

Paul Corbin Oral History Interview – RFK#1, 07/02/70
Administrative Information

Creator: Paul Corbin

Interviewer: Larry J. Hackman

Date of Interview: July 2, 1970

Place of Interview: Nashville, Tennessee

Length: 67 pages

Biographical Note

Campaign worker, John F. Kennedy for President, 1960; Robert F. Kennedy Senate Campaign, 1964, Robert F. Kennedy for President, 1968; Special Assistant to the Chairman, Democratic National Committee, 1961 - 1964. In this interview, Corbin discusses his personal and professional relationship with Robert F. Kennedy, among other issues.

Access

Open

Usage Restrictions

According to the deed of gift signed **June 10, 1991**, copyright of these materials has been assigned to the United States Government. Users of these materials are advised to determine the copyright status of any document from which they wish to publish.

Copyright

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be “used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research.” If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excesses of “fair use,” that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law. The copyright law extends its protection to unpublished works from the moment of creation in a tangible form. Direct your questions concerning copyright to the reference staff.

Transcript of Oral History Interview

These electronic documents were created from transcripts available in the research room of the John F. Kennedy Library. The transcripts were scanned using optical character recognition and the resulting text files were proofread against the original transcripts. Some formatting changes were made. Page numbers are noted where they would have occurred at the bottoms of the pages of the original transcripts. If researchers have any concerns about accuracy, they are encouraged to visit the Library and consult the transcripts and the interview recordings.

Suggested Citation

Paul Corbin, recorded interview by Larry J. Hackman, July 2, 1970, (page number), Robert F. Kennedy Oral History Program of the John F. Kennedy Library.

Donor: Corbin
Paul

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION
JOHN F. KENNEDY LIBRARY

Legal Agreement Pertaining to the Oral History Interview of
PAUL CORBIN

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, Gertrude Corbin, do hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America all my rights, title, and interest in the tape recording and transcript of personal interviews of Paul Corbin conducted on July 2, 1970 and July 14, 1970 at Nashville, TN and prepared for deposit in the John F. Kennedy Library. This assignment is subject to the following terms and conditions:

(1) The transcript shall be closed to research for a period of twenty years. Thereafter, the transcript shall be made available for use by researchers at the John F. Kennedy Library.

(2) The tape recording shall be closed to research for a period of twenty years. Thereafter, the tape recording shall be made available to those researchers who have access to the transcript.

(3) I hereby assign to the United States Government all copyright I may have in the interview transcript and tape.

(4) Copies of the transcript and the tape recording can not be made for researchers for a period of twenty years. Thereafter, copies of the transcript and the tape recording may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request.

(5) Copies of the transcript and tape recording may not be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the John F. Kennedy Library. Thereafter, copies of the transcript and tape recording may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the John F. Kennedy Library.

Gertrude M. Corbin
Donor

May 28, 1991
Date

[Signature]
Archivist of the United States

June 10, 1991
Date

Paul Corbin – RFK #1

Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	Professional relationship with Robert F. Kennedy [RFK] in spite of allegations of communism
16	Influence on RFK's run for the Senate
19	RFK's Catholic beliefs
30	RFK's temperament
48	Preparations for what would have been John F. Kennedy's run for a second term and how the assassination affected both Corbin's and RFK's career

Oral History Interview

with

PAUL CORBIN

July 2, 1970
Nashville, Tennessee

By Larry J. Hackman

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

HACKMAN: What kind of conversations did you have with Robert Kennedy about what you were going to be doing during the Administration?

CORBIN: Well, I'd dealt briefly with that. I read the last pages of the transcript with John Stewart.
[Interruption]

Bob bugged me every day as to what I was going to do. Of course, I went into the episode where I wanted to work for the National Parks. And then he really wanted me at the Department of Justice. But he was always concerned about possible repercussions because of my association in the labor movement and my association with Harry Bridges, which might be misinterpreted. Now, he became aware of that in Wisconsin when they had continuously--like [Kenneth P.] Kenny O'Donnell and Ivan Nestigen were raising the point. I can recall this was on the Friday prior to the Tuesday election. He was in Eau Claire, Wisconsin; I was up in Wisconsin rapids getting ready for his visit to Wisconsin Rapids on Saturday.

He called me up on Friday in the middle of the night to inform me that he'd just got a report that [Hubert H.] Humphrey was on "Meet the Press" on Sunday, and he was going to blast the hell out of me as being a Communist. And he [Kennedy] wanted to ask me if I was or if I was not. I told him it was none of his business. And he said, "You don't understand, Paul,

I don't care what the hell you are, but I've got to know so I can be prepared as to what way we can handle it." I said, "Well, I'm going to say this to you only, Bob, because you told me you didn't give a shit one way or another." I said, "I am not, so I am not so concerned. Furthermore, your brother-in-law, Steve Smith, told me these rumors had come up almost a year ago and your brother, the Senator, had me checked out at the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] and I was clean." Subsequently, I happened to see that particular report, which was true; the FBI investigation had cleared me, going to the extent of even saying I was 100 percent American and a loyal activist on veteran affairs and patriotic activities. John Siegenthaler showed me that report when he was in the Department of Justice. So I said, "The answer is no. Don't worry about it." He said, "I want to talk to you about it when I see you tomorrow up there in Wisconsin Rapids." I said, "Okay, we'll talk about it."

I had been, in Wisconsin, very close to Governor [Gaylord A.] Nelson, had been the chairman of his draft committee which drafted him for governor. I was very close to him and was his fund raiser when he was the governor of the state. I had open access to him all the time, was a very close friend of his. I knew that although he played it neutral, he was for Humphrey. So I called Gaylord Nelson, who was governor, and told him I understood that they were going to blast me on "Meet the Press." I said, "It isn't nice for you who have a whole political future ahead of you, Gaylord. They will kill you on this thing. I was chairman of your draft committee and have been associated with you. I picked up checks all across the state as your fund raiser, did all those things. How the hell are you going to explain me? You'd better get to Humphrey for your sake and call the dogs off."

"I'll take care of this crap. Don't worry about it, Carbine" --he used to call me Carbine--"Don't worry. That's witch-hunting McCarthyism. I'm opposed to it and will call Humphrey and present it on a principled basis. He's a nice guy, you know"--meaning Humphrey.--"Don't worry about it."

Bobby comes to Wisconsin Rapids. They have an open market. We started out in Stevens Point, Portage--I forget, Stevens Point --oh, Stevens Point, Portage, Wisconsin, right. And he says, "Corbin, I'm really concerned about this thing. I'm going to ask you again" Were you ever a Communist?" I said, "Now, god-dammit, stop bugging me. I told you I wasn't. Don't worry about it, Bob." "Why not?" "I've got it all fixed. I just called

Gaylord Nelson." "Dammit! What did you do that for?" "Well," I said, "because you were concerned. You called me up in the middle of the night." "Listen, you dumb nut. They accuse my brother of being pro-McCarthy, that I am pro-McCarthy. Why, you're made to order. We need someone who is accused of being a Communist and is not to get the liberal vote. Get on that damn telephone and tell Gaylord Nelson to keep out of it and be neutral." I said, "He's not that stupid." "Get on that phone and phone him." "We've got to make the next stop." "The hell with the next stop." We stop at a phone. "Get in there." I call him. I talk to Gaylord. I said, "Look, Gaylord, let the son-of-a-bitch call me a Communist. I'm sick and tired of having . . ." "Corbin, it's stopped. Forget it. Don't worry about it." I said, "That was a wasted call. I made a goddam fool of myself." "Why?" "They ain't going to put it on." "Sure they ain't going to put it on, you dumb fool!" He was sick.

Going back to what I was going to do in Washington, he knew of all that so he said, "Can you stand the FBI check?" I said, "Yes, sure. I ain't worried." By that time Kenny O'Donnell began to move. Now, you say how do I know it's Kenny O'Donnell. Bob Kennedy repeatedly kept telling me. . . . I'd say, "How can you permit these things? We can't have them." He says, "Kenny. Kenny." "Can't your brother stop it?" "Look, Corbin, these are committees. They've got their chairmen. They've got [Francis E.] Walter there. Kenny's calling on Walter saying, 'Look you're going to do a great service to the President. Get rid of this guy. He's Bobby's guy. They're being fooled by him. He's wormed his way in. You'll do a great service to your country.'"

He [Robert Kennedy] would say, "I know, Corbin. I know, I know." Then Bob would say, "I can't help it." I said, "You mean to say you can't stop him?" "Can't do it. I'm afraid myself to call Walter." He had Seigenthaler do it. He [Robert Kennedy] was frightened. Well, that was later on, of course.

So about a week after, they started reports and he said, "Corbin, you'll never stand up. The goddamn shit that's coming in on you. . . ." I said, "What do I do now?" "Democratic National Committee." "What am I going to do there?" "Get your ass over there!" So I get over there and reported to John Bailey. "Oh, my God, not you! I don't want you!" He's on the phone calling Kenny O'Donnell. "Got to talk about it." I said, "Look, John. . . ." It took over a year and a half to two years for Bailey to really sink into his head the tie between Bob and I. It took him that long.

I'll tell you a story that's interesting. I said [to Bailey], "Bob wants to talk to you." "Bob who?" "Bob Kennedy. Get on that goddamn phone and talk to him!" "I will!" He picks up the phone. He [Bailey] says, "Well, I guess I'm stuck with you." I'll say one thing for the [Irish] mafia: Once they lost that battle, they decided they'd cut me in. Kenny calls me, "We're having patronage meetings at the White House." [Richard J.] Maguire who was then working [in] the Executive House, Kenny O' Donnell--I forget who--[Charles D.] Chuck Roche and myself, Bailey, [Richard K.] Donahue. John Bailey brings me in and Chuck Roche, and Bailey says, "I and Chuck, individually and collectively, speak for the Democratic Committee." And I'm on the patronage committee, and this is where I make my colossal blunder, the greatest political blunder of my life. We're sitting there and they're talking about appointment of a U.S.--I believe it was the legal counsel to the IRS [Internal Revenue Service], someone for legal counsel. And they proposed this name, and everybody says, "Aye." I said, "Well, I'm not so sure. I vote no. I think I'm going to call Bob about that." And Roche says, "You dumb son-of-a-bitch. When are you going to cut loose of that little bastard. You--Corbin, you're crazy. Here's your goddamn chance. They're calling you in; they're cutting you in." I said, "Fuck 'em. We're checking with Bob." Now, the reason I took that position was because I already was involved with Bob on chasing the crooks. It dated back to the New York campaign with Utica. So I was already knowing what direction he was going to work, go as Attorney General.

Well, I came and I rush over to Bob's office. "I just went to the first meeting and they tried to shove this guy in the IRS." "You're dumb, dumb, dumb, dumb. You'll never be invited again. You're in and you're out in one hour, Corbin. Why didn't you call me? Why didn't you drop in?" Well, they never invited me again, and then the war was on.

So I went back to the Committee, and of course--I was handling patronage for New York. In my previous statement you read where Bob had me call every county chairman to send their stuff to me. So they were sending it to me.

And I have to relate to you one incident which is really classic of Bob Kennedy. Peter Crotty, who was the leader in Buffalo, a wonderful man and a great liberal, very loyal to the Kennedys and a friend of the Ambassador [Joseph P. Kennedy], he calls me up. He's coming to Washington. He'd like to see Bob. So I called Bob and I says, "Bob, Peter Crotty's coming. He's

staying at the Statler Hilton Hotel." "Okay, Corbin. Tomorrow morning my black limousine will be in front of the Statler Hilton Hotel. You bring Peter over to my house for breakfast." I pick up Peter, drive down in the black limousine. Of course, I don't realize--to me Bob was just like having coffee with you or my brother or any guy. But to the county chairman, going to the Attorney General's in his black limousine, Christ, he was getting his nuts off, couldn't believe it, it was like dreamland. To me it was nothing. And there was my whole problem. Some of the classic blunders I've made--never realized that these guys. . . . Like Bob would say, "How much did you collect to bring this guy in to see me?" I'd say, "What are you talking about?" I was dumb. "What do you mean?" "Oh, nothing, Corbin. You're too dumb." I found out later on I could have got two thousand or five thousand bucks to ten thousand from the guys I was running in for nothing and picking up their dinner checks because they were Kennedy guys. I loved them all. They fought for Kennedy. I was buying them drinks. So I brought Peter over and we had breakfast. I don't know if you've ever been in his home at Hickory Hill. As you walk in, to the right--it's now a sitting room--at that time it was a dining room before they remodeled it and put in this additional room. So Peter sits down and Bob sits down and I sit down. We're having breakfast. The maid serves. "Well, Peter," he says, "what can I do for you?" Peter says, "I've got about eight or nine jobs I'd like to talk to you about, Bob." "Oh, anything you want, Peter. You didn't have to come all the way for that. Let's talk about something else. Right after breakfast I'm taking you over to meet the President, take you down to the White House and meet him. He would love to see you. How about coming down to see my dad? We'll pick you up in the Caroline some weekend and bring you on to Hyannis Port, bring you and the Mrs, meet my father." I figured, oh, shit, Bob was up to something. I knew Bob was up to something. He said, "Now, let's talk about these jobs. What do you want? Anything you want." "Well," he says, "there's an SBA [Small Business Administration]--it was SBA or Housing, I forget--"director open in Buffalo. And I have a fine fellow I'd like to recommend." RFK: "What's the name?" Peter gave him his name. "That's the crook that DeSapio wants in!" RFK: "What about it, Paul?" I said, "Agh." RFK: "Let's put that one aside, Peter." Crotty: "We can't put that aside." RFK: "Put it aside temporarily." Crotty: "Do I get this or don't I?" RFK: "Well, there's a little question about that. But go on to the next

one." U.S. attorney, U.S. Marshal, Veterans' Administration, right down the line, every name that comes up. I said, "Brr, Bob." Peter said, "Just a moment, Bob. Who is the leader of Erie County, me or Corbin?" "Now, just a moment, Peter. I'm saying to you that we will not appoint a single person to those positions unless you recommend them. Now, you send the recommendations, as Paul told you a couple of months ago, to him. Now, if the name is no good, Paul will call you up and say, 'No good.' You come up with another one, Peter, and another one until Paul says it's okay. But he will never put a man in unless you recommend him. Peter, make sure that Paul likes him." Crotty said, "What's the matter, Corbin?" I said, "Peter, you know I love you, but they've got to be honest, they've got to be clean, Peter. Now, this guy here. . . ." I went down the line. Finally, "All right, How about my mayor, Sedita, Frank Sedita? I want him as director of Customs." I said, "Robert, this guy must be nuts." "Shut up!" Don't speak disrespectful of Peter Crotty!" Well, anyway we're laughing. Sedita got it, by the way. He finally squeaked through the FBI. Sedita got it, but the other ones, down the drain.

HACKMAN: They went ahead and sent them through though?

CORBIN: Sedita?

HACKMAN: No. No, the other guys.

CORBIN: Out. Never got them. Sedita, they checked and they checked, there was rumors, and finally the FBI cleared him. Bob tried to sabotage the deal to the end because he had me try to pick up all the dirt he could on Sedita. But the real truth of the matter was he wasn't the best guy, but he wasn't the worst guy. But the other guys, out.

