

Milton S. Gwirtzman Oral History Interview – RFK#4, 04/04/1972
Administrative Information

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Biographical Note

(1933 - 2011). Chief speech writer, Robert F. Kennedy Senate Campaign, 1964; director or public affairs, Robert F. Kennedy for President, 1968; author (with William vanden Heuvel), *On His Own: Robert F. Kennedy, 1964-1968* (1970), discusses staffing RFK's 1968 presidential campaign and providing research to speechwriters for the campaign.

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Milton S. Gwartzman – RFK#4

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Fourth Oral History Interview

With

Milton S. Gwirtzman

April 4, 1972
Washington, D.C.

By Roberta W. Greene

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

GREENE: Last time we were discussing the people that you brought on as researchers; most of them were people you had worked with before and you said they had worked out very well. Did you ever feel the need for more experts among the research staff, or did you have enough people to draw on outside of your own circle?

GWIRTZMAN: No, I never felt that need because I've always been of the opinion that for a campaign, the best people in research should be generalists who are able to draw upon outside experts. If you bring in an expert, he can only be an expert in one or two fields, and he naturally tends to seek to have the campaign emphasize those issues even though, from the political standpoint, they may not be the best ones to stress. And he also tends to go into too much detail on those issues, when they are being used by the campaign. A good generalist, however, can take ideas from a lot of experts and assess which will be best to advance the campaign; he can also put them in a way that is understandable to the public, and is related to the other issues in the campaign. So I never felt the need for more experts.

GREENE: Did you hear criticism about it, though? I've heard mainly on the foreign policy side.

GWIRTZMAN: Foreign policy? No. I wouldn't have been involved in that. I think Peter [Peter B. Edelman] was.

GREENE: Can you think of people who were particularly helpful, that you drew on as outside experts?

GWIRTZMAN: I'll have to think about that. Because the campaign research effort really grew more out of the Senate operation, and because

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Peter had been in touch with outside experts for the senator's Senate operation, he would have tried to use the same people. And since Robert Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] spoke about so many issues as a senator, there weren't too many in the presidential campaign he hadn't had work done on previously. Natural resources might have been one. In that case we drew on Ben Stong [Benton J. Stong] and Vic Reinemer [Victor O. Reinemer] from Senator Metcalf's [Lee Metcalf] staff. There might have been a few others.

GREENE: What do you remember about the assembly of new positions and materials and area studies that had to be done in the early part of the campaign?

GWIRTZMAN: There, too, because the campaign started so quickly there wasn't time for much of that. Had Robert Kennedy not run in 1968, and decided instead to run in 1972, there would have been a period of a couple years during which new material could have been pulled together and updated. But with such a sudden decision, it was hard enough to do what had to be done to let the public (especially in the primary states) know about the positions he had already taken, than there was in finding new positions to take. There was also the fact that when he began making campaign speeches, he was much more comfortable with the positions he had taken as a senator because he didn't have time to listen to both sides and give the kind of consideration that you have to pay when deciding who will get a newly created position.

So, as far as what went out to the public in the first weeks of the campaign, we pretty much depended on the positions he had taken already. There might have been research groups starting to prepare other, new issues. But again, in my opinion, that sort of thing in a campaign is largely "make-work." You have certain people such as academics, lawyers, and others who want to help; they can't give full time; they work in the time they have. They all want to contribute to the campaign the expertise they have, because it's much easier to prepare positions on areas that the candidate is familiar with. For example, a campaign for president will always have a lot of people—volunteers—working on position papers on the president's role vis-a-vis administrative agencies of government just because there are a lot of Washington lawyers who know about that subject and have ideas. It keeps them busy.

GREENE: I can remember in 1960 there were people who sort of fit this description who used to get rather angry and their egos used to get bruised because they were spending a lot of time preparing these things and they weren't getting out. Do you remember complaints of that sort in '68?

GWIRTZMAN: In 1968? No, not specifically, but it's very normal. Because as someone works on any given research topic, it becomes more and more important in their eyes. So by the time they're finished they think that the success of the campaign depends upon it. [Interruption]

GREENE: Okay. You were talking about how people....

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GWIRTZMAN: Then when the candidate doesn't use it, they could be upset. I know how they feel because there are campaigns in which I've been in the same position they have. It's always difficult to free up the bottleneck between the large number of people who have ideas and are interested in a candidate, and the small number of issues on which a candidate, as a practical matter, can do or say. Especially when he's being urged by the pollsters and his political staff to just emphasize one or two issues and not go all over the lot.

To think of all the people who suggest issues to Governor Wallace [George C. Wallace], and he just talks about busing and tax reform. I know that in 1960 Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] and Mike Feldman [Myer Feldman] tried to encourage as many people as possible to send in a memo on anything that they were interested in. This was done on the supposition that that would make them more involved in the campaign. Occasionally submitted material would turn out to be very useful, such as what J.K. Galbraith [John Kenneth Galbraith] submitted in 1960. In 1968, I don't think it was done as much. One of the reasons was that the people who were sending in memos were then of a high enough position and a level in their communities that they really wanted to see their stuff used. It couldn't be, because it was not written with knowledge of the senator's style, or of the thrust of the issue campaign.

GREENE: What about the academic committees that were organized to put position papers together and give day-to-day help as needed? Was that this type of thing, to just bring people in and get them involved, or were you seriously seeking this kind of help?

GWIRTZMAN: Are you talking about Mike Curzan [Michael Curzan] and his people now?

GREENE: Yes, and Abe Chayes [Abram Chayes] in Cambridge [Mass.] and Peter Fishbein in New York. These are the names that I've heard most often.

GWIRTZMAN: That's right. You had separate operations. Mike Curzan, who had worked on Senator Kennedy's staff, had a number of people, especially in the domestic economics and tax and international economic area—Washington people and professors in some of the East Coast institutions. He worked with them in order to get their ideas, basically in the form of legislation and programmatic proposals that could be made into the legislative proposals. He had done that for Robert Kennedy's Senate operation prior to his announcement for the presidency. A couple of the things that Kennedy introduced—I think in regards to urban problems—had their genesis in the Curzan group. Kennedy liked what it was doing. So that continued.

I don't know about what Chayes did, but I know that Peter Fishbein did make some trips, especially when he was in California, to try to coordinate academics out there and persuade them to do the same sort of thing, and also in creating an issues group specifically directed at the California primary

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campaign, where national issues could be given a California twist, and where important local issues could be analyzed.

GREENE: Was it most highly organized in California, this sort of thing?

GWIRTZMAN: With the exception of what Mike Curzan was doing, and what Chayes perhaps was doing, but of the primary states, yes. California, especially because there was more time before that primary (it was not to be until late June) and there were more people.

GREENE: And more campuses.

GWIRTZMAN: But, I don't think that that was specifically directed at Kennedy's speeches.

GREENE: I think that these were primarily for position papers.

GWIRTZMAN: That's right. Let me say that that sort of an operation—I said before I have a low opinion of its usefulness in a campaign aside from offering a sense of participation. These people are of a high level. They need coordination; they need care and feeding; it takes the time of someone fairly close to the top of the organization to work with them. It takes much more time than it is worth in terms of what actually can be used either by the candidate himself or by those working for him.

Position papers can be developed and published in Washington when the candidate is away. But because they don't come out of the candidate's mouth, they don't get as much attention from the media. Once a man is out campaigning around the country, he has to make primarily political speeches. They can't have a great deal of substantive detail in them. They can be substantive in terms of program and proposals, but they can't go into the sort of detail that anyone who is expert in a field feels is necessary for a complete and effective

presentation. Yet there is another very important purpose that they serve. If a campaign is successful, there has to be a new administration. This sort of thinking, going on during the campaign period, does provide a basis for the proposals an administration can make in its early months. It can also provide a nucleus of people who can work on them in the new government. I'm sure that, insofar as Robert Kennedy authorized this, it was not just to get these people to feel they were participating in his campaign, but to get them started thinking of how to handle the upcoming issues, that people would expect solutions to by the new government.

GREENE: Did you get involved in the preparation of these position papers?

GWIRTZMAN: No.

GREENE: No. Not at all.

GWIRTZMAN: Peter and Bill Smith [William Smith] were in charge of those.

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GREENE: Was Bill Smith the fellow from Joseph S. Clark's office?

GWIRTZMAN: Yes. When Peter went on the road, Bill took over the day-to-day management of the research section here. And I think that most of the position papers that were made public came out during that period.

GREENE: What do you remember about the speeches during the first couple of trips and why did the people react with alarm?

GWIRTZMAN: After the announcement, there was the short southern trip and then there was the California trip. In both of those trips, there was an enormous outpouring of crowds and emotion for Robert Kennedy.

This outpouring of emotion was viewed to be anti-Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson]. Insofar as it was so strong and so numerous, it could justify a stronger anti-Johnson content to the speeches. Also, Robert Kennedy was obliged, on his first speaking tour, to explain why he had suddenly decided to run. And he couldn't explain it in terms of his fear that Gene McCarthy [Eugene J. McCarthy] might be elected president. He had to elaborate upon the criticisms that he had been making of Johnson in the preceding year, and in his announcement statement. I think if you go back and read the press at the time he started his tour, he was talked of as a man who had been liberated. By becoming a candidate, he was liberated from all the fetters that had held back his criticism for so many years—really three years. He was suddenly able to speak his mind. So at first, the criticism of Johnson was understood. Then, a few phrases he used were picked up and publicized—like “calling upon the darkest recesses of the soul” and things like that—they were picked up and the press remarked that this was very strongly critical stuff, personally critical of Johnson, maybe

almost in an unfair way. Perhaps with such remarks, he did step over the line which separates criticism on substance and programs to criticism on a personality basis.

GREENE: That speech that you just referred to which became sort of the core of this criticism was Goodwin's [Richard N. Goodwin], is that right?

GWIRTZMAN: I believe so.

GREENE: But was this phrase Goodwin's? I know Robert Kennedy was ad-libbing so much at that point.

GWIRTZMAN: I'm not sure; I wasn't on the trip. I don't know. I would suspect so because Adam [Adam Walinsky], who was doing the bulk of the speechwriting, and he had been able to—keep that personal stuff out of the speeches even though Adam's speeches were very critical of the administration. But it sometimes happened—a certain phrase can be picked up and used to characterize all your speeches, and then the press goes back and looks at them all in that context. And of course, the personally

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critical parts were bound to receive more attention than the rest. That is inherent in the nature of all political coverage. They like to make it look like a prize fight.

GREENE: You were, I gather, back in Washington during this period?

GWIRTZMAN: Yes.

GREENE: Do you remember people back at headquarters or feedback through the L Street office of people who were alarmed and who....

GWIRTZMAN: Not as to the content of the speeches. There was some criticism and concern about the overall way in which Robert Kennedy was being pictured in this period. The media emphasis, especially television, was on the mob, the fact that he lost his shoe, that not only his clothes but his aides' clothes were being torn to shreds by these mobs. And at the same time there were, or had just been, riots in American cities in which mobs had run loose. So that it was—I used, at the time, the phrase “a traveling riot.” He was becoming identified with the riots by the other riots he was causing. It wasn't because of what he was saying; it was because of who he was—the dead president's surrogate and the embodiment of disaffection with the incumbent president—and the emotions that fact unleashed. But it created what I thought was an unfavorable image, and what other people in the campaign also thought was an unfavorable image.

GREENE: And what did you do to get this back to the candidate?

GWIRTZMAN: Well, we talked to him about it; we talked to each other about it.

GREENE: And there wasn't much disagreement?

GWIRTZMAN: Well, you couldn't stop the crowds from coming out and responding as they did. There was a lot of anti-Johnson sentiment in the country. You might have organized the schedule and the advance to reduce crowds, but Kennedy did not want this. Kennedy said to Fred Dutton [Frederick G. Dutton], who was traveling with him as his chief traveling aide, that he needed the crowds to sustain him. He had embarked on a tough campaign; he found a lot of antagonism against him among the liberals; he was finding antagonism in other places, too, like the labor leaders. He campaigned hard and it was exhausting. The only thing he had going for him, the most morale-building thing he had going for him, was his contact with these crowds. He needed them as a stimulus. He would not turn it off. They did try to modify them to some extent. Jerry Bruno [Gerald J. Bruno] and the advance men could create a crowd; they could create a mob scene. But by lowering the number of motorcades, as opposed to set speeches or things, they could adjust it somewhat. But what could not be adjusted was the fact that every time a crowd had a chance to get close to Robert Kennedy, a sort of emotional catharsis took place which dominated the news, and that didn't look good on television.

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GREENE: Was there a specific point, do you remember, at which a decision was made to try to tone that down and stay, for instance, farther from the campuses? Do you remember any special....

GWIRTZMAN: No, he didn't want to stay farther from the campuses, and this was not just a campus phenomenon.

GREENE: But wasn't that one of the concerns, that he was being pictured too much as the candidate of the young and this youthful enthusiasm, and not enough maturity and seriousness?

GWIRTZMAN: I think that might have come from the fact that reporters noted the fact that his crowds tended to have a lot of young people in them. Quite the contrary to what you suggest, there was a deliberate effort to go to campuses for two reasons. First of all, it was on campus that McCarthy was felt to be strongest, and Kennedy had to go on campus in order to match his appeal against McCarthy's. Secondly, Kennedy recognized that the only really effective source of mass workers in the primary states in that year, as now, was young people, especially those who are going to college and don't have to work all day, and therefore have time to campaign. He felt strongly about going onto campuses in order to build up cadres of workers for the primary states.

GREENE: Yes. Now I was thinking really more ahead like towards California when he really did—I thought at least—begin to put his foot down and say he just didn't want to go to any campuses. I can remember, in fact, somebody telling me that they did schedule a campus appearance after this order was given and it infuriated Bob Kennedy.

GWIRTZMAN: Well, I'm not aware of that. But that might have been after he found that he could not compete for college workers with McCarthy; McCarthy was attracting the more activist students. The Indiana primary showed that the students who would go in and work for Kennedy were not as good, they weren't as motivated, they had to have their way paid. So maybe after that he found that the strategy wasn't working and so there was no reason to go to the campuses. He did do campuses in California.

GREENE: Yes. But I'm sure there was one point at which he said he didn't want to go to any more campuses and not to schedule him, and they did for some reason. I don't remember the details.

GWIRTZMAN: Well, very often when you go into a town in the middle of the day, the only place you can get a crowd is a campus, especially on a working day.

GREENE: Yes. There was some specific reason why they had to go through with this appearance, but he was very dissatisfied. But that, I think, was really towards the very end.

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Maybe it's best if you start by explaining just what you were doing in the first few weeks, let's say prior to Johnson's withdrawal, where you were and....

GWIRTZMAN: That would have been a two-week period, about?

GREENE: Yes. Just exactly.

GWIRTZMAN: Which isn't much time. But we first had to put a staff together. We had a lot of applications and a lot of people had to be interviewed in order to winnow out those who could do the work from those who couldn't. That takes a great deal of time in the first days of any campaign. It's very hard to tell just from resumes who will be good.

GREENE: Now you're talking about the actual research staff or supportive staff?

GWIRTZMAN: Research staff.

GREENE: So the people didn't sort of come in naturally....

GWIRTZMAN: Well, a lot of people came in naturally, but they weren't necessarily the best people to do this sort of thing. Some people came in, and found they didn't like it, and left. But to put together the eight or ten full-time people took some time and some negotiation with the places they were working. We had to bring Kaden [Lewis Kaden] back down from New York; we had to get P.J. Mode out of his law firm; we had to make some arrangement for Bruce Terris to work—he had been working for the vice president. There were others. But then, in addition to that, there were a lot of people who applied; there were a lot of people in other parts of the campaign who sent in resumes of people who had contacted them about working. So there was that purely administrative work to do.

Then we had to begin to set up some sort of system to service the rest of the campaign with the materials we were developing—the citizens' committees, the press section, the other parts of the organization. We established a liaison with them which basically consisted of spending a lot of time visiting with them and answering their questions; and we also gave interviews to outside journalists who had issue questions.

GREENE: Did you do anything yourself to promote that kind of an interview? Were you anxious to get that kind of coverage?

GWIRTZMAN: No. It worked out naturally. Pierre Salinger [Pierre E.G. Salinger] was in the press office, and if there were issues on which the people he saw wanted more detail about than he could supply them, he'd call up and they'd come up to see one of us. I think we started on the McCarthy voting record then; that was another project.

GREENE: Yes, that was very early.

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GWIRTZMAN: Peter Edelman began his project of putting all of Kennedy's positions down in one document, which was essential to the rest of the campaign. We had one meeting on print material and buttons with Chermayeff [Ivan Chermayeff] and Jerry Cummins [Gerald Cummins]. We had a couple meetings with Guggenheim [Charles Eli Guggenheim] who was doing some television, Papert [Frederic S. Papert] who was also doing some television. In those two weeks, in addition to answering requests from the traveling party, it was largely organizational work. Remember, we were beginning to gear up for what we thought would be a six or seven month campaign, through November. And while we didn't work slowly, we tried to do the things that had to be done first, first.

GREENE: When you say requests from the traveling party, what kinds of things were they after, in those first few weeks?

GWIRTZMAN: Well, Adam or Jeff [Jeff Greenfield] or Fred would call for specific facts and figures when preparing speeches. And then if anything occurred to the candidate concerning him, facts or figures that would be useful, they would relay those because they didn't have the resource material with them to answer those questions from the road.

GREENE: Was there any problem in coordinating all of this?

GWIRTZMAN: Well, there is always a problem in coordinating between a traveling party and the office back in Washington in a presidential campaign. First of all, there's a communications difficulty; they're going from place to place and it's often hard to reach them and it's hard for them to reach you. Secondly, for that part of the trip in California there's a time difference of three hours, which makes your 9 o'clock calls not useful to them because it's 6 o'clock in the morning. And so you have to overcome that. There's also a problem, because they're traveling, in that they may be out of touch with the day's news or the mood created by that news, or they may be getting a different media than you are. You read the New York Times and the Washington Post and the news magazines; they may create a different structure of the kind of things that are needed than the structure as sensed by the traveling party. Very often we would recommend things based on what we were reading, which they didn't feel were really relevant.

GREENE: And how'd you iron that out?

GWIRTZMAN: The other thing is that we knew what the candidate was saying only from news dispatches. We didn't hear his entire speech, we didn't see his entire speech, and so our concept of what he was doing was different than theirs. Yet our concept of what he was doing was more in accord with the reality of what the voters were getting than theirs was. All these things are natural problems that you can overcome only with time and good rapport with the traveling party, and with the people in Washington spending time in the field.

GREENE: Well, what kind of procedures did you finally establish for ironing out some of these problems? I believe there were certain

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meetings and....

GWIRTZMAN: Well, it's hard to do it with meetings. It can only be ironed out over time and with constant communication...

GREENE: On a day-to-day basis?

GWIRTZMAN: ...on a day-to-day basis, which is difficult because the people in the field are on the run, and exhausted, and they also have deadlines for what they are preparing. It's a luxury for them, except when there's an emergency, to be able to return your calls quickly. The people back in the headquarters often feel sort of out of it. The call they may get is their only contact with the traveling party, which is where the candidate is and thus where the action is. So you just have to keep trying to work at that. There were no meetings, obviously, till the party came back from the first trip, which would have been after—what?—ten days or so?

GREENE: Yes, I think that's about right.

GWIRTZMAN: And then there was an exchange of information. Adam and Jeff used the Washington research office as it should be used, and that is for research. They had a speech idea, they came in and called a quick meeting, tried to get some researchers together to work on what they needed.

GREENE: Was there any problem of getting the kinds of things that you were preparing and thought were important across to them, to get them to use it in their speeches?

GWIRTZMAN: At that time, no, because at that time we were—at least I was—still getting oriented. I didn't see how the campaign was going to the extent I needed to know what else should be prepared, until I got to the Indiana law and order issue, which we'll discuss. I'd say that if we did have ideas—you can't just call the traveling party and say "do a speech on tax reform"—you have to explain why, and then they say where. The candidate can't just get up and give a speech.

GREENE: Just to clear this up in my own mind, you weren't just preparing materials and then sending it ahead to them to use as they saw fit; it was a question of their requesting specific things and you would follow up accordingly?

GWIRTZMAN: Yes. Now there were some ongoing speech memos being prepared, which later on were sent, which could be the basis of a speech. But in that period, and all the way through, the initiative and direction as to what speeches should be given was up to the traveling party. They prepared the speeches. Now, that started to break down in the speeches

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to political rallies and dinners, because neither Adam or Jeff had written many political speeches of that nature. This was because after 1964, Robert Kennedy had not—except in the 1966 campaign—given a series of speeches to political audiences in rallies—which, of course, is what a presidential campaign mostly is. So Kennedy began to feel—this is what

Sorensen told me—that, while his issue speeches were fine, he didn't have a good political speech.

GREENE: Can you remember about when that took place?

GWIRTZMAN: When was the Philadelphia city committee dinner?

GREENE: I would have to look at the schedule to say exactly, but I think that was after he came.... after Johnson stepped down...

GWIRTZMAN: Oh, yeah, after Johnson, that's right.

GREENE: ...he went to New York, and then I know he came to Philadelphia, like, the next day, maybe the first or second of April, before he went to Indiana.

GWIRTZMAN: Yes, but I don't think it was then, I think it was a little later.

GREENE: I'm not sure of the day then.

GWIRTZMAN: No, he didn't come from Philadelphia, he came from New Jersey then.

GREENE: Well, when....

GWIRTZMAN: He might have done a little street campaigning in Philadelphia.

GREENE: Yes, because he met with Green [William J. Green, Jr.].

GWIRTZMAN: But this was a little later than that. I heard from Sorensen, who said that the senator didn't have a good political speech and could I try to write a political speech. And that was after the first Indiana trip, I think. Anyway, I had done a lot of political speechwriting for other candidates, and so I wrote a political speech and I went up to Philadelphia and finished it up there, in the hotel and he gave it. It was obviously, to the press traveling with him, a different kind of speech than he had been giving. It was a more traditional speech, aimed more at getting people to applaud, and it wasn't as much him as these other speeches. And it got a mixed reaction with that crowd—it was not a Kennedy crowd. Moreover, it was not an overall political speech; it was a speech prepared specially for the audience at that dinner in Philadelphia, so he didn't use it later on. But there was that effort made. I don't think there....

He gradually evolved his own political speech for rallies. For example, on the Wabash Cannonball trip or the other trips through Indiana he had a set

speech that was basically the same—it concerned reconciliation, Vietnam and things like that. On those days, when I was traveling with him, I would just write a speech for the evening political rally, which was always held inside a hall. I remember we wrote one for Evanston [Ill.]. But there again, it didn't bring the house down, because he was not as good or as natural giving that kind of a speech, reading that kind of a speech, as he was giving a speech out of his own head. Even though for the set, evening occasions he'd prefer to have something on paper.

GREENE: How did he feel about the Philadelphia appearance? Do you remember his reaction?

GWIRTZMAN: He said it was the toughest audience he'd ever had. He said that he had not convinced that audience. Part of his appearance there was obviously an effort to butter up Mayor Tate [James H.J. Tate], and the speech included passages which had that purpose. The press saw it as that, some of the newspapers wrote that. They said it wasn't him. Each of the times that I wrote a speech for him and he gave it, the press said it wasn't him, and it wasn't. He had developed a certain style over the past three years, and Adam working with him had helped him develop that style, which was a personal style. It may not have been the best style for political speeches in some of these primary states. But I don't think that to step out of your natural style into somebody else's style was the answer to the problem.

GREENE: That's interesting because I was going to ask you just a little while from now about a meeting that I've heard about at Hickory Hill where people complained about Adam in the traveling party and wanted him to come back to Washington and work primarily on major speeches from the headquarters here, and have you replace him in the traveling party. I wondered if you'd ever heard about this and if you knew what brought it on?

GWIRTZMAN: No, I didn't hear about that. I don't think it would have worked. I think that if there were complaints about Adam it was more because he was pushing certain views and emphasizing certain issues rather than that he wasn't a good speechwriter...

GREENE: No, I think that was it.

GWIRTZMAN: ...because he was far and away the best speechwriter Kennedy ever had.

GREENE: Yes.

GWIRTZMAN: And the style he wrote was more Robert Kennedy's than what anyone else could write. I think that sometimes they might have blamed Adam for Robert Kennedy being too emotional in his speeches on the road. I

don't think that was justified. But insofar as they wanted someone who wasn't as ideological to travel with him, someone who would confine his activity to smiting the speeches and not try to make policy, that could

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have been a reason. I wasn't at the meeting and I wasn't aware of it. I do know that before he went on the first major trip to Indiana, I wrote a speech for him, and Jeff wrote a speech for him which was alien to Adam's style. We went out to Hickory Hill—this could have been the day after that meeting, I don't know—and he read those two speeches and he very much preferred Jeff's speech because it was, as he said, more his style.

GREENE: Did he actually make the decision himself that Jeff should accompany Adam, or was that made elsewhere?

GWIRTZMAN: Well, Jeff started right away accompanying Adam as the backup speechwriter. He went on the first trip.

GREENE: I'm wrong on that then. I thought that didn't happen until after this Hickory Hill meeting, that it was decided that you should...

GWIRTZMAN: I think you're wrong, Jeff....

GREENE: I may very well be.

GWIRTZMAN: In fact, I'm certain that Jeff traveled all the way through. Now, there was a point that Adam.... You have to also understand that Fred Dutton was sort of the buffer on the road between the senator and everybody, but among others, between the senator and the speechwriters. The senator wanted the speeches to go through Fred, make sure they had Fred's approval. before he gave them.

After a while on the road Fred felt that it would be good for Adam and Jeff to drop back for a while, first of all, to rest up because it's a very exhausting thing to try to write a lot of speeches while you're traveling; secondly, to recharge their own batteries with facts and figures and ideas because it's impossible to do.... I mean, when Adam was writing in the senator's office he kept up a constant flow of reading of all the best materials from the newspapers and magazines and so he had a lot of fresh ideas. When you're on the road, you have to draw from the fund of information you have built up before, and it begins to run dry. So he dropped back, and naturally, as everyone or anyone would, when they're asked to drop back, he thought it was that he wasn't doing well, or wasn't wanted, or had gotten some bad press and was proving embarrassing. He was told to prepare a major speech on foreign policy which he did, the "No more Vietnams" speech. I went out to Indiana with John Bartlow Martin on that trip and we traveled for that week, including the Wabash Cannonball. Then Adam came back with his speech, after about a week. But I do not think that our replacing Adam and Jeff was intended to be a permanent arrangement—at least it wasn't put to me as a

permanent arrangement. Because I certainly couldn't have traveled all the time and still been able to write good speeches any more than anyone else could.

GREENE: Yes. No, I think the decision at Hickory Hill, particularly with Peter's intervention, was that this wouldn't work, but that Adam

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should have some help, and I thought it was at that point that Jeff came on full time.

GWIRTZMAN: I don't think so. It might have been...

GREENE: But that's very possibly inaccurate.

GWIRTZMAN: ...speculated up to then whether Jeff should stay all the time.

GREENE: Oh.

GWIRTZMAN: Later on, Peter traveled.

GREENE: