, of course, there was that marvelous time when he was leaving as Attorney General and the little children came and told him how much they loved him for

what he had done. So it was natural for him to ask to be on the District Committee, which he did, when he came into the Senate. And then on the District Committee he continued to be active, had a fair amount to do with getting

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the Subway Bill passed in 1965, helped mediate a dispute between Roy Chalk [O. Roy Chalk] and everybody else, in terms of Chalk's demands and I think could take some real credit for having sort of satisfied Chalk. And he was active in the home rule efforts in '65 and in '66 amended the bill in committee to change the structure of the City Council, it provided a little bit in a couple of other ways and then was helpful on the floor. And then we had been active repeatedly in opposing the D.C. Crime Bill, the aspects of the D.C. Crime Bill which would have overturned the Mallory decision and later the Mallory and Miranda decisions together—was very helpful on that, was active in the fight to bring the welfare program for aid to dependent children of unemployed fathers to the District. That was a fight that Ribicoff [Abraham A. Ribicoff] used to undertake every year. Kennedy helped him with that. So he was involved in the general run of D.C. issues and was reasonably, although I wouldn't say perfectly, diligent about going to his committee

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meetings and so on. When Joe Tydings [Joseph D. Tydings] had hearings on parking bills in the District, he came to the hearings and lent a little bit of color, got a little more news that day by taking in on the parking barons and the hearings. And when Joe Tydings had his hearings on the D.C. housing, why then the Senator came on the appropriate day and got after the slum lords and, you know, the things that he was good at doing and that he liked to do and on behalf of issues where he was on the side of right end justice—so all of that. He introduced legislation which was primarily applicable to the District to change the rules of what happened when somebody was acquitted in court on the ground of insanity, make sure that they wouldn't go out on the street. Those are the main run of things that come to mind.

HACKMAN: Are those mostly things that you would be the person in the Senate office who was handling this?

EDELMAN: Yes, I handled all the D.C. Committee matters. And

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then there were other things. For example, one time I got him to go to Cardozo [High School] to give a speech for model school week. You know that geographical area of the city has a sort of a sub-system, model school system, And I would get requests from time to time from various people, He went out to Western High School another time, got him to go out there. Then if anybody had any lobbying to do for District matters, whether it was the police men or the fire men or the D.C. Citizens for Better

Education or whatever it was, I would see them and talk to them—the Home Rule Committee and so on. So, yes, that was really exclusively my bailiwick I didn't spend a tremendous amount of time on it, but in so far as we were involved in D.C. affairs, I did the staff work for it.

HACKMAN: Who were some of the other people around town that help him out on D.C. matters? Are there people that he turns to?

EDELMAN: Well, he was always friendly with Walter Fauntroy [Walter E. Fauntroy]. I'm not sure what the beginning of that friendship was. That was an association that

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went back for some time and so if it was a question of the black community, Walter Fauntroy was certainly one person that he would ask. And Joe Rauh [Joseph L. Rauh, Jr.] would be a logical person. Their relations weren't particularly close, but Joe, of course, was the key figure in the Democratic party here, so that he would be a person whom it was logical to ask for advice on things. And then if it was a question.... Oh, I just remembered another thing that we were involved in, the D.C. General Hospital. Joe Alsop's [Joseph W. Alsop] wife worked out there on some basis or other and was appalled by the conditions there. And, you know, they were and probably still are like any big city public hospital, long waits in the emergency rooms and in the clinics and sometimes less than courteous treatment and certainly always seeing the doctor, whom one had never seen before and would never see again. So along with Senator Morse's [Wayne L. Morse] man on the District Committee I went out and did a sort of a investigative look at the D.C. General

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Hospital and then we got after Doctor Grant [Murray Grant]—some hearings later on. So on something like that we would naturally turn to Doctor Grant not for his help, because he was not a very trustworthy fellow, but because he was the relevant city official. And if there were local people involved in the health field, we might just find out who they were and turn to them. And then.... Oh, we worked on through Eunice Shriver [Eunice Kennedy Shriver]. There was a question about the recreation budget for the mentally retarded. And, of course, when Eunice got after, it was necessary that he respond. So I spent some time getting after the D.C. recreation people getting them up to the office for a meeting and so on and that was an occasion where he, in fact, got Senator Robert Byrd [Robert C. Byrd], whom he did not like and who did not like him, to add an item to the budget for the recreation for the mentally retarded. It was a great triumph of some eighty-five thousand dollars or whatever it was, but Byrd did that for him. So on occasion

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like that we'd turn to the recreation people here. But I suppose in terms of the private citizens in the District, you know, it's just like anything else. You would try to find people who had an interest in the particular problem. On the subway, for example, we worked very closely with a young lawyer named Gerry Levenberg, who's in practice now in town and had been chairman of a committee which, I believe, Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] or maybe even President Kennedy had appointed to see through the initial stages of the subway thing, until the legislation was enacted. And so it just came to my attention that Levenberg was working on this and was tearing his hair out over Roy Chalk and so on and I got in touch with him and we worked together. We didn't really have any regular contacts that I recall that, you know, somebody that we would call up and say, "All right, now, you know, Mr. So-and-so, you know all about the District. What should we do?" The Senator had quite a bit of respect for Walter Tobriner [Walter N. Tobriner] and would call him up if there was any problem, but

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you know didn't like to overuse that kind of a relationship. So most things I just did what I could myself.

HACKMAN: What about the old Justice Department people like John Douglas [John W. Douglas] or Lou Oberdorfer [Louis F. Oberdorfer] or Barrett Prettyman[E. Barrett Prettyman, Jr.]? Are these people of any help? Does he frequently turn to them on something like this?

EDELMAN: I wouldn't think for District matters. Barrett Prettyman has had some interest in the District because he grew up here. And I suspect that the Senator probably talked to him. I don't... The only stuff I ever remember working with Barrett on was the New Haven Railroad, 'cause he had worked for a year in the Justice Department on transportation matters. And then, of course, Barrett was helpful on same.... Did he do some advancing for us of some kind? Don't remember. But, no, I don't remember ever using John Douglas or Lou Oberdorfer on the District matter as such. Now on the Junior Village telethon, for example, which was a District matter, which I had nothing

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to do with, of course there were dozens and dozens of people involved, all wives who were friends of Mrs. Kennedy [Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy] and Ethel [Ethel Skakel Kennedy] and, you know, just all kinds of people all over the city. And they had their friends, some of the Negro ladies in town, Flaxie Pinkett [Flaxie M. Pinkett] and her sister and some of her friends that they used to turn to on various things. But from an office point of view I don't recall anybody special.

HACKMAN: Any close ties with any of the black leaders in Washington other than Fautroy?

EDELMAN: No, not really. Channing Phillips [Channing E. Phillips], of course, turned out to be a great friend, but he was never... He were never very close to him.

Then, you know, who else is there? Well, Marion Barry [Marion S. Barry]. We weren't close to him. And as you know Home Rule was not a black issue up until really Marion Barry came to town and started to organize. But it was essentially a Joe Rauh, Arnold Lyons, all of those people—white, Northwest kind of issue. So in terms of other black leadership, he had no relationship

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with Doug Moore [Douglas E. Moore] or, you know, any of the other ministers, Frank Jackson. Frank Reeves [Frank D. Reeves], he was a person that he liked and that he knew from the past and I don't remember ever specifically turning to Frank Reeves about anything. Well, I guess maybe I talked to Frank Reeves a couple of times about some things. Yeah. So he would have been a second Negro besides Walter Fauntroy, but the Senator didn't have a personal relationship with that many people in the District.

HACKMAN: Okay, getting back to '68 then. Was there any reluctance at all on Robert Kennedy's part or an your part to try to work out this initial coalition with McCarthy[Eugene J. McCarthy] when you got together with Rauh?

EDELMAN: No, I... You know, it was one of.... It was a very funny thing. I got this phone call, as I said last week, which I think was on the afternoon that he announced from Joe Dolan [Joseph F. Dolan]. Evidently, the Senator had just, you know, in his own mind without making any equation about whether I was a powerful

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politician or not, they just remembered that I was his District man and had either called Joe or said to him to tell me to get to work on the District. That was all he said. So we didn't know what he really wanted. You know and I, you know, I gulped a little and I just plunged into it. And, as I told you, it happened that Channing Phillips was trying to get in touch with us at that time. I didn't go into the detail of the fact that the McCarthy people, the Democrats for Peace and Progress, and the McCarthy people—these were two concepts that overlapped, although they weren't exactly the same—They'd been after Channing to be at the head of their slate, to be their candidate for National Comitteeeman and, you know in effect, to head their state. And he'd been ducking them, wasn't sure if he liked McCarthy. If Kennedy wasn't going to be in it, he wasn't sure that he wanted to run and so on. Then when Kennedy announced, he wanted to let us know that he was for Kennedy. And I did some

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quick checking primarily through Bruce Terris, who had been working for Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey], but had quit his job with Humphrey immediately upon the Senator's

announcement and had showed up and, you know, said, "Here I am." So I talked to Bruce and of course had worked very closely with Channing in the Housing Development Corporation and he said Channing was fine. And I think I talked to Walter Fauntroy, and I believe he said that Channing was fine. And I don't remember who else, but probably one or two other people. And so I went to this meeting at Channing's church that we arranged. And first Channing and I—and I think Bruce was there. I'm not sure whether Bruce was there, no, I guess not—Channing and I and Phil Neul met with—Phil Neul being Channing's pal—met with Arthur Strout and Don Greene and somebody else from the Democrats for Peace and Progress and it was a meeting where, you know, we essentially were announcing to them that we were going to be coming in on it and trying to say that diplomatically, and asking for their

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cooperation and so on and they were rather non committal. And then they, of course, had their problems with Joe Rauh, even though they were all supposedly on the same side, because they thought Joe Rauh was manipulative and old politics or whatever the relevant term was. So then Joe came in while they were there and we met with him in a different room. You know it was a sort of a microcosm of back room politics. And Joe was very cooperative, to my surprise. The reason, as I said last time, in retrospect, was that he just knew that his guy didn't have any backing in the black community and he knew that if we wanted to come in and take him on head-on, we'd just beat him. So he tried to.... He was responsive to a coalition arrangement and I had no real instructions so that every time we would come up with something I had to go back. And as I said, I went back primarily to Steve Smith [Stephen E. Smith]. But the coalition thing just seemed like the natural idea. I don't remember who thought it up, whether it was I or whether it was Channing

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or whatever it was, but that would mean we wouldn't have to oppose anybody and wasn't really that many delegates involved and the thought was that if we could get at least an even break on it, then if we were doing pretty well, that probably some of them would come over to us. So we proceeded on that basis. And then there were more meetings and again this triangular thing because Don Greene was a person that you couldn't really trust. So we would meet with Joe and then sort of tell Don Greene what we were doing and he was very grumbly. And then we went out into the community. I remember we had a meeting over on H Street, Northeast one night where people sort of yelled and screamed at me and they just, you know, they didn't trust Kennedy and this and that and so forth. Finally, that was all straightened out and then came the business of McCarthy rejecting the deal and then I don't remember just what happened, whether McCarthy himself said he would drop out or whether Joe Rauh told him he might as well drop out. But then the whole thing fell into our laps.

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HACKMAN: Well, in the initial stage of the dealings was Rauh saying that he was clearly

speaking for McCarthy, had he checked anything with McCarthy?

EDELMAN: No, he was very candid that each.... at each point, just I was having to go back and check, that he would have to check with his candidate. So we were making sort of tentative deals. And then there were some questions about whether we would put up some initial money—I think two thousand dollars—for some ads for voter registration, which we did. Joe had some money that he'd already raised and I believe that he put up half and we put up half for some television ads.

HACKMAN: But you're saying when the poll out came, then it may have been it may have been Rauh. Did you ever find out if it was directly McCarthy saying, "Let's pull out." Or was it.... Could it have been a Rauh Judgment?

EDELMAN: Oh no, it was directly McCarthy, but what I don't know is whether it was initiated by McCarthy or whether Rauh said to McCarthy, "You better get

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out," or "You might as well get out." In any event, it was something that McCarthy authorized and told Rauh to do.

HACKMAN: How would you read their motives in something like that, if he.... You know, why get off the thing when he couldn't, obviously, win the delegates on his own? Why not ride?

EDELMAN: Just that, that he didn't want it to...

HACKMAN: He didn't want to cooperate.

EDELMAN: Didn't want to take a beating, Well you mean, why get off the coalition?

HACKMAN: Yeah. Right. Yeah.

EDELMAN: Oh, because he was.... I would think that the personality of it was more important than the politics of it. The politics of it would be that he simply felt very strongly that if he was ever tempted into a cooperative relationship with us, that since Kennedy was sort of the more substantial figure, he would be swallowed in it. But I think that the personality of it was more important, that he just, damn it,

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was angry at Kennedy and didn't want to be involved in any cooperation with him after Kennedy had muscled in on the whole presidential thing after New Hampshire. I think that was the thing, nor did he want to be involved in a cooperative effort in one place that would

be then used as a wedge or a lever to induce hits into cooperative efforts in other places. He felt he had to be consistent all over the country.

HACKMAN: As the campaign developed, were there people within the McCarthy campaign that you have close ties to, that you can sort of keep up on how things are developing, what his attitudes are and...

EDELMAN: Some extent. You mean, around the country?

HACKMAN: Yeah.

EDELMAN: Yeah. Paul Gorman, who was a pretty good friend of mine, was writing speeches for McCarthy and we would see him from time to time. And Jeff Greenfield was friendly with Sam Brown [Samuel W. Brown, Jr.] and he would see him from time to time. So we would hear a little bit that way. And then Mary McCrory was

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almost on their staff. And we would.... Adam and I were still friendly with her I mean we'd see from her from time to time, things like that.

HACKMAN: How was this thing with the Democrats for Peace and Progress finally resolved? How did you make the selection? There were a couple people from there taken on?

EDELMAN: Yeah. Let me look at that sample ballot. What.... You remember—I think I said—that the way we started was that with the McCarthy people we worked out about ten of the twenty-one delegates. And about five of them were ours and five of them were theirs. And ours were, for example, Channing Phillips, Flaxie Pinkett. I think Phil Stern [Philip M. Stern] was listed as ours. Sophie Reuther on the other hand, was theirs. Lloyd Symington was theirs. I think Herb Reid [Herbert O. Reid, Jr.] was listed as theirs. And so on. Then, when McCarthy went out, if I remember right, there may have been one or perhaps two who were on that list who were McCarthy people who dropped off. Joe Rauh, for

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example, dropped off. So we had to start from the eight or nine, whatever it was, we had. So we had lines out around through Channing and elsewhere to these groups. Democrats for Peace and Progress had sort of had these ties to the local community groups that were holding elections, like the Adams-Morgan area was holding an election and they came up with Topper Carew and Arthur Waskow [Arthur I. Waskow] as their two people. Then there was an election on Capitol Hill. I don't remember who those two people were. There was an

election in Anacostia, I think, and somewhere up in Northeast and so on and so forth. So we didn't want to box ourselves in by saying that we would flatly accept all of these things, but we got the results of the elections and, of course, Don Greene through this whole time was being very, very hysterical and not trusting us and putting rumors around the community that we were sabotaging and everything and we had to keep saying, "Just hold your

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elections and we'll do the best we can." And so the elections were held and in a way they were rather phony, because sometimes there were a hundred people who got together to make this great grass rootsy thing, but.... So we sort of closed our eyes to that. Then we sat down one Sunday at Flaxie Pinkett's office—She and Channing and Martin Carnoy who is an economist at Brookings and was a friend of Adam Walinsky's and had been very active in the Democrats for Peace and Progress, but was really a Kennedy guy, so we had gotten him very involved in it. And by this time we had Dan Mayers [Daniel K. Mayers], who's a lawyer at Wilmer, Cutler and Pickering who had scene on to be our coordinator for the District. And so I was already beginning to bow out of it. And by this time we had Dave Marlin [David Marlin] who is another very good guy and had been a lawyer in Neighborhood Legal Services here and who was a strong Kennedy person and he was sort of the assistant.

HACKMAN: Who picks those people? I mean how....or how

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do they get chosen?

EDELMAN: Well, it's a hit and miss process. You know, it's a.... You go around the headquarters, "Who do you know that can do this for us?" I think Dan Mayers may have been my idea. I don't remember. Maybe somebody else said it, but he's an old friend of mine. I went to law school with him. He was a year ahead of me in law school. He also is a friend of Dun Gifford's [K. Dun Gifford] so it may have come through Dunny. But it's just the kind of thing where you just talk around the headquarters and, you know, "Who do you know? Who do you know?" or, "Who do you know that knows somebody?" and let's just talk around until we find somebody. And it's a question of finding the person who was able that didn't cost you any money, if possible. And so Dan fit both of those categories. And that was, you know, it just is that kind of hit or miss, hit or miss process.

HACKMAN: Do you take that to Steve Smith then or is this...

EDELMAN: Yeah, I would think so. I think we.... I don't

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remember whether we took it to Steve, but it was ratified by somebody or other, whether it was Steve or Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] or maybe Ted Kennedy [Edward M. Kennedy]. And so then, you know, they said, "Fine," and Dan came in for a meeting with somebody or other and they all shook hands on it and then Dave Marlin was just cleared. Either Dan or I or somebody just brought that in the same way. I don't think Dave came in personally. Then there was a kind of a task force organized which Dave Hackett [David L. Hackett] sort of ran and Helen Keyes [Helen M. Keyes], in terms of making up a budget for that thing and getting some media help, and were we going to use an ad agency here or would the whatever ad agency help we had elsewhere do the stuff for here and this sort of thing. And by that time I was basically trying to stay out of it, because Dan, you know, had the responsibility and I just told him that I would stand ready if he just wasn't getting any action. And from time to time I would go and nag when he asked me to. But I didn't sit through all those long meetings of when

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they worked out their budget and so on and so forth. And of course, you had the usual problem, which I take it happens everywhere and particularly here because this was not regarded as a tremendous priority place, so that the Kennedy people, that is the national Kennedy people wanted to put as little as possible into it and put as much of the money raising as possible on the local people; whereas the local people, not being unwilling to do that, nevertheless wanted to have a guarantee. First, they wanted to have a fund or a stake to start with and then a guarantee that if they couldn't pay all their bills that the bills would be paid. So that's always a cat and mouse game, And somehow it was worked out and I think what happened was that probably the national Kennedy people put up most of that. I mean it was a piddling amount compared to what they were spending elsewhere. I think the whole thing cost perhaps forty or fifty thousand dollars, you know, it was very, very small by comparison—just a little bit of advertising

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and the rent for the headquarters and a little bit of literature. But it was really a very modest kind of an effort. So whether Phil Stern and some of those people gave some money, perhaps they did, but.... And then, of course another thing was that their money would have been sought for the national thing later on anyway, so that if you insisted too much in the District—which would be different from places out around the country—if you insisted too much an collecting money from the types here who have money, you'd just be robbing from yourself, because they'd be people that would be contributing in any event later on. So I don't know the final figures, but I suspect that the Kennedy national paid for most of it. Now going back to the Democrats for Peace and Progress, what finally happened was that we took over the McCarthy headquarters which was the building that Joe Rauh had gotten a lease on on Connecticut Avenue next to Elizabeth Arden. The Democrats for Peace and Progress had been operating out of that, but it was really Joe Rauh's lease and,

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in fact, he, I believe, just, you know, gave us whatever he had left, which may have been the rest of the month or something and which he, I think, had paid for out of his own pocket. And then the Democrats for Peace and Progress, although some of that group who were really more for us stayed and worked out of that headquarters, some of them went and rented another place up the street which they then operated their thing out of. And they were, you know, for the Phillips-Pinkett slate and all of that. There was nobody else to be for, but they were quite clear that they were preserving their own identity—really Don Greene preserving his own identity. And nobody ever quite knew what they were doing for the rest of the time. We just sort of.... We didn't ignore them, but didn't give them much to do and try to keep an eye on them to make sure they weren't gumming us up. Well, then Martin Carnoy and Dave Marlin started to build the precinct organization and, of course, used as many of the people as we had

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here as they could. Oh. I should say.... I skipped over the fact that the meeting at Flaxie Pinkett's which probably was around—oh, if I had to guess, probably around March twenty-seventh or so, no I'm sorry, April first, eh, April second, I think was a Sunday, but possibly the Sunday before that—in other words, either eight days after Kennedy announced or fifteen days after he announced, I'm not sure. And we basically ratified all of the neighborhood elections and so on and then tried to get community leaders. We had quite an effort to get Bill Simons [William H. Simons], the local teachers' union man. We.... I think at one point I had Senator call him personally to ask him, if I remember correctly. And, of course, Father McSorley [Richard T. McSorley] was a great pal of the Kennedys anyway. They liked him a lot. And Frank Reeves was on there for sort of old time's sake and we got people like Mort Caplin [Mortimer M. Caplin] and Mike Feldman [Myer Feldman], who were Kennedy people from a long time ago. And it really was a slate that, both for

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the Central Committee and for the delegates, which had a much better community base and a much more of a reform, you know, kind of good citizen thing on the white side of it than you'd ever had before—people like, Howard Willens [Howard P. Willens], who's the former first assistant, United States Attorney General, first assistant in the Criminal Division and had been Executive Director of the D.C. Crime Commission. So it was a.... You know, had a real District base. And Ralph Fertig, who had been, you know, director of the Southeast Neighborhood House and then Fritzzy Cohen, Felice D. Cohen, was a girl who was Democrats for Peace and Progress from the beginning and was quite a pain in the ass, but was one of those that we wanted to, you know that we just felt that it would be useful to have her on there in a way just to, you know, shut her up so she wouldn't go around town bad mouthing us. But then she did work very hard and she was fine. And Arthur Strout was a lawyer at Covington. His wife, Ann, was marvelous

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and came into the headquarters every day and worked very, very hard. She'd been in the original Democrats for Peace and Progress. So Fritz and Ann were examples of people who, you know, stayed with us. And then Dee Sternberg [Dianne D. Sternberg], who was an alternate, she was a pal of Channing's, which was who she got into it, but she worked very hard during the campaign. And then.... So, you know, you had a pretty good thing, pretty good base. You had black community people. Theresa Jones, a former welfare recipient, and was a community organizer. And Willie Hardy [Willie J. Hardy], who's a, you know, bona fide grass roots leader. Louise Barrow, who is a welfare, or was a welfare recipient. And so on. A much more grass rootsy kind of thing than had ever been put together before in the District—really anywhere. You know, Topper Carew was a delegate. You know what Topper looks like, but the very bushy Afro and the very bushy beard and he looks like a sort of a Negro Talmudist.

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HACKMAN: Yeah. What do you do with people like Carew and Waskow when they start.... I think a couple times they make some very irate statements about the direction Robert Kennedy's campaign is going in in Indiana, the law and order thing.

EDELMAN: Well, the one thing that they were particularly perturbed about was that they.... They sent him a telegram demanding that he repudiate Mayor Daley's [Richard J. Daley] shoot to kill statement.

HACKMAN: Yeah. Right.

EDELMAN: And.... But, you know, you just let it go. I mean, you know, you listen.... The fact is you don't get into that much trouble over a thing like that. You know, it's not that big a deal. It doesn't get that much attention. Now, I had a running argument with Ted Sorensen over Arthur Waskow. Did I talk about this before?

HACKMAN: No. Not at all.

EDELMAN: And, you know, I was keeping Ted quite informed as we went along on this. Steve by this time was gone off somewhere. The first week or so I was talking to Steve and then the second week

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I was sort of talking to Ted. And I said, "Now, you know, really to keep the peace here, we've got to take the results of these neighborhood elections and I want to tell you that

Arthur Waskow's going to come out." "Arthur Waskow is not going to be a Kennedy delegate from the District," he said. "Well," I said, "I don't know what I can do about it." So, I told.... I was keep Arthur pretty—perhaps too honestly—informed of the thing and being a little bit, I must say, a little bit self-justifying by blaming Ted for the thing, and finally it came down to the meeting when the delegates were going to be sort of ratified at a public meeting. They were all invited to the basement of Channing's church and came in and the list was read off and and Arthur was on the list and Topper was an alternate. Now I'd never met Topper at that point, except I'd heard that he was fairly wild guy, which, in fact, he's not. Topper's a.... Topper is of the sanest, but he just looks wild. And so Arthur was very cute. He got up and he said, "Well," he said, "I'm not going to be delegate, if Colin Carew is only an

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alternate. He's the true person from the community. So I demand that he be the delegate and I be the alternate." I should say parenthetically that Sorensen had told me that it was okay if Waskow was only an alternate and I had told Waskow that. And so that was his way of saving face and getting out of it and it was fine. But we clearly.... We had the only bearded, afro delegate at the convention in Topper Carew, although I suppose on the California delegation there were a couple of tough looking guys. But that's just a little sidelight.

HACKMAN: Who, other than Sorensen, at headquarters gets involved in the D.C. primary? Do you have any problems in getting things through anyone or any other things with Sorensen that comes up?

EDELMAN Well, there was no other problems with Sorensen about it. And he was really only involved in those kinds of initial decisions of.... I don't know how much involved he was after that. Dave Hackett perhaps had the most day to day contact with the thing, Dave Hackett and I and Helen Keyes. And then some

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of the.... You know, Don Wilson [Donald M. Wilson], some of the media people and so on were helpful from time to time. Those, I think, were the main people. I think Dun Gifford took some interest in it too.

HACKMAN: What kinds of things would Hackett get involved in other than just running the Boiler Room?

EDELMAN: I just don't know. Not much. That was basically what he was doing.

HACKMAN: How helpful was—And I was just looking at the black book upstairs and it was Mary Jo Kopecne's assignment, one of them was D.C.—was the Boiler Room ever helpful to you on any of these things?

EDELMAN: I didn't really work.... No, I mean, I don't.... I just couldn't say one way or the other. You know the.... What they were supposed to do in the D.C. headquarters is if they had a problem, they were supposed to call the Boiler Room, which would have been Mary Jo. And I assume they did, but those were the kinds of things that I wasn't involved in. Now I should say that Joey Gargan [Joseph F. Gargan] was also involved to some extent because when it came to be a question of scheduling the Senator running those

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rallies, that one Sunday later on why then he was sort of scheduling and Joe Dolan worked on that too. And they helped to pick the rally sites and then Boston advance boys.... There was a guy named Bill Foley and Kevin Kenell. Kevin Kenell was not Boston, was from here. But they were guys out of national headquarters who did the advancing for the Senator for those trips. And they sort of worked with the local the people. Willie Hardy, for example, made a stop up in the Northeast. Theresa Jones and Louise Barrow made a stop in the Southeast. And I don't know who on the third stop of the day.

HACKMAN: Do you have any problem with any of that? I think that's May fifth that three or four stops.

EDELMAN: Yeah. Oh, well first we should put into perspective that the first stop in the District I would think was the night before Martin Luther King [Martin Luther King, Jr.] was killed, April third.

HACKMAN: Right. Yeah.

EDELMAN: And that was a.... That one didn't go very well. I mean it was marvelous in the sense that he had a

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huge, huge crowd, but it was mechanically awful. The microphones didn't work and it just wasn't.... wasn't done very well from the mechanical point of view, although the crowd was fantastic. But it was just interesting because he was there on the third of April and then he was there again, what, four days later on the or, you know, that following Sunday. And, you know, the place that he.... It was just a complete transformation. It was all burned out and everything. It was very, kind of sad. But on the May fifth thing, no. You know, we had some problems of how much time were we going to have, 'cause he was going to have to catch the plane to go back to Indiana and so how many stops were there going to be and the usual back and forth. And of course the advance men were all up-tight about whether they would get crowds. But it turned out that they had three good stops. The first

stop was weak. The first stop was in a fenced in school yard and it didn't fill up the whole school yard, so there were maybe only—oh, who knows—

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between five hundred and a thousand people there, or something. But the second stop was the second and third stops were fantastic. And I mean, you know, not fantastic by the standards of Watts or someplace else where he was absolutely mobbed and not fantastic by the standards even of Fourteenth Street and Park Road where it was more his kind of black person. You know, these are more.... These were out in less densely populated areas and slightly more middle class kind of people and so on, but even so they were very good rallies. And, you know, just the usual headaches of would anybody show up and would we get.... Oh, we had problems with fliers and.... I remember we printed up a bunch of extra fliers at the last minute. That sort of thing. But it was all fine.

HACKMAN: Can you recall getting involved in discussions of what attitude you should display toward Walter Washington [Walter E. Washington], toward the D.C. government?'

EDELMAN: Yeah, not so much for the Senator as for Channing and for the local campaigning. And the basic

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feeling was hands off, because Walter Washington's very popular. And he, as I recall.... Had he endorsed the Jackson slate?

HACKMAN: I don't think he did.

EDELMAN: I don't think he did.

HACKMAN: No.

EDELMAN: No. I think he was Hatched and the question was whether they would get a bill through Congress unHatching him in time and we were working with Joe Tydings people to prevent that from happening. And I think that it never did come through. So I don't think that Washington ever took a position and the result was that.... The feeling was as long as he didn't take a position that nobody should knock him because he was so popular. So I think that was the way we did it.

HACKMAN: Can you remember how that release came about on May fifth when Robert Kennedy said or it was released that if he was elected, he would nominate as mayor members of the City Council, people who were elected by...

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EDELMAN: Yes, Bruce Terris, as we've said a couple times, was working in our research operation and, of course, Bruce has long been involved in District affairs and, in fact, handled District affairs for the Vice President and so Bruce and I agreed that he would work with the D.C. people on developing substantive statements that would be issued in the Senator's name during the few days before the election. And I think that what, if I remember right, the way Bruce, I left it was that he cleared the basic positions with me and then just went ahead and put the stuff out. I think he may have cleared them on a daily basis with Sorensen as well. So that was Bruce's idea and I'm sure it had been cleared. But that's an example of what we were talking about before, that something like that didn't have to clear with Robert Kennedy, that he left it in essentially in my and Sorensen's discretion and I probably wouldn't have showed it to Sorensen except that I was out of town from May first to May fourth or so. But, in any event, that's how those things came

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about. So those were releases issued in his name. As I say, cleared probably by me and Sorensen. But that, as I recall, that got some attention and I think that was helpful. But it was Bruce's idea.

HACKMAN: Why, do you think, when you were in Indiana Robert Kennedy wanted you to come back to D.C.? I guess what I'm really trying to get at is how worried would he have been about D.C. or what.... Do you know if he had anything specifically that he felt had to be done?

EDELMAN: Well, he just didn't know. You know, he didn't know what was going to happen in the District and, you know, I don't think he regarded me as a great politician, so if he wasn't worried enough to send Larry O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] in. But he didn't quite believe me that things were really marvelous here and, of course, I wasn't completely sure myself. And he just felt that I had been involved in the whole thing. It's just really a security blanket kind of thing. You know, he's up to his ears in the Indiana thing. He doesn't quite know

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what I'm doing there 'cause I haven't.... don't have any base there. I hadn't been there the whole time and so on. And, as we said, the only reason I was there was 'cause of trading off with Milton [Milton S. Gwirtzman]. So he sees me and the thing that comes into his mind, it's a reflex thing. You know, Peter, D.C., ought to be there. And that was really what it was.

HACKMAN: Was the Central Committee, Democratic Central slate picked in much the same way that the delegate slate was.

EDELMAN: Yeah, we did that at the same time.

HACKMAN: Yeah. Okay. Same people involved in choosing.

EDELMAN: Uh huh. And I don't remember any particular.... Now there's some overlaps, if you look at the list.

HACKMAN: Yeah, there are a few I think. She probably.... Maybe.... Are those the ones she has checked that are the overlaps?

