

John F. English Oral History Interview – RFK#2, 11/25/1969
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English, New York political figure; political aide to Robert F. Kennedy, discusses RFK's 1964 senatorial campaign, the New York leadership fight in 1965, and the 1966 governor's race, among other issues.

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John F. English – RFK #2

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Second Oral History Interview

with

JOHN F. ENGLISH

November 25, 1969
New York, New York

By Roberta W. Greene

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

GREENE: ...Nassau [County] and didn't do a great deal in '64 outside of there once the campaign got started. How much help did you get from the statewide Kennedy organization in terms of both people and money?

ENGLISH: Well, we got people. People were sent out to assist. Tom Johnston [Thomas M.C. Johnston] came out quite often, and they sent up a girl from Washington who came in just to oversee a particular part of the operation, and a few other people, I think, were sent out. We had material which was delivered to us. We got money. So I think we had, in terms of other campaigns, significant help.

GREENE: Was all of the money that was raised in Nassau used in Nassau? I know sometimes they take money from an area to use it elsewhere.

ENGLISH: Ordinarily they do; everybody does that. But, no, Kennedy's [Robert F. Kennedy] didn't do that. It was used all in there. What we raised in Nassau, we used in Nassau.

GREENE: And they were sending in additional funds?

ENGLISH: Yes. Now, that doesn't mean that there were some fund raisers where there were some wealthy people from Nassau who went to a

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cocktail party or something for him, but I don't count that.

GREENE: Who was controlling the spending in Nassau?

ENGLISH: I was.

GREENE: You were. Did you feel that the Kennedy wealth was a big advantage in this election? It was, of course used by the other side to....

ENGLISH: It's always helpful. I know that another candidate certainly would not have been as well financed. And Keating [Kenneth B. Keating] was a real tough candidate to hope to beat, so I think the finances were an important part of it.

GREENE: Did you have any objection to the kind of spending, their style of spending, you might say?

ENGLISH: No, I thought the money was rather well spent. I knew the media people – in fact, I had recommended them – and that's where most of the money went; it usually does. And I thought their stuff was pretty good.

GREENE: What about to the type of fund raising? Was that fairly well run?

ENGLISH: I don't even remember the fund raising. It was done rather artfully. I mean I just don't even remember how it was done.

GREENE: What about campaign techniques? Were there new things done in this campaign that you hadn't seen used in New York before?

ENGLISH: Well, of course, campaign techniques for a candidate for the United States Senate....Kennedy drew huge crowds which called for an entirely different kind of campaigning. It took a lot more advance work. The scheduling had to be tighter because it took so long to break through crowds. There was a difficulty trying to get in mature audiences from time to time because of the number of kids he was drawing. So it was certainly a much

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more exciting kind of thing when he appeared. You know, he used more media than any

statewide candidate we had before. There was a better hold, I guess, on material distribution, that kind of thing. We knew when we were going to get it, and there were some foul-ups, but I mean it was logistically pretty good.

GREENE: What about the people involved? How did you feel about, oh, vanden Heuvel [William J. vanden Heuvel], Nolan [John E. Nolan], Myers [Debs Myers], Douglas [John W. Douglas], people like that? Did you have any problems?

ENGLISH: No, I didn't have any problems. Of course, I knew them all for a long period of time and had worked with.... Well, for instance, John Nolan, I worked with him, when the Senator was deciding whether to run or not, on other things. No, I didn't have any problem.

GREENE: Can you recall any specific conversations about whether or not Robert Kennedy's campaign should be linked with Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] and Humphrey's [Hubert H. Humphrey]?

ENGLISH: Well, there were a lot of conversations about that, and there was a lot of turmoil about that when the Johnson-Humphrey thing tried to disengage itself from Kennedy at various periods of time. Then there was a split at the headquarters with Kennedy headquarters moving away from the Johnson-Humphrey headquarters, so it was rather difficult. It didn't concern me too much because at that stage I was out in Nassau County. At the beginning I was a little unhappy about it. I talked to Steve Smith [Stephen E. Smith] about that yesterday because the.... Prior to the time of the assassination of John Kennedy, I had agreed to be the campaign manager for New York State in '64. I had picked a speakers' bureau, and we picked an ad agency, and we had the whole thing all set up. And then after the.... We were really ready to operate and to run a coordinated campaign. It didn't turn out that way, but at that point I lost interest because I was too busy tending the store.

GREENE: What was Robert Kennedy's feeling about running in conjunction with Johnson and

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Humphrey? Did he prefer to keep it separate, especially in the beginning?

ENGLISH: Well, I think there were mixed.... I mean he knew that once Barry Goldwater, of course, was nominated that Johnson was going to win in a landslide, and it was very helpful to run a coordinated campaign because obviously the President was going to run stronger and it was getting into landslide proportions.

GREENE: Can you remember any joint appearances?

ENGLISH: Well, there were, but I mean my recollection just isn't that good.

GREENE: Did you ever get the feeling in this campaign that Robert Kennedy was in real trouble and was likely not to win?

ENGLISH: Well, I mean sure, I do remember them. Like the last Saturday of the election, we had Johnson and Kennedy together in my own county. We drove down Hempstead Turnpike with them and so forth. But that wasn't the only one; just that was the only joint appearance in my county.

GREENE: Did you get any feeling about how Robert Kennedy felt about doing this? Did he have any problems working with the President on it?

ENGLISH: Well, I think at that time there was sort of a feeling that it was to their mutual interest or it was a detent, I suppose, at that particular time. You know, it wasn't as strained as it was prior to that time or after that time.

GREENE: Did you get the feeling at any point in this campaign that he was in trouble, that he might likely not win?

ENGLISH: Oh, I think he was in trouble from the beginning. In the end, I mean, it was perceptible that he was coming on and that he had momentum; but it took a long time. I mean he was definitely not a winner for a long period of time. It seemed to me, he started out

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pretty high and then went down and went way down. He was not an experienced campaigner, and he wasn't very good on the stump in the beginning. And the carpetbagging thing came home to haunt him; and all his old enemies, the people in the reform movement and so forth, all ganged up on him and there were defections to Keating. And there was that curve down. Of course, once he did hit bottom, then he started to come back pretty strong – I suppose culminating with Keating running away from the debate, which was probably the point where you knew it was busted, that they had him intimidated.

GREENE: I've read that the low point was the first week in October. Is that the way you remember it?

ENGLISH: I guess that's about right, yes. And it was really low. And, of course, it was very low, for instance, from our... It was tough in the suburbs in my own county. There were Democrats who were against him, and when you have that kind of thing it was very difficult. The people didn't want him and were

very negative about him at that particular time. And then we got into that massive effort having Schlesinger [Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.] and Galbraith [John Kenneth Galbraith] and Yarmolinsky [Adam Yarmolinsky] and people like that coming out and go to the very liberal areas and indicate how well he had served in the administration.

GREENE: Well, you also said that you could feel the resistance wearing down to him right in your own area. Would you say that this was a major cause of it, this group of liberal people that came in?

ENGLISH: Yes. There was special material, of course, prepared just for those groups, yes. And there was a whole effort – we had a special effort made where we had a group of the most liberal people we could find in the county who just concentrated on their friends and the people that they knew in the liberal community. But a special effort was made toward those kind of people. But it did take a long time before that started to come around. We had a little special trouble because, you know, he took up his residence in Nassau County, and that caused us a few problems, too.

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GREENE: In what way?

ENGLISH: Well, for instance, he was supposed to be living in Glen Cove, and Ethel [Ethel Skakel Kennedy] had all these parties and so forth, and all these buses and everything would come charging through Glen Cove up into the estate area, and a helicopter was landing up there. We had all sorts of problems for a while.

GREENE: People felt it was too splashy, is that it?

ENGLISH: Well, they felt they were being invaded.

GREENE: Did you take a lot of the static from that personally?

ENGLISH: Well, it didn't really bother me. I don't live in Glen Cove.

GREENE: Was there anything in the issues that helped him? There was the General Aniline [and Film Corporation] thing and a number of other things.

ENGLISH: I think the General Aniline thing helped. You know, I think it was unfair, and it gave him a chance to be a little bit on the offensive. Up until that period of time he was soft-pedaling the thing and not trying to say anything nasty about Keating; he was a nice old man and had never done any wrong. You know, once he was attacked himself, that gave him an opportunity to do the Keating record and that kind of thing.

GREENE: What's your understanding of the way that debate fiasco developed? Do you know anything that hasn't been printed?

ENGLISH: No, I don't really think I do. I think there'd be better authorities on that than me.

GREENE: What about commitments in the course of the campaign? Were you aware of people extending themselves beyond perhaps what they should have in an effort to win support in commitments that were later not kept?

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ENGLISH: No. I'm not sure I understand that, Roberta. Commitments that he made?

GREENE: No, no. Not so much he, but people...

ENGLISH: On his staff.

GREENE: ...working for him.

ENGLISH: No, I don't know of any.

GREENE: I had heard that there were people promising all kinds of things to people, and, of course...

ENGLISH: I don't know how anybody in his right mind would... What kind of a commitment could you get out of a United States Senator? It'd be different if he were running for governor, President, or something. But I mean United States Senator – postmasters or something? I mean they would be kind of silly people, and he himself, if he had found out about that kind of activity, would have been very disturbed. No, I never....

GREENE: Is there anything else, maybe on election night, that you'd like to talk about on the Senate race?

ENGLISH: No, I don't even remember all that. I mean I stayed out in Nassau, I think, at the... We all stayed until the end anyway, until 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning.

GREENE: Well, then maybe we should go on to the Senate. You mentioned last time that you talked about the kinds of things you thought he ought to be doing in New York and the kinds of people he ought to be

associating with. Were you advising him mainly from a political standpoint on these things or also as a...

ENGLISH: This is after he is now a United States Senator?

GREENE: Right.

ENGLISH: Oh, yes. You know, I think I mentioned last time there were such questions as the bridge, you know, local issues in the state, and which

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labor leaders, that kind of thing.

GREENE: Can you remember some of the specifics, people you told him not to get associated with, who could be harmful to him?

ENGLISH: Well, like we had a lot of discussions from time to time about various political personalities. I'd never say, "Don't get associated," but, you know, "Be wary."

GREENE: Who were some of those people?

ENGLISH: Well, most of them aren't around anymore anyway. But I mean he had pretty much the same opinions. There were specific people like Paul Jennings of the IUE [International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers], and they hadn't met and so forth and I told the Senator that I think Paul would be a very good fellow to support because his brother and Jack – what is it. Carey [James Barron Carey], who had been the president of the IUE, had supported Jack Kennedy heavily, and when there was this contest between Jennings and Carey, of course, Kennedy stayed out of it and I supported Jennings. And I suggested they get together, and they became good friends after that.

GREENE: Any other people like that that you can remember?