Well, anyway, so I went to the Committee and I started getting involved in New York. But politics is funny. It didn't take long for the guys all across the country to find out that the way to get to the Attorney General is through Corbin. And a steady stream started coming in, all parts of the country-- [Jesse M.] Jess Unruh, [Robert A.] Bob Troutman from Atlanta-- and the first thing you know, I was in patronage up to my ass all over the country. Of course, what I would do was go to Bob. If there was a complaint, I'd go to Bob. We'd check it out.

Now, while this was going on, I get a call one day from Peter Crotty. He says, "Paul, you're a very complex individual. But in spite of the differences we might have had, I've always found you to be a man of integrity and principle. Now, I disagree with your philosophy. I don't like what you're doing to DeSapio. This is something you don't understand. There is a federal building going up. What do I look like? Some architect from a different bloody state comes in and grabs this contract. Now, look, you guys are crazy, you and Robert. You're both sick. Now, if you have to give it to somebody, that has nothing to do with me, please at least pick a guy out from Buffalo so I can say that I did it?" I said, "Peter, if you have a good contractor, if you have a good architect, you'll get it." I said, "What is the name of the architect that got it?" "So and so." Bob said, "You find out who gave it to him." He said, "I'll tell you right now. Richard Maguire." I go to Bob. "That ain't fair, Bob. Maguire is messing with crooks. These architects are all no good." "You're right, Paul. I'm going to see that Peter names the guy." And he [RFK] calls Dick Maguire in my presence and says, "Keep your nose out of New York. Cancel that contract!" Maguire said, "I don't even know what bum you're talking about!" He [RFK] said, "Well, I'll give you his name." In the meantime, a fellow comes up to me and his cover name is Jose. My wife had his name--I can't think of his name. He's dead now. He came in and he was working for Welton Becket Architects. He had gone to jail and Bob had helped him out. I don't know what the background is. He was involved with Cuba. And he started telling me stories about the sale of contracts, federal contracts. I said, "Put it in writing." I went to Bob, showed him these reports, the first report, the second report. He said, "Corbin, don't let that guy get out of your hands. Now, bring him over here." I did. Bob patted him on the shoulder, told him he's doing a good job, told him to report to me. And these reports started coming in: wholesale sale of architects and government contracts. You know, it would take me weeks to go into detail so I really don't want to; I'll just give you it briefly. Then I get a call from Governor [John W.] Reynolds, who was the Governor of Wisconsin and is now a federal judge, a very close friend of mine. He said, "Paul, I had a fellow called"--damn, what's his name; he's over in GSA [General Services Administration]. I shouldn't have forgotten his name. My wife will tell you his name; she'd know his name. Karel Yasko is his name. He said, "He used to be the chief architect for the

state of Wisconsin. He's now working at General Services. He's an honest man. He called me . . ."

HACKMAN: [Karel H.] Yasko?

CORBIN: Karel Yasko! He [Governor Reynolds] said, "Yasko is an honest guy. He's in charge of the selection of the contractors, and he tells me stories that make your hair stand up. I gave him your name. Call him up and go over and have lunch." He tells me stories which fit into the pieces that Jose has given me. And this particular one in question was the Housing building [in Washington, D.C.?] which was just built, just completed a year ago.

HACKMAN: The new HUD [Department of Housing and Urban Development] building?

CORBIN: Yes, the one that Marcel Breuer got.

HACKMAN: I can't remember the name.

CORBIN: Well, anyway, this contract had been sold, paid off. Jose gives me information. I get Karel Yasko and he puts two and two together. The deal had just been sold that day. He's a little taken--and he's not sure--Yasko. But he says he comes highly recommended by John W, Reynolds, the governor of the state, former attorney general of Wisconsin, a close friend of mine. I said, "I'll tell you what, Karel, after lunch I'll call you back." I rush over to Bob and tell him the story. I said, "I've got the guy in GSA, got ourselves an agent." "Corbin, get his ass down here tomorrow morning." I said, "You're going to Hyannis Port." "I'm not! I'll cancel my trip for the weekend. Get him down here!" So I bring Karel Yasko down to see Bob Kennedy, bring him in. And old Yasko just--he's a Czech--just shaking in his boots about meeting the Attorney General. He said, "I'm very busy. I'm working on this and that. Paul tells me the wonderful work your doing. Now, I want you to report to Paul Corbin, who will report to me. I will meet with you periodically but until such time, you work with Paul." Yasko rushed out. I said, "Give me the name of the Contractor they signed." Jose told me there was a payoff of a hundred thousand dollars--paid in Grand Central Station in hundred dollar bills for this contract. Yasko tells me that the guy who got it wasn't

worth shit--the buildings were no good, the plans were no good. And he said, "Here is a tremendous payoff." I don't tell him what I hear from Jose. I say, "Who would you recommend?" He said, "Marcel Breuer, a great architect, great plans." He says, "But they've already signed the contract." I said, "Don't men a shit, pal. I'll take care of it now." I rush over to Bob, told him the story. I said, "You'll love this, Bob. They've already signed the deal." I said, "Ran it t through." He calls up Kenny, "Did you hear about. . . ." "Never heard of the bum, never heard of the bum, never heard." He says, "Of course, you've never heard of the bum. He's an architect." A day goes by, I say, "Bob, he ain't done a god-damn thing." "Yasko's sitting there. He tells me this other guy is in there getting the plans." He calls Bernie, Bernie Boutin. [RFK:] "Who called you? Who gave you that name?" [Boutin:] "Why, we selected the best." [RFK:] "Bernie, who gave you that name?" [Boutin:] "Kenny." [RFK:] "Scratch him. You take the recommendation of Karel Yasko on this one. And you call me up, right back, when the contract is cancelled and Marcel Breuer's got it." Three days later, an editorial in the Washington Post.

HACKMAN: Marcel got it.

CORBIN: Marcel got it. "In the new era of the Kennedy creative geniuses. . . ." Bam, a new era in federal construction. Yasko goes strutting around. "Okay, Karel, let's get going." Now, what I talked to you about, which was discovered on the 20th of November, started that day.

HACKMAN: Do you remember when that is? Well, I can find it in a newspaper just by looking up the announcement.

CORBIN: The announcement and editorial, editorial comment.

HACKMAN: But it's '61?

CORBIN: I believe it's '61. I can't remember--I've lost all time. Anyway, so here I found myself in patronage, contracts, hundred thousand dollar payoffs on oil, and then I get my next assignment: [James R.] Hoffa. I knew the fellow, who came out of Iowa, who was Curley Lore. He finds himself in the labor movement enmeshed in politics. And

the first thing, he becomes ideological, gets religion, starts fighting the windmills like Don Quixote. And they lop his head off. He winds up working for a little local of the Teamsters in Chicago. He writes me a letter one time. He heard about me in Chicago. Oh, and I went with Bob--that's another story--to Chicago some Polish day, Katskatski or someone [Kosciusko]. So we flew in and it was on television. And this little guy sees me on television walking around with the Attorney General. He writes me this letter, he'd like to have a job and get out of town. He's now working for his local union.

HACKMAN: Teamsters local.

CORBIN: Yes. I call him up. I said, "You know Hoffa, don't you?" "I don't know him, but I know his bodyguard. Oh, he likes me." He says, "My God, I'm working for him very closely." He says, "Hell, I know his bodyguard." I go to Bob and he says, "Corbin, number one target. Get to that guy. Get to the bodyguard. We got to get him." So, I'm sitting on the Democratic Committee. I've got all these José's coming in with these reports, these Senators and Governors and all these leaders, working on Hoffa, and Bailey sits there wondering what the fuck is going on--can't understand. Memos coming from the White House by Kenny--this is good--Kenny O'Donnell transferring me to NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration], the space agency. You know what would happen to me? Headline: Communist Trying to Get Into NASA! I figured what the hell. Bob got mad--I went down and I said, "Bob, I just got a call from Bailey to come in. I'm going to NASA." "What, NASA? Get your ass back there!" I go back, I say, "Well. . . ." I called Bob. "What's the matter?" "They disconnected my telephone. They fired my secretary. I've got nothing up at the headquarters." "What are you talking about?" "They cut my wires, Bailey and Roche. They fired my girl." "Sit there." Seigenthaler comes up, talks to Bailey. My secretary gets a letter from Roche apologizing, my telephones are restored. But I'm transferred from a nice plush office to an office about 1/6th the size of this--no windows, no air conditioning, a small desk.

I called Bob. "You ought to come up and see my goddamn office. I'm telling you." "I'll be up." The only reason he came up there was to establish that he was with me. He comes up there, and the first guy that drops in to see is me. "How are you,

Paul?" I says, "Bob. . . ." He said, "Corbin, it ain't the size of the office or the size of the desk. It's how secure a guy is in his chair. And there ain't no one more secure in this town than you are. Stop yapping." [RFK] Walks over to Bailey. A half a minute in Bailey's office, then Bob comes back to my office and he says, "Oh, you cause more goddamn trouble. I've got to sit here ten minutes at least to keep you alive for three months." "What are you talking about?" "You're the dumbest guy alive, Corbin! I've got to be here ten minutes! I'm so--listen, Corbin, I could be talking to [Nikita S.] Khrushchev, [Charles A.] DeGaulle. What am I doing here? Talking to myself to keep you alive for three months. Goddammit, Corbin, behave yourself!" "I ain't done a thing." "Aw, shut up," and he walked out. Bailey says, "Corbin, what did the man say?" "Well, he said he" --everybody started--attention now. Bob would periodically every three or four months come up to my office.

Well, when these hearings were going on--let me tell you what kind of a man Bob Kennedy was. When these hearings were going on, they're blasting--you ought to see some of the stories from Milwaukee. You never read them? Man, horrible, it was absolutely horrible. They dug up guys I never even knew in my life. He would drive me to work in the morning with Brumus in his black limousine to the Democratic National Committee. He says, "Corbin, you're so goddamn hot that I've got to drive you in the morning. By nightfall you're dead. I've got to wake you up every morning to keep you alive because the papers are blasting the shit out of you." And we'd laugh like hell. The poor guy felt sore. He'd be so goddamn busy and he'd have to drive me. And if there was nobody around the office, he'd drive twice around the block so somebody could see me.

HACKMAN: N Now, how was the stuff getting in the papers in Milwaukee?

CORBIN: Ken O'Donnell.

HACKMAN: Q He was feeding to who? Someone out there like Miles McMillan or somebody?

CORBIN: No, he was feeding it to a reporter called [Edward S.] Kerstein and a guy called [Laurence C.] Con Eklund, who's still around in Milwaukee. They were feeding it to him, through the FBI and through the House--Un-American Activities Committee. Every time a witness would come

up in executive session they'd leak it the next day--boom, right on the front page.

HACKMAN: Would anybody else pick it up or just Wisconsin?

CORBIN: New York Times.

HACKMAN: Yes, I know they did, but not as much.

CORBIN: Nothing compared. Oh, Des Moines Register, Clark Mollenhoff, every paper in the country, here in this town--blast the shit out of me. And [William F.] Buckley in National Review is blasting away every issue. In the meantime, I was losing weight, I was getting ulcers, bastards calling my wife, my father-in-law and mother-in-law in Wisconsin, they were throwing rocks at them. It was just a terrible ordeal --relatives, it was just horrible. And Bob would say, "Shut up. Shut up. You'll stand up." And he'd have me in his house. Every time he had a party he'd drag me out there. I'd say, "Bob, I don't feel like . . ." "Get out there. Sit in the living room so people can see you." He'd keep me alive.

Well, anyway, it was the Seattle Fair, Seattle Fair. Bob came back from the Seattle Fair and he said, "Paul, I took Bailey on one of those Ferris wheels. We're alone and I said, 'Now, look Bailey, if you would do exactly what you're supposed to do instead of surrendering to the White House palace guard you wouldn't have all this trouble. Now, I'm telling you for the last time, you're the chairman. Now, if you can't run the goddamn Democratic Committee, Corbin will be running loose. But if you run it, I'll call the dogs off.'" Bailey said, "I'll run it, Bob!" He comes back and says, "I had a fine talk with Bob. What's new today?" Oh, he was coming in by then every morning for the instructions Bob would give me to give him. He'd say, "Corbin! He won't tell me" on account of. . . . The Attorney--he never takes the call. "What's new today?" I said, "Well, you're supposed to do this." It was awful; you'd know it makes him feel terrible because Bailey was an awful egotist. He'd come, "What's the orders for today?" I'd say, "You do this, do that." I said, "Don't pay any attention to goddamn memos." One day a memo came in the office. Here's a memo, signed by Kenny O'Donnell: "The President wants you to immediately--they want to cut expenses--discharge Bill Brawley and Matt Reese." I said, "Well, I don't know about Matt

Reese; maybe they have something else for him. I don't think these guys would turn on Matt Reese, he's one of theirs. Bill Brawley . . . [Inaudible] This was on a Saturday. Bob was going to Hyannis Port. I drive down to Butler Aviation--before it was Page [Page Airways, Inc.]. I said, "Bob, I just talked to Bailey. They canned Reese's ass and . . ." [Inaudible] "Corbin, are you crazy?" I said, "I'm telling you I saw the letter." RFK: "I'm getting sick and tired of you, Corbin. Do you understand? You're spoiling my weekend. I want that letter on my desk Monday morning." I said, "Sure, whatever you want." "Get that letter." So I'm up there Sunday, getting in the office, prying Bailey's desk open, get the letter. Rushed down to Bob Monday morning. He [RFK] gets in about 11 o'clock. "Here it is." In the drawer. "Okay," he says, "Get back to your office. You don't know a thing if anybody asks . . ." [Inaudible] . . . by one o'clock." Bailey says, "Corbin! Somebody stole the letter." "What letter?" "That letter I showed you. Oh, Corbin, the Attorney General just called me up. Who told him we were supposed to fire . . .?" I said, "I suppose the President. The President told you to fire them; I suppose he discussed it with Bob!" "Listen, Corbin, something got mixed up. Bob says the President wants to raise the salary of Brawley and promote Reese in charge of registration. Somehow they got it mixed up and thought he was going to fire them. I've got to have this letter. He says he doesn't believe me. He wants to see the letter. I've got to find the letter." I said to myself, "Oops, Bob's got him by the balls; he can't produce the letter." Then Steve Smith appears. You've got to talk to Steve about it. [Inaudible] Smith goes down to see the President, the President did not inform Kenny to fire Brawley, did not inform them to fire Matt Reese. [Interruption]

Well, anyway, you asked me what I did at the Committee. That about covers it: patronage--a lot of patronage. Nothing went through New York--nobody got appointed in New York unless it passed my desk, which meant that I would take it to Bob. Well finally, I said to Bob, "We've got to have Steve Smith on the Committee." He said, "You're crazy. He's in the State Department"--or AID [Agency for International Development] or something, playing around with that kind of stuff." I said, "I can't fight myself." So Steve comes up and I become his administrative aide to Steve Smith.

The funny thing is--Steve will tell you this--there comes a clash on an order from Steve and an order from Bob. Whose order do I follow? So I go over to Bob and I say, "Bob, I'm giving you a hypothetical problem about a guy in fairyland and his two princes are both good." I draw sort of an analogy between him and Steve. He picks up the phone and he says, "Steve, you've got a traitor working for you. He's just come and turned you in." I come back to the office and Steve says, "Well, Corbin, I misjudged you. You're a man with a conscience. Bob kept telling me that all the time. I never believed him. But I guess you live and learn. From now on ease yourself. You don't have to worry. I'll never ask you to make any major decisions anymore or tell you what to do." I said, "Sorry, that's the kind of guy I am, Steve. I love you; you know how I feel about you. I know the way you feel about me. Our relationship is a little different from Bob's and mine. We're genuinely fond of each other in a different way. I just can't help it, Steve, I'm with Bob."

Now, the real clash came--and this you may recall--in New York. It goes back to when [Robert] Morgenthau was running for governor. But [Robert F.] Wagner with Alex Rose were out to get rid of [Stanley] Steingut. And with the aid of the New York Times, they had built up this great myth about what a boss Stanley Steingut was. Of all the people that I have dealt with in New York State, of all the chairmen--like Peter Crotty and others--there's one decent human being and that's Stanley Steingut. I dealt with him every single day. Stanley was being cut up by the New York Times and Wagner and Alex Rose. Wagner got to the President and the President had promised him jobs, which he would bypass me and give the jobs to Wagner--subsequently I found out--aided and abetted by R.F. Kennedy. He kept me fighting, but would acquiesce with his brother. Stanley Steingut makes a trip to Washington to my office. He says, "Paul, I've had it. Wagner has just taken away the largest trucking contract from one of my largest contributors in my district. The job was to transfer voting machines from the central place to the schools, and he took that away from him." "I am dead, Corbin. Now, those eight jobs that are open, Wagner got every one of them." I said, "In a pig's ass he has. You've got every one of them as of tomorrow." I pick up the telephone. I start calling guys like in V.A. [Veteran's Administration] "[Edward T.] Kelly"--who's administrative aide--"Kelly, who are you signing up with, Bob Kennedy or JFK?" "Steingut gets the job." "They had to shit to get off the pot. They start coming

through for me. They sided with Bob--at the time. But I know these bastards would be calling the White House and there'd be a squabble the next day. It was the Fourth of July weekend. It might have been just this very day [July 2]. We're going up to Hyannis Port. And my wife and I are flying up on the Caroline. There was Steve, there was Bob, myself, my wife, and Wendy Sears, a girl who is in New York and now works for the second man in the [John V.] Lindsay administration. She worked for Bob in the press corps. She lived in Massachusetts and he gave her a ride. I'm sitting with my wife in the front of the Caroline and I hear a voice call, "Corbin, come up here, by yourself." "What's new fellows?" I can see Bob's face is red and Steve is white. RFK: "All right, Corbin. What did I tell you about Steingut?" I said, "To be nice to the guy." RFK: "Did I okay eight jobs for Steingut?" "Yeah, you okay a lot of jobs." "Quit playing games. You know what eight jobs I'm talking about." "No, I didn't have time to talk. You were busy so I just shot them through. As you and I have always discussed, Bob, there's always a motive in what I do, and so far you haven't proven me wrong." "What did Steve tell you?" "Steve told me not to give any jobs to Steingut?" "What did you do?" "Well, you know that story about fairyland, Bob." "All right, Corbin. I can recall in 1960 I chewed your ass out. And you said to me you'd never do anything unless you have a motive, and I listened to your motive and it was correct. It better be correct today." "Simple, Bob. You don't have to be a magician. The moment Steingut falls, Wagner's got control of New York. He's got the city; he's got Brooklyn; he's got it. I just don't want to give that much power to Wagner. I like to keep the pot stirring so you can run it Bob. Anything wrong with that?" "Get back there." I sit down, we land in Hyannis Port. Bob doesn't talk to me, dirty look, walks away, Ethel [Skakel Kennedy] greets him. Steve says, "Corbin, will you call Steingut and tell him that we're going to award him a contract to deliver mail from Brooklyn to Los Angeles ten times a day. And he's got those eight jobs and ten more." "I'll do that Monday." "Do it today." Still dumb, I don't know why today. So I get to the telephone and I call up. And I'll never forget Stanley Steingut on the Fourth of July weekend. Stanley ain't home, but his father answers. Who was calling? "This is Hyannis Port." "Ah, it's the President! Mama, the President's calling Stanley!" Then I got it, that Steve meant a call from Hyannis Port meant the President, not Bob. That's how dumb I was. "He's not here.

I'll track him down. Call every hour on the hour," the old man's yelling. Well, I wait a day and the next day I call Stanley. "What is it, Corbin?" "Nothing much, Stanley. There's a big contract to haul mail about ten times a day from Brooklyn to Los Angeles which your contractor is going to get. And by the way, these eight jobs are all yours and send in applications for ten." "Corbin, you mean they're siding with me over Wagner?" I said, "I don't know anything about that, Stanley. All I know" "Thanks a million, Corbin. Thank you. I'm saved."

Now, the last chapter. Robert Kennedy's brother is assassinated. I come here to spring this deal for him to run for New York. He's ready to lock me up in a nut house. The day I came in and said, "Bob, run for the Senate." He said, "You're crazy." I said, "Massachusetts, forget it. There's a law that says you can run [in N.Y.] without being a resident." He says, "You must be nuts." The next day he calls me and says, "Corbin, who do you think will go for me?" I said, "Bob! Steingut." He said, "Corbin, am I glad I sided with you on that plane. God, just imagine if Wagner would have had Brooklyn." I said, "You're one hundred eighty-six votes, Bob, in Brooklyn. You've got Jack English, you've got Crotty, you've got Watertown, you've got Rochester. It's ours, pal, it's ours. And I'll tell you something, Bob. In order to not make it look like a boss-ridden deal, let's run a guy called [Samuel S.] Stratton and Howard Samuels." Now, the truth of the matter is we created the support for Stratton and Samuels; we created opposition for Bob not to make it look as if he walked in and just steamrollered it. To this day Stratton doesn't know and Samuels doesn't know that our guys on instructions came out for Samuels and they came out for Stratton--to this day.

HACKMAN: You put that together?

CORBIN: That is right. Put that together and ran two guys --I called a guy up in New York, couldn't hold him. He said, "Corbin, I'm not going to do it. I'm going for Bob." "Listen, you're Collector of Customs up there, Ed Gossier. You're going for Samuels or Stratton, one of the two." I'll take my hat off to that guy. "Fire me," Gossier says. "I'm not going to do it. I'm going for Bob." "Split your delegation." You check the list. Rochester, the guys in Schenectady. . . . [George] Palmer was the chairman, who was for Stratton. I got his delegation. They come and say, "Mr. Corbin, we don't

give a goddamn. We're going to be in revolt. We're not going to go along. We're going to call for a roll call." I said, "You bastards do that, you'll ruin Bob Kennedy. You're going right down the line for Stratton. Attack Bob as a carpetbagger. Raise hell. We can't have it as a walk-away." That's the true story. All the time we were in New York, we had it. Now, as far as Bob was concerned . . .

HACKMAN: Who else knows that? Let me ask you that. Anybody else know that?

CORBIN: Steve Smith--ah, I don't know. Yes, Bob Kennedy and Steve Smith. Bob Kennedy and Steve Smith and-- I can't remember--about three or four guys. The guys who were the guys who were told to go for Stratton and Samuels. I can't remember the roll call. But you could check it. If I looked at it, I'd tell if he was the guy. This is '64, six years. But we put that together.

Now, if you recall when Bob announced that he was going to talk to Wagner at Gracie Mansion, he kept him waiting, him and Steve. Do you know why? They were trying to convince [Adlai E.] Stevenson to run. He was on the telephone begging Stevenson to run for the Senate and pledging him support all over the state. The key was Steingut--wouldn't budge, wouldn't budge with a hundred eighty-six votes. And I'll never forget when it was all put together, was all over, I walked into Bob's house and he said, "Paul, I'd like to ask you one question, and I won't explain to you why. You are persona non grata in New York. I can not get you a passport. You'll have to work behind the scenes. I can't have you, a professional gunfighter, moving into New York; I've got to find a local man. I'm going to ask you one question, Corbin. And, gosh, I want the right answer. Your friend Jack English, what do you think of him?" I said, "What do you mean 'my friend'?" "He's your friend. You built him up, you created him. You had me come down to Nassau County when I was Attorney General. You had me represent the award of the 'Man of the Year' for the Long Island papers. You've given him every contract, every contract. Why?" "Well," I said, "he personifies suburbia, a young clean-cut fellow . . .", "Answer my question. What do you think? You're hesitating, Corbin." I said, "Why do you ask, Bob?" "Give me an answer." I said, "Don't turn your back on him. Pick him, but don't turn your back. Remember, Bob, if you got a hundred and one votes and the

other guy's got a hundred and two, your throat will be cut. If you've got a hundred and two and the other fellow's got a hundred and one, you're his hero. Now, he might, by close association with you, get to like you. But he's a political boss, a typical Irish leader."

HACKMAN: Let me ask you to go back and explain that on Stevenson. I don't understand all of what you're telling me about Stevenson.

CORBIN: Wagner did not want to turn over the state of New York to Bob Kennedy. He himself didn't have the guts to run against [Kenneth B.] Keating. He tried to stop Bob from coming in. Bob Kennedy made a public statement he would run if Wagner said no. Wagner was trying to get Stevenson to run for the Senate to keep Bob out. Now, while Steve and Bob were outside cooling their heels, him and his boys were on the telephone--[Bernard J.] Bernie Ruggierei for one of them--trying to get Stevenson to accede to run.

He said, "Thanks for your recommendation about Jack English." I said, "Bob, you haven't answered my question. Why did you ask me about Jack English?" "Because my father has the same views about him as you have. He called the shots in 1960. I never forgot what my dad said about Jack English. And you say the same thing, 'don't turn your back,' and that's what my dad said. I won't turn my back, Corbin." I said, "Well, put him in then. Keep Crotty and these other guys in the background." And then he turned around and he looked out the window over the court in the Department of Justice. He said, "Come over here." He put his arm around me and he said, "Paul, thanks." I said, "Thanks for what?" "Steingut," he said.

HACKMAN: What did he think of English later then?

CORBIN: English?

HACKMAN: Over the years.

CORBIN: English genuinely loved Bob Kennedy.

HACKMAN: Did Robert Kennedy trust him later?

CORBIN: Bob Kennedy was like an elephant; he never forgot. He forgave but never forgot. That's the best way I can answer that. He forgave but never forgot. He had an instinct. He had an instinct. Although Jack English--I've known him for now this is ten years. I like him. He's an honest leader, as honest as one can be and survive in the state of New York. But if the other guy has one more vote, he's with the other guy. That's Jack English. [Interruption]

Bob Kennedy was a deeply religious man with very strong religious convictions. He was a very strong Catholic. The first time I became aware of it is Wisconsin when he'd be traveling with me for three days at a time. We'd ride down the highway and I noticed--I was completely unaware of Catholicism, had no idea what it was--we would drive along the highway and he'd make the sign of the cross as he'd pass a church. I said, "Why did you do that for?" "None of your business." About the fourth or fifth day I said, "Bob, why do you always make the sign of the cross when you pass a Lutheran church?" "That wasn't a Lutheran church! That was a Catholic church." I said, "Bob, that was a Lutheran church. Let's drive back." He wouldn't drive back. I figured, well, the guy thought he made a mistake.

One day we get to a city called Merrill, Wisconsin, which was the Seventh Congressional District. We had a lunch in the Badger Hotel, which I found out just the other day from a tourist that it's burnt down. Bob appeared at the luncheon and I always --when I had Bob speak or Jack speak, I always had the formula of having four or five bands playing and singing, rooms to jazz up the thing for luncheon because usually you have to wait for the people to come in, Rotary Club members and businessmen. In order to not have them all standing around, I had singing and music. I noticed when Bob came in in Merrill that day. . . . "There is a Catholic group here from a Catholic school," Bob said. "No there ain't." But there was. "I'll bet you twenty-five cents I can pick it out," Bob said. "You've got yourself a bet." "That little group over to the right." I said, "You win." This went on. About the third day after that I said, "All right, Bob, you pick out the Catholic group again." Anted the bet to a half a buck so I could get even. "It's on. The ones over there." "You won again." About the fourth, fifth win I said, "Okay, Bob. There's a trick to everything."

What's the trick?" "It's not a trick, Paul. Have you noticed anything about these students?" I had by then. I said, "Yes, I did. They're clean, their clothes are all pressed, their hair is combed and they all look happy." He said, "That's right. That's because they're Catholic they're happy." Then we drive along the highway and we discuss about religion. And I can recall in the early days, in the primary in Wisconsin, we had to stop at King, Wisconsin, which is outside of Waupaca, which is a veterans' home. That was the last stop that night, and the next one at 8 o'clock in the morning was a breakfast in Antigo up north. There was a terrific fog. And I was driving and he kept urging me to try to hit a hundred miles an hour in this fog. He was a reckless fool of a driver. Finally, I got to Antigo about 3 in the morning. And the hotelkeeper, who was a Norwegian, stayed up because he had a Kennedy staying in his motel. Bob and I walked in, and I registered. Bob turns to this Norwegian and says, "Can you direct me to the closest Catholic Church and can you tell me what time they have the first Mass?" I said, "Goddammit, Bob, you're supposed to be a smart politician. Here you are in Norwegian territory, all farmers, all prejudiced, and you ask this man where the Catholic Church is." "Now, get this straight, Corbin. If I can't go to Mass tomorrow morning, the hell with the Presidency. It don't mean that much to us. And don't wake me up in the morning." He went to bed. I got up the next morning; I came down and I'm waiting for Bob in the lobby. Bob is at Mass. The same Norwegian is up. I paid the hotel bill. He said, "Let me tell you, young man, I'm voting for Kennedy. Any man who has such deep religious convictions must come from a good family. And I'm voting for his brother Jack. And I'm leaving this hotel, I'm going to hear his speech up at the city hall"--it was the second or third floor--of Antigo.

Well, we had discussions about Catholicism in New York. We'd play this game. He never missed in picking--it became so that we couldn't wait to get to a place to test the formula. By then I became an expert. I could pick out each time the Catholic students in each school. And any time Bob would go to Mass I'd go with him. Then in New York, I would go to Mass with Bob, and I found myself going to Mass in the morning with [Benjamin A1, II] Ben Smith, who, incidentally, almost never missed going to Mass

a day in his life, Ben Smith.