EDELMAN: Yes. That's right. Bill Simons was both a delegate and on the.... And Howard Willens. And then a couple were alternates. Theresa Jones

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was a delegate and so on. So I don't remember exactly how it was that we differentiated. I think in some cases it was by the preference of the person. I believe, Willie Hardy, for example, said she wanted to be on the Central Committee. And, of course, Bruce Terris. That was rather amusing in that my recollection is that we didn't particularly focus on.... You know, we just thought well, Bruce has been active and we'll put him on there and then, of course, later on he emerges as the chairman.

HACKMAN: You mentioned the last time trying to get Coates [James E. Coates—I can't remember his first name—to work on the CUP staff. Why was there such a problem in getting a black person to come in last year?

EDELMAN: Well, basically because people have.... You know, people work for a living.

HACKMAN: That's really it.

EDELMAN: Yeah. I mean you got to find somebody who's got time to come in and so wives is one thing. And they could come in. Most of the black ladies were out

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working in their neighborhoods—Willie Hardy and Lola Singletary and Theresa Jones and Louise Barrow and so on were much more effective out there than they would have been downtown anyway. And, you know, if you look around, Walter Fauntroy's not going to come in and work in your headquarters. You know. Channing Phillips is not going to do that. Maybe we could have found some young guy, but then what kind of political experience would he have. So Coates was found, and of course he was a.... not very helpful.

HACKMAN: Do you recall anything about a guy named Al Harrison?

EDELMAN: Oh, yeah.

HACKMAN: Who is he?

EDELMAN: He was a friend of, if I remember right, was a friend of Martin Carnoy's and he's a black guy. And he did work. He was pretty good. We sent him out to California later on that was fairly late in the game that they found him.

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HACKMAN: Anything else on the District that you can remember?

EDELMAN: No, that's basically it. There isn't.... You know, if I think of something later on, maybe I can say. But just, you know, it ran like a regular campaign once they got the thing organized and, you know, between, let's say, April fifteenth and May fifth, for about three week period, I didn't even pay any attention to it very much. Once we got the delegates picked, really basically I got out of it.

HACKMAN: I didn't ask you before we started today whether there was anything that came to you from last time that anything you wanted to say?

EDELMAN: No.

HACKMAN: Okay. Let me pick up a couple things then from last time I'd like to get a little more on that speech you said that was planned in Kentucky on cigarettes, where you say that's one of the few instances where some trimming had to be done. Can you talk a little bit more about

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what would have been done?

EDELMAN: Yeah, it wasn't a speech. What it was was one piece of paper it was about three hundred words that I typed up and that Seigenthaler [John Seigenthaler] took a look at and he said it was all right. And I think maybe Tom Johnston [Thomas M.C. Johnston], one or two other people did. And it essentially said.... It wasn't really even trimming. What it said was.... Either for use.... Probably you know, for.... more for use in response to a question that he would.... you know, if he was going down there. Or maybe he would make a statement on it somewhere or issue a press release, but probably in response to a question. You know, we can't really dispute what the Surgeon General says, but on the other hand I don't want to drive anybody out of the business. And that was the major theme of it, was that clearly that there is going to be a continuing effort to discourage people from smoking cigarettes and I think that's right because of the Surgeon General's report. [Interruption] But I, you know, then he would go on to say, "I think

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Since this is going to happen, we've got to look to what the result is going to be on people's economic—on their livelihood. And so I think we should take steps to help people get into other crops and to help industry get into other products and this kind of thing because I want to emphasize that I don't want to drive the.... that no one should be driven out of business by this kind of a trend." That was what was in it. So it wasn't really trimming 'cause that was something he would have said in any event.

HACKMAN: Can you remember other kinds of statements like that that you worked on for other particular areas? For instance, the gambling thing in Nevada. Did you get at all involved in that?

EDELMAN: Yeah, I don't remember what the final thing about that was. It came across my desk, but I never actually drafted the statement. I gave that to somebody. If they did finally have something on that, it was after I was out on the road. No, of course,

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that early in the game there wasn't that much of that. There'd been much more in the Senatorial race, making up.... you mean a specific letter to somebody who says to you, "In fact you can have my support if you say something satisfactory on so and so." We didn't do too much of that in the presidential, or at least I don't remember much of it. In particular primary states, of course, we would try to find issues that were of interest to people and where we could take a position conscientiously that would be politically helpful. In Oregon we would talk about the problems of the lumber industry and so on, and that kind of thing. But there wasn't very much of the old politics kind of, you know, you get a group in, you get the American Legion leaders in and you make a statement about veterans, and then they endorse you. Mostly because there wasn't anybody around that was going to endorse Robert Kennedy on that basis. And I'm sure there would have been more of that as the summer went on, as he began to pick up steam.

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HACKMAN: Okay, one of the other thing we talked about in conjunction with the South is setting up the challenge in Mississippi. How much had been done by the time of the assassination and how much, particularly, how much had to be done from the Washington end or from your end and how much could just be left to the Mississippi people?

EDELMAN: Well, we had gotten the people. You know, we had talked to the FDP

[Freedom Democratic Party] people, Larry Guiat, to Hodding Carter [Hodding Carter, III], to.... I don't remember.... Oh, to Charles Evers. And I think to Aaron Henry [Aaron E. Henry], although Aaron Henry was such a strong Humphrey fellow that I don't know whether he would have been involved in it. But essentially we had talked to everybody and gotten everybody talking to each other down there. And I don't know that it had gone any further than that. There had been the meetings to select. The first stages of the delegate process in Mississippi had taken place before Robert Kennedy was killed and I simply don't know to what extent they showed up to contest in

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order to make their case, if they were being excluded. I think they did. We had certainly urged that they did that. But Ted McLaughlin had gone down there to work and I'd stopped following it during the month of May.

HACKMAN: You'd said last time that Dr. King would have endorsed Robert Kennedy sometime during the campaign if it would have been needed. Were there other black leaders that you got involved with or that were being worked on to get an endorsement or were those more or less laid off of earlier?

EDELMAN: I think they laid off of it generally speaking. We tried very hard to get Vernon Jordan [Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.] to come into the campaign and he wouldn't do it and the result was we didn't really have any top black guy in the campaign as of June fourth. Earl Graves [Earl G. Graves] was running around, but he was of no particular significance. And we had.... You know, John Lewis [John R. Lewis] had been very helpful in the primary states and he's a marvelous guy, but he doesn't quite have the stature to come in and be, in effect, our Louis Martin [Louis E. Martin]. And we talked

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to Roger Wilkins about doing that, but we hadn't been able to get anybody as of the time the Senator was killed. So the result was that there was nobody and, you know, it just wasn't a particular problem. There was no need to get.... God, you know, that was the one place where we were solid. And besides, that there were a number of Negro athletes and entertainers and so on who in their capacity as athletes and entertainers had endorsed him. I remember we used commercials from Bill Russell and somebody else in the District here. The last few days before the election we put on radio commercials by Bill Russell and whoever the other person was that we got in at great hurry and brought in. So I assume that Floyd McKissick [Floyd B. McKissick] would have been for him. I don't know about Roy Innis. I certainly don't know about Whitney Young [Whitney M. Young, Jr.] and Roy Wilkins. But he'd been very helpful to Floyd McKissick in the past and so I assume that McKissick would have been for him. And then, you know, some, maybe some of the local people around the country as indeed there

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were and was and so on.

HACKMAN: Were you getting much criticism from people because you didn't have a Vernon Jordan?

EDELMAN: There was some. There was some, but not.... Nobody was paying that much attention to it.

HACKMAN: Earl Graves couldn't have played that kind of role, what, just because he didn't have the connections or the experience or the stature?

EDELMAN: All of that. All of that.

HACKMAN: Yeah. What really was his role during the campaign?

EDELMAN: Objectively, he was just sort of taking himself around to the primary states and working with the black community in each one without much direction—just kind of doing it. And if you asked him, he would have told you he was Robert Kennedy's top key black man, but I think they just wanted to keep him busy and keep him out of the way.

HACKMAN: Had they had problems with him in New York previously or...

EDELMAN: Well, since this is for history and he's not ever going to hear this tape, yes. He's really a....

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He's really a very limited individual with a tremendously inflated ego. And, yeah, we just.... It was a mistake, you know.

HACKMAN: When he was taken on to New York

EDELMAN: Yeah. But they, you know, they needed a black face in that office and sometimes they didn't do things with exactly the level of rationality and good judgment that should have been undertaken. And he's really trading on it now.

HACKMAN: Did you get any feedback from the meeting that Robert Kennedy had with the SCLC [Southern Christian Leadership Conference] leaders at the King funeral and some of the other black leaders who were there?

EDELMAN: No, the SCLC leaders were a little mad at him, 'cause he didn't, because they

had asked him to explain his program and he figured his program was well known and, you know, I think there was a legitimate question, particularly on a time when they were.... I mean that would have been a legitimate question any time, but he was just impatient with it at

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that particular time, so he kind of didn't really go through it. And they weren't satisfied and he wasn't satisfied. But that was the only thing. Well, I know that he regarded that meeting as a distinct minus, but I don't think it hurt him particularly.

Now I should back up a little on the question of black leaders. Julian Bond [Horace Julian Bond] was for him and was going around the country and speaking. And there had been a meeting of community leaders that Dick Boone [Richard W. Boone] but together, which at the time I hadn't appreciated the significance, but here is Dick Boone, who was the executive director of a tax exempt organization, you know, out using his network and bringing in all these people. And he brought them out to Hickory Hill and he really flew them in from all over the country. And I don't know where he got the money to do it, although it may have been from the campaign. But you had Arthur Brazier [Arthur M. Brazier] from Chicago, the Woodlawn Organization, Southside, Chicago. You had a couple of black guys from

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Newark. You had Albert Pena [Albert A. Pena, Jr.], who's a county commissioner in Bexar County, Texas, San Antonio, a Mexican-American. You had Ted Watkins from Watts, who's quite a powerful community figure there. And so on. A total of about twelve or fifteen around the table. And that was really the kind of minority group support that Robert Kennedy was getting and much more significant than getting the endorsement of a national leader, because these were the fellows who if they were really.... Of course, it depended on them. But if they wanted to, really had local organizations and could command a tremendous number of supporters at the local level. So it was a much more grass rootsy minority operation than any presidential campaign before.

HACKMAN: Who was at that meeting at Hickory Hill from the Robert Kennedy side?

EDELMAN: Well, Robert Kennedy was there briefly. Ted Sorensen was there. I don't remember who else. I wasn't there. I mean, I came in on the tail end of it. I think my wife [Marian Wright Edelman] was there. If I remember right, it

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I think who was there for the whole thing.

HACKMAN: Do you know about...

EDELMAN: She was not from the Robert Kennedy side. She was a.... She was a community person in those days.

HACKMAN: Can you remember anything about Robert Kennedy's regard or lack of it for any of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference leaders after King was assassinated? How did he feel about Abernathy [Ralph D. Abernathy] and Williams [Hosea Lorenzo Williams] and some of the other people?