ENGLISH: There were a lot of labor leaders. During the course of the campaign there were some, for instance, that he had been unfriendly with, like the Operating Engineers [International Union of Operating Engineers]. And we were able to put him together with some of the people he had prosecuted or been tough on.

GREENE: You mentioned specifically that you had talked to him about the Appalachian amendment and the Bedford-Stuyvesant project. At what point did you get into the discussion on Appalachia? Do you remember?

ENGLISH: Well, I remember traveling with him on that. Time-wise I don't even remember when that....It was very early though; it was one of the first things he did.

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GREENE: Were you talking about that specifically from a political standpoint?

ENGLISH: Yes, the reaction in the rest of the state, whether that was a good issue because Appalachia was....You know, he spent a lot of time on it, and there was a lot of criticism upstate in those counties in the beginning that he was insincere and he didn't know anything about New York and there was no poverty in New York and there wasn't an Appalachia and the whole bit.

GREENE: Was there any concern about running up against Rockefeller [Nelson A. Rockefeller], or did he kind of enjoy that?

ENGLISH: Oh, no. I don't think there was any problem. I think he rather enjoyed that and expected it.

GREENE: What do you know about how he finally works things out with Javits [Jacob K. Javits] so that they work together on a lot of legislation for New York?

ENGLISH: Well, I'm not going to be very good on that. I think that's really Joe Dolan's [Joseph F. Dolan] question, except I knew that in the beginning they were always playing press release against each other. You know, some defense contract would be let, and Kennedy would get it out, but the Javits' staff was so good, Aurelio [Richard Aurelio], that they used to find those things out. So finally they had to make an accommodation; they worked together. And then I think they felt that....You know, then I used to see, when we'd go out to the airport with the Senator, Javits would be out there, and they'd always go back to Washington together from the Butler Terminal. They would travel together a lot. You know, I think they found it to their mutual advantage not to be knocking each other around.

GREENE: Okay, then what about the Bedford-Stuyvesant project? Do you know about where the suggestion originated?

ENGLISH: No, I don't know where that suggestion originated. I remember talking to him once about that whole thing. He was heavily

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criticized. A lot of the black leaders and some of the white leaders –

particularly the black leaders – said, “Kennedy keeps coming over here, and he doesn’t clear it with us, and he doesn’t talk to the leaders,” and so forth. And I mentioned it to Kennedy that the black leaders over in Bedford-Stuyvesant were annoyed at him. And he said, “Well, I’m not going to be too concerned about that.” He said, “I’m seeing the people, and I’m not going to have a broker.” So I dropped that, persuading him that he should let the local leaders know. He wasn’t very great on that.

GREENE: Yes. I was wondering about that. Was that a complaint from a lot of places?

ENGLISH: Oh, they used to complain. Well, everybody complained, but I mean in Bedford – the black leaders in particular. All leaders complain all the time about that activity, but I was a little more concerned about it because they were black leaders, and he just made the point that he just didn’t want to have somebody else doing his bidding, that he would like to see things firsthand and he didn’t think he needed that kind of an entrée to the community, that he could be accepted on his own, and he’d look in on his own and not have anybody on as broker.

GREENE: Well, what kind of advice did you give him on the Bedford-Stuyvesant project once it got started?

ENGLISH: Well, nothing. You know, I’m not an expert on Bedford-Stuyvesant or on that kind of a program, but I thought if we talked about the repercussions of it, about who could be worked with over there, what kind of personnel, what kind of talent could be gotten....

GREENE: Were you fairly satisfied with what they finally worked out? Did you think they’d done it right?

ENGLISH: Well, you know, there were a lot of difficulties, and there was a lot of hustling and shaking on it and backtracking and changing the composition and so forth, but I think it’s a very difficult thing under the circumstances. I think if we look at it today, it’s in pretty good shape

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as compared to other similar projects.

GREENE: Did you find he was concerned with political considerations on this project?

ENGLISH: No, I don’t....No, not really. Not really.

GREENE: Who else do you know of that was giving him this type of advice, you know, on projects he might get into or people he should see?

ENGLISH: He talked to a lot of people. Every time you saw him there was always somebody going or somebody leaving. There was such a fantastic mix, and there were strange combinations from time to time. I don't ever remember – whenever he came into New York there was constantly seeing this fellow here and that fellow there, and one guy would be in the bathroom and other would be someplace else. He'd be taking a bath or something and seeing...He was always doing something, was always on the move. You know, even when he walked to the post office building from the U.N. Building he'd say, "Let's walk instead of taking the car." And he'd be, you know, going a mile a minute. He never wasted any time. When he'd shave or be taking a bath he was always, "Let's talk about this or that." There was never any time, when he was up here anyway, that was wasted.

GREENE: Was there anyone else that had the amount of influence that you did in the state?

ENGLISH: Oh, I think there were probably a lot of people who did, but I only see it from my point of view. You know it's hard to know, for instance, who on his staff were the most influential people, you know, who else in the business community did he listen to. I wouldn't know all of that. I mean I was strictly political.

GREENE: Well, actually, I meant in a political way.

ENGLISH: He wasn't consulting me about the arts. [Laughter.]

GREENE: Actually, I meant in a political way. Were there other New York...

ENGLISH: Well, of course, he consulted with the

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state chairman, John Burns. And he was very close to Peter Crotty while he was chairman.

GREENE: What about Crangle [Joseph F. Crangle]?

ENGLISH: When Crangle succeeded Crotty, he also consulted with Joe Crangle. I don't think he was quite as close as he was with Peter. Of course it was an older relationship.

GREENE: Anyone else like that that comes to mind?

ENGLISH: I suppose it would depend on when it was. You know, who were getting close at the beginning – there were probably different people in the end. For instance, in 1965 I hadn't even met Carter Burden. You know, Tom Johnston had worked in the campaign and he was here, and I guess I used to talk to more than anybody else, and I assume he did. Down there, of course, it was Joe Dolan.

GREENE: What was your impression of his relationship with Johnston and Burden and some of the other people that were working with him in New York?

ENGLISH: Well, as I said, Carter came in later, and Tom had gone through that campaign. I think he was very close to Tom. They had the state divided up into regions and so forth, and we used to go over those regions and say, "How is this leader?" and "How is that leader?" "Have you done enough here and enough there?" That kind of thing.

GREENE: Did you have any contact with Bruno [Gerald J. Bruno]?

ENGLISH: Oh, yes. All the time, yes.

GREENE: And your impressions of him?

ENGLISH: Well, of course, I had known him for a long period of time. No, I thought he was very effective and I thought he did a great job upstate. He really minded that office. And the people who worked for Jerry, too, also worked very

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hard. That office was always open. I used to travel up there to see him. He was very effective up there. He scared a lot of people, I guess.

GREENE: I was just going to say, did he have problems because of his...

ENGLISH: Well, he didn't have the problems that Paul Corbin had, but there were some leaders who were hostile to Kennedy, and Jerry knew that he was hostile to them. And if they were friendly to Kennedy or if he...I think Jerry brought in a lot of good leaders (some of whom have departed since then, too), you know, encouraged them to run for county leader and so forth.

GREENE: What about Corbin? What was he doing in this period?

ENGLISH: Well, he sort of fit...In the beginning of it, of course, he was very active. He was secreted, of course, during the '64 campaign. Some of the leaders said, "Well, we'll let you" – in fact, I remember Billy

McKeon [William H. McKeon] was the county chairman. I was state chairman at the time, and I remember when we first started to promote Kennedy's candidacy, we had one leader up in Wayne County, who's subsequently died, and it was John Keane. And he said, "I'll be for Kennedy, if you give me one promise: if Corbin doesn't come into the state." So I made the promise. We kept him someplace else. But that, you know, was rare. No, I don't think Jerry ever had that kind of thing.

The more conservative leaders or people who would naturally be inclined away from Kennedy, I suppose, were not inclined to see eye to eye with Bruno. And of course, he had patronage problems, Bruno, more than anybody else had, because upstate a rural postmaster means something; down here it really doesn't. And he had handled all of those things. And you have the Farm Bureau things, a lot of rural problems that, you know, we're not even familiar with down here.

GREENE: What about the rest of his staff? What was your impression of their knowledge and understanding of politics? Did you ever feel they were naïve or....

ENGLISH: Well, some of them were. I mean he had

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some good – like Tom Hogen, you know, I don't think had any political background or experience. And sometimes the leaders were probably unnecessarily offended. Some of them look for reasons to be offended. And Phil Ryan [Philip J. Ryan, Jr.], of course, was there at the beginning, and he left rather early.

GREENE: How did he do in the time he was there?

ENGLISH: Well, I always thought he did pretty well. I guess some of the leaders didn't think he did, but I'm not sure....You know, I don't know how to assess that. You know, a lot of these leaders want to be babied and think the Senator should be there all the time and should be spending all their time at cocktail parties at their house or taking their wife to Luchow's [Restaurant] or something.

GREENE: Was Johnston pretty good at this?

ENGLISH: Well, he's a soft sell kind of fellow. He never came on very strong, but of course, he was a real liberal, and he was an activist, and he had that Community Action Program, and none of the leaders liked that.

And Toby Foote, I guess, was working really at the state committee rather than the – I guess he worked for some time on the Senator's....He's basically the Senator's fellow at the state committee. He did a lot of things, too. And leaders used to become annoyed at him because he would always follow up. You know, when they were supposed to do something, they were supposed to do something, and of course a lot of them never do anything. They don't want to be followed up on.

GREENE: Did Kennedy do a lot of that, looking for himself and then assigning people and assuming they would follow through? Did you find that was one of his methods?

ENGLISH: Oh, they always had people prodding. You know, have a program and then keep checking back on it, keep checking back on it.

GREENE: Did that....

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ENGLISH: Well, it aggravated a lot of people unnecessarily. And I think he had an idea that some leaders should be – you know, the interests of the Party were not best served by some of the leadership, so he'd just as soon prod them enough into getting them out.

GREENE: Can you remember specific instances like that where you talked about getting rid of people? I know, of course, you talked about the Suffolk leadership thing during the administration, but...

ENGLISH: Well, there were a number of them which we talked about. Now, we're going back to before the assassination of John Kennedy. Corbin had a map in his office in the National Committee [Democratic National Committee], and they had pins in it and they have red flags and blue flags. Most of them were red. They had one in each county. The red flags were all the leaders they were going to get rid of, and it was about three-quarters of the leaders in the state. And then there were blue flags. These leaders used to come down and talk to him, and they'd look at this map and, of course....

GREENE: The ax hanging over their head.