Then, when Bob became Attorney General, most Saturdays when he was in town, I was in his office--cooked breakfast for him in the morning and called up all my relatives on the free telephone of the Attorney General--and b.s. with Bob, kid, talk about patronage and politics, dissect people. That's when he was himself. And we'd take a ride usually--he had a convertible--drive out to Hyannis Port [Hickory Hill] and have lunch, we we'd talk about religion. And one day he said, "You know, Paul, you'd make a good Catholic." I said, "Why?" He said, "You're very sincere about it and you're asking questions. I've watched you," he said. And I said, "Well, I might go into it." "Never make it, Corbin. Let me tell you right now, if they ever let you in, that will be the end of the Catholic Church." One day I made some inquiries at a Roman Catholic Church and found out you had to take instructions. So I went to Janesville, Wisconsin, where I originally came out of, and talked it over with Father [Gilbert E.] Carlton, who was very helpful to the Kennedys in the sixties. He said, "You have to take instructions. After you take instructions, come back and see me." So I lied and said I'd been taking them. He says, "Fine, I'll take it up with the bishops while I'm in Madison. You go back to Washington and you get a refresher course and then come back." I came back to Bob and I said, "Bob, I went to see this priest in Janesville." "Oh, is that where you were? I tried to reach you." And I said, "I'm trying to get into the Catholic church. I have to go in to a bishop. And he talked about taking instructions. Where do you take them?" "I'll arrange for them." Just then the phone rang and Ethel was on the phone. He said, "Ethel, will you do me a favor? Paul wants to take instructions. Will you call"--I forget the father's name [Father Garnier]; he's dead now--"at Holy Trinity Church and have them give Paul instructions? Can you arrange it for him?" So Ethel arranged it and I start taking instructions for several months. Then I went back to Wisconsin, went to the bishop, and discovered that I had to go to Rome to the . . . I had problems. I had been divorced, I hadn't been baptized, my wife had been divorced--it was a whole mess. But the bishop brought in his legal expert in Madison, Wisconsin, at the Chancellery. He listened to me and he said, "I think you've got a 60-40 chance of winning, maybe more." He gave me the reasons why: "I would take your case, but it would take a year to check out the facts that you gave us." They go right through

your record. "Go ahead." I flew back and a year went by and they recommended my case to Rome. So I came to Bob and said, "Bob, this thing is in Rome. I believe Jack or Jackie [Jacqueline B. Kennedy] is going down there to talk to the Pope." I said, "How about I just slip the guy a few bucks and fix it?" "Corbin, you're not dealing with Crotty, with English and those guys. You're not going to bribe the Pope." He said, "Let me tell you, they'll never let you in. Just forget it. They've got your number." And one day I get a call from my parish priest. He says, "Everybody thought I was crazy, but I have been blessed." I said, "What do you mean you've been blessed, Father?" He says, "Pope Paul, the new Pope, who just was installed, granted his first favor, number one favor. He let you in." "How do you know it's number one? Somebody's conning you, Father." "Oh no, they're numbered. You're the first signature. You're in." "Good news. See you later, Father." I run down to the Department of Justice. Bob was conducting a meeting of all the U. S. attorneys on crime that day. And Angie [Angela M. Novella] is sitting outside, who hated my guts. Angie hated my guts--it's a long story. So she figured, well. I come in and the door is locked, Bob's two doors. "Angie, I've got to see Bob." "Can't see him. He's got this crime meeting with the U. S. attorneys." "Well, what do I care?" "I'm telling you, you can't see him." I said, "Aw, mind your own bloody business and open the door." She says, "No." I can't wait to see him. Three times in a row. Finally I took a piece of 3x5 card, "Just got the word I'm in. Pope Paul let me in the Church." Opened the door, "Got to see you." All these U. S. attorneys. "It better be good Corbin! I'm telling you right now it better be good. What is it?" "Can't tell you. Come over here." I lay down this card. "Corbin, you made it! Meeting's adjourned." Picks up the phone, "Jack, time for you and I to leave the Church. Corbin just made it." And, "Take a couple of days off, Corbin. We're going to throw the biggest champagne party for you." I said, "Fine." "Who's your godfather?" "Godfather?" "You've got to have a godfather and godmother." "What are you talking about?" "You don't understand. You're being baptized. You're clean." "You're kidding, Bob. You mean I'm cleaner than you? You've been living all these years and you've sinned, and I'm like a new baby?" "Don't get smart with me now, Corbin." He says, "Who would you like to be your godfather?"

"Never gave it any thought." "Who would you like it to be, Corbin?" "You're kidding," I said. "Yes, I want to be." "Fine." "Who's your godmother?" "I never gave it any thought." "I've got one for you." I said, "Who?" "Ethel." "You're kidding." "You've got to give it to Ethel." "Oky-doke." And he became my godfather and gave me my godmother. And my wife became a convert at the same time, and Charlie Bartlett was her godfather and Ethel was her godmother. And that's how it was.

HACKMAN: That's quite a story.

CORBIN: Didn't you know that?

HACKMAN: No.

CORBIN: It's not on there, is it?

HACKMAN: Yes.

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

HACKMAN: Can you remember other conversations you had with him about--would he ever talk in talking about religion like, you know, what all this stuff is you believe? Would he ever say, you know, how can you believe the Trinity and how can you believe in the Eucharist, how can you believe in baptism, all that stuff?

CORBIN: Never discussed that with him.

HACKMAN: That's not the kind of thing he would talk about?

CORBIN: I never raised it with him. People are coming to him at the time that they knew that he was involved in becoming a Catholic. And, of course, the Irish Mafia were going wild, "Kennedy's got to be going nuts." And I get repercussions, started hearing about it; they were making snide remarks about it, taking digs at me. And I went to Bob and I asked him, I wish he wouldn't talk about it anymore, not

to tell people, just forget it, this is personal between, you know, myself and my wife. He said, "But Paul, you don't think for one moment that I would do this as a Catholic unless I thought you were ready for it. You were ready for it the day you met me. You just never knew. Your whole life was geared toward Catholicism." And I said, "I agree with you, my whole life." He said, "You will be a better Catholic than I am. People don't believe that; they don't know that, but I know you." Now, the amazing thing is, before I became baptized, although he volunteered and asked for to be my godfather, I had to bring three letters to him as to why he should be my godfather. I can't recall the three people, but I can recall two. One of them was Charlie Bartlett and the other one was Steve Smith. So Charlie wrote the letter and Steve Smith wouldn't. Everyday I'd go in and I'd say, "Bob, Steve won't write the letter." He said, "Well, I'll never agree." I said, "Well, I'll get myself a new godfather." Bob said, "That's not the arrangements, Paul. Now, get this letter from Steve and I'll proceed with it." Well, finally one day--I'd go in about every other day, "Steve, can I have that letter?" "No, cannot." One day Steve says, "Paul, I've got this letter for you." I said, "Why did you go through all this?" "Never mind why. Here's the letter. Take it to Bob." So I took it to Bob. Then my priest wanted to baptize me in his parish in Janesville. Bob said, "Do me one favor, Paul. Transfer to Washington. It will be an extreme hardship for me and Ethel to leave--Attorney General to fly there. Now, if you can't do it, I'll go there. But try." "I'll try that." "You can do that." So I called the parish priest, and he had to get permission from his bishop, who granted permission to come to Washington. Then I found out I had to get permission from the Holy Trinity Church to allow this priest, Father Carlton, to come.

HACKMAN: To come in, right.

CORBIN: Oh, how do you know?

HACKMAN: No, I just know the rules. I'm Catholic.

CORBIN: Are you Catholic?

HACKMAN: Yes.

CORBIN: I didn't know that. Well, finally, we got to the church. I'm picking up the priest at the airport, Father Carlton. And on this plane is Gaylord Nelson, who knows the priest--because when Gaylord became Governor, I got the Catholic Church and the bishop to come out for Nelson. And the deal was free bussing. I promised them that. I said to Gaylord, "If you become Governor, we want free buses"--I wasn't a Catholic then--"for the Catholics." He said, "If it can be maneuvered, Paul, when it passes, I will not sign, I will not veto it." So we met in the Athletic Club with the bishop, Father Carlton, and Nelson after he became Governor. And Gaylord kept his word and he allowed bussing in Wisconsin. So, anyway, on this plane when I pick up the Father, Nelson's on there, Miles McMillan from the [Madison] Cap [itol] Times, a real hate son-of-a-bitch, a real sick--on this plane with Father Carlton--by the way, he was a Catholic; he was kicked out, Miles McMillan. And they meet Father Carlton, they're great buddies. I'm meeting him at the plane, and they can't put two and two together. And Jim Fitzgerald happens to be on this plane. And Father Carlton says to me, "Paul, Jim Fitzgerald is one of the largest contributors to my church. I just met him on the plane." I said, "Yes, I know Jim. He helped with Jack Kennedy." He said, "I'd like to take him to the baptism." I said, "Well, I don't know. It's sort of a private little affair." He said, "Paul, I've got to have him. If he goes to this baptism, meets Bob Kennedy, he's good for a swimming pool, new school and everything. Will you, Paul?" How can I turn the Father down? I said, "Bring him along." So we go to the Holy Trinity Church. And the old Father who gave me instructions refuses to give up his right to baptize me because he's a Jesuit and they have a different method of baptism, which is about two hours, the old book. Finally we have an argument then, and Father says, "All right, all right," because he sees Ethel there and--Ethel smiles at the old priest--Bob. So Father Carlton, my priest, is going to baptize me. He says, "Corbin, this is two hours long." "Cut it,

1

short. Just say 'I do' . . ." "Corbin, you'll never make it." "Just say you are and get out of here." So we get in there and I'm kneeling, and Bob is on one side of me and Ethel's on the other. Now, this I could never understand why he did it. He would never tell me. I was standing there--this went on for about thirty-five, forty minutes, the whole baptism. He had dug his fingernails in my sleeve, and I bled. The pain was horrid. And I stood there. And I couldn't scream, couldn't say, "Stop, Bob." Well, he kept digging his hand in my arm and just kept it up as long as the baptism was. I thought I'd faint. Never could understand why Bob did it, reached in his hand and just kept squeezing. I stood there, and when it was all over he grinned. I said, "What the hell did you do that for?" He just grinned. Can you figure out why he did it?

HACKMAN: That's strange.

CORBIN: What?

HACKMAN: That's strange.

CORBIN: He just did it--I guess to sort of, to suffer before I came in. I don't know what it was. But it had to do with his religion because it was orientated toward religion, so there was suffering.

HACKMAN: Did he talk to you later over the years? I mean, you know, he's your godfather. Does he check up on you to see whether you're doing what he thinks you should?

CORBIN: Always, always asked me, "Go to church, Paul?" I recall--let me see. Jack was assassinated the 22nd, and the 26th was Thanksgiving Day. I got a call from Ethel that Bob wanted me to come over alone that morning. So I came over to see Bob on the 26th. It was the first time that we had a conversation since the assassination. We got into the roadster, his roadster convertible, and Ethel says, "Paul,

be careful when you're with him." I said, "Why?" She said, "I don't know. But there's U.S. marshals here and Secret Service so there must be something wrong." So we got into the car, and his eyes were swelled up. He said, "Let's take a ride." We took a ride and he says, "What's new, Paul?" I said, "Well, I know it's hard for you to believe, Bob, but I really am sorry about your brother." "Why should it be hard for me to believe?" "Well, you remember that article in Newsweek where I popped off about Jack?" He said, "Oh, I know you were just joking." "I know it hurt you very bad." I said, "I don't know what to say at a time like this. All I know is politics, Bob. And what irritates me, of all the phonies, your brother's body wasn't even even laid in his coffin and the phonies came out from under the rocks." "Give me the list." "I don't want to do it, Bob. Not today." "Well, let's exchange lists. Give me yours and I'll give you mine." I said, "Aw, Bob," and his eyes were swelled red. "You got a list?" "Sure have." "What's yours, Paul?" "You give me yours first." "No, you give me yours first." "Well, now, Bob, you're not going to suck me in a trap and chop my head off. Who is it?" "Dean Rusk. Now start talking."

HACKMAN: That's what he said?

CORBIN: Yes. "Dean Rusk. Now, what's yours?" "The [Irish] Mafia, right down the line. Maguire, Donahue, [Lawrence F.] Larry O'Brien, Chuck Roche."

HACKMAN: Does that include O'Donnell at that point?

CORBIN: No. I never included O'Donnell. O'Donnell was never a traitor to the Kennedys, never. And never would be. I gave him the list. Then we stopped --because we're on religion--at St. Luke's, which at that time was a school and they hadn't built a chapel yet. And the chapel was actually a school class. We went in there. "I'm so glad," he said, "that you're able to come in with me as a Catholic, so glad." I said, "I guess that's one thing I got from your brother's administration." We went in and we kneeled, and I broke down crying. He walked out and he said, "You big crybaby." I

said, "Let me tell you right now, Robert, I'm not a Boston aristocrat. I'm nothing but a bloody peasant from Canada. And we peasants cry." He put his arm around me and he started crying. And we went to his house, and we talked politics all the way, all the way. And he came in, he said, "Ethel, never go to church with this crybaby. He cries." I already knew that he cried too. And I went into--he'd just got a sauna bath for his birthday, November the 20th. We went into the sauna bath that day. And [William H., Jr.] Bill Orrick was there and a couple of others, and there was an awful scene in there, awful. But he would always refer, when I came to his home, he'd always refer to me as "my godson." He would do it in this way: He would turn to his little boy and say, "That's my godson." Or he would say, "Go upstairs and kiss your godmother." That's the way he said it, "Go up and kiss your godmother." One day we're having a political dinner at his house or a luncheon--it had to do with the Senate race in New York. So I leaned over and kissed Ethel. He says, "Hell of a time to kiss her. Everybody knows you're as hot as a firecracker. You had to kiss Ethel right now?" I said, "Aw, you told me to 'kiss your godmother every time you see her.' Now you're bitching when I kiss her." "Goddammit, Corbin, these guys are after your ass. I'm trying to shake you today." I said, "That's you, fair-weather friend." And I forget what chairman out of New York--I think it was [William F.] Bill Luddy--made some derogatory remark [about me], and Bob just turned on him and just pounced on him. See, even when he--he played games, you know, he played games with me about Ethel, which were him and I. Then somebody else would step in and he'd turn on that guy. I remember when he was Attorney General, on Saturdays or after work I'd come by. He'd lock the door and we'd play games. I'd chase him around the room, down the hall, laugh and joke and throw things. He was a different personality. And he'd ask me, "How much did you steal today?" I said, "What are you talking about?" He says, "You're too dumb, too dumb, too dumb." And I'll never forget, one time a guy came over to me at the Committee, and the government was storing special jet fuel in certain strategic spots across the country in the event of atomic attack or some bloody thing. This guy had a lease or something. He had found out where the government wanted to store this

gasoline and he leased all this land. And he wanted the contract and an option to buy. And he came to me, offered me 25 percent of the land, put up the tax and the first 25 percent profit went to me by getting this contract. "Corbin, you'll be a millionaire in a year." I rushed down to Bob. "I'm not screwing the government. Somebody's got to get it. Jesus Christ, Bob, my chance." "It's yours, Corbin. Tomorrow morning make the deal and you get it." "What's the fine print?" "The fine print is you resign. You're out of politics and out of government." I say, "I don't want that." "Think about it, Paul. You may be sorry some day. You want that contract, you want that 25 percent, let me know tomorrow morning." I said, "The answer is no. Right now." "Wise choice. You would never have gotten the goddamn thing anyway." That was his answer, "Wise choice. You wouldn't have gotten the goddamn thing anyway." That's Bobby.

One Saturday morning I arrived at the Department of Justice --this was early '61. Angie, by then had gotten to know the ropes at the Department of Justice and had informed the guard that when Corbin comes, he can't get in. I arrive bouncing in Saturday morning in my slacks, you know, expecting to go riding with Bob, have some fun, screw around. "Corbin? Never heard of you. You can't get in?" "What do you mean I can't get in? I can use the telephone." "Stay away from that booth." I'm standing there, don't know what the hell to do. Going outside putting a dime in to call Bob; can't get by Angie. Well, screw all, see Bob Monday. I'm just turning around to go out of the Department of Justice and get my car. Out from underneath the ramp shoots Bob. "Hi, Corbin. Why weren't you here earlier?" "Couldn't get in. Angie threw the blocks to me." Private key. I've got it at home. A.G.'s [Attorney General's] office. "Hey, how do I get in?" "You dumb bastard. That's the key to my elevator." I walk right around to the door, put the key, opens. I step into the elevator, turn the key--I'd seen him do it. It opens right up in his office. I walk in. Angie's sitting there. "How did you get in?" "Bob gave me his key." Now, I would say at least fifty times after that, Bob would want to go out. "Where's my key, Angie?" "Can't find your key. I lost mine. Get Corbin's." "Angie, get me that key." "You'll be sorry," she'd say. She just went to every length possible to trap him into asking me to give my key. He never took it away. I have

it to this day. I ought to go up and see [John V.] Mitchell one of these days, say, "Hey, Mr. Mitchell." I ought to do that some time. They haven't changed that lock, ought to do that so some time. What the hell would he do if the elevator door opened and Corbin walks out?