EDELMAN: Well, he didn't.... I mean, didn't know them all that and just didn't have any particular occasion to focus on it. You know, I think except that the poor people's campaign had gotten going and wasn't going well. I remember one day he asked me about Abernathy. But he didn't.... So if his opinion was based on what I told him, he didn't think too highly of Abernathy. But, you know, he didn't know Hosea Williams. If you said, "Hosea Williams," he'd say, "Who's that?" If you said Andy Young [Andrew J. Young], he knew who that was and he had respect for Andy Young.

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HACKMAN: Can you recall discussions of how you talk about Resurrection City and the poor people's march, what you say?

EDELMAN: Well, again since this is history, the poor people's campaign was Robert Kennedy's idea. Marian and I were out at his house in the summer of 1967 one day. We just were out there, I think it was some meeting on a Saturday or Sunday to talk about tax reform with Lew Kaden [Lewis Kaden] and I don't remember who else. Lou Oberdorfer perhaps. And when that was over he asked us if we wanted to stick around and swim and so on for a little while, which we did. And we were just all sort of walking around the pool. I think he was in it and we were standing on top or, you know, he and I were in it and Marian was standing.... I don't know. And he just started to talk. He was asking Marian, as he did, about how things were going and, you know, how did she think anything would ever happen and so on and so forth and finally said.... He said, "The only thing.... The only way there's ever going to be any change is if it's more uncomfortable

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for the Congress not to act than it is for them to act." He said, "I think what really has to happen is that you got to get an awful lot of them, you've got to get a whole lot of poor people who just come to Washington and say they're going to stay here until something happens and it gets really unpleasant and there are some arrests and it's just a very nasty business and Congress gets really embarrassed and they have to act." And so she thought that was a pretty good idea and they talked about it a little bit, but not really too much more than that, except he.... Well, he went on some. You know, he spun that thought out perhaps into a little five or ten minute little speech about all the things that that would mean. And the next

week it happened that there was an SCLC retreat [Begin Side II, Tape I] at Airlie House to talk about strategies for the future. So Marian brought that up and it was accepted by everyone and it became the poor people's campaign.

HACKMAN: I didn't realize that.

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EDELMAN: Yeah. Well...

HACKMAN: Did he talk about it, then, over time?

EDELMAN: Well, he used to, you know, sort of give me a wink every now and then. But while the preparations were being made, he would ask me every now and then how it was going and this is while King was still alive, and, you know, I would sort of say that it wasn't going too well, that the plans were proceeding rather slowly and he would say, "Gee, that's too bad." Then, King was killed and they went ahead with it. And one day he asked me how it was and, you know, I just said it was, just wasn't what he had thought it would be, because it wasn't being done very well. You know I think there's some question as to whether even if it had been done well, whether it would have been any success in terms of the mood of the country at that point. But he was a little bit too optimistic I'm afraid about people's rock bottom willingness to do good when they're forced to. So I just said it wasn't going very well. And he said, "Gee, that's too bad."

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HACKMAN: During the campaign did you ever get involved in any....Well, I guess really the only one I can think of, the meeting with the black caucus in Oakland?

EDELMAN: No, I wasn't there.

HACKMAN: Okay, why don't we talk about Nebraska then. Before Nebraska, there's one stop at the UAW [International Union, United Automobile, Workers of America] convention in...

EDELMAN: I wasn't there.

HACKMAN: Atlantic City. Nothing on that. Did you have any contacts on the labor side at all or spend any time during the campaign on that?

EDELMAN: No, I talked to Paul Schrade from time to time. Paul just.... but more on issues like when, you know, they were going to do that atom testing in Nevada, Paul Schrade wanted to get the Senator to make a statement against it—that kind of thing. But other than that, I didn't really talk to labor.

HACKMAN: What did you spend most of your time on in Nebraska? Where were you—staying or sitting somewhere or

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moving around a lot with the Senator?

EDELMAN: Both. The first couple days that we were in Nebraska... Well, I don't know my time sequence. I spent out of the week that we were in Nebraska, I spent approximately two to three days in the hotel in Omaha, another day or two in the hotel in Lincoln and one day on the airplane with him doing some airport stops going into town in South Dakota which I think was the Saturday before the primary. And mainly what I did was to work on the day to day releases, getting up his material for South Dakota—you know, a different speech for each stop and his releases for that day and that sort of stuff. Just to brief him on the local issues and then I worked on his farm program. I was his farm expert. And so we got out his farm material. But it was just a, you know, the two releases a day thing.

HACKMAN: Well, yeah. I'd like to get you to talk a little bit about the farm program and how much you had to do that you didn't already have on this.

EDELMAN: Well, yeah, you've got releases there.

HACKMAN: Yeah. This is May and they should

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be in chronological order.

EDELMAN: Well, basically the farm program came from John Schnittker [John A. Schnittker], who was the Under Secretary of Agriculture who just...

HACKMAN: Has that thing out in—what is it—*Atlantic* or *Harper's*?

EDELMAN: Yeah, *Atlantic* this month. But John was for us. There's that marvelous story about how Johnson said one day that his Cabinet members could do what they wanted and the next day Schnittker came out for Kennedy and the next day after that Johnson said that his Cabinet members were not supposed to take positions.

HACKMAN: May ten is the Otoe County Courthouse thing, so that's the community services act.

EDELMAN: Oh, yeah. Well, that was just something that I had had sitting around in my

own head for a while and we needed a release and so Adam and I talked about that and he said, "Well, let's make it into a release." And so we did.

HACKMAN: How does something like that appeal to Nebraska?

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I mean why use that in Nebraska?

EDELMAN: It's just something to say that's about rural communities. I don't know if it had much appeal or not. We just thought we'd give it a try. You know, you don't get much coverage on something like that anyway. But we had to first develop a farm.... First farm thing was a speech in Fargo very early.

HACKMAN: Some are missing out of there.

EDELMAN: Yeah, I know. Speech in Fargo, you know, in April some time, along about April tenth. So I talked to Schnittker and I got the basic points and then we would sort of refine it every time. Talked to him, show him each release after we did it and he'd tell me what was wrong with it and then we'd sort of make it better. And I remember the night of the Nebraska primary the Senator was very jubilant and you know, we ran across each other and he said, "Well, it was your farm program that did it." And so that was nice. But it was a very simple kind of a thing. You know, it was just trying to say that we should.... Oh, there was a position in it about corporate farming,

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which is interest all through those dates. And I don't see in this pile releases.... any release about farm programs, so.... Here we are. Here we are. This is one in Pendleton, Oregon on May twenty-second, so I mean this just shows you what we would do. It goes through the prices in Oregon, the fact that prices are lower and costs are up and in each case we would always have the relevant statistics for the state that we were in and then we would talk about how many farms had closed and what that had done to rural Oregon, Nebraska, North Dakota, Indiana. And then we would.... The program was you have to assure farmers an adequate farm income and then.... Oh, then we would take a position in favor, in a sort of a oblique way, in favor of collective bargaining for farm prices, that farmers could organize to bargain for their prices. We just.... It would be like a statement, "Help farmers join together to bargain with those who buy their products." That kind of thing.

HACKMAN: Did he know what the NFO [National Farmers' Organization]

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was?

EDELMAN: Yeah. Oh, yeah. He had met with the President of the NFO.

HACKMAN: Is it Oren Staley [Oren Lee Staley], is that the guy?

EDELMAN: I think so.

HACKMAN: Used to be the man.

EDELMAN: Yeah, he's met with the president of the NFO and, you know, he was in contact with the Farmers Union, although that tended to be for Humphrey. But, in fact, through the years he had always tried to stay in touch with—what was the old guy's name with the one eye?

HACKMAN: Patton [James G. Patton]?

EDELMAN: Yeah, with Patton and then with Tony Dechant after that at the Farmers Union and went and spoke to their convention, you remember, in Oklahoma in, I believe, 1967. So he'd always made an effort and he used to write.... Some guy from North Dakota, head of the North Dakota Farmers Union once wrote him a letter and said, you know, "Dear Senator, I like what you're doing." He wrote me a note: "Peter stay in touch with these people." [Laughter]

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And he would always do that about people that he knew that he should be in touch with, but he didn't quite know how. He would just always say, "I hope you're staying in touch with those people." Well, then, you know, then another position that he had was a strategic grain reserve, which was the thing where the government would buy grain to, essentially, stabilize prices, but on the theory that you would have a reserve in time of shortage and that you could sop up surpluses, And then he was for reenacting the basic price support legislation and he was for low interest loans for farmers and he would talk some about what the results of the cost of credit had been. And he was for ending the tax loopholes that enabled people to make money off of farming without really being farmers.

HACKMAN: Did you have any problem in going along with.... I know, I guess, that Schnittker was for this, in extending the basic price support system or had you done anything from beyond that point?

EDELMAN: Oh, I had no problem with that because I wouldn't

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know what else to say. And what he said was that, you know, that we've got

to work for a long term system that incorporates all the improvements that need to be made in the farm program. You know you don't really have to engage in that much detail on your campaign rhetoric. That's a five or six point farm program that I just went through—you know, collective bargaining, grain reserve, extending the legislation so farmers can plan ahead, lowering the costs of credit, ending the tax loopholes. That's a five point farm program. And then you can flesh that out with talking about bringing industry in and, you know, talking about a whole lot of other things. You know, talking about power and other rural sorts of issue—rural electrification, that would have been.... That was in some of the releases. And developing a non-farm rural industry like tourism and so on. And that's what, basically, not only what people wanted to hear, but all those positions were basically right. So you don't have to have a.... At least in the early

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stages of a presidential campaign. I mean it would have been quite anomalous for somebody who'd never been involved in farm matters to all of a sudden issue a major farm program statement. And you just get.... If you do that, you know, if you give somebody a thing, if you give people things they can pick at, you begin to get sniped at. The Farm Bureau begins to get after you, the Grange begins to get after you and so on. It's much better to have just enough to say so that you can go before an audience of farmers and sound like you know what you're talking about, have the applause lines and those were applause lines. I mean to us they don't mean anything, but if you stand up before a bunch of farmers and say, "I think you ought to be able to bargain after the prices you get," that brings down the house, And he was always very surprised. He would look at those farm things that I'd worked out with Schnittker and he would say, eh, what's all that?" And he would stand up and he would give it and they would say "Yeah." That

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HACKMAN: That's right. My relatives are all NFO people. They really get wild on that stuff.

EDELMAN: I remember going around with him in Indiana to a little farm meeting somewhere outside of somewhere near Purdue, I think, Lafayette. And, of course, he had a marvelous patter that went with all this. You know, saying, "You've got to elect me, because I'm the best friend the farmer has. We drink eleven quarts of milk." And you know, "You should see my breakfast table." And that sort of stuff. And they loved it. They loved it.