ENGLISH: And he would look, you know, and he wouldn't say anything. And it was so obvious; he used to just torture these people. And it was really kind of funny. I remember one time I was particularly mad at our Leader, Bill Luddy [William F. Luddy], up in Westchester, because in the '62 thing for governor he had deserted Peter Crotty and I, and I was mad as hell. And so I was down in Washington seeing somebody else, I think Dick Maguire [Richard Maguire] at the National Committee. And Corbin always knew where....It was funny. It was funny. I'd walk into that place, and I'd get a call, "Corbin wants to see you." So I get this call, the switchboard operator said, "Paul would like to see you." So after I finished with that, I went to see Paul, and he said, "A friend of yours was just here." And I said, "Who?" And he said, "Bill Luddy." "Oh." That's all I said. I said, "Is he coming back?" He said, "Oh, yeah, he's coming back. He's got his briefcase over here. He went over to some department." I said, "Okay. Fine." So I took a flag

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and I put a red flag in Westchester County, and then I hid in the closet when he came back to see the expression on his face. [Laughter]

GREENE: Did you have that kind of thing after he became a senator, too?

ENGLISH: Yes, to a lesser degree. I mean he didn't care that much if the candidate was unimportant, but he was interested in the leadership in these major counties. It was important to him, and he wanted to revitalize the party and make changes and get more vigorous leadership, particularly younger leadership.

GREENE: You mentioned the bridge. I assume you mean the Oyster Bay-Rye Bridge.

ENGLISH: Well, I was talking about a Long Island bridge, whether... There were two proposed bridges, the Suffolk – you know, and that was always the question: which bridge; whether you needed either of them and so forth. And Wendell Pigman, I think, was his fellow that worked on that at that time. You'd deal with different people on different issues. Peter Edelman would be on some of the issues, and I remember that particular one was Wendell Pigman.

GREENE: Yes, I talked to him about that. How much interest did the Senator himself take in something like that? Would there just be an initial discussion, and then he'd hand it over?

ENGLISH: Oh, no, I think he took an interest because he knew whenever he was out in the area that would be the first question a reporter would ask, so he had to have more than... Once he found out where the boundaries of the state were, he took an interest in those major issues to make sure that his position was right, sometimes a little flexible. For instance, it was flexible in that particular issue.

GREENE: He didn't have any strong feelings to start out with?

ENGLISH: No, I don't think he did at all, and I think he took the staff's you know, kind

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of advice, plus whatever we could pump in.

GREENE: Were you at odds at all with the staff on this? You favored the bridge, as I understand it.

ENGLISH: Well, I mean let me just say this: We're talking about two different bridges. Nickerson and the Nassau-Suffolk [Regional Planning Board] planning commission favor a bridge, and we were just trying to point....The advice we'd give is distinguish positions between the two newspapers out there, one which favored an east end bridge and one which favored the Oyster Bay bridge, just to make sure that he didn't get caught up. You know, labor was heavily for the bridge, but the people on the north shore were heavily against it. We still have that division. Lester Wolff, who's the Congressman from the Third District, keeps passing bills to obstruct the building of the bridge. As long as you go in, say you go into a Congressman's district, you know that he's against it – you know, just so that he knew what the problems were. Also what are the problems on the other side of the Sound? Is Connecticut or Rhode Island a correct terminus? That kind of stuff. [Interruption]

GREENE: Well, you favored originally the Oyster Bay-Rye bridge which was suggested by Moses [Robert Moses], is that correct?

ENGLISH: Yes.

GREENE: Okay. And your reasoning?

ENGLISH: That there has to be some way of getting the traffic off Long Island, that it's a bottleneck, and that that would be the best way of getting passenger cars off the Island without having to go through the city. The east end bridge was more of a freight bridge and more of a commercial thing. It would do more to build up the eastern end of the Island, particularly Suffolk County. The bridges really served two different purposes.

GREENE: Did Kennedy and eventually Pigman go along with this?

ENGLISH: I don't remember.

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GREENE: But you don't remember that you were in conflict on it?

ENGLISH: Oh, no. We were never in conflict. You know, we worked with a nuance. I've never taken a public stance on the bridge because I basically leave that to the elected officials. Nickerson [Eugene H. Nickerson] said he was waiting for the Nassau-Suffolk planning commission, who favor the Oyster Bay bridge.

GREENE: As I remember it, you had advised Kennedy simply to stay quiet on the thing and not to take a position one way or another. Is that the way you remember it?

ENGLISH: I just can't remember. I remember having so many discussions about that, but I don't remember.

GREENE: Well, what do you remember about the discussions?

ENGLISH: I mean the discussions would have been which positions Newsday had, which position the planning commission was going to come out with, what the political implications were, and that kind of thing. Then you had the conservation problem, and Wendell was talking to the conservationists, who were bitterly opposed to any bridge anywhere.

GREENE: How much influence do you think someone like Pigman would have on him in this type of issue?

ENGLISH: I think he would have a lot of influence because that gets down to, "Are you going to disturb the unicellular animals and the finny fish and the balance of nature?" and "Is it economically feasible?" On the political thing he'd probably take more from us, you know, how much can you get hurt. My position is you're running statewide in the United States Senate and can't get hurt that much. It's the Congressman who runs just in that area who can really take it on the chin. And so we find like that Petito [Michael N. Petito] who's the supervisor out in Oyster Bay, Democratic supervisor, just opposed the bridge and made hay out of it from the very beginning, the Oyster Bay bridge. And Lester Wolff has done the same thing. On the other hand,

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if you're running, labor would be vehemently opposed to you, you know, anything that's bricks and mortar....

GREENE: If he couldn't get hurt too badly on something like this, how much influence could he have? Could he be effective on it?

ENGLISH: Well, yes, I think he could be effective. Eventually, you know, one of the big problems on that state highway system, which would mean a road would have to come along the south shore and connect to it, which is what Moses had in mind all along. Well, although the bridge still is being considered as a first priority and it's a constant debate between the planning commission, the local officials and so forth, the proposed road, the expressway that was going to come along and connect it with the Verrazano Bridge [Verrazano-Narrows Bridge], has been completely killed, so there's no road on the south shore that now would connect this thing, so it wouldn't be interstate.

GREENE: Do you know how he felt about Moses in general, and on this issue particularly?

ENGLISH: No, I don't really know that.

GREENE: He would seem someone that people would have strong feelings about one way or another.

ENGLISH: Well, I'm sure we discussed it, but I mean I just don't remember.

GREENE: What about Rockefeller's position in this? He first came out strongly against it and then called for immediate action on the identical project. Was there much talk?

ENGLISH: Rather ambivalent about it, I think. I don't even know what his position is now. He changed it a few times.

GREENE: Several.

ENGLISH: Yes.

GREENE: Well, there were a lot of legal problems involved, too, suits and....

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ENGLISH: Oh yes. There are. And, you know, Wolff has got a bill pending, you know, which would deed over some of the wetlands, where the bridge is supposed to go across, to the federal government, but I don't think that's going to work.

GREENE: That would make them untouchable, wouldn't it?

ENGLISH: Yes. That actress would not be there. I think on the Oyster Bay bridge, though, there are three routes all of which go in at about Bayville. And what it does is it would force you into the least desirable route. One of the routes goes right across Len Hall's property [Leonard W. Hall], who's on the Nassau-Suffolk planning commission.

GREENE: Were there other major issues or not so major issues that you got together with him on that perhaps we should discuss, local issues that had larger implications?

ENGLISH: There's none that I really recall as being real local that caused a lot of consternation. There are always little things which, you know, may not have that great an impact that I would remember it.

GREENE: Would you normally go first, on something like this, to his staff and let them take it up with him, or would you go directly to him and let him hand it off to them?

ENGLISH: Well, it depends on how it originated. For instance, if he were going to make a trip out for something, at that time it becomes necessary to think of all the things that he may have been asked – if he was going to talk to the Long Island Association of Labor Leaders or whatever it is – so we'd just go through the whole thing of all the things that are current, what the position of the community is and how hot the particular issue is, school bussing or something like that. So there's total preparation which you would originate back. But even if you didn't do that, they would be calling you, you know, "What do you say?" And then you go over what he should say in his direct text.

GREENE: Well, let's talk a little bit about politics, directly politics, the New York legislative leadership fight in 1965 which was...

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ENGLISH: Was that politics? That was mayhem.

GREENE: Mayhem. Anyway, you were both very much embroiled in that. How interested was he in it, and how closely did he follow the whole thing, and how much did he want to influence the results?

ENGLISH: Well, he followed it very closely. He didn't talk to many people about it, and he was very careful when he did. He talked to me about it. But we got into that without consulting him actually. And he was very careful not to call people, not to do anything overt. I mean you could never pin him with doing anything that would influence that fight one way or the other, except in the end when he said, "Let's" – you know, he and Harriman [William Averell Harriman] and whoever it was at that point, of course... That was the only overt act which, of course, he released publicly. But I mean he didn't do anything behind the scenes, to say to this leader, "You do this", or to this legislator "You do that." Now, because the people who were leaders in that fight were closely associated with him – myself, Steingut [Stanley Steingut], Billy McKeon and so forth, Peter Crotty – the newspapers constantly said, "This was a Kennedy-led revolt," and, of course, we were back to the same fight against Wagner [Robert Ferdinand Wagner, Jr.] again, so the conclusion was easily arrived at. It wasn't really that simple. We decided to make that fight. You know, what the hell. I suppose if he told us not to, we wouldn't have, but we did that on our own. And, of course, he got bathed in our stupidity.

GREENE: Did you talk to anybody like Steve Smith about it before?

ENGLISH: Well, I think they knew what was coming. And I used to talk to him on the phone, the Senator himself; that was not through an intermediary. I used to talk to him about it regularly, about what was going on. And it was getting more and more hopeless, and he saw it was hopeless, and he was trying to just give some tactical advice on maybe how to extricate ourselves.

GREENE: Was there any discussion with him in the beginning, once you decided to make the fight, on who the candidates would be?

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ENGLISH: Oh, no. Never. He didn't know any of them. God, I didn't know any of them – I mean not “any of them”; that's not true. I mean the fact of the matter is, in the beginning when we made that terrible mistake of going along with O'Connell [Daniel P. O'Connell] on Erway [Julian B. Erway]. Well, I had never met Erway, who, you know, when he got to the caucus and they accused him of having a bad record on civil rights and the Democratic caucus said he got a Christmas card for his maid every year....So we had to dump him in a hurry. But, you know, Kennedy knew, for instance, about Jack....Well, when we finally got around....Charlie Buckley [Charles A. Buckley] wouldn't take Jack Bronston, and I had wanted Jack Bronston from the beginning. But Kennedy, although he didn't know Bronston that well knew that he was the quality guy, and if we could get ourselves into that position, at least we'd be looking better, rather than have some guy who sent Christmas cards to his maid.

GREENE: Was McKeon active in this choice, too?

ENGLISH: Oh yes. The choice is, you know....Steingut's been running for speaker, you know, since his father died. So that precluded. We couldn't shift off that. Wagner hated Steingut so, we were stuck on that particular side. On the senate side, we shifted candidates so many times, the original....You know, if you had a downstate Jew, we thought it would be better to have a Protestant to stay on the senate side. Begley [Owen M. Begley] was really the first choice of everyone. He was then a senator up from Schenectady. But he would not do it, and there was no logical choice on the other. After Erway it was Bronston, and it was Mackell [Thomas J. Mackell] and the whole thing. Mackell was a compromise. He came from the Wagner side.

GREENE: How did you feel about that?

ENGLISH: Well, the other leaders, they all wanted to do that, and I, in the first place, I had felt that Wagner was dealing now with Rockefeller and that he didn't want any – the thing that was sticking in his craw was Steingut and that really what we had to do was dump Steingut, but nobody would tell Steingut. We could have done anything so long as Steingut was not our candidate.

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GREENE: Was this mainly an anti-Wagner thing or an effort to undercut his support for '67.

ENGLISH: It was an anti-Wagner thing. All the leaders were mad at him.

GREENE: Anyway, it's been written by – have you read the Shannon [William V. Shannon] book?

ENGLISH: Yes.

GREENE: Well, he makes a point of saying that he thinks – of course, he makes Robert Kennedy's intentions more open than you seem to. But he says that Robert Kennedy did not really adequately consider the implications of what he was doing, what he was up against, that this was a way to get more progressive people in and to undercut Wagner, but that he didn't really understand the political considerations.

ENGLISH: Well, he was not consulted in the beginning. He just wasn't consulted. It was done. Now, the fact of the matter is that it was a poor struggle because we had the votes, which we counted; we knew we had the votes. Now, we did not, of course, from the beginning anticipate that Wagner would make a deal, with the Republicans or that the Democrats would not go along with their own caucus. There's no historical precedent for it. So we miscalculated that particular thing. But we knew we had the votes to beat Wagner and to put our own people in. That, on top of Kennedy's thing, would have really diminished Wagner's standing so he'd been apart, so he was fighting for his life, which is exactly what he did. He pulled everything, every low blow going, you know, accusing people of bribes. And he became irrational. [Interruption]

I can remember a funny thing. One night I was up in Albany, and the reporters got me on television, and they get back to the question of how strongly involved Kennedy is. And I said, "I don't know. He's not involved at all." I said, "As a matter of fact, he's very disturbed at my activities up here." So then I was talking to Ethel that night. He must have called. Anyways, I was talking to Ethel one night. She said, "Oh, I just saw you on television." She said, "Ha. Ha. Ha." So she thought I was – you

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know, I was telling really the truth, and she thought I was faking it, and she thought it was just so great that I would say that he's mad at me.

GREENE: Was he really mad at you?

ENGLISH: Well, he wasn't really. You know, I'd use the word "disturbed" or something. The fact of the matter, we were bogged down in quicksand going down so damn fast with absolutely no way of rescuing ourselves, and, of course, he was getting blamed for the thing. Everybody said that he was behind it, which just wasn't true. Shannon is wrong about that. Everybody drew that implication, that he was calling all the signals. In the end what he was trying to do was extricate us from an impossible position. Now it's true in the beginning if he said, "What are you getting into that for?" We probably would have putted out, although I'm not sure that that's so because we had a lot of tough-minded leaders who would have liked to pursue that course no matter what he thought. I'm sure that he himself never thought of the possibility that Democrats in caucus would not go along with the majority.

GREENE: How did you come up with that suggestion that he should suggest that along with some other prominent people as a way out?

ENGLISH: Well, we discussed that, but I think that was his idea, but he discussed that. That was a stroke of genius as a matter of fact. Wagner agreed to it and, of course, twenty-four hours later he came out with this business that Billy McKeon had offered a bribe, which was incredible. I was in the room.

GREENE: Yes, well, maybe you ought to talk about that, what you remember from that night in the hotel room.

ENGLISH: Oh, well, it was a normal....Discussions were going on for six weeks, and we used to go from one hotel room to the other. It was real comedy. We used to sneak around the staircases so the reporters wouldn't follow us. They always found us. And the walls are paper-thin and we'd get into these arguments in which we'd be shouting.

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Pretty soon you'd open the door and there'd be forty reporters out there listening to the whole thing.

In addition to that, the telephone operators all listen to the phones there. You know, they're all O'Connell's people. And I was so dumb there for a while. We used to stay up until 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning – and then whenever I went downstairs to go someplace – there were two taxi drivers; they were brothers, Louis and somebody else – there was always the same taxi, and I never thought anything about it. So one day we were coming downstairs – McKeon and I were going out to see Dan O'Connell – and we're talking and we got into the taxi and we didn't say anything. And all of a sudden I realized we were going. So Louis, you know, knew....It was all right. He listened to everything we said, I guess. And, of course, the telephone operator undoubtedly was listening to the calls.

GREENE: That really is like a comedy.

ENGLISH: It was really...I used to get infuriated at Ray Jones [J. Raymond Jones] during these things because they never told the truth, they never negotiated in good faith, and he and Weinstein [Moses M. Weinstein] and so forth would sit up there as if they could negotiate something. And they'd agree on anything. And they'd take it back to Wagner, of course, and the answer would – after we had agreed, this continually happened – we'd agree on things, and Wagner would cancel it because he didn't want any agreement because he was working toward a total deadlock in which he was going to have his deal with Rockefeller because he had the arrangement there and we did not. But at that meeting they were talking about committees and who would be the chairman of the various committees. And the word "lulu" came up. I think it was in the terms that this committee chairmanship has a larger lulu than that committee chairmanship. It's a lot of nonsense. And it was a total...You know, it was a setup by Ray Jones, but what he did...Then they went back to Wagner and Wagner said, "Well, you'll have to use that against McKeon. And Marcy O'Rourke [Maurice J. O'Rourke], who was up there tending the room would not do it because it wasn't true. And it was a real devastating kind of thing. I remember when I testified before the SIC [State Investigation Commission] on it, the closed session – McKeon was very worried – but when I testified, the SIC

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at the time was investigating Ray Jones for his involvement in some of those urban renewal projects. And they thought it was a big joke, the SIC, which it was, accusing someone of double lulus. So then when I got into the private session before Commission, the counsel asked me a question about, "Did you hear of a bribe, an offer of a bribe from McKeon to Ray Jones?" And I said, "That would be foolish. No one would possibly think of offering a bribe through Ray Jones. There'd be a problem in transmission." So they all broke up and they said, "Well, that's off the record." And they said, "Now listen, we'll let that answer stand here, but will you promise when we get to the public session, don't say that?" So I promised. It was nonsense.

GREENE: Well, why do you think Wagner agreed in the first place? Did he agree with it in mind that he'd get out of it somehow?

ENGLISH: You know, he was perfectly entrapped. I mean Kennedy set it up so perfectly. They couldn't turn down the proposition. There was no way that he could. But basically he's a vacillator anyway, and this was the kind of thing that he agreed to because there was no way that he could not agree to it. It was a perfectly reasonable thing. And then he knew that was the end because our fellows would have been elected without any problem at all.

GREENE: Was there a lot of pressure on Kennedy to do more? Were there people who felt that his position of neutrality was not...

ENGLISH: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. In our group a lot of people thought he should do more.

GREENE: Do you know who particularly?

ENGLISH: I don't remember it because some of them weren't there, like Buckley wasn't there. Maybe Steingut probably did. He always wanted everybody to do more.

GREENE: Was there any discussion of his meeting privately with Wagner to try to work something out between the two of them?

ENGLISH: I think there probably was. Well, in the

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matter of those, everything happened. Every single proposition was tested, and it just got silly. I mean there wasn't anything that wasn't thought of and turned down.

GREENE: You really just think that whole thing in the hotel room was just a lot of normal politicking and he decided to make political hay out of it?

ENGLISH: Oh, it was the most normal conversation I've ever been involved in. It was kind of silly to me because I knew nothing was going to happen anyway. And really what they were doing was trying to stake out – you know, the shape of the table kind of conversation: Is it going to be round or square? And this is, who's going to be the chairman of the committees. "You've had all these people who've resisted us for all this time. We won't deny you seniority because of that, that kind of a discussion. You know, you're not going to cut them off. "And you will be able to get that committee chairmanship, and that committee chairmanship," which was nonsense because it wasn't getting down to who was going to be the leader.

GREENE: Well, anyway, this whole thing with McKeon, did that give you the feeling that you had to look for a new leader? Did it ever get to that point where you felt, guilty or not...

ENGLISH: Well, yes. I mean the fact that I talked to him about that and Kennedy....After that happened, of course, Wagner insisted that McKeon go, and they cut off all of the funds for the state committee, the Wagner people, and cut him off from all the legislative patronage and so forth. And Kennedy himself thought that McKeon's ability to really exist had been impaired, that he couldn't – once the funds were cut off, it didn't make any particular sense. Now, it was a very difficult thing to do because I had participated with him in that venture, but he was then the state chairman of nothing because the opposite thing than we wanted had happened, that Wagner now ended up with both houses of the legislature and insisted that unless McKeon went, they wouldn't support the state committee. And it was already heavily in debt – still is

– and I mean to the tune of four or five hundred thousand dollars, and there was a matter

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of payroll to be met. And Kennedy thought, under those circumstances, that it would be better if Billy stepped aside, with some, however, guarantees as to his own future, which we discussed at very great length. He had discussed it with Wagner. Now, Steingut and George Daly and some of those people were vehemently against. They wanted Billy to stay in there. And he was ambivalent about it. He would say one thing to me – I was sort of handling it for Kennedy. And he would say that's what he really wanted to do. But they would talk to him and say, "No, you stay here." And finally it came about because one day I got him aside, and they were all looking for him, and I had him over at the Bull and Bear [Restaurant] because Kennedy said, "You really have to get this resolved." Then and there he said he would resign.

GREENE: Were there hard feelings? What were Kennedy and McKeon's relations after that?

ENGLISH: No, I don't think there were. Billy understood. The problem was that Wagner reneged and Travia [Anthony J. Travia] and Zaretki [Joseph L. Zaretki] were supposed to have gotten Billy a good committee assignment and so forth, and they really didn't do it. Steve did some things for him and so forth, but it was never in the amount or to the extent that it was supposed to have been. You know, they reneged. So Kennedy felt bad about that. I felt bad, and I still feel bad.

GREENE: When did you find out about the arrangement between Rockefeller and the Wagner people? Did you have any advance warning so that you could try to head it off.

ENGLISH: Well, we kept hearing about it. It was recurring, I mean, all the time that it was going to happen and I had contact on the Republican side with a Republican assemblyman who's a very close friend of mine, who told me it was about to happen. But when it actually did happen, at the moment that it happened, we didn't know it was coming just then. I mean it didn't happen on the floor without us knowing it. It was about an hour before and we heard that they were going to do this. Then when it happened on the floor, Weinstein and Mackell came marching up to our suite and then said, "Now Wagner

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has gone too far. Now we're going to go with you." That's what Moe's position was for about fifteen minutes, which is about the extent of his stability.