Oh, [J. Edgar] Hoover hated my guts. [Interruption]

HACKMAN: Let me just ask you--well, you've talked about a lot of the times when he got impatient with you or whatever--what kinds of things would make him throw a tantrum or would really upset him?

CORBIN: Well, I wasn't referring to getting upset, tantrums. He was under tremendous political pressure, and I would not refer to that as a tantrum. But he would get impatient at times about getting an airplane or in his office, wanting a coke and the guy not bringing the coke in a hurry. And we'd be alone and he'd start screaming, you know, and he'd get mad just like a little kid. And I'd say, "There you go, Bob, right back to your childhood. Jack just took your toy away. You're getting mad, aren't you?" "One of these days I'm going to punch you right in the nose if you say that again." "Now, admit it, Bob. Did Jack take your toys away or did he not?" "He did! Now shut up." "There you go, Bob. There you go." We were driving out to a plane during the campaign--I'll never forget New York. "Bob, Jack took that toy away again." "What did you say?" "Jack took your toy away." He started laughing. He'd get out of that tantrum. Every time he'd go get in it I'd say, "That Jack took your toy away," and he'd get out of that tantrum. That's what I meant by tantrums. But he'd get into them--impatient about a coke. I'd say, "There you go. He took your toy away. You're getting mad, Bob." And I have to say this to you: We'd drive along--this all started in Wisconsin. He'd constantly talk about his mother. Now, this has continuity right up to '62 or '63. In fact, in '68 he once mentioned over the phone while he was campaigning in Buffalo. I talked to him one night--about another story which I should tell you. Anyway, he started telling me what a wonderful mother he had. Because he'd talk about his mother, I said to him, "Bob, it's not your mother that's great; it's your father." He said, "Why do you keep always saying that?" I says, "Because your father really

must have loved your mother and had confidence in your mother to give her so much power to exercise over you to bring you up--because we all know how he thought about you children. And yet he turned over the day-to-day upbringing to your mother. That showed that your father had excellent judgment. The one that you should talk about is not your mother but your father who allowed your mother to do that." "Well, you don't understand the Catholic religion, Paul. The mother is the center of the home. She's the mother, just like Mother Mary." And he'd discuss religion. So he says, "And in ours, a Catholic home, my mother represents" "Well, you can cut it the way you want it," I said. "It's the father gave the mother--religion or no religion. Don't tell me the father's going around with a Bible in their hand all the time and say, 'Well, I have to do that.'" And he grinned.

He became Attorney General, and he talked on television and radio, I forget, in some speech, reference to his mother. I says, "You know, Bob, you're always talking about your mother. And everybody's taking a kick at your old man's ass. I'll never forgive you, and I've told you a thousand times. What you did to your father when Jack got the nomination in L.A., you wouldn't allow him to stand and make his speech, acceptance speech at the open arena. You shanghaied his ass to the Mediterranean. You're ruining him. Always at a time when a father should get pleasure, you sloughed him off. Now you're the Attorney General and your brother's President and you're always building up your mother." I said, "Some day, brother, you're going to regret it." "I promise you, Paul, that next time I'll talk about my father." About three weeks later he's on television--boom, about his mother. The next day he called me at the house. He always called to get an assessment, if not me, he probably called a half a dozen guys. "What do you think of my speech?" "Stunk!" "Now, listen to me, Corbin, I'm getting sick of. . . ." "Don't call me." "All right. What did I do wrong?" "Your mother again. You're going to be sorry." Three days later his father. . . . I said, "Bob . . ." "Don't you say it. Don't you say it." "I'm going to say it. I'm going to say it." "Anything you say about your father don't mean a damn. Why in the hell didn't you say it before?" He walked away. That was one incident.

And in '68 I talked to him one day about another deal which is very interesting. I had to call him in Buffalo and track him down in the middle of the night. I was using me a cover then, a different name. "Hi." "Hi. I tried to reach you all day. Chased you all over the lot. You've got some guy screwing up your schedule." I'd always needle the guy. He'd laugh, "Aw, you're mad because you're not there." I said, "Jesus, who you been talking to? I've been trying to get you for an hour." "I've been talking to my father." "Oh, you've been talking to your father? You mean he's been listening." "Corbin, please don't raise that thing again to me now, not tonight." "Well, it wouldn't hurt you to think about it, Bob. It just wouldn't hurt to think about it." I raise it again in Buffalo. I needle him all the time, all the time, all continuously. And he'd needle me. Now, the amazing thing is Teddy [Edward M. Kennedy] tries to needle me. And I'd love to give it to him--but not since Bob is dead. I would have loved to give it to Teddy, but I won't do it now. I saw him at Ethel's, you know, stewed to the gills, stewed to the gills. On the sixth of May, stewed to the gills.

HACKMAN: Sixth of June.

CORBIN: Yes, stewed. Of course, I suppose, you know, the anniversary of his brother's death, and he's stewed. I didn't think he should have done it. But it didn't really make any difference because those who were there were all friends. I saw him and he looked at me and he expected me to needle him. I walked away. But Steve told me not to give it to him anymore. After Bob was assassinated, Steve said, "Don't ever needle Teddy anymore." I said, "I won't." "He's the last one. Please . . ." "I won't." So when he was standing in the stairs talking to his sister Jean [Smith], so he saw me go over. And he expected me to needle him. He gave it to me first. He left himself wide open, I could have just knocked him. I passed it up. You know what the tragic thing was? He knew that I passed it up. That was worse. I should have given it to him. So this shocked the Kennedys. You'd rather be giving it to him. You following me?

HACKMAN: Yes.

CORBIN: I passed it up. I passed it up. It hurt me after I did it. He had a funny look about his face, and I just passed it up and kept walking. [Interruption]

Everybody saw Bob in a different way because Bob had a great knack of playacting. I'd watch him seduce the reporters. He'd analyze the reporter before he came in and he would playact. Of course, you've run across that, haven't you? He playacted. And the next guy that would come in, he played a different role. And I'd go by, "All the world's a stage and all the men . . ." "Shut up!" And I'd say, "You phony. You phony." I'd listen to when he talked to the guy. Of course, he wasn't a phony, but--you know, when you really got to know the guy, when you were involved in these political deals where he's maneuvering. . . . I'll never forget one time--I've got to say this to you. I'm not going into the New Hampshire primary, just give you one incident. I bounced in. Bob was in his office. "Yep, I've got a complete report," I said. "On what?" "On what else but New Hampshire?" "Listen to me, Corbin. I don't want you to stick your goddamn nose in New Hampshire. I don't want you to stick your nose in my life. I'm sick and tired of you latching on to me. Now, get out of this goddamn office. I don't want to see you for two weeks." Out of the corner of my eye, [Edwin O.] Ed Guthman was standing there. I said, "Are you nuts?" "Get out of here!" I went out. I go, "What the hell's the matter? The man's gone crazy." I felt kind of bad about it, couldn't figure what the hell's the matter. Two in the morning the phone rings, "Well, hurry up and give me that report on New Hampshire." "Jesus, Bob, that was absolutely uncalled for. You absolutely just treated me as if I was a dog." "Aw, don't whimper and whine with me on the phone. Let's have that report." "Not until you tell me where I goofed." "You're dumb. Guthman was standing there." "Are you trying to tell me that Guthman don't . . ." "Corbin, Ethel don't know what you and I are doing." I said, "She don't?"

"No." Two days later I'm back, bouncing up in Bob's office. We're laughing, playing around. I walk outside and Guthman says, "What kind of games are you playing with me? What kind of a game? Corbin, what's going on in New Hampshire?" "Look, Ed, can't you put two and two together?" "Well, if he is, if it's what I think it is, he don't trust me." "Well," I said, "poor little boy. Don't you know Bob by now? Everybody has a different role. He may trust you with things that he don't trust me with. There are certain things that he . . ." "Yeah, that will be the day." From that day on Guthman hated my guts with a passion, with a passion. He used to leak stories to the press in New York against me. Leaked them to the Gannett newspaper chain, in Rochester, a fellow called Paul Black, just because he knew that I knew that Bob didn't trust him.

HACKMAN: Did anybody else know about that?

CORBIN: Know about what?

HACKMAN: Know about New Hampshire.

CORBIN: Two other guys know about it. Don't know what the hell they knew, but they brought me money. [Interruption] . . . I'm sure he was just raising hell with me about stories he had read in the paper. He wanted to know if I was really screwing around or not, and he didn't want me to do it. [Interruption]

You know I got fired by LBJ [Lyndon B. Johnson]. I went to Aruba for two weeks because things were getting hot in New Hampshire. So I went to Aruba, and I believe I took my wife--I can't remember, yes--and I came in. It was February the 11th because that was my wedding anniversary also. The phone was ringing as we got into the house. It was Bob. "Where the hell have you been?" I said, "I told you. I went to Aruba. Didn't you get my card, my telegram?" He said, "That's right. LBJ called me up about New Hampshire and wants you fired. I said to him, 'Mr. President, the public have got the whole story wrong. He never was my fellow. My brother, the President, loved him.' Guess what the bastard said to me, Corbin? 'I'm the President and your brother is dead. Now get rid of him.'" I said, "How in the hell does he know I'm in New Hampshire?" "Kenny told him." I said, "Bob. . . ." That's the first time that Bob went so far as to make it,

"Kenny told him." I said, "Doesn't that son-of-a-bitch ever give up?" "No, he's just like you." "You're wrong, Bob, about me." "I didn't mean that, Paul. I didn't mean that." Then he said, "You come to my office tomorrow and we'll write a letter of resignation." Well, that was a masterpiece, blasted LBJ from top to bottom. Have you heard that story?

HACKMAN: No.

CORBIN: I write the letter. I said, "Bob, I can't sign it. You're nuts." "Sign it." Just then Steve Smith walks in, picks up the letter, says, "Hold it. Corbin can't say that. Let me write it." "He says that. He's signing that." Well, finally Steve toned him down. I came back the next day and gave it to Bob. "Is it okay to sign?" "No, sign the other one." I said, "Look, Steve wants it that way. What the hell? Just tell them I'm going into private industry and I'm leaving"--which I signed. But LBJ had me canned; Kenny told him. Now, this was these fellows still wouldn't accept the fact, in spite of all these affidavits--the crooks in the White House and the goods we had on them--they still thought that these people were just displaying a weakness for money and that they still loved the Kennedys, which wasn't true because our people, some of the guys who were working for Bob in New Hampshire, were staying at a hotel owned by [Bernard] Bernie Boutin's brother, who had the lines tapped. They were going on the assumption that Bernie Boutin and his brother was for Bob when they were lock, stock, and barrel owned by LBJ. I kept telling him, "Now, Bob, for crying out loud, you're sitting right with a spy. Now, Bob, you're crazy. Get this guy out of there." But Teddy liked Boutin and his brother. I couldn't convince him. I couldn't convince him that these guys were cutting their balls, couldn't convince them. Just they couldn't see it, couldn't see it until a year later when Bernie Boutin really starts slugging it out. Well, he was doing it then, for crying out loud. Bernie Boutin was doing it then.

HACKMAN: Were there people that went in from out of the state, or was it just Dunfey and people that were working for Dunfey?

CORBIN: No, never done out of the state. And Dunfey wasn't the leader. It was [Philip H.] Hoff, the Governor of Vermont--who, incidentally, is having a party at Ethel's house to raise money on the 13th of July. I don't know if you know that.

HACKMAN: No, I didn't know that.

CORBIN: Yes, she's going to be at Hyannis Port. And Gertrude [Corbin] told me last night that Ethel called her and they're letting him have the house to raise money. So I said, "When you see the Governor there just tell, 'My regards from Corbin,' and he'd remember." Hoff was for Bob. But the others were owned, lock, stock, and barrel by LBJ and Bernie Boutin, but they couldn't convince him. I used local people.

Now, this Vermont thing goes into '68. The real last discussion which I had for over an hour with Bob I'll never forget as long as I live. I came to see him at his house. I had heard then--in '67 I was in Acapulco for two weeks during the Christmas week. And I was invited to ex-President [Miguel Herman Valdes] Aleman's home for a party with a friend of mine. I went there--there was all celebrities in Acapulco and he's the center of the social ladder, ex-President Aleman, next to Merle Oberon who also operates out of there. And I was invited. About two days after the party, walking through the Hilton Hotel in Acapulco, a woman comes up to me and says, "How are you, Mr. Corbin?" I said, "How are you?" "Don't you remember me?" I said, "Yes, I met you at President Aleman's party." "No, you did not." I said, "We sure did." "No, you did not." I said, "Where did I meet you?" She said, "You're a Bob Kennedy man." I said, "That's right." She said, "Do you want to have a cup of coffee with me? I want to talk." She said, "Well, I did meet you at the party." I said, "What do you want to talk to me about?" She said, "I am a schoolmate of Eugene McCarthy. I was at a party

at Gene McCarthy's house a few months ago, and he told me that he was dedicating his life to ruining the Kennedys, and that he should be President. He was a Catholic and he was intelligent and he was going to stop Bob Kennedy. And if Bob hesitated, he was going to jump into New Hampshire, that he thought for sure that Bob was going to hesitate."

HACKMAN: Tell me again when that was.

CORBIN: That was in '67. Let's see. '67, yes, it was '67.

HACKMAN: What time of the year?

CORBIN: It was Christmas when I went there.

HACKMAN: You mean the Christmas before McCarthy announced the next fall. So it would have been the Christmas of '66.

CORBIN: Yes, it must have been '66--'66, before he announced. I picked up the telephone and I called Steve Smith when I got back and told him the story. I said, "This woman lives in Hopkins, Minnesota. She likes Bob Kennedy--not so much that she likes Bob Kennedy, she's disillusioned at McCarthy. This guy is going to run." And I saw Bob, he came over and he was playing--I'll never forget--he was playing tennis. He suspected that I was coming to talk to him about New Hampshire. He wouldn't say hello to me, ignored me as if he never saw me in his life before. I watched him playing tennis. He had a worried look on his face. He's playing tennis. Teddy was there and Ethel was there, and I forget the other partner. Then we walked over to the house. He wouldn't say a word to me. I said, "What's troubling you?" I got to the house and he was talking to Teddy. I came over and Ethel stood on the stairs. And he was on the bottom step. I said, "What bugs you?" "You keep goddamn off New Hampshire, Corbin. You step in there and I'll chop your goddamn head." I said, "Let me tell you right now, Bob, this is not '64. I'm asking you to go into New Hampshire. If you don't, he'll take it." "Keep out of my political life, Corbin. I've got top advisers. Right now this is a different ballgame. This ain't New York. I'm going for the Presidency." "You're darn crazy, Robert. You're darn crazy. These reformers are going to get your ass before

it's through. The last mile when you reach out to grab their hand, they won't like the color of your fingernail polish and you're a goner. Remember that." "If I want your damn advice in New Hampshire, I'll ask for it." Teddy said, "Leave him alone." I said, "I never asked your brilliant advice." "Well, it's time you left." "Suits me fine, Robert, but get your ass into New Hampshire." I started walking. "Paul, now, look, Paul, you're one guy in the world . . . [Inaudible] I just can't go to New Hampshire, Paul." "Why?" "I don't want people thinking I'm reaching out for power." "It ain't going to come to you, Bob. You've got to reach for it." "I can't have that image, Corbin." "Well, how the hell are you going to get it?" "Leave me alone. I'm not going in." "McCarthy's going to go. I'm telling you he's going to whip your ass. He's going to win." "I'm not going to New Hampshire, Paul." "All right. Answer me one question. They're calling me." "Sure they're calling you. That's why I'm mad. And you're talking to them." "I'm listening." "You never listened in your life. You're urging them." I said, "I'm not. I really am not, Bob. I'm just listening. What do I do?" "That's the problem, Corbin. They all call you. That's the problem. Now, you can't say a word. Just talk about the weather. Don't say anything. It'll be in the papers." "What do you want I ought to do? What do I do?" "Turn the names over to Steve." "What do I do? Don't take the calls?" I knew him. He never said don't take them. "Take the calls, but be careful." I said, "Okay, Bob. Run in New Hampshire." "Not going to do it." I got to the car, and his way of making up, you know, he said, "See you later, alligator." I said, "Smile when you say that, crocodile." He waved his tennis racquet.