HACKMAN: Is this came out of him naturally doing something like this or is this something he really has to work at, this coming back at the audience like that?

EDELMAN: Oh no, he loved that. Maybe not naturally in the sense of that there was a, you know, a great shyness about the man and that when he first undertook to do

public platform stuff, he was rather stiff. But Robert Kennedy in private had a very playful streak in him and it was a question of his becoming related

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enough in public to have his platform manner be somewhat related to what his private, playful streak was. And that's really what it was. And he had, you know, long since achieved that by the time the presidential campaign came around. No, he liked nothing better than to play around on the platform. It gave him something to do. He didn't have to give the same stiffy old speech every time.

HACKMAN: I was thinking. I think it was in the *Divided We Stand* book I was looking at this morning, you know, the book on the '68 campaign and these people, I think, have the idea that Sorensen and Salinger [Pierre E.G. Salinger] and people like this, who are talking to Robert Kennedy, say, you know, "Don't appear the crusader. Get a lot of this type of thing in and soften your image," and all this. Is this so? Is there ever a shift in the campaign in this regard?

EDELMAN: Well, yeah, but I... Yeah. You know it goes back to what we were talking about last week, which is a combination of things. I mean one is that he naturally tones down after he gets the venom out of his system, you know, after he gets all of the pent-up

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stuff out, then he naturally tones down. Second, he naturally tones down after he loses Johnson and Vietnam as an issue, which happens coincidentally or about the same time as he would have been—perhaps a little bit before—he would have been through sort of getting rid of the worst of what had been pent-up in him. And besides that his advisors are telling him that he's too hot a candidate, that he's got to be cool. So all of that really. And then he's like anybody else. With a huge, frenzied crowd he tended to be more emotional and to be a hotter kind of speaker. With a smaller, more laconic crowd he could tend to be sort of quieter and more playful and particularly with rural people he—you know, they're rather laconic anyway—he would be really in a way at his best with rural people, much more so certainly than suburban people or white, city people. And with blacks, blacks he would make some jokes, but, you know, it was more, you know, what the black wanted to hear was about social justice in this country. So that the

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place where he could really be closest to himself and he said this sometimes—was with rural people. He really felt that they, in a romantic kind of way, he felt that they were his kind of people, particularly the farmers in Nebraska. I know some people said with perhaps some exaggeration, but not all that much, that the Nebraska farmers were John Kennedy's coal

miners, that, you know, that was the same kind of romance that took place, that Robert Kennedy hadn't known what terrible problems the farmers had and that he went there and really saw it in their faces and on the land and that's true. And he did really feel, did learn something out of that Nebraska primary in terms of what he saw of the farmer being another kind of forgotten and alienated American, another person who thought that this system had just left him behind. So, I remember him.... You know, some of my best campaign memories are with those rural crowds and his standing up. On the other hand, that famous crack that he made in Indiana—was a crowd in Gary, I think, there very late at night

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he said something about, "Make like, not war," and then he said, "See how careful I am." And, of course, nobody in the crowd got it.

HACKMAN: Can you remember discussions of what, other than the farm policy issues, you talk about to Nebraska farmers or to Nebraska people in general?

EDELMAN: What other issues besides farm issues?

HACKMAN: Yeah. Can you say the same things you've been saying in Indiana or...

EDELMAN: Oh, sure.

HACKMAN: What are the new things you have to say, if any?

EDELMAN: You talk about old people. I mean you always have an old people release in every primary. And we had a housing release and we had something about education, I'm sure. And it's just that you play down the federal government's going to solve everything stuff, which was not his line anyway. He didn't believe the general government could solve everything, So you talk about local initiative. You talk about bringing industry in. Of course, in Omaha you talk about urban type problems, but around the state it's a question all forms

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of rural development: recreation, conservation, tourism, industry. All of that.

HACKMAN: How.... Can you recall discussions of how handle McCarthy in Nebraska, where he's almost running a non-campaign of sorts?

EDELMAN: Yeah. Well, you know Kennedy basically ignored McCarthy up until after Oregon, so it wasn't really a question.

HACKMAN: Anyone urging him to pay more attention to McCarthy or confront McCarthy

directly as opposed to...

EDELMAN: I don't know. I don't think so. Not at that point. There certainly was in Oregon, but not.... I don't believe in Nebraska. But one is somewhat hard put to think of what to say in Nebraska because they are certainly not dovish on war, although you remember that he made one of the best and strongest speeches in Kansas but that, of course, was to kids.

HACKMAN: The first big position release, the program for a sound economy, came out on May twelfth. I assume that doesn't have any tie in with...

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EDELMAN: No, that was for national.

HACKMAN: Yeah.

EDELMAN: That was for national consumption.

HACKMAN: Who primarily put that together? Who was the...

EDELMAN: Lew Kaden. Yeah, so that Otoe County Courthouse, which was the, I think, was the first release when he came back to Nebraska after the Indiana primary. They'd been putting out some local releases of the kind we've talked about before in Nebraska. They'd had a week or so of releases in his name when he wasn't in the state about various things. But the first release was this Otoe County Courthouse, which was a, you know, rural development, which was farms plus this kind of rural community service idea. And then the May twelfth he talks about old people in Wilber, Nebraska.

HACKMAN: Czech village.

EDELMAN: Huh?

HACKMAN: Czech village. What is that?

EDELMAN: I think...

HACKMAN: A Czechoslovakian community, I guess.

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EDELMAN: Yeah. Oh, and then.... That's right. Then, of course, inflation.

HACKMAN: Which followed—that's the day after the release on the sound economy.

EDELMAN: Yeah, but that was another them that was of interest in Nebraska, cost of living.

HACKMAN: Anything for that Democratic fund-raising function, I guess in Omaha that he and Humphrey attended?

EDELMAN: Oh, he just had a short speech that didn't say anything and he high-tailed it out of there. I don't think he was very good at that particular function.

HACKMAN: I think you'd said last time that you felt that Phil Sorensen [Philip C. Sorensen] had put together Nebraska well? How do you measure that when you go into a state?

EDELMAN: Oh, I suppose just how many complaints you hear about fights between people and how much flak you get about missing appearances that you ought to be making and how much sense you have that the schedule is good or lousy in terms of appearances that he is making—just whether he's well scheduled, well advanced and

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whether he seems to have support from local groups.

HACKMAN: Did you go on the trip either to Columbus, Ohio or the one to Davenport and Des Moines after Nebraska was over?

EDELMAN: No, I stayed in Nebraska. And that was the day of the Nebraska primary. And then he came back to Nebraska that night. And I was working on a speech about economies for Portland all during that day for the Portland City Club or whatever it was called.

HACKMAN: I think you said last time that right after Nebraska there was again an attempt to do something with McCarthy. Do you know anything about the contact made with McCarthy at that point?

EDELMAN: No. There was contact made, but I don't know whether it was directly with McCarthy or just the fact that.... To my knowledge, it was just the fact that he made that appeal on television.

HACKMAN: Yeah. Now you'd mentioned that there were other attempts during the Campaign, other than D.C., to put together McCarthy-Robert Kennedy coalitions and in most cases McCarthy broke these up. Can

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you.... Did you get involved in any of these?

EDELMAN: No, that was all in the political side. But they were.... You know, there was an attempt in Connecticut. There was an attempt in New York. I think there was an attempt in Pennsylvania. There was an attempt in Maryland. I think that there was an attempt in Minnesota, I believe, or Iowa. So there were, you know, seven or eight states.

HACKMAN: Any places where these did work well?

EDELMAN: No, worked nowhere. McCarthy vetoed every one of them.

HACKMAN: Well, Oregon, then. Where did, you spend most of your time in Oregon?

EDELMAN: I was, during the two weeks from the fourteenth to the twenty-eighth of May, I was in California some of the time and in Oregon some of the time. And I was in Portland while I was in Oregon I was in Portland most of the time except the swing that the Senator took through eastern Oregon. I travelled with him, met him in Pendleton and I did all the speeches for that day and, you know, just...

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Fred Dutton [Frederick G. Dutton] was down in California so I did the whole thing in handling everything that day. That was the day that we had an airplane that didn't have steps.

HACKMAN: When he had to get out on the what?

EDELMAN: When they had to come out with a fork lift and box at every airport. And the first time he was.... Everybody else went out and then he came out and as the thing was descending he said, "As George Bernard Shaw said, 'Why not?'" So that was kind of a funny day. But he got very.... It was like Nebraska. He was very well received in eastern Oregon and as you look at the voting, he won in eastern Oregon as far as the population, but he carried eastern Oregon, because he knew how to talk to those people. Those people had some problems and he knew how to talk to people with problems. They had the same problems that people in Nebraska had. I mean, you know, substitute maybe one crop for another or, something, but they're basically farmers and it's basically a problem of declining farm prices and spiraling credit costs and increasing

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economies of scale, making it harder and harder to make it on a smaller scale. And so all through that area he could talk of, particularly, natural beauty. He could talk about farm problems and rural development and taking advantage of natural beauty and so on. And it rang a bell with them. But when it came to Multnomah County and the suburbs, God, we just.... I mean, I went around with him one day or there were two or three days there when I played Fred Dutton and it was just awful going into these factories and these workers just sit there blah, you know. They just look like you just descended on them from some other planet, and you didn't know what to say that would get them interested. You talk about the cost of living. Well, you know, most of them are making enough money so that that was a minor irritation. And you talk about how much the lumber industry in Oregon was being hurt by the credit squeeze and they sort of look at you. You talk about how beautiful Oregon is and they sort of.... There just wasn't anything you could say that would turn them on. Now

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I think, in retrospect, he should have talked about the war. He was afraid to talk about the war because he thought that maybe that was one of the things that had gotten Morse into trouble. But I think that that would have appealed to them. They weren't interested in racial problems. They have, in Portland, Oregon maybe four thousand Negroes or eight thousand Negroes. You know, it's nothing.

HACKMAN: Was anyone urging him to open up on the war more?

EDELMAN: I don't know. I don't know. I don't. I just don't know whether it was discussed. I assume that it was.

HACKMAN: Had there been reports earlier in the campaign that you knew of that things were in bad shape in Oregon?

EDELMAN: Well, there'd been an early poll that said they were in great shape and that was too bad because that's where the trouble started, because that's where the trouble started, because you know, they thought they had it knocked and they sent in a rather second string crew—you know, all nice people, Barrett Prettyman and Bill vanden Heuvel [William J. vanden Heuvel] and Herb Schmertz. But.... And then I think

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it was really a mistake to get into bed with Edith Green [Edith S. Green]. And in a way I think he knew that at the time and he just sort of didn't know what to do about it. So it just, you know, it was just a wet blanket the whole thing wasn't any organization, there was no enthusiasm; it just didn't ever take off. And he made an early swing through there and did pretty well, drew good crowds and everything and then seemed okay too. And it was only when he came back—I remember quite vividly that day he came back to Portland and we went to those factories—that he realized that the thing wasn't so good. And we didn't get

along with each other too good that day, because he, you know, he sort of wasn't blaming me. He knew it wasn't my fault, and yet he was just sort of griping about everything. And then he went out to a model convention at a high school that night, at the Sunset High School and it was a very festive occasion and they had all

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their balloons and it was really very colorful. And he, you know, he just sort of wouldn't take it seriously because they were just sort of these kids. And on another occasion it was just his meat. You know, on another occasion it would have been.... He would have probably thought it was marvelous. But the result, he was awful and he left a bad taste in their mouth and they nominated Humphrey because they thought that he had treated them condescendingly.

HACKMAN: How would he treat advance men with him? You were playing Dutton's role. You must have had contact with advance men setting these things up. Was he, you know, in these couple days that you were with him, was he satisfied with the work they were doing or did there seem to be real problems?

EDELMAN: Oh, it varied. It varied. I mean, you know, a thing like the factory plant he would blame the schedulers rather than the advance men. What were you going to do? You know, you had a captive audience, it was every worker in the factory. It's not

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the advance man's fault except in so far as he was involved in the scheduling. So what he would do really is very seldom would he chew anybody out in public unless they did some obviously stupid thing and every now and then there would be something—you know, a guy just wouldn't get the cars moving or something like that and then he would take over and start directing traffic himself. But most of the time he would get back and he would say to somebody that night, "Now who was that guy?" You know, that kind of.... So, it usually wasn't a direct sort of thing.

HACKMAN: How did you come to be filling Dutton's shoes in those couple days?

EDELMAN: Because he dropped Dutton off in California to work on the California primary and, you know, they just thought who knew him well enough to carry the brief case and that stuff. And I was around, so they asked me to do it and then after a couple days of doing it, they had Peter Fishbein do it for a while, who was a lawyer from New York and who knew

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him. You know, you had to have somebody that he wouldn't be embarrassed.... I mean, somebody that he knew and somebody who was generally of an easy disposition. But as easy as my disposition is, I'm not too good at retrieving shoes and things and one morning in Portland he said, "Where's my other shoe?" And I said, "It's out in the living room," and didn't get up to go get it. And he went out and got it and didn't say anything to me, but I think it was not surprising that the next day I was relieved from that duty. [Laughter] One of the secretaries was sitting in there placing phone calls for him that morning and she said afterwards that she just.... She was astonished. You know, I just sat there.

HACKMAN: Did people ever come back at him on anything like that or did you frequently...

EDELMAN: Well, if you had any consideration for him, you know, in a campaign, you wouldn't because the poor guy was just, harassed and he was marvelously even tempered considering, you know, considering all the pulling and tugging and hauling at him. He

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was really remarkably easy to get along with. And I mean I got very mad at him that episode that's been described in a couple of the books about the debate and the guitar playing, but, God, the provocation! Ethel was carrying on at him. You know, she was inside the room screaming about something or other whatever it was and, you know, she's very volatile and while most of the time she's marvelous, she can be a tremendous pain sometimes too. And people had been after him all day to debate and I think he knew he was wrong and so Adam, on behalf of himself and me, had made a pitch at a meeting with Pierre and Larry O'Brien and so on and reality along kind of turned them around along about six or 6:30 and the Senator's supposed to be taking a nap. So one of them went in to tell him that it was the belief of this group that the matter ought to be reopened again. Meanwhile, Adam and I were standing out in the hall talking to John Lewis and Earl Graves, who were there to see him about something else. And were laughing a little bit loudly and it

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either disturbed his sleep or whatever, so he came out in the hall in his underwear and Jeff Greenfield wasn't even around. This is a.... I mean not that I want to take credit for being bawled out, but in the books it says it was Adam and Jeff. And he made the remark that's been quoted about speech writers playing guitars all the time and didn't they have anything better to do and if they didn't have anything better to do, they could at least go out and ring doorbells or else go home. And, you know, I was really mad. I thought that was very inconsiderate and very nasty to people who'd been very devoted, but I didn't say anything. Adam started toward the door and he slammed the door in Adam's face. Adam was continually feeling hurt and, metaphorically, continually felt he was having doors slammed in his face through the whole campaign—unduly, but felt that way, felt that nobody was

listening to him. And you know Adam has a large ego and thinks that he's full of sage political advice and so on

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and felt that nobody was listening. And, you know, I hadn't particularly felt that way. But on that occasion, I was offended and the next day I was with him, went around with him on his stops. The next day was the day that he ran away from McCarthy in the zoo. And just a few minutes before that we were going in the car from one place to another and I said, "You know, Senator, I just want to say for myself that—and for Adam—that I think that was too bad, because I think you know that we work very hard and you know...." And he apologized and said he was sorry. He knew that we worked very hard and he was very nice about it. So, you know, it was hard to—you know, I just loved him dearly—it was hard to stay mad at him and particularly when he would have that kind of.... when he would be willing with everything else that was on his mind to sort of apologize. The day of the Pendleton of that swing through eastern Oregon was the day that the Drew Pearson story on the wiretapping came out and so Pierre had called me and, you know, told me about this, asked me to

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get his reaction to it and I came back on the plane after one of the stops looking very, very glum. And he said, "Why do you look so glum?" He said, "What are you so unhappy about?" I said, "Well, you know, it's not going well here and Drew Pearson and all this." He said, "Oh, come on." He said, "It's a long pull and it's a long year." He said, "Got a cover story coming out in *Time* Magazine next week that's a nice cover story." He said, "And *Time* Magazine can do a nice cover story on me. That's almost unbelievable." He said, "We're not doing so badly." He said, "Buck up." You know, and that was just. That was just nice.

HACKMAN: Did you get involved any more then on how to handle the Pearson story?

EDELMAN: No. I relayed a couple of messages. That was all. No, so I didn't do any more on the Pearson story. That day in Portland, the same day of the factories and the convention, there was a whole business about whether he had agreed to met McCarthy in a debate down in California and I

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was carrying messages back and forth on that. And after some seven or eight hours when I still wasn't able to assure him that the matter had been taken care of he got pretty mad at me and, you know, it's just.... But who could blame him?

HACKMAN: What had to be carried back and forth on that?

EDELMAN: Well, you know, get some kind of clarification out to the press and printed

that Kennedy had never had any intention of coming to that thing. It was a business where Ted Kennedy was going to go and somebody put out the story that originally Robert Kennedy was going to go and when he heard McCarthy was coming that he pulled off of it. So he just wanted to.... You know, he kept saying, "Have you called down?" "Yes, I've called down there." "Have you told them to tell the papers that I wasn't ever going to go?" "Yes, I told them that." "Have they told them?" "Yes, they've told them that." "Well, what does the wire say?" "Well, I haven't seen the wire, Senator." "Well, how do you know it's been taken care of?" "Well, I don't,

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Senator." "Well, call up the next stop." You know, that kind of thing—just nudge. And, you know, taking.... It's a frustration quotient. Taking it out, the fact that the thing wasn't going very well.

HACKMAN: What about the zoo thing that Jeremy Lerner, I guess, has written about?

EDELMAN: Well, I just thought that was dumb, but I didn't... You know, he did it very fast himself. We came out of the zoo and McCarthy was coming up in the other direction and he just had.... This was the night after the non-debate and he just had this fixation in his mind that he could not give McCarthy any kind of basis for being on an equal footing with him, even though, you know it was clear to the people of Oregon. They weren't looking at it on a national basis. In Oregon there were two candidates plus the stand in for Humphrey or whatever, the slate for Humphrey. And the people of Oregon, I think, were very offended. But he had this fixation and so he saw McCarthy coming and he just, you know,

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clickety-click in his mind, can't be seen with him, hop into the cars and get out of there—probably afraid that McCarthy would say something snide in front of the, you know, all the cameras or something, get some play.

HACKMAN: You'd made the statement last, I think, last time that people in Oregon just seemed to be sort of spinning their wheels or a lot of people standing around, not really knowing what to do. Why was that a problem? Or maybe I don't understand exactly what you mean by that.

EDELMAN: Well, I would think it's an organizational problem first. I mean I think the first problem that he had in Oregon was that whatever is supposed to be done in terms of, you know, finding a guy for this group of blocks or that precinct and, you know, getting precinct organizations going, and getting materials out and having a whole, you know, set of coffee klatches. I mean you had people who came in and spoke, but....

Kennedy's sisters and I remember seeing Abe Chayes [Abram Chayes] from Harvard was there,

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and Adam Yarmolinsky and so on. They all came out to speak. And speaking engagements were arranged for them, but one had the sense that there wasn't really a good network of organization and that was partly because there was too much reliance on Edith Green, who didn't really have an organization, and partly because the people we sent in didn't really organize all that well. So that's what I mean by same people standing around.

HACKMAN: Was it your clear understanding that Prettyman had been assigned to organize Oregon or did other people assume this? Do you know how?

EDELMAN: Well, I don't remember when it.... vanden Heuvel was out there from a very early time.

HACKMAN: He went out there, I think, at the end of April. But just from what I can understand there's no one there during late March and most of April. Prettyman is only out there for like five or six days and then doesn't spend any time in the state and there really doesn't seem to be anyone assigned to Oregon.

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EDELMAN: I think that's probably right.

HACKMAN: That I can see.

EDELMAN: And that probably contributed to it. You know you can't.... It's always very hard to assign the blame. I mean you can't have an organization if the people aren't for you. And there were a lot of problems. There was memories of 1960 the conflict with Wayne Morse, there was the memories of Robert Kennedy's conflicts with the mayor of Portland and the whole Teamsters investigation, labor racketeering. There was the fact that the people of Oregon didn't really have the same problems that some of the rest of the country had. There was the fact of the debate, the non-debate, which hurt tremendously. There was going swimming in the cold water in the Pacific in his under shorts that hurt a lot. There was the zoo encounter that hurt a little. I mean, you know, there were six or seven things that hurt him in Oregon.

HACKMAN: Can you recall the reasons that he was giving for not debating McCarthy in Oregon when you talked to

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him about this or others would take it?

EDELMAN: Well, the basic reasons was that he didn't want to raise his stature. He didn't want to raise McCarthy into a candidate of equal stature. And then the usual things of he thought he was—Kennedy thought— he was ahead and shouldn't.... which is related to the stature thing. It's just that it's an axiom that it helps the fellow who's behind to get into a debate, and I suppose some worry about how well he would do in it as well. He hadn't had time to prepare.

HACKMAN: Any problems in putting together his release or speeches on Israel and Mideast policy? I mean is this.... Is he saying the same things he said before?

EDELMAN: Yes.

HACKMAN: No big questions on what he should say?

EDELMAN: Oh, no. No, no, Same. He hadn't said anything about it up until May and there was a big meeting and a release right after the Indiana primary, which got into scene of the Jewish press. And then

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he gave a speech in California and a speech in Oregon. But, in fact, he didn't spend that much time on it.

HACKMAN: We could talk about some of the Oregon speeches if you can recall those that you think are of significance.

EDELMAN: There weren't. That's part of the problem. You know he talked in eastern Oregon, as I said, about agriculture and rural development and recreation. He talked about the pollution of the Willamette and deepening the channel and...

HACKMAN: Use of beaches, opportunities of the ocean.

EDELMAN: Yes, there was a thing about the oceanography.

HACKMAN: Right. Newport....

EDELMAN: He made that fairly major economic speech at the Portland City Club, which didn't get any particular coverage and didn't turn them on particularly. And we made a Vietnam speech at Eugene, Oregon on May eighteenth. It was more of a.... It was really a replay of his "No more Vietnams"—didn't get much attention.

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HACKMAN: What about efforts to do something with campuses in Oregon and student groups? Did you get involved in organizing this in any way or was this left up to other people?

EDELMAN: I didn't, no. The.... Oh, I notice Baker, Oregon, May twenty-second, that was that same day with Pendleton. He made a revenue sharing speech. It was really a release. I don't think he covered. Students—Just one side light, we sent a guy named Peter Countryman out early in the campaign to Oregon to help and he had a beard. Edith Green just told him to get on the next plane. He made some education speeches on the first swing in Oregon. And then he put out for national release his poverty area business development program on May twenty-sixth.

HACKMAN: Did you do most of the work on that one?

EDELMAN: Poverty area business thing? Mike Curzan [Michael Curzan] did the basic work and then, you know, I sort of worked with it. That particular release, Bill Smith [William Smith] was with us by that time and cleaned it up and really was the one who did the major editing on it in

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Washington.

HACKMAN: How are you fixed for time today? Do you want to try to do something on California?

EDELMAN: Yeah, I'm okay.

HACKMAN: Okay.

[Interruption]

HACKMAN: Okay, you'd talked in the early period; you'd gone out in January and you'd been there when he'd talked to Unruh [Jesse M. Unruh] and you'd maintained some ties with some of Unruh's people. During the campaign do you have any ties with California—during the early stages of the campaign and then through until you get to California really?

EDELMAN: No.

HACKMAN: Okay. What, when you first arrive in California, is your understanding of what the problems are with the Unruh organization or are there still some major problems at that time?

EDELMAN: Yeah. By the time I got there Frank Mankiewicz [Frank F. Mankiewicz] had been there for quite some time and it was much better. We had really built our own organization

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on top of the what passed for the Unruh organization. But that was.... You knew, the basic problems in California were how did you hold your own, what you had, which were the blacks and the Mexican-Americans and some of the liberal—well, not too many of the liberalities because they're basically McCarthy—but make some inroads into that white population. And there was something of a struggle of, you know, how much of an appeal would you make to the Orange County types. And I think basically the Senator felt and, as I think, I did, that you couldn't get too much there. I mean he was willing to go and make appearances, but he wasn't willing to really say very much that was.... Well, he wasn't willing to say anything that was inconsistent with anything else. When he went into, I remember one day he went into Orange County and made a couple of education speeches and those happened to be the day when we had gotten things out a little bit early and so we had television all day saying, and radio saying, "Senator is in Long Beach today making, you know, talking about

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education," and I think that had some effect.

HACKMAN: Anyone who was urging him to do more to get this type of support, the Orange County?

EDELMAN: Yeah, I think so. I couldn't tell you who. But John Douglas, I think, was out there and John felt that way. I don't know.... No, I'm sorry. I don't mean John Douglas. I don't think he was out there. I was thinking of Peter Fishbein and Milton had been out there. Now, they're not terribly influential on the Senator directly, but in terms of blocking out the speeches I remember that when Adam and I first arrived there from wherever we'd been and sat down with Peter and Milton and they were making a list of the kind of speeches that ought to be given we got into a tremendous fight with them and Adam, as was his wont, told them they were stupid and stuff like that. They got really mad. But, you know, they wanted him to make a crime speech and they wanted him to make stuff that was more clearly, would pander to those interests. And, you know, Adam felt that that would be transparent

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and that there were other things that he had to say and so on and so forth. So I think we finally resolved it by doing some, but less of what Peter and Milton had proposed. And that's

just on the kind of speech and release side of it. In terms of the scheduling I guess it just kind of speaks for itself, if you look at where he went. And there probably were some who were urging him to do more of the suburban, middle class kind of stuff than he did, but I couldn't tell you who they were.

HACKMAN: Were they disagreements, many disagreements, with Gwirtzman throughout the campaign on things like this?

EDELMAN: No. Some, but he wasn't... You know, Milton was basically deferential to Adam and me. So I mean we would argue, but nothing. You know, I didn't... Adam, you know, the more excited Adam gets the more he thinks that everybody's a creep, so I don't think that counts.

HACKMAN: Were there other aspects of the California campaign other than the releases that you got deeply involved in? Did you get involved with the Mexican-Americans

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or the farm workers or do anything on this side or was that put together by the time you got there?

EDELMAN: That was really put together by the time I got there. I... Every now and then the farm workers would call me when there was something that they wanted that they didn't seem to be able to get through the regular channels, but I didn't do, just didn't do much at all on that.

HACKMAN: I know Bert Corona, is it, was having a lot of trouble getting money for the "Viva Kennedy" thing.

EDELMAN: Yeah, but he never spoke to me about that.

HACKMAN: Let me just skip back to one thing on Oregon before I forget it. You said that in Oregon there was the feeling on some people's part that Robert Kennedy should address McCarthy more directly, rather than Humphrey. Did you discuss that with him or was it talked about at any kind of meeting?

EDELMAN: Well, I was involved in trying to write some ads which addressed the McCarthy problem indirectly by saying, "There's only one candidate in Oregon who can be elected President," something like that.

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And I don't.... I just am fuzzy on what.... I guess, well, we were just trying to establish the uniqueness of Kennedy's candidacy, but beyond that the only time I got involved in the question was on the debate night.

HACKMAN: How quickly, then, was the decision made to debate McCarthy in California?

EDELMAN: Right away.

HACKMAN: Right away?

EDELMAN: Immediately. I was down in Los Angeles the night of the Oregon primary so that by the next morning the decision had been made. We came out and met him at the plane and they had a statement ready to go and so on.

HACKMAN: What was his mood after Oregon?

EDELMAN: Very matter of fact, very—very, I would say not down—just realistic. And, you know, I think, in fact, that quality of being the strength for some other people as well.

HACKMAN: How did you get involved then in the preparations for the debate in California?

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EDELMAN: Well, we started to pull together—Milton and I—all of McCarthy's statements about various things and questions and answers, which Adam and Jeff helped us with also. We thought up as many questions and answers as we could think of—things that, you know, he might be asked by the newsmen or things that McCarthy might say and what he should say in response to them. We prepared a whole book full of stuff for him to read, you know, just every subject. And then handed him the book of questions and answers and then—that book about two or three days to prepare—and then Adam and I.... Let's see. Not Adam. I guess Milton and I and Arthur Schlesinger [Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.] and, maybe Burke Marshall—I don't remember—sort of eat with him. And, you know, he would answer the question and we would say what we thought of his answer. And then Adam came into one of the sessions later on.

HACKMAN: Can you remember any issues that here particularly difficult to resolve or positions that were hard to spell out or where he felt things would be the

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toughest?

EDELMAN: Well, there was the question of how far he would go on war and the question of what he would do about the integration and “gilding the ghetto” issue. Oh, then what he would do about those ads that McCarthy had been placing that were so awful. But I don’t remember being particularly dissatisfied with his tentative approach to anything. The thing I remember more was the byplay that they sort of excluded Adam from the morning meeting on the basis that they didn’t want too many people there. You know there was always this tension going on. I didn’t mention Ted Sorensen. Ted Sorensen was really one of the major figures in the debate preparation. We did the books and stuff about it was really Ted, I think, who excluded Adam from that morning meeting, then Adam came to the afternoon meeting.

HACKMAN: Do you recall where the idea for the response that he made on the pointing out or stating that McCarthy’s urban plan would mean moving the people

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from the suburbs.... or from the inner city to the suburbs?

EDELMAN: They discussed that during the clay. That was what he really believed. I mean he believed that there was no... that integration was not something that you could just do by moving people around, that the only way to achieve integration was to give people the economic and psychological security that would be necessary for them to be full members of a community and that you weren’t going to get any kind of stable integration of Orange County until, in fact, until a lot of people could buy their way into Orange County. You know the only other way you’d do it is by locating public housing in Orange County and that’s a political impossibility. Why raise people’s hopes with that kind of thing? You can say you’re in favor of it, but it’s not going to happen.

HACKMAN: Did you talk to him after the debate then? What were his own impressions of how he did? You said he.... I think you said last time that he

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was always dissatisfied with his performance on panel programs. How did he feel about the ...

EDELMAN: Well, if I remember, in one of his statements that he would always use when he didn’t want to talk about things I think he said, “I think it was fine.”

HACKMAN: And that was it.

EDELMAN: Everybody thought he’d won it.

HACKMAN: Yeah.

EDELMAN: Everybody. You know, all of his associates, staff, friends, Ethel thought he'd won it.

HACKMAN: I think. We've gone over most of this other California stuff unless you can remember speeches that particularly we should talk about.

EDELMAN: No. Maybe next time I'll bring in my full set of the campaign releases and I can look through and just talk about them a little bit. We released that...

HACKMAN: Program for the urban cities.

EDELMAN: Program for the urban crisis for that Sunday, didn't get too much coverage as I Recall, got a pretty good story in the *L.A. Times* though.

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I was reading, I guess it's in the *American Melodrama* book, these guys conclude that this is a direct response on your part to McCarthy's speech of May twenty-eighth, when he talks about.... I think it's a speech at the University of California in Davis in which he criticizes Robert Kennedy's plans for the ghetto. Do you remember that?

EDELMAN: May twenty-eighth?

HACKMAN: Yeah.

EDELMAN: Oh, that's not true.

HACKMAN: Sure, it couldn't have worked at all.

EDELMAN: Because we'd been preparing that for some time. It was however a response to McCarthy in a sense. I mean the motivation was much broader than that, but you know, we did want to make the point that McCarthy had no program. And one way to make that point was to show that we had a very detailed program.

HACKMAN: Well, if we're going to talk maybe a little bit more about speeches next time, let me just ask you a few other things. Can you remember...

EDELMAN: You're almost out....

HACKMAN: Yeah, I am.

[END OF INTERVIEW #3]

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