GREENE: Was there any possibility of you working with the Republicans on it?

ENGLISH: Oh, no, we wouldn't do that. There was discussion about that, but we wouldn't do that.

GREENE: Well, anyway did Robert Kennedy ever discuss his retrospective feelings about this whole thing and what he might have done particularly to...

ENGLISH: No, I don't think, not hindsightwise, no. I don't think you could have said you would have done this or that. Other people had....Buckley always said, "You shouldn't have made the announcement that fast; you just should have waited to get to the floor and then cast the votes." That was always Buckley's feeling not to show the strength that early, that you had the votes.

GREENE: Anyways, I know there was supposedly an effort to make a compromise. In fact, there was some talk that the compromise had actually been reached and then Wagner reneged.

ENGLISH: About three times.

GREENE: Yes, but the last one where you'd finally decided on Mackerell and Steingut and then Wagner backed out the last second.

ENGLISH: Yes, that's right.

GREENE: Were you in on – you must have been in on that.

ENGLISH: Yeah, I was in on it. But I never believed it anyway. And I was a dissenter from that position, but I was the lone dissenter so I didn't get in the way.

GREENE: Who else was...

ENGLISH: But, see, I thought that Bronston was the

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quality candidate that we had, and I was unwilling to abandon that position because we had the problem, too, of the newspapers and so forth. One thing is to get into a power fight two New York guys against one of those guys. Once we had Bronston into it I thought we had the better of the argument. Now we really were improving the leadership. Now, you take him out, and we were just substituting us for them. I didn't want to be stuck with that position even in my own county. I mean as long as Bronston was in there, then you looked pretty good. Because I was very embarrassed by the Erway situation – I didn't know anything about Erway, which was stupid. That was really the stupid thing, putting Erway up. It stuck us in the first instance anyway because when

they caucused for the assembly, there was a motion made to make it unanimous, and Weinstein made it. So it was unanimous. So we had the vote in the assembly. But then when Thaler [Seymour R. Thaler] held it up in the senate, then they did the same thing in the senate. And it was terrible because they were screwing each other all over the place. They didn't care. Wagner didn't care about Travia. And poor Travia was holed up in his room and they were dumping him one day, and they weren't consulting with him. It was being done. You know, it was Wagner. Bernie Ruggieri was running his thing up there. He was very clever, knew what he was doing and actually worked it out with the Republicans.

GREENE: Who in that meeting did favor going along with that kind of a compromise?

ENGLISH: Everybody but me...

GREENE: Well, who?

ENGLISH: ...On our side.

GREENE: Do you remember who...

ENGLISH: Well, now, a lot of this is done on the telephone. Buckley would have to be on the telephone. My recollection was that Crotty was also on the telephone although he was there from time to time. I'm pretty sure it was on the telephone. Crangle came down. Crangle was there for a while. He was not the leader, but he was there in the city. Steingut.

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ENGLISH: Those were the men. McKeon.

GREENE: What was the effect of this whole thing on relationships, particularly Robert Kennedy's with Wagner and his people?

ENGLISH: Well, his relationship with Wagner to the end, I think, was strained. However, Kennedy then established an excellent relationship with Travia. He liked Travia.

GREENE: But he also made arrangements to have him appointed to a federal judgeship.

ENGLISH: Yes.

GREENE: Was that a renewed effort to get rid of him?

ENGLISH: Well, there were two things. Of course, that was going on right during the presidential thing and that's caused us a lot of consternation about how that was. Steingut was pushing that all along, and Kennedy used to get very annoyed at him because every time he'd come to New York the big thing was, "How the hell do we get Travia on the bench? Is the bar association going to approve him, and will Johnson appoint him?" It was really a major problem which Kennedy used to get disgusted about because it used to come down to – whether you're going to get the Brooklyn support depends on whether Travia goes on. Travia wanted to go on the bench. Kennedy liked him and thought he had somewhat of an obligation, but he also didn't want to have the whole Brooklyn thing erupt. He was interested in who the new leader would be. There's always the question if Travia went out, who had the votes to elect the speaker. We were never as sure of that as Steingut was.

GREENE: We could talk about that now rather than save it for later. My understanding was that if Travia's appointment came through in the course of the late legislative session, then an election would take place. On the other hand, if he waited and...

ENGLISH: Weinstein would automatically succeed, which is what happened.

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GREENE: That's what Travia wanted, isn't it?

ENGLISH: Oh, yes. And that was the big thing. Steingut said – you know, he used to get....He's very pessimistic and always says "Well, if Kennedy needs me and if he wants to do this, he can do this." And, you know, it was that kind of conversation constantly going on. "He's got to do this now, and he can do it now." You know the conversation, "Well, how do you know that Johnson will do it just because Kennedy wants him to do it?" We were always unsure of what to do because we didn't know how all the pegs would fall into place once it was done. And we used to count the votes all the time and say, "Stanley, where are you getting these votes?" And he'd go around, he'd mention people. He had some Republican votes. Every time we'd add them up, it didn't quite make out because he'd count people that I'd know were on the other side. He'd count some that I knew might go the other way. In the end, of course, he was able to get them, but I was....In fact, right up in this room where we're sitting now – and this is after the assassination, I think, wasn't it?

GREENE: Yeah, it was.

ENGLISH: It was after the assassination when we still didn't know. You know, every leader was going to make sure that the other guy was there before he'd commit his votes. And that went on and on and on, and no one would answer the question. They said, "Well, if you're with him, I'll be with him," and

so forth. But anybody... You know, that was a very delicate balance. It could have been pushed any way by any individual leader.

GREENE: Did Kennedy do much at that point? He was campaigning but...

ENGLISH: No. He used to get very annoyed. You know, he was more annoyed by that whole situation than anything. He used to come back to New York and say, "Can't we talk about something?"

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GREENE: Were you kind of representing him in the course of that while he was campaigning?

ENGLISH: Yes. Well, I was the one in New York. Of course, while he was campaigning, you know, Steve was here sometimes, but less and less. So I was the only one. Well, John Burns was here in New York, but everybody else left. The whole staff left. There was nobody here. We were left without any money, you know, left to our resources with all the – you know, we had a lot of problems back in the state. A lot of people unhappy with challenging Johnson and the Humphrey movement and the McCarthy thing. And Kennedy did not have the resources to concentrate on New York when he had to go into those four other primaries, and the decision was deliberate, "Don't do anything in New York until we see whether we're going to get that far."

GREENE: Had Johnson just frozen that nomination and the other major appointments in New York after Kennedy came out? Was that your understanding of what happened with Travia?

ENGLISH: Oh, Johnson froze patronage in New York long before that. For instance, Kennedy had an absolute agreement and an arrangement with Larry O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] that the regional director of the Post Office Department, which is a very important position, would be filled by someone recommended by Kennedy who was satisfactory to O'Brien. And we – Jerry McDougal [Jerome R. McDougal, Jr.] is the fellow I was just talking to on the phone – was a very wealthy businessman and so forth and had worked with Steve during one of the campaigns. And Steve said, "Would Jerry do that?" And I talked to Jerry and he said he'd do it, which surprised me. So we put his name in. We got it cleared through the Post Office Department, all postal checks and so forth. Then Johnson would not appoint him and never did appoint him. To the very end that remained vacant. Well, this caused... And Kennedy was very, very disturbed about that, and O'Brien would not let him put anybody else in because he hadn't made it. And it caused very bad blood between Kennedy and Johnson. But that happened, you know, before Kennedy's announcement. So Johnson thought Kennedy was going to run before Kennedy thought Kennedy was going to run.

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- GREENE: Probably four years before.
- ENGLISH: Yes. He was always looking over his shoulder.
- GREENE: Getting back to this other situation, what do you know about the letter that Robert Kennedy sent to Zaretski and Travia beseeching them to choose people by merit than...
- ENGLISH: I don't know. You know, it was a blunder and it was a tactical error.
- GREENE: You didn't know about it ahead of time?
- ENGLISH: No.
- GREENE: I thought maybe it was an effort to shore up McKeon a bit, to give him a ...
- ENGLISH: No, I think that must have been one of the things he just did off the top of his head. You know, it just didn't....It wasn't very well thought out.
- GREENE: Did he ask you, once it backfired, how he might get out of it?
- ENGLISH: No, I don't think so. I don't think he worried about things like that. I think he thought that he was fallible and that he made mistakes and was inclined to do them, and once you've made a mistake, then you go on to something else. There are new mistakes to be made.
- GREENE: Bigger and better ones. Okay, then what do you know about – well, McKeon's resignation we've gone over – but Burns' selection? Robert Kennedy played the major role in that.
- ENGLISH: Oh, he did. And I would say that Burns was Kennedy's choice. Well, I mean everybody liked John Burns anyway. It wasn't that difficult a problem. Wagner liked him, too, which made it very easy.
- GREENE: Yes, that surprised me.
- ENGLISH: Wagner always like him.
- GREENE: How did it develop after he came in? Was Wagner cooperative?

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ENGLISH: For a while until he saw that he was a Kennedy man rather than a Wagner man, and it started to break off.

GREENE: That was not apparent at first?

ENGLISH: No. He had a good relationship. Burns had an excellent relationship with Wagner because Wagner was the architect of that ticket in '62, the Morgenthau [Robert M. Morgenthau] ticket, of course, on which Burns ran for lieutenant governor, and he was a mayor of a rather large city and Wagner was a mayor. Wagner always was very high on John Burns. And, of course, Burns gets along with everybody else, too. So it was a very popular choice.

GREENE: So, see, we have one conflict settled without any problems. Nothing to talk about. Everybody liked him.

ENGLISH: It pretty much worked out that way.

GREENE: What about the surrogate's race and the mayoral race? Did you get into those at all in '65?

ENGLISH: Well, I did because they called me and they were in deep trouble in the surrogate's race. Not before. I mean this was a vanden Heuvel special, I think. But during the course of the campaign Steve called me. You know, they needed equipment and they needed people. So in the end I sent about five hundred people to work in the primary and all our equipment in, which Ray Jones found out about and called me up, and I said, "Who? Me? I can't control those people."

GREENE: What do you mean a "vanden Heuvel special?" Was this something he got Robert Kennedy into?

ENGLISH: Yes, it was all screwed up from the beginning. It's one of those meetings, you know, with the reform people, which went one way and then the other way. You know, I'm not too sure that it was one of the greatest....I mean if I were Robert Kennedy, I sure as hell would have gotten into who was going to be governor rather than who was going to be surrogate. Now we have a surrogate who doesn't want to be surrogate

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any more. I mean I don't criticize the decision but I mean he got burned on it. All the leaders were mad at him about it and so forth. And it was the right pro bono public decision, but as a pragmatic politician, it's not. You know, you don't go after the surrogate; you go after the control of the state, which is in the governor's office. He didn't take a position on that. To take a position for a local office in one county seems to me, you know, not to be a

pragmatic political thing to do because it took a lot of his effort, a lot of his money, and his prestige was all on the line.

GREENE: Well, why do you think he listens to a guy like vanden Heuvel, who you and other people have said at least gave poor advice?

ENGLISH: Well, I think vanden Heuvel has poor judgement. You know, he's very bright, but I mean if you gave him two choices, my opinion is he would make the wrong political choice every time.

GREENE: Was that because he listened to the wrong people?

ENGLISH: I don't know. No. I think it's intuitive. You know, some people are just brought up – some people have an instinct, and some have a bad political instinct. And his instinct, I think, is bad.

GREENE: Was this something that people tried to make Robert Kennedy more conscious of?

ENGLISH: Well, I used to tell him. I mean I was particularly unhappy every time I'd go to a meeting and then read about it in the paper, and Kennedy would say, "Who do you suppose leaked that?" And I'd say, "What do you mean, 'who do you suppose'?" I said, "Look at the way the story came out, and you can tell because that didn't happen at the meeting. It's a tainted version. You know, fourteen people in a room, one guy sees it this way and the other thirteen were at a different meeting." And he just never would respond.

GREENE: It continued because in '66 in the gubernatorial race he took advice from him, too, didn't he?

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ENGLISH: Oh, yes. Bad advice. You know, I've always thought part of that whole thing, too, was that vanden Heuvel himself had ambitions, and he'd always go around saying, "Someone is asking me to run for governor," as he's doing now. "A lot of people are trying to draft me for this or that." You know, well, I never heard anybody yet doing it. So he was self-interested, which I think gets pumped into that judgement, if you knock over other people.

GREENE: Were there any other people around Robert Kennedy like that who, out of loyalty, he seemed to continue to.... Well, Corbin, of course, is another example.

ENGLISH: Corbin was very effective on certain kinds of things. There was no one who could do the things that Corbin could. I mean he could, you know, stir up a tempest. If you wanted to stir things up, he could do it faster than anybody, and it was very valuable, you know, if treated. You know, if you didn't take him seriously, and Kennedy did not. He enjoyed his company, and he enjoyed the things he used to do, and he thought he was a rascal. But Corbin was valuable to do certain kinds of jobs. No one could do the kinds of things that Corbin could do. And, of course, he was totally dedicated. You know, he was sort of the ombudsman, too.

GREENE: What about other people like vanden Heuvel – maybe close personal friends – who got in over their heads or gave poor advice? Were there other people that come to mind like that?

ENGLISH: Well, the Kennedys... You know, a lot of those people like that were Jack Kennedy's friends like from the – a fellow like Bill Walton [William Walton] and so forth had no political background or judgment, and he was up here during Kennedy's presidential campaign. He's nice for getting the arts and the letters and taking Jackie [Jacqueline B. Kennedy Onassis] over. When you want Jackie to do something, Bill would be a fine escort. But as far as who should be delegates in Brooklyn, it's absurd.

GREENE: Do you have trouble convincing Robert Kennedy of that?

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ENGLISH: No, no, no. He never... He wasn't around, of course. I never even talked to him about the slate. But you know, what happens is when a Kennedy runs, these people all show up, and they're all volunteers. They're all very dedicated, they're all very sincere. And the problem is finding a slot for them. If you could keep them into the things that they could... For instance, vanden Heuvel, too, would be very effective in keeping that actress whatever her name is -- you know, married to Humphrey Bogart.

GREENE: Lauren Bacall.

ENGLISH: Lauren Bacall. He always wanted to run her for delegate. "Bill, no, you know, we just don't need her for delegate." He always had a contract for Lauren Bacall. That kind of thing he was pretty good at. You know, organize committees of lawyers and writers and artists – very good. And so was Bill Walton. But they wouldn't know a Brooklyn politician or the problems involved. And I used to constantly find them getting into stuff that was not their business or dealing with the McCarthy [Eugene J. McCarthy] people, which was hopeless. I mean I had vanden Heuvel with me one night or the first time we met with him [McCarthy]. Well, it was a terrible thing. He was going to bring a lawsuit against them to kick them out of a discoteque place that they had. I forget the name.

GREENE: Eugene's?

ENGLISH: Eugene's, yes. And we're trying to make peace. Our whole thing was not to ruffle them because in the end, if Kennedy won the primaries, we would need them and that was the whole thing, and this is – and they're tough cookies. And this is the kind of thing. They were so goddamn mad and of course they're still mad about Ellie French [Eleanor Clark French] and whoever else – and Izzy Sipser [I. Philip Sipser]. I'll never forget that. I mean it was just incredible to me. He's going to bring a lawsuit against them. We had them there to – my purpose was to say, "Well, Humphrey was a common enemy and even if we can't agree now, you know we have to develop modus operandi so if we have to get together, we can pick slates and so forth. But no, he's going to sue them. He's going to kick them out of Eugene's.

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GREENE: What was his plan? Where did he come up...

ENGLISH: Oh, that Uchitel [Maurice Uchitel] said that we could have it after – which knowing Uchitel, could have happened. You know, promise it to them and they're already in there and then say, "Well, I didn't know Kennedy was going to be in the race," and then we could have it.

And the whole thing was which districts we would stay out of. And I was always a hawk, that we had to go into all of them and not default anywhere, even where we knew we were going to lose, like the Seventeenth [Congressional District]. We had a lot of people who just wanted to default. Now, I don't think you can do that. You've got to keep their money tied up and keep their energies all tied up, and particularly the people in that district. Even though we knew even if he were alive, we would not have carried that district.

GREENE: How are we on time?

ENGLISH: It's a quarter after four. And I have to go to Toots Shor [Restaurant] so we have half an hour.

GREENE: That's fine. We can talk about the 1966 governor's race. I think maybe if I got some light I could tell... [Interruption.] All right, now on the 1966 governor's race, your candidate from the start, I believe, was Nickerson [Eugene H. Nickerson].

ENGLISH: Right.

GREENE: When you first went to Robert Kennedy did you have to do a lot of selling, or was he receptive to this?

ENGLISH: Well, now, I talked to him at least a hundred times about it, sometimes alone, sometimes with other people, sometimes in a car, sometimes at his house, sometimes at dinners. And he was always probing in the beginning. I mean I didn't believe in a hard sell. Say, "Listen, you have to go along with this fellow or else," which is not quite the way to approach that man. Or just say that, "This is the best man without any question." Just put in all the pluses and minuses. And I handled

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him that way from the beginning. And he would say such things as, "Well, yes, he's the best candidate," from the beginning, you know, "and I like him. And he has the best record, and he'd make the best governor, and he'd be best for me." But then he would always say, "Well, can he get elected? I hear he's not so good on television." We had that kind of conversation. "Some people tell me he's stiff." Or, "How's your tiger doing?"

GREENE: How much of a relationship did they have at that point?

ENGLISH: Well, Nickerson had campaigned very hard for him in '64. Nickerson, himself, was running, and he ran way ahead of Kennedy. But, you know, when it was unpopular to be for Kennedy, Nickerson was out campaigning for him, and we used to go up to this house at Glen Cove, Nick and I, and go on the issues, you know, such things as bussing. I remember spending a whole day with Burke Marshall, Bobby and Nick and I, just going over how to handle that particular thing.

GREENE: What did you decide? I don't think we've talked about this on the tape.

ENGLISH: Now, I'm just... There was a statement which he gave even the next day after we did it – I think it was in Binghampton. But it would be something that, you know, "It's a matter of local determination." And if we're talking about inter-district bussing, that would be up to the people, if they wanted to bus between districts. But, you know, it should be involuntary.

GREENE: Was this directly related to the Malverne situation?

ENGLISH: Well, it was, yes. That's why we were so concerned about it and going through the history of, you know, the intra-district

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bussing, which is not bussing at all, and making the distinction that it's not bussing. It's the assignment of pupils under a court order and how it's been done. It was done out there in eight school districts with no problem at all. Just Malverne was the problem.

GREENE: Anyway, so he and Nickerson had a fairly good relationship?

ENGLISH: Yes.

GREENE: Did he keep coming up with...Did he have other people in mind, or was it...

ENGLISH: You know, various people that vanden Heuvel was always suggesting – Perkins [James Alfred Perkins], the president of Cornell; that one would have made a great governor. [Laughter.]

GREENE: What about O'Connor [Frank D. O'Connor]?

ENGLISH: No. Well, he was never...He never thought of O'Connor from '62. I mean he never changed. I knew he was never going to change his position on that.

GREENE: Samuels [Howard J. Samuels], I know that wouldn't have been his candidate. What kind of an opinion did he have of him?

ENGLISH: He thought he was a bore. And he used to get his face all screwed up because Samuels went in to see him one day and told him he was the intellectual candidate. That used to get him. He used to tell that, "intellectual candidate." I never saw anything annoy him so much. You know, "That bore," he'd say. "I can't stand him even a half an hour. He's the intellectual candidate?"

GREENE: What about FDR, Jr. [Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr.]? Did he talk about him at all in the early stages?

ENGLISH: Well, he just wrote that off as not being...He decided that, you know, the loyalty and some old debts – that he was not the

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kind of candidate that the Democratic Party should be running.

GREENE: Did he seem to favor this idea of an outsider, a prestigious outsider? Maybe not Perkins, but John Gardner was mentioned. Is this what you think he had in mind?

ENGLISH: Well, we talked about that, but you know I think these were all people being foisted upon him by other people. I don't think he himself ever had it – I don't think he knew Perkins. I mean, sure, we talked about Watson [Thomas J. Watson, Jr.] and things like that, but I don't think it was very serious. There were more names than that, too.

GREENE: Linowitz [Sol M. Linowitz] came up later, I think.

ENGLISH: Linowitz, I think, was another vanden Heuvel name, as I remember.

GREENE: They all go down in the books as people Kennedy was interested in.

ENGLISH: Well, he always discussed things. You know, we never talked about '65, but when... We're just going backwards just for a minute. But in '65 he said, you know, "We're going to run for mayor." We got together. He said for "You and Steve and so forth come in with a list." And the next day we came in, we had about twenty-five guys. It was Hester [James M. Hester], the president of NYU [New York University]. We discovered he lived in New Jersey or something. But we had the whole list of every labor leader, every businessman... You know, Watson and the whole bit. And then it came down to he said, "Well, why don't you talk to Frank Hogan and see if he'll do it?" But I mean he always did that. I mean his whole thing was that you should never close the door on anything. You ought to be wide open and flexible and make sure that you haven't forgotten a single person.

GREENE: Did you find that tough to do when Nickerson was your candidate?

ENGLISH: Well, I never got involved in that. I mean I never thought too much about it. I wasn't very open-minded about it.

GREENE: Just to go back a second, did you see Frank

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Hogan and what happened with him?

ENGLISH: Oh, yes, I did. He came out to my law office, as a matter of fact. And I said, "Senator Kennedy thinks that you'd be the best candidate for mayor under the circumstances, and he would be willing to back you if you'd consider doing this." And Hogan said, "Well, I'm really not the age where I should be doing this now and my wife wouldn't really like it, but if the Party wants it and if there's a consensus on the candidate, I'll do it." Well, meantime Screvane [Paul R. Screvane] announced and the whole bit, and that isn't what Hogan was looking for.

GREENE: Did you get involved beyond that?

ENGLISH: No, I got out of it – and so did Kennedy.

GREENE: Did you make any requests of him, as far as Nickerson went, to at least keep his mind open, as far as the Nickerson candidacy in the beginning?

ENGLISH: No, I never talked to him in those terms. In retrospect I always thought that he would come around to supporting Nick. I thought it was absolutely certain that he'd have to support a candidate, and I knew he could not support Samuels or O'Connor or Roosevelt and that his inclination was for Nickerson. And I just thought that as time went on and Nickerson got around more and became better known and established himself better, that it was inevitable that Kennedy would have to take a position.

GREENE: Were you surprised by the open forums?

ENGLISH: I suggested that.

GREENE: You suggested that.

ENGLISH: See that's one of the unfair things about... You can't ultimately say that Kennedy never helped Nickerson. The fact of the matter is I said that Nickerson is going to be the best, and this is the forum in which he will show the best. He'll show his knowledge, and it's the kind of thing. And he agreed to do that. He agreed that that's the way to do it and "Let's do it that way." He spent a lot of time on it, too.

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GREENE: And Nickerson was considered?

ENGLISH: He was, except in the first one which was at Cornell, I think. And Nickerson was not the best at the first one; he was not the best.

GREENE: And Kennedy was there.

ENGLISH: Kennedy was at all but one, I think. Kennedy was at the one in Brooklyn and he was at the one in Buffalo. I think he missed the one in Saratoga.

GREENE: Yes, I think that's right.

ENGLISH: But Nickerson wasn't the best. He was stiff and we got the bad draw. I think he was first. He just was just too pat.

GREENE: Well, what was the overall impact of the forums on Kennedy's thinking?

ENGLISH: Well, I think he probably concluded that Nickerson was by far the best candidate. Nickerson, by the last one, which I think was Buffalo, was really great. I mean he was outstanding and the other guys were not in the same league at the particular time. But, of course, nobody was – you know, you got fifteen hundred people for the forum, or something like that. I thought that was the thing that would do it.

GREENE: What conversations did you have with him afterwards about how much he'd be willing to do at that point for Nickerson?

ENGLISH: Well, I would just persuade him that he had to do it, that he had to take a position affirmatively for Nickerson. Then he would say, "Well, if I do that, isn't it going to be boss rule?" Isn't he going to be the Kennedy candidate? Isn't this the dynasty? It's not going to help." I said, "No, it can't be done. These other people aren't going to move toward Nickerson because they're all waiting for you. They all think you're going to make a decision. They're not going to do a damn thing until you do."

Meantime, there was a deal back here in the city between Buckley and Steingut and so forth because of the Beame [Abraham D. Beame] thing. They had made that agreement and all these upstate fellows, all they want to do is see where they're going to go. So ours was a holding operation.

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GREENE: I understand that – again this is Shannon; I should quote him. He says that Robert Kennedy encouraged Franklin Roosevelt to take that memo around, that that was his idea, in hopes, I guess, of forcing them to take a stand, and that it would help Nickerson. Is that the way you understood it?

ENGLISH: Well, I first found out about that memo, of course, from Kennedy, who told me about its existence. And he thought I didn't know because I wasn't there at the conversation. But he told me that Roosevelt had come in with this memo and said he was going to use it. And Kennedy told me that he would no longer be a viable candidate, that was the end of it if Roosevelt ever did that. He was convinced that that would be so. And, you know, I wasn't that convinced of it. People here in this state are a little bit tougher than that, and they expect these charges of deals and so forth. But he really thought that that would absolutely destroy O'Connor's candidacy. And of course, it did not.

GREENE: You didn't actually try to convince him not to show it?

ENGLISH: Oh no, I wanted it shown. But he told me that Roosevelt was going to do it, period.

GREENE: You don't think it was Kennedy that forced him – not forced him to, but encouraged him to, that he would have done it in any case?

ENGLISH: Well, knowing Roosevelt, I'm sure that that's true. He was the destroyer. He was out to do everything. I mean even at the forum, no matter where you went, I mean he was the guy who was obviously the fellow with the low blow. And there was no doubt that he'd do anything. It's part of his character.

GREENE: What did Kennedy think of him?

ENGLISH: Well, I think he just thought because of all the problems he had, most of them personal problems and so forth, he couldn't get the Liberal Party endorsement, which turned out that he did get, the whole thing, that he would not be – you could never elect him. Too many bad marks.

GREENE: Anyway, my understanding is that he showed the memo, and people kind of said, "So what?"

ENGLISH: Roosevelt?

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GREENE: Yes.

ENGLISH: Yes, that's what happened. He made the change and, of course, some of those people denied that there was any such deal. And, of course, Buckley never really denied it.

GREENE: No, he didn't.

ENGLISH: That's kind of interesting.

GREENE: Well, why didn't Kennedy do more to push that?

ENGLISH: Well, I don't think he wanted to be associated with it. I mean he didn't dream it up, and he certainly didn't want to be the hatchet man.

GREENE: You didn't encourage him to dramatize the situation?

ENGLISH: No, I didn't. You know, if he did that, he'd be much better off coming out directly for a candidate, I think, rather than get himself caught in a lynch. After all, if he did that, he would have to go after Buckley and Steingut, and I don't think that was what he was intending to do.

GREENE: Anyway, at what point did he indicate that he was ready to abandon his resistance to O'Connor?

ENGLISH: Oh, I don't think he... [Interruption] I am not sure. But anyway, I remember going down to Hickory Hill because I knew that things were breaking for O'Connor. Unless he did something, the whole thing was going to wash away from us. So I went down early in the morning. I remember getting out there like 6 o'clock. He was playing tennis with the fellow who was killed...

GREENE: Dean Markham.

ENGLISH: Dean Markham. And I talked to him at very, very great length, and that was the most forceful that I had been during the whole thing, that he just had to do it, that it was in his interest to do it. If he didn't do it, he was going to be in trouble in his home

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state, that these people are hostile to him and they were growing more and more hostile all the time. You know, I'm talking about the O'Connor people. And they had their deal with Johnson, and they were moving more and more that way. And I said, "Well, what do you want me to do?" He said, "You know, I think it's gone so far that maybe we can't do it anyway, even if I do something." He had come to that conclusion, that he couldn't switch it around. I said, "That isn't true. They're just waiting for the word." And I knew that that was so. People just wanted to be told. And he said, "Well, you know, what can I do to help you short of just coming out and saying, 'I'm for Nickerson' and calling people up?" I said, "Well, if people know that your inclination is toward Nickerson and that if they, on their own, make that decision that you will be happy with it." I said, "I think that's going to be enough." He said, "Okay, go and do that."

So I left there and I chartered myself a plane. And I'll never forget it because I had hurt myself playing football, I guess, somewhere. And my leg, when I got back from there – I was bleeding all over when I got back to the hotel down the street here, the Roger Smith. And I remember going out, and I hadn't changed my clothes and the blood was coming through. Well, I had them charter this plane for me. I was going to fly all over the state. And all the girls in the office came up. And I said, "My leg." He said, "You've got to do something about your leg," which was bleeding all over. So I said, "No, I've got to get that plane." So they went out and they got Kotex and they put it all over with Scotch tape and Scotch-taped my whole leg. And I took off with my leg covered with Kotex and flew to Buffalo and Rochester and Syracuse and Massena, wherever. I was telling all these leaders that Kennedy's preference was Nickerson, but they would have to make the decision on their own, and he would be very happy if that was the decision they were going to make, but he didn't want to tell them what to do and so forth, but that I was authorized to say that. Well, of course, I wasn't any more than out of the first city than O'Connor's people were behind me calling down to Washington on him. So by the time I got back, he said, "Well, maybe you ought to change it just a little" because Dick Dougherty [Richard Dougherty] from the

Los Angeles Times had it in exactly the terms I was giving. And they were running this now in the upstate papers, you know. And someone must have told him,

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“You might as well come out for him if that’s what you’re going to do.” He said, “Why don’t you stop that for a while and see if you can do something else.” Well, that was it. You couldn’t do anything after that. And right after that, then Suffolk County caucused, and it was over then.

GREENE: Anyways, he didn’t do much. Well, he did. He campaigned for O’Connor, but, I guess he wasn’t very enthusiastic...

ENGLISH: He had no enthusiasm for it. He couldn’t see O’Connor. Steve went up there to their headquarters and tried to help out, but they wouldn’t listen to him. So I think, if O’Connor had been smart enough to take the advice and run a Kennedy-like campaign, they would have taken the thing over anyway. But in the end, every time they’d get excited about it Steve would want to do something, and Larry Perez [Lawrence Perez] or someone who had no judgment would just veto the idea. And, of course, he was a terrible candidate. He had to spend every afternoon sleeping and cancelled everything and he didn’t want to attack Rockefeller.

GREENE: You know, that’s interesting because my impression from press reports was that the Kennedy’s did not want to lend themselves to this. They felt the whole team was of losers and they just didn’t want to be that much identified with it, rather than that they offered and the....

ENGLISH: Steve was up there, you know. He had that office right up there. He used to go up there every day most of the time, on the theory that – don’t forget that the polls showed Rockefeller was going to lose and that O’Connor was going to be a winner. Now, Kennedy had to contend with the fact that if you have a governor of the state, the governor is the fellow who calls the shots in the state and not the United States Senator, even if his name is Kennedy, and therefore you might as well do you best for him, you know, if he’s going to win. But I think they finally became accustomed to the idea that this fellow wasn’t going to win because he, O’Connor, didn’t want to win. It wasn’t Kennedy that didn’t want O’Connor to win; it was O’Connor that didn’t want to win. He didn’t want to do the things that you have to do to win, like

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get up in the morning and campaign all day and kick the other guy in the groin. He wouldn’t attack Rockefeller at all. You know, it was a patty cake exercise. We set up confrontations, and O’Connor would back out of them every time. It was terrible. He wasn’t like that in ’62. I think he might have gotten old, and he was real sick. You know, 3 o’clock in the afternoon he was worn out.

GREENE: Why did he go along with the whole thing, if he really wasn't interested?

ENGLISH: Well, the ambition is, you want to be governor, but you don't just want to do too much about it. And his wife was very aggressive, very aggressive. She wanted him to run. And she was all over the place. But a lot of – Steve spent his time up there. He gave a hell of a lot of time for that campaign. I didn't; I stayed out in my own county again. Jerry McDougal was my fellow. He went in there and he worked full-time. He did the schedules and all that stuff, and we brought Peter Smith and all the Kennedy people to do the advance. So we had Kennedy people in that campaign.

GREENE: You know, just to back up a little bit, did he take much interest that you know of at the convention as far as particularly the choice of the lieutenant governor?

ENGLISH: Oh, I know all about that. When he got up there, and now we're in this debacle, he said to O'Connor...I was in the room. O'Connor's saying, "Nickerson ought to run for lieutenant governor." Nickerson's going to – Nick's fact [contortion] is worse than Kennedy – "Get me out of here." And so Kennedy said, "Listen, Frank, you've got yourself pictured as a hack. You've been nominated here by the hacks, and what you have to do, if I were you, is put a new face on the thing, get yourself some young guys who haven't been in politics before, and you're going to be the big reformer. You know, come out with some people like that and put your ticket together that way." O'Connor thinks that's fine. So they say to me – this is O'Connor. Perez is in the room. O'Connor met Perez. Nickerson was there and Kennedy. So he

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said, "Well, will you try to get...We need an Italian." No, first he says, "Well, would you talk to Jack Weinstein, see if he would run?" He's now the federal judge in the eastern district, who was the county attorney in Nassau, who's a brilliant guy. He was a professor of law at Columbia at the time and a genius and a real way out, left-wing guy, kept federal welfare cases in front of the court. So, you know, I said, "Jack is never going to do this, run for lieutenant governor or attorney general." So I go and I talk to Jack, and Jack says he'll do it. He won't run for lieutenant governor, but he'll run for attorney general because he'll run on a – he doesn't want to really win, but because he wants to whack the hell out of the state government and reform it into a federal system and so forth, he said he'd run. So I go back and say, "All right. Weinstein will run." Kennedy's now enthusiastic about that. And O'Connor's...And so he said, "Now, wait a minute. We need an Italian." So we go through Lagonegro [Edward T. Lagonegro], the major of Elmira and this whole business, and I say, "If you really want to do this," I say, "There's a guy up at the Maxwell School [Maxwell Graduate School of Citizenship and Public Affairs of Syracuse University] whose name is Joe Julian [Joseph D. Julian]."

GREENE: I know him, yes.

ENGLISH: So I say, “We’ll get...” Kennedy never heard of Joe Julian; O’Connor never heard of Joe Julian; and nobody else in the room except Nickerson. So I said, “He’s a bright young guy with a Ph.D. who ran for Congress, got some political experience. He’s Italian.”

GREENE: He’s got eleven languages, too.

ENGLISH: So he said, “Okay.” So they say, “Where is he?” So we called Syracuse and get Joe Julian and said, “Joe, we’re sending the Caroline after you. We want to talk to you.” So the Caroline goes off to Syracuse. Joe was out playing golf. He shows up back – now, he doesn’t even know what the hell he’s doing there so he comes back in his sports jacket. We said, “We want you to run for lieutenant governor.” So, of course, O’Connor hasn’t met him. He sees this young guy in a sports coat, and he says, “What happened

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to the “o” on your name?

GREENE: Juliano.

ENGLISH: Juliano. And he goes through this. And he thought he was too young. So that’s the end of that. Then we get into the room. Now Kennedy has left. Now we go into this big room and Marty – this is the leaders: Marty Tannanbaum the guy from Yonkers Raceway, what’s he doing in on it; Humphrey’s guy, Rosenberg, Marvin Rosenberg; Joe Crangle; Steingut; a couple of others; it would be McDonough [Henry G. McDonough], I guess somebody from the Bronx – anyway, the major leaders. [Interruption] Kennedy has now left. And we get into this meeting with all of these people sitting in the room. Now, of course, I don’t want to participate too much in this thing anyway. But they throw all these names up. Crangle’s got Sedita [Frank A. Sedita] and Steingut’s pushing Orin Lehman. And they’re going round and and round in this room. And of course, they knock out Jack Weinstein. I couldn’t have cared less. You know, this was an accommodation to O’Connor. We were trying to help....Juliano, they never even gave a call; they never even gave a call; they never even brought him into the room for these guys to see him. He just met him in the hall and O’Connor decided against that. And they go round and round. And they get into this big thing how Sedita would be....Crangle’s insisting on Sedita. And Steingut and Tannanbaum want Orin Lehman. And that’s how it ended up. And Kennedy didn’t know anything about it. Howard Samuels never got a call on it. There wasn’t one guy in the room for Howard Samuels. Not one. You know, we had some upstate leaders there, Bill McKeon and some of those others. Then, of course, the story came out that Kennedy knocked off Howard Samuels. He didn’t have anything....He was gone by that time. It was true that he never....Well, O’Connor didn’t want Howard Samuels.

GREENE: Yes, well, that's interesting because the story is that he didn't care who the lieutenant governor was because they weren't going to win anyway. But what you say contradicts that.

ENGLISH: Yeah, well, he said, "Now you're the nominee and you do what you want." But he said, "I think your problem is that you're

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being nominated here in what will be called a boss-ruled convention. You're a hack candidate. You're an organization guy. They're going to yell deal. Your way to come out of that has come out with these new young guys." Now, he didn't have anybody in mind, of course. He never met – to this day he hasn't met – I don't think he ever met Joe Julian when he came in. By that time I guess I was off in the other....Of course, he knew Jack Weinstein.

GREENE: He would have liked Weinstein?

ENGLISH: He liked Weinstein. He did promote that. He was a little enthusiastic about that.

GREENE: Well, anyway...

ENGLISH: But it was one of those things. You know, we're standing around and O'Connor's saying to Kennedy, "You get Nickerson to run." And Nickerson's going, "He's some kind....It's ridiculous."

GREENE: He wanted him to run for the lieutenant governor?

ENGLISH: O'Connor did, yes.

GREENE: Nickerson wouldn't hear of it?

ENGLISH: Oh, God. You know, you ought to see, you know, the contortions he was going through. Nickerson can be very WASPish at times. He could never see himself as the second man to Frank O'Connor.

GREENE: So where did Samuels come from? I'm not sure I even recall.

ENGLISH: Well, I was somehow responsible for that. Because now I got out of this meeting and they were really....You know, the way these guys – you have racetrack owners and so forth. I was pissed off as hell because now I had gotten Jack Weinstein and I had gotten Freddy Ohrenstein [Manfred Ohrenstein] to write a nominating speech for him. Jack Weinstein had written an acceptance

speech. So now I'm peeved as hell.

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And our own delegation, Nassau, was steaming. So I'm walking back to the convention hall from up here and I meet Ray Jones. They haven't consulted him and they put Orin Lehman on, who was from New York County. So we get down on the floor and I say, "Who do you want?" The upstate people, of course, Johnny Fabrizi and group, are for Samuels. "This is what the people upstairs in the room want. What do you want?" They said, "Samuels." I said, "Fine. Unit rule. We're off with Samuels." You know, this is when you become cynical.

Oh, we had another guy, Petito, I forgot, who would have been a rotten candidate, who's got nothing up here. And he was being promoted by our own delegation. And his name kept coming up as the Italian. I wasn't for that. But Steingut kept saying that he was going to put him on.

GREENE: I just wanted to ask you, in conclusion, what your feelings were about Robert Kennedy's handling of this whole thing, and why you think he did what he did, and what else he might have done?

ENGLISH: Well, I never became too embittered about it because I saw some of the problems that he was faced with. He was a national figure. He was getting fed information from around the state that Nickerson did not have charisma, did not do well on television or some of those things, and that he might, number one, be backing a fellow who might not be able to beat Rockefeller. He, Kennedy, again didn't want to be marked with a defeat. And he would be responsible for raising money, for instance. He'd have to get all the way into it. So putting all those things together, I knew what some of his advisers were telling him. And it was also evident to me that Nickerson did not have people all over the state saying, "It must be Nickerson," and saying, "You, Kennedy, must do something about him getting nominated." I mean he didn't have that kind of thing going, although that is not to say that he did not have support and that many of the people, including newspapers, knew that he was the better candidate. So Nickerson was more embittered about it than I was, you know, for good reason because it was him, and he could never understand it really.

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GREENE: Did that kind of spoil their relationship?

ENGLISH: No, it didn't. It didn't destroy it, but I mean a lot of people on Nickerson's staff... You know, one guy wrote a book. Al Connor, Nickerson's speechwriter, in his book that he wrote, The Tigers in Tammany, in his last chapter has a thing in there where he really puts it to Kennedy for lack of courage. And a lot of Nickerson people were bitter at Kennedy. In fact, my own researcher, Laura Davis, would say "That no good son-of-a-bitch. He's a little tiger, and he's

arrogant, and he's self-serving," and all that kind of stuff. There was a lot of bitterness directed toward Kennedy from Nickerson people who thought that he, you know, was not a profile in courage in that particular situation.

GREENE: But you kind of understood more than they did what his problems were?

ENGLISH: Well, of course, I had gone through it all. No one else had had the conversations with him but me over a long period of time. He never said he would. I just expected that he would. It had gone on so long that I must have gotten rather accustomed to it before it happened, so after the event I wasn't that much annoyed. And I thought there'd be another day, too. I also knew that if my bitterness did show, or even if it were inside me, that I was fully expecting to come back with Nickerson another day. So there's no sense in ruining that. And I knew that he would pump that into his own thinking, too. I mean he said, "If I could appoint a governor, I'd appoint Nickerson." I mean he was sincere about it. He was just saying he may not have an electable character.

GREENE: Well, I don't want to take any more of your time. The only other thing I wanted to ask you was any suggestions you have for things we might talk about next time, political things that you got into or got him into. You know, if you could just rattle off a couple things, then I could prepare for them.

ENGLISH: Well, one of the things I thought is the business of the state chairman's conference, which we had just before he announced, about two weeks before

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he announced, in that White House...

GREENE: Yes, Chairman Burns mentioned that, yes.

ENGLISH: And the thing with Johnson. And Kennedy telling me to jump over the fence into the White House and that whole bit, which is really kind of funny. It shows a different side of his character.

GREENE: Did you get into the Utica situation where he was...

ENGLISH: Well, I didn't campaign in Utica, no. I mean I supported Assaro [Dominick Assaro] and I knew what was going on and I was associated, but I didn't go up there and campaign.

GREENE: What about the constitutional convention? Did you get in on that at all?

ENGLISH:

Yes.

GREENE:

Okay. Well, maybe those are some things, and then we could start talking about '68, too.

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