HACKMAN: When was that?

CORBIN: That's the last argument we had about New Hampshire. I can't even remember--I can't remember the date.

HACKMAN: Okay. It must be though, what, the fall of-- it's before McCarthy announced?

CORBIN: Yes. It was the last time we discussed New Hampshire.

HACKMAN: Okay. Let me get you to go back to something else then. You were talking about José. How then does it develop from those first things to the point where you are on November 20th? You know, how do you build up the case and what gets put down on paper?

CORBIN: Well, José played no real concrete role in the last mile where I build this case. Yasko, Karel Yasko contributed information. He participated in calling people, getting me the information about meetings between certain regional directors of General Services Administration of certain areas. I become, by trial and error, an expert on getting the information. It got so that you had a jigsaw puzzle and three or four pieces were missing. The moment you pick up a piece, it gave you the key. The guy who gave you that piece didn't know he was giving it to you. Karel Yasko would sit there and I'd be talking to him constantly, and he was giving me--of course, he felt secure. He had met the Attorney General. The Attorney General told him to feed me this information [Inaudible] the White House. He probably would have been the next administrator for GSA [General Services Administration]. And he was giving me all this information. What they were beginning to do is rather than go direct into Bernie Boutin or a fellow called [Lawson B., Jr.] Knott . . .

HACKMAN: Lawson Knott.

CORBIN: Lawson Knott, who was up to his neck in this whole deal, not that he was getting paid off, but he was going along and doing Bernie's dirty work. They would start sending these guys through regional directors, recommending it to the regional directors. So I had built up a case on ten regional directors or people that were in their offices, and received affidavits, where they were recommending a certain guy that they'd meet and he'd get a cut--he sent them into Washington and there was a cut all the way down the line-- and the amount of money paid and how it was paid and who was paid. I would constantly go in to Bob with evidence. I remember I said, "What the hell do you want? Trying to find an alibi for these guys?" "Corbin, I've got to go to Jack, my brother. I've got to have it stand up. In other words, Jack will say to me, 'Bob, can you take this evidence and get a conviction?' I can't accept your evidence. I know you're right. I know what you say is true, Paul. But I've got to have evidence which will stand up in court, and I've got to have enough of a case because I know they can get to a federal judge, Corbin. You get me that." [Interruption]

HACKMAN: You should talk about what his reaction was then when you presented it to him finally.

CORBIN: Oh, Jesus. I went to show him the evidence. He read it. He said, "Well, I guess that does it, Paul. You did a fine job. Great work, Paul. Terrific. I'm going to call my brother." He reached for the telephone and he said, "Paul, today's my birthday." I said, "Yes. Some of those guys are going to be at your house tonight." "Well, I won't do it on my birthday. But you be here tomorrow morning 9:30 sharp, Paul, and we'll do it." "I'm for doing it now. I can't wait until tomorrow morning. Bob, they're going to know. They know by now. One of those guys chickened out and told them. Out of all the people who have been interrogated, one guy is sure going to get scared and tell them."

"What can they do, Paul? I'm the Attorney General and my brother's got the White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. We'll get them tomorrow. I ain't going to do anything to mar this party. Now, are you going to be there tonight?" "Yes, I will." "You be sure and be there." "I'll be there." That was the last festive party held by the Kennedys, the last affair of Camelot, November the 20th. It was a great affair and everybody was there that meant anything to the Kennedys because it was his birthday. All night long as we were dancing, and laughing, and drinking champagne, Bob had a strange look on his face. And four or five times during the course of the evening we would look at each other across the room, look at each other across the room, and I've often wondered what he thought. But he knew I was nervous and he was nervous. As I left I said goodbye to Ethel and I went over to the door to go out and Bob came up to the door, "9:30?" "9:30." I knew that that was on his mind. 9:30 the next morning bright and early I'm in his office. Bob is there. "Hi, Paul. How are you? Well, let's get my brother." He picks up the telephone, hangs up. "Jack went to Dallas. We'll get him Monday." I said, "Gosh, Bob, a whole weekend. What are they going to do?" "There ain't a damn thing they can do." "I don't know. I'm scared. Why wait?" "I can't do it. Got to talk to Jack because of the people involved."

Now, well, Jack was assassinated. I completely dropped the matter. I wasn't going to bring it up. Well, one of the people involved in helping me get information kept bugging me. "What's happening?" I went to Bob finally and said, "Bob, remember that stuff I gave you?" "Yes." "Where is it?" "Paul, did you do what I told you to do when you typed out that memo?" "Yes, I did, Bob." "I knew you would. No copies, Corbin?" "No copies. But the girl that typed the memorandum knows, Bob. She doesn't know all the details, but she typed it." And I said, "She looks at me every morning." He said, "Paul, can't do a thing. You've got to have 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue to pull off what you want to pull off and what I want to pull off." I said, "Why?" "Paul, did you read the paper? They're all on the plane going to the Johnson ranch." I said, "You mean to say that he's involved?" "Don't you talk about the President that way, Paul." I said, "Okay." I said, "Bob, you're the Attorney General." He said, "You don't understand."

I knew what he meant about two months later. Judge Brennen was a federal judge who sat in Utica, New York. That's the home of [Rufus P.] Rufie Elephante--and that's a chapter by itself which I really should record separately. But there was a gangster who was up on a tax evasion case in front of Judge Brennen. I worked with a [James E., Jr.] Jim Byrne, the U.S. marshall, who is now in the Virgin Islands, a great guy. I was working with him and he was watching the case. He brought it to my attention first. And he got shocked when Judge Brennen practically let the guy go. I said to Jim Bryne, "Is Judge Brennen a crook?" He says, "No, he's not, Corbin. He never accepted a bribe and never would, but he's a product of the New York political machine. He's an Irish lawyere who became a federal judge. So the party chairman comes in and says, 'Judge, my son made a mistake. We mistreated him. He's a great fellow. I can vouch for him.' He brings his priest in and they all vouch character references. And the judge goes easy. He wasn't bribed, wouldn't take a dime." I said, "Let me talk to Bob about it." I said, "Bob . . ." "Yes, I watched that case, Corbin. That Judge Brennen's crooked." "No, he's not. He's a typical Irish federal judge." "Corbin, if he's not dishonest I don't want to hurt him. Get his ass out of that judgeship." "How am I going to do it?" "You work it out." "How am I going to work it out?" "Work it out, Corbin." "Well, I'm dumb, tell me how." "Ask Jim Byrne to follow him into the piss house to take a leak and whisper in his ear, 'I just came back from Washington and it looks like Bob Kennedy is ready to [Inaudible] you because of that case.' That's all you do, Corbin. Don't get caught." I call in Jim Byrne. Jim Byrne flys in. Jim McShane, who was head of U.S. marshals, brings him in and I told Byrne to say, "Judge Brennen, I just came from Washington and they're noseing around that tax case. They think you took a bribe," and walk away. "The moment you do that call me up." He calls me up. He met him, passed the message. Twenty-four hours after he got the message, Judge Brennen's in his office, resignation on Bob's desk, at your leisure. I get a call from the county chairman, who has enough trouble in his life right now without me mentioning his name. We can spare his grandchildren. He meets me at a hotel called, I believe, it was the Webster, which is now torn down in New York . . .

[Inaudible] And we're having a drink. He introduces me to some big contractor engaged in government work. And he says to me, "The reason I brought this fellow is this fellow has a real friend, a wonderful fellow, he'd like to have as a judge out of Auburn, New York. And we have found out that you have influence on Bob Kennedy." I said, "You're over-estimating my influence. I've never recommended anybody for a federal judge." "No, but we understand that Bob Kennedy has had you working on federal judges." "Yes, checking them out. That's all. That's not my cup of tea. Never screw around with federal judges. He'd asked me to go into the state and check on a guy, and I'd say good or bad." "Now, look, if you said to Bob Kennedy that you like Jack Smith, would Bob look into the guy?" "Yes, he would." "And if the guy stood up, he was good, would Bob put him in?" "Yes, he would." Well, the truth of the matter, I had recommended another guy for the judgeship, George Craig, who would have gotten it. I deal with him. Oh, you misspelled it-- you call him Crane--and I corrected it in the transcript. It's Craig, C-R-A-I-G. Bob had told me he was going to put George Craig in. So I knew this guy wasn't going to go. So he said to me, "Will you whisper, just whisper, this guy's name to Bob Kennedy? There's ten thousand dollars in cash." I said, "Payable when?" "Right now. Just give us your commitment that you'll mention his name. Your word is good for us." They knew my word was good. I said, "Let me think about it." I go into Bob and tell Bob about it. "You dumb son of a bitch. You should have taken the ten thousand bucks. We need it for registration." I said, "What about--you're not putting that bastard . . ." "No, who's going to put him in? So you tell the guy you whispered. So, I didn't hear." I said, "You don't mean that, Bob, do you?" "No." What's the guy's name?

[Inaudible] Jack Kennedy gets assassinated. Rumor has it that this guy has given me the ten thousand bucks for that judgeship. [Joseph F.] Joe Dolan is now Bob's administrative assistant. He was handling the judges now. I got to Joe, I says, "Joe, what are you doing?" He says, "Look, Corbin, Kenny's there right now." "I know it's Kenny." As soon as I was bounced, Kenny [O'Donnell] was appointed to handle New York, to take my place. Kenny is doing it. I go to Bob. I says, "Bob, how can you put this guy in, Bob?"

You know the ten thousand bucks was offered." "Corbin, I didn't submit that name. I submitted George Craig. And it came out that guy there." "What are you going to do about it?" "I told you we haven't got 1600 Pennsylvania." That's when I begin to realize what he meant when it came to the case: He didn't have 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. I said, "Bob, it's terrible about that crook. You know the guy's corrupt. They offered me ten thousand bucks." "Can't help it. Can't do a thing about it." I said, "Can you do something if you ever got to be President?" "We got rid of Brennen, didn't we?" He smiled. [Inaudible] . . . get rid of the son-of-a-bitch one way or another. Well, then he said, "We got rid of Brennen, didn't we?" So this guy who succeeded Brennen was worse than Brennen. He's right now sitting on the bench. And all Brennen . . . [Inaudible] . . . give me his name. Now, he wasn't involved with these two guys who were speaking for him.

HACKMAN: Whatever happened to these papers that you put together on the thing?

CORBIN: Oh, well, Bob had that copy. And I'd go to Bob and ask him for it. "Later. Tomorrow. Later. Later." I said, "Bob, you're never going to give me those papers, are you?" "Yes, I will. Later." I said, "When?" "Corbin, I'm busy right now." "You ain't never going to give them. . . ." "I said I'd give them to you later." "You promise?" "I promise. Later I'll give them to you. Some day you'll have them, Paul. Now, please, Paul. . . ." He had a look of agony in his face. Couldn't do anything. "Give them to you later." Bob Kennedy became assassinated. In between that time, another party, this one person who I was working with, whose name I will not divulge--I'm pledged to secrecy to the guy. "Say, Bob, Paul said you got those notes. Can I have them?" "Oh, I'll find them one of these days and I'll give them to you. I'll give them to Paul and he can give them to you. But I'm busy right now." We get on the telephone and said, "He ain't never going to give them to us. He can't do a thing about it. You're going to print the story in the paper and the first thing, bang, it will make him look like a shithead because he had them from the 20th. It's no good. Forget about it." "Got to get a hold of it. Reconstruct your notes." So I go through rough copies,

look at them, look at them, raw material, but not the affidavits. Ain't got them. All the rest is raw material. Well, Bob Kennedy's assassinated, and John Seigenthaler has access to his papers. You knew that, didn't you?

HACKMAN: Yes.

CORBIN: "Well John. . . ." "Looked through every one of those papers, Corbin. I know what you're after, and they're not there." I says, "Okay. There's two other alternatives. Either he destroyed them--which I do not believe because he would never destroy them--or Angie Novella got them. And Angie got them and she flushed them down the toilet." And I said, "Look again." John says, "It's the first thing I looked for, Corbin. I couldn't find them."

HACKMAN: When did John look for those? How soon after the assassination?

CORBIN: As soon as he got access to them.

HACKMAN: I've forgotten that. . . . What about the raw materials? Have you still got those?

CORBIN: No.

BEGIN SIDE I TAPE II

CORBIN: Does anybody ever discuss his role with the reformers?

HACKMAN: In New York?

CORBIN: Yes. His feelings toward them and his role.

HACKMAN: His what?

CORBIN: His feelings and his attitude toward reformers.

HACKMAN: Well, yes, we've asked a lot of people about it, and you sort of get mixed . . .

C
CORBIN: Mixed . . .

HACKMAN: Yes, as you know, depending on who you're talking to. I mean, if you're talking to [Allard K.] Al Lowenstein you're going to get a different story than if you're talking to you or O'Donnell or Seigenthaler or William Walton or whoever.

CORBIN: What is Bill Walton doing these days?

HACKMAN: I think he's spending the summer, wherever he goes for the summer, I don't know. We did one interview with him and then he took off for the summer somewhere.

CORBIN: What does he do for a living now? [Interruption]

HACKMAN: You had something about the reformers then?

CORBIN: No, I was just curious.

HACKMAN: What about his opinion of vanden Heuvel?

CORBIN: Well, Bob used to have one answer every time I'd raise hell about [William J.] vanden Heuvel: "There's one thing I can say about vanden Heuvel which I can't say about you, Corbin, he comes free." "I'm not so sure if it's worth it." "A lot of people say you ain't worth a goddamn when I'm paying you. Corbin, vanden Heuvel comes free. Don't cuss vanden Heuvel. Whoever I send in New York is going to become a target and everyone will be critical of him." "Yes, Bob. But vanden Heuvel doesn't know politics. He's a nice, likeable guy-- I really like him. I'm extremely fond of Bill vanden Heuvel, but he knows nothing about politics." "Yeah, maybe I want it that way. I had you around me and look at the trouble I was in all the time." That would be his answer. But his standard answer is, "Bill vanden Heuvel comes free."

HACKMAN: During the Kennedy Administration where does [Geráld J.] Bruno fit in over there?

CORBIN: Bruno did not work in the Democratic National Committee. Towards the end, getting ready for '64--they tried to put Bruno in the Democratic National Committee since 1960. They sent memos to Bailey. Bob would never approve it. He finally did!

HACKMAN: Why is that?

CORBIN: Well, I really never, never discussed Bruno with Bob. When Bob Kennedy became Senator, Walter Sheridan became his man up in Syracuse. And Sheridan made the mistake of quitting. I had a fellow called Jim Byrne as U.S. marshall, who is now in the Virgin Islands, all picked to be his successor. But Steve Smith has always liked Jerry Bruno and Steve Smith recommended Jerry Bruno to Bob. And Bob put him in. And he worked hard for Bob Kennedy. Jerry Bruno was not my cup of tea because Jerry Bruno was involved in one of those deals--not with GSA, but an oil deal. He was a witness to the deal. So Jerry Bruno is not my cup of tea.

HACKMAN: What about Louis Martin?

CORBIN: Louis Martin came through Sarge Shriver out of Chicago. Louis Martin got along well with everybody and was liked by the Negroes and by the whites. He was very loyal to the Kennedys. And when Jack Kennedy was assassinated, he stayed throughout the Johnson Administration. But always, when called upon to do something for the Kennedys, would do it.

I like Louis Martin. There's one little tidbit about Louis Martin that some people know about. I think it's never been told to you. But try to find out by echoing around as to why he was never brought into the White House. That's a nice question. I like Louis Martin though, I really do.

HACKMAN: I'd like for you to talk about getting sort of organized in '63 for what would have been the '64 Kennedy campaign for President.

CORBIN: Oh, you have a list of that. This is very interesting.

HACKMAN: I don't know whether this--this is a list sort of . . . [List shown to Paul Corbin:]

Raskin: Washington
Oregon
Nevada
Idaho
Montana
Indiana

Roncalio: Wyoming
Utah
Arizona
New Mexico

Brawley: California
Florida
North Carolina
Arkansas
Kentucky

Bruno: North Dakota
South Dakota
Nebraska
Kansas
Iowa

Smith: New York
Pennsylvania
Ohio
Michigan

Lucey: Wisconsin

Meriwether: Alabama

Dolan: Colorado

Seigenthaler: Tennessee

Troutman: Georgia
South Carolina

E.M. Kennedy: Massachusetts

J. Symington: Missouri

Maguire: Illinois
New Jersey

Bailey: Connecticut

Dunfey: Maine
New Hampshire
Vermont
Rhode Island

CORBIN: 1964 would have been the most enjoyable campaign of my life. Dick Maguire is calling meetings about twice a week which Bernie Boutin was chairing. That list is full of bullshit right here, about as phoney as a three-dollar bill. I'll give you the real list when you come to my house.

HACKMAN: Okay.

CORBIN: Now, this was the Mafia assignments, the Irish Mafia. I came to Bob one day, I said, "Bob, these boys called me in to one meeting and they asked me what I thought about certain states. I haven't been invited, but I've got a pigeon there. The pigeon sits at these meetings, and he's got a list. They'd appointed the coordinators in charge of these states." I said, "You wouldn't believe it." "Get me a copy." "Got it right here." "They must be out of their minds. I'll take care of that right now. Dick, who in the hell authorized you?" I'm giving you a conservative description of Bob's discussion with Maguire: "Who in the hell authorized you to pick coordinators? I'm going to pick them and Jack is going to pick them. We're going to pick the coordinators. Now, get that, Dick Maguire, or your ass is going to be out of there. Now, Dick, I want you to write me a letter of apology. I will select the coordinators, every single one of them. And Steve Smith will give you my list. Now, you got that, Dick? Repeat that to me three times." Of course, you've heard the story that Maguire cried. Steve came in, "Okay, Corbin, let's draw up the list." So we kicked it around for a week, and we drew up the list, took it to Bob, Bob okayed it, "Give that to Maguire." I've got the list-- saving it for posterity. And I can tell you right now this is all bullshit--all b.s., all b.s., Brawley, all b.s., Bruno--jeez, they shanghaied him up to nothing; there ain't six, there ain't ten votes in all these things. Smith, it's all bullshit, bullshit, bullshit, bullshit, all b.s. Oh, they'd love to have that copy I have. Do you know who has Ohio? You can check that, my friend. It can be checked out. On our list, do you know who had Ohio?

HACKMAN: No.

CORBIN: Well, it was already announced in the paper. We beat them to the punch. Helen Keyes and [Patrick J.] Pat Lucey.

HACKMAN: Yes, as a matter of fact, they took a trip to Ohio.

CORBIN: They got it. They're on the list. Now, they have here Pat [Lucey] staying home right here in Madison. They're full of shit. That's their dream ticket. I've got the only original list. Maybe Steve has his, maybe Bob has one in the Archives, but I kept mine.

HACKMAN: It was overruled in effect by him?

CORBIN: Let me see about being overruled. No list was even recognized. Bob told Dick Maguire, "I'll prepare it. Don't you think my brother and I have something to say about who it's going to be?"

HACKMAN: That's what I've heard.

CORBIN: There was a witness to the conversation.
[Interruption]

HACKMAN: Barbara Coleman?

CORBIN: Barbara Coleman was very loyal to the Kennedys, but would never be a pigeon even for the Kennedys.

HACKMAN: Barbara Coleman, yes, okay.

CORBIN: Terrific gal, very capable, very loyal, came from Green Bay, Wisconsin. Her father was Jewish and her mother was Irish, and she moved to Brooklyn--a confused, mixed-up girl. But a terrific gal, terrific gal. What's she doing now? Working for Congressional Quarterly? [Interruption]

HACKMAN: Yes.

CORBIN: I've got papers that would fill this room up--all notations and handwriting by Bob, signed instructions.

HACKMAN: In terms of getting papers, what did you take with you when you left the Democratic National Committee?

CORBIN: I moved out with a truck on Sunday morning and walked in there and cleaned out every goddamn piece of paper I had, and tried to grab everything else I could.

HACKMAN: Anybody ever come after you on that?

CORBIN: Took all the Kennedy files that I could, all the cards, everything. In fact, I took them twenty-four hours after Jack Kennedy was dead. He wasn't even buried. He wasn't even buried and I was up there already taking them. [Interruption]

One day I'm in West Virginia and a reporter by the name of Charles Bartlett blows into town. He couldn't get a hotel room. So I had twin beds and he shared it with me. He said, "Paul, why don't you like Kenny O'Donnell?" I said, "The only thing that makes me stop for a while and wonder what the hell am I doing working for Jack Kennedy, is the presence of Kenny O'Donnell. He reminds me of Heinrich Himmler, [Joseph P.] Goebbels, [Hermann W.] Goering all rolled in one--a real Gestapo agent. Charlie says, "You've got a good sense of smell, Corbin."

Now, when we caught Maguire with his pants down on one deal, Charlie Bartlett went to Jack Kennedy to get him canned. Kenny O'Donnell called up Charlie Bartlett, told him Maguire was an honest, lovable man who gave up a fortune in law practice in Boston to make the supreme sacrifice for his President. The truth of the matter is Dick Maguire didn't have a pair of pants without his ass sticking out in Boston. Kenny came up with that line. "He would resign." Well, how do you analyze that? Well, it sounds as if he's the king of America and he's turning the crown in. Now, if I was Jack Kennedy and a guy threatened to resign, I'd kick his butt out that goddamn gate so far.

Now, I also have stories where I once talked to a Secret Service agent in Hyannis Port one weekend--he got stiff and talked to me about what Kenny said. I reported it to Bob Kennedy and Bob Kennedy told Jack. The next day they shanghaied that Secret Service man somewhere in Alaska somewhere instead of Washington. But Kenny got drunk, got drunk in Lake Como, Italy, shot his mouth off about it. A Secret Service man told me to talk to Bob. I told him, Bob. This was one case where Bob told Jack. They chopped off a Secret Service man instead of Kenny.

But as far as Kenny O'Donnell, he was a greatest force of evil, outright lied to the President, lied to Bob. But Kenny thought what he was doing was good for the President. And that's the strange contradiction about Kenny. He actually thought what he was doing was good for the President--has no sense of history, has no idealism, a typical Boston politician: you scratch my back, and I scratch yours--only tougher. Sometimes you'd scratch his back and he wouldn't scratch yours. But he thought he was serving the President well. But he was a force of evil. When I see pictures of him sitting and discussing Cuba, I shudder that this man is running for Governor [of Massachusetts]. He's the last man in the world I would vote for. Have you ever talked to Charlie Bartlett?

HACKMAN: No, I haven't.

CORBIN: What does he say about Kenny O'Donnell?
It would be interesting to read.

HACKMAN: Why do you say you'd be frightened or why do you say Cuba frightened you? Now, why on something like that, which is foreign policy?

CORBIN: Well, I just can't visualize Kenny O'Donnell making decisions on foreign policy. I know a man shouldn't judge a book by it's covers, but did you ever look into his eyes? Like a rattlesnake, a rattlesnake. They feared him, they feared him around there. Kenny had a system of building a machine by payoffs; he kept his boys by giving them goodies. There was no loyalty or idealistic rapport with his boys. It was good--to parties, free airplane rides, promotions. He appealed to their basic greed. You see, you don't get a man to produce for his country if you're going to his greed. You get the best of the man when you get to his idealism, when he wants to produce for his country.

HACKMAN: Now, when you say "his boys" you mean--I guess that includes Maguire and Roche, or who do you mean?

CORBIN: Most of the positions of government, like Ivan Nestigen, Bernie Boutin, [Eugene P.] Gene Foley, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people in the Defense Department, Ronald Linton for one, Gene Trezak for another, who is now completely sold out to the Republican administration--all catered to greed, lust for power. Sure, I could be accused of power because I was close to Bob, but I never got anything for myself.

HACKMAN: Where is [Timothy J.] Reardon in all this stuff? Anywhere?

CORBIN: Reardon is a good decent guy, scared of his shadow, didn't want to step on anybody's toes, great feeling of insecurity, but a decent guy. No power whatsoever.

HACKMAN: What about [Ralph A.] Dungan and [Frederick G.] Dutton?

CORBIN: Fred Dutton and Ralph Dungan. Ralph Dungan was also a nice Irish fellow, part of the Mafia. He had been around Washington for quite some time. And as far as I was concerned, he was a member of the bureaucracy, typical Washington bureaucracy. He instituted this program that Dan Fenn had and picked the wrong guys, not a bad fellow, wasn't a hate guy. I liked Ralph Dungan. It was way over his head, the job he had. He'd make a good district manager for the A&P grocery chain as far as I'm concerned, Ralph Dungan. Now, who's the other fellow you want to know about?

HACKMAN: Dutton.

CORBIN: Fred Dutton. Fred Dutton was a mild-mannered gunman; he was a gun for hire. He knows politics. The reason I say that--I'll give you my reason for that. I've always liked Fred Dutton. Fred Dutton did more for the job that I was doing for Bob when he was in the State Department than anybody else. He hired idealistic girls who wanted to work in the embassies, USIA [United States Information Agency], and Bob liked him. He was a mild-mannered fellow. The reason I say this--and I shouldn't be so quick in my judgment--it was that year that I was in Acapulco, that was the year right after the election that [Edmund G.] Brown got beaten. What year was that?

HACKMAN: '66.

CORBIN: All right. I was involved in--I better not go into that. Well, anyway, this fellow, this chap was a very close personal friend of Governor Brown. We were talking about the Kennedy people sitting around a pool at the Acapulco Towers. The fellow asked me what I thought about Fred Dutton. I said I liked him very much, he was a great guy and was loyal to the Kennedys.

This fellow said he worked for Brown, and Brown didn't know until after the campaign he paid him about a hundred thousand bucks. I said, "It's hard to believe." The guy said, "Yes, and Brown was shocked when he found out."

HACKMAN: That he paid Dutton?

CORBIN: That's right.

HACKMAN: As a salary, you mean, or as a whatever.

CORBIN: Dutton never did nothing in his life without getting paid. And he compared with a fellow named Bradley who also worked for Brown.

HACKMAN: Right. Don Bradley.

CORBIN: Don Bradley who I know. And both got paid. Now, Fred Dutton's running the Bob Kennedy memorial. Now, Bob liked Fred Dutton, and I'll tell you what happened to Bob after the Senate race. Bob wanted to change his image. He didn't want to be the ruthless political boss. He surrounded himself with guys like Dolan, Fred Dutton, people who were not the abrasive type like myself or others. He no longer was trying to play the role of the tough political boss, the nut cutter. And I used to have arguments with Bob about that. I said, "If you ever needed these guys, you need them now, Bob, because when you were running Jack's campaign you were the nut cutter. You had a million guys liking you, around you. Now, as the candidate, you cannot play that role. You're too much involved in speeches and schedules. You haven't got time to go into the gut fighting. You've got yourself a bunch of creampuffs around you. If you ever needed tough guys, ruthless guys, you need them now. You're going for the Presidency. You're not going to win it by mild-mannered guys like Tom Johnston or guys like Fred Dutton."

You need a bunch of sons-of-bitches around here who will make the deals and cut these bastards' hearts out, these bosses. You gut them and belt them. But you're trying to change your image. It's going to be costly and expensive to you." But he had changed his image. He no longer wanted to have the image of the ruthless, driving--which was fine. But he should have strengthened his machine by having tougher guys. Instead, he had mild-mannered guys like Fred Dutton, who couldn't elect a sheriff as far as I'm concerned. That's my personal opinion; it might be a minority opinion. Fred Dutton's got a hang-up. He's got, you know. . . . A nice fellow, I can't complain because when I was sitting in the Committee any time I called Fred Dutton, he'd go, right through, any job we wanted. He was very good. He didn't give a shit about the Irish Mafia. So I'm just saying--you're asking me a candid opinion--he's not tough enough.

HACKMAN: Okay. Let me ask you . . .

CORBIN: You disagree with me, don't you?

HACKMAN: I've never seen him in a political campaign. [Interruption] What was Robert Kennedy's opinion of [William R.] Bill Haddad, who a lot of people say is a talker and not a doer?

CORBIN: Bill Haddad. I don't believe that Bob Kennedy thought enough about Bill Haddad to engage in conversation with me about him. He would not waste two minutes of his precious time to discuss Bill Haddad. Neither was Bill Haddad amusing enough for him to talk about this man in a leisure moment. There was other more interesting people to talk about than Bill Haddad. That's Bob's opinion of Bill Haddad. Any other questions?

HACKMAN: Yes. What about the accelerated public works legislation and the money that became available through that? How did that work and how did the Democratic National Committee get involved?

CORBIN: All I know is that I had the authority to say "yes" and "no" in New York. A fellow named Jim Cochran, who worked for Maguire, had passed it out, until they started playing around New York and using it as a weapon to help the old dying remnants of the DeSapio-Prendergast machine, until I went to Bob and showed him what the hell was going on. Steve went to Jim Cochran and said, "Well, any time Corbin tells you, you do something." And I'll say one thing about Cochran, he did it.

HACKMAN: But did he continue to have control in the way he wanted in states other than New York, or do you know?

CORBIN: All I can say is, any time I wanted something to go to a certain state at a certain time, it went--which is very rare. The only time I would enter into a project is when a known Kennedy supporter, going back into the sixties or prior to the sixties, would come to me as a Kennedy guy and talk to me about it. I'd pick up the phone and I'd call Bob. I'd say, "So and so is up here. He's having a little trouble. Should I help him out?" He said, "Yeah," and then I'd go by with him--never on my own would I go.

HACKMAN: Now, you've gone through a lot of things, different kinds of situations, where you've said, "Well, I'd pick up the phone and I'd call up Bob." How much time does he have? Does he ever say, you know, "Gee, I just don't have time. This isn't important enough for me to talk about?"

CORBIN: Bob never said that to me, never. I've talked to him--as a matter of fact, there is an article in Esquire magazine. I don't know if you ever read it. This guy attended a birthday party of Bob's which must have been '62 maybe. Well, he got a gift, a red telephone, and on it was "Hot Line: Corbin to Bob." This reporter wrote that one of the gifts was a hot line which sat on Bob's desk, a telephone. I would talk to Bob, say, an average per day, oh, I would say sometimes three times a day, sometimes twenty times a day by telephone and see him just about every day. Now, when I say he talked to me, it wasn't to me personally, it was the work that I was involved in that he talked to me about. He wouldn't just start talking about the weather; it was mostly politics. Sometimes I would talk to him six, seven times an hour, get back, get back. I talked to him at night, on weekends. It was a continual--every day, every day. Rarely would a day go by. I can't recall the day that Bob was in town that I didn't talk to him at least once or twice.

HACKMAN: There would have been very few matters though that you would have dealt with him on paper? Most of it would have been phone or personal?

CORBIN: The only paper--and never anything from me to him--was from him to me. And I will explain to you what I meant by that. He would not say, "Dear Paul: Do this." We'd talk to each other twenty times a day. A letter would arrive, somebody. He'd say, "Dear Paul: Take care of this. Dear Paul: Look into this and let me know." Or he would say, on a lot of letters he'd write "For Paul," "To Paul Corbin," "For Paul," stacks about that high, four or five, six hundred of those letters, "For Paul," "To Paul," "Paul do this," "No, Paul," "Yes, Paul," "Check into this Paul," "What's this all about, Paul?" I'd get those in a steady stream every day.

I'll never forget--you read about the Chappaquiddick case. One of the girls involved was Esther Newberg. I went to the Bob Kennedy dedication of Memorial Stadium in Washington. "Hi, Mr. Corbin." I said, "Your face is familiar." "My name is Esther Newberg." "Oh, yes, I know you. Your mother is from Connecticut. You were a boiler-room girl, weren't you?" "That's right." "You don't know your ass about politics." "What are you talking about, Mr. Corbin?" "I set a trap and you bit." "What are you talking about, Mr. Corbin?" "Bob Kennedy was announcing for President and Mr. [Abraham A.] Ribicoff was playing cute. So I called the Connecticut desk and you answered. I said, 'Young lady, I want you to get a memo to Dave [Hackett] to give to Steve Smith, and I recommend that we should run somebody against Mr. Ribicoff for the Senate. Ribicoff is either playing cute or his ass belongs to Johnson. Let's throw a guy in against him. Shake the son-of-a-bitch up. He might even beat the bastard. Let's find a good Catholic to run against him.' Do you know why I said that, Miss Newberg? Because you were a spy for John Bailey. You called John Bailey and within twenty-four hours Senator Ribicoff came out for Bob Kennedy." "I know your secret, too." "What secret do you know?" "You don't even remember, do you, Mr. Corbin?" I said, "No." "'61, your secretary went on vacation for two weeks. Everybody was afraid of you. You walked into the summer typewriter pool. 'Who wants to be my secretary for two weeks. I'll take you.' I was your secretary." "That's right. I'll be a son-of-a-bitch. And you're Bailey's spy." "That's right. I know your secret." "What was my secret?" "Every morning at 9:30 like a clock a voice would come over the phone, 'Can I speak to Paul Corbin?' One day I made a mistake and asked who was calling. It was Bob Kennedy." I said, "That's right, but keep your goddamn mouth shut, Esther." "I want you to know something, Mr. Corbin. I wasn't a spy for Bailey when I worked for Bob Kennedy." "You'll always be a spy, you're part of that machine." That's Esther Newberg. She worked for me. She said, "I know your secret. Every morning at 9:30, 'Is Paul there?'"

HACKMAN: Nobody else then knew that he . . .

CORBIN: Oh, yes, Brawley, Bailey. Bailey, he got his orders from me every morning. He used to walk in and get them.

HACKMAN: Yes. So why is it a secret then? Why was it a secret? I mean, why would she say it was a secret? How did she mean that? I don't understand it.

CORBIN: I don't know. I don't know. Well, they knew we were close, but not to the point where the Attorney General calls me every morning. There's a difference from me calling him. There's a difference from me going down to him as to him calling me every morning, isn't it?

HACKMAN: Yes.

CORBIN: I didn't want anybody to know that he was actually calling me. I didn't mind if it was said, "Oh, Corbin's brownnosing." There's all kinds of interpretations which can be interpreted and passed off. But him calling me, I don't want that to be known. Do you agree?

HACKMAN: Yes.

CORBIN: All right. She said, "I know your secret, Mr. Corbin. Every morning like a clock, the moment I pick up the phone I recognize that voice, 'Paul there?'" One day I made a mistake and I said, "Who is it?" What did he say?" "The Attorney General." But I set a trap for her about Ribicoff.

HACKMAN: How much did you get involved in fund-raising during the administration?

CORBIN: Never raised a nickel. The first thing Bob Kennedy told me when I got up there, "Corbin, first son-of-a-bitch that offers you a dollar, right to [Matthew H.] McCloskey. Take him into Maguire. Don't you ever take a dime. The first son-of-a-bitch that offers you a dime, look out, Corbin, he ain't your buddy." Never took a dime. The moment a guy came in, McCloskey, sent him upstairs to talk to McCloskey. But I never took a nickel, never got involved. No sir. Bob said, "Never take a dime. Into the treasury. They talk about money, that's not your baliwick, zipp, the treasurer's office."

HACKMAN: What did they think of McCloskey? What did Robert Kennedy think of McCloskey.

CORBIN: He liked McCloskey. Let me tell you about McCloskey. McCloskey fired me one day, or he said he wouldn't pay my expenses. Bailey brought me to McCloskey. McCloskey was going to be the official hatchetman. This was very botched. He said, "We're sending you over to the space agency." "Oh?" "Good job, sixteen thousand five hundred dollars a year and you do nothing but sit on your butt." "Fine. Have you talked to the man?" "What man?" "The man." "What man are you talking about?" I said, "Bob Kennedy. You'd better call him." "Who the hell are you to say Bob Kennedy's the man?" I said, "Ah, Mr. McCloskey, I suggest you talk to the man." "You're fired!" "You won't make it stick, Mr. McCloskey. You can't make it stick. Listen, I would suggest. . . . It's awful embarrassing for me to sit in this position and argue with you. We're all on the same team." "Don't give me this team shit you whippersnapper." Off they go in his fedora. Ask John about it. Zoom, in the black Cadillac that Bailey got from the Democratic National Committee, down to the White House to see Jack Kennedy. "Corbin?"

Who put him up at the Committee? Ah, imagine, what a dreadful thing, I don't blame you, Mr. McCloskey. Get his ass out of there. But talk to Bob first." The President called Bob, "The twins coming down to see you, Bailey and McCloskey about Corbin." They come to see Bob. He says, "God, it's terrible. Corbin up at the Committee? Disaster! I suppose Jack put him there." "Well, I know. I don't trust him, can't stand that son-of-a-bitch Corbin. Jack likes him." "Jack said you do." In the meantime Bailey's ready to kick him, McCloskey. "What's the matter?" "Don't you see what they're doing to us?" They come back, "Hey Corbin! Come in my office." "Corbin, you're wired" "Yes" "Please, I've got a problem. They promised me the ambassadorship to Ireland and Kenny is stalling me." Kenny was stalling him. He's selling it to some guy. "Please help me." "Ah, forget about this other little thing. That was a little game that Bailey and I were playing. Why, we like you. Will you talk to Bob? I've got to have that ambassadorship." All in the three hours, the flip. I rung up Bob, "Bob, you'll die laughing." He said, "What do you think?" I said, "I'm for giving it to the old guy, shit!" "I like him, Corbin. They're trying to sink him." I said, "Who? Kenny?" They're trying to sink McCloskey by selling the fucking deal. You know, some Irish guy gives a hundred thousand. He figures, I mean, he's got all he can out of McCloskey. "So what do I do?" "Call back and tell him it's his." I go back, "McCloskey, it's yours." "Are you sure?" "It's yours." Of course, his goddamn nomination was held up, you know. Every day he would come in and say, "Corbin." I said, "Stop worrying, will you, McCloskey! It's yours." But I laughed. The guy fired me in the morning and came back, he said, "You're wired!" I said, "That's right." Son-of-a-bitch! I like the old man--crooked as a corkscrew. Oh, what a crook. He was a great buddy of [Robert G.] Bobby Baker.

HACKMAN: Next question.

CORBIN: Oh, Bobby Baker?

HACKMAN: Yes. Did you talk to him about it before the assassination?

CORBIN: Talk to who?

HACKMAN: To Robert Kennedy about it before John Kennedy's assassination.

CORBIN: The Bobby Baker case?

HACKMAN: Yes.

CORBIN: I can recall one time mentioning that I heard that they were after Bobby Baker. He said to me, "What do you think of Bobby Baker?" I said, "Bob, I've only spoken to him once in my life. I was on the tenth floor of the Biltmore Hotel at the Convention. I had a room on the same floor which the Johnson people had. When Johnson got beat for the Presidency, Bobby Baker was walking down from one elevator as I walked towards his room which is right across mine. He was crying." I said, "He must have a great sense of loyalty toward LBJ to shed tears. The guy can't be all bad." Bob said, "That's right." That's the only conversation I ever had with Bob Kennedy about Bobby Baker and the only time I ever really spoke about Baker.

HACKMAN: When you said, when you told Robert Kennedy, "I heard 'they' are after" who did you mean by 'they'? What had you heard at that point?

CORBIN: What about "they"?

HACKMAN: Yes, who was "they"?

CORBIN: We didn't . . . [Interruption]

HACKMAN: What about the Vice-Presidency in '64? You talked a little bit about New Hampshire, but what on then after that? Can you remember that conversation up to the time Johnson tells him he's not going to be Vice President? Did he ever talk about how he would get along with Johnson as Vice President if he was named, you know, how it might work?

CORBIN: I would like to say this to you, and I'm going to close the subject about New Hampshire and the Vice-Presidency. When Jack Kennedy was assassinated, Bob Kennedy just didn't accept, say to himself, "Well, Jack is dead. My next step is this." Bob Kennedy was a different man when his brother was shot. He had emotional problems. He felt that they were robbed--I felt that way. Really--I'm going to say this because it won't be read for fifty years or so--we weren't ourselves, our judgment was not the best. We just were in a state of shock for a great length of period. As far as I'm concerned, Bob Kennedy never got out of a state of shock, never got out of it. That's just my opinion, judging as I knew the man. Bob Kennedy was really--something was taken away, and something was added to the man. He was never the same, never the same. I can recall the 1964--when he was elected, we had a celebration at Delmonico's Hotel and from there we went to LaPavillon. I went, I believe Charlie Bartlett, and we went to LaPavillon for ourselves. Bob was there and Eunice [Kennedy Shriver], Jean, Pat [Kennedy Lawford], [K. LeMoyné] Lem Billings and Arthur Schlesinger, and I believe maybe Bill vanden Heuvel, I'm not sure, and Bob was there. I walked in and I bumped into Bob and I looked at his face. He said, "Do you care for a glass of champagne, Paul?" I said, "No, I was really looking for a vanilla ice cream soda, a dish of ice cream, and I think I'm going to bed."

He said, "Let's walk outside." We go on outside and he did this, he said, "Thanks." I said, "You must be goofy thanking me. I'm not a ward heeler that you're thanking. I'm not Bill Luddy." He says, "Snap out of it." He says, "What are we doing in New York politics? What are you going to do in New York?" I said, "I don't know." Bob says, "Are you thinking the same thing I'm thinking?" "Yes." "It should have been Jack's night." Tears came out of his eyes. "We should be celebrating for Jack and everybody's hollering LBJ. What am I doing in New York? as a Senator?" "Good idea, wasn't it?" "I don't know." I said, "Where are you going?" "I've got to shag myself over to some Fulton fish market. I promised somebody I'd be there the next morning." "You've got to keep that new image, Bob." He said, "I want to talk to you when we get back to Washington. I'll talk to you again. See you later." But he asked me what was he doing in New York--"What are you and I doing in New York" were his exact words, and "This should have been Jack's. It should have been Jack's night and here we are celebrating LBJ." He was in a daze, a complete daze.

I can recall something at Delmonico's which is very interesting. Now, people didn't know me. Do you know Bernie Ruggieri?

HACKMAN: I'm sorry.

CORBIN: Did you ever hear of a man called Bernie Ruggieri?

HACKMAN: I don't know. No, not that I know of, I don't know.

CORBIN: Well, people didn't know me. He went into Delmonico's and he was using certain Italians in the campaign of '64, New York leaders, typical. And every time you'd pick up the paper, this guy was an aide, this guy was a bosom pal and so on. Those who were, knew that they were just tools, instruments to use in the campaign. But the campaign is like a carnival when the show was over--nothing left but sawdust. Here we are sitting at Delmonico's. I had my wife with me that

time and I had some friends who I'd brought in . . .
[Inaudible] And I knew that I had my table assignment
written so I figured it would be next to Bob's. It
wouldn't be far so we could lean over and whisper. And
I look over and see three of these henchmen, New York
guys in tuxedos sitting at Bob's table. One of them
was escorting Maria Cooper, Gary Cooper's daughter, who
I'd been out one night with and knew her name. I went up
to the guy. "Sit down, Corbin." I says, "No. This is the
Senator's table." "What the hell. He ain't going to do
anything to you." "No," I said, "I'll sit over here."
And they're drinking champagne. The fellow says, "He's
very close to the Attorney General. Bosom pals. I read
it in the paper." I said, "I'll tell you what I'll do."
[Inaudible] . . . breakfast and he whispers about New
York, "After we get through, he doesn't last . . ."
[Inaudible] . . . see a different Bob . . . [Inaudible]
Bob walks in, they're cheering Bob. I can see his face.
He's thinking about Jack, not about this operation. "Get
rid of that--off my table." This guy's sitting there in
his table, see. That's Bob. In spite of all his tears, he
spots his table, "Get rid of that--off my table." "Bernie,
out." "Corbin, what are you talking . . ." "Out, Bernie."
I was in hiding in New York--do you understand--during the
campaign. He was with Bob every day. I said, "Move!"
What do you think the guy did? He moved. Now, if the
situation had been reversed, I'd have said, "Fuck you,
Corbin"--a difference in men. He'd still be bounced. Maybe
the judgment was right, probably was because he would have
been bounced. Maybe his judgment was right. "Move,
Bernie." You know, he's all shaking hands and smiling,
"Get rid of that--off my table, Corbin." He had this guy
up to here, you know. I laughed to do that one. That's
Bob. So how do you describe the guy? See, he's basically,
in spite of everything, a political animal too. "Get rid
of that. . . ." That's exactly what he said, "Get rid
of that. . . ." Now, if you told that to the Times they'd
say he's anti-Italian. But he wasn't. They would say
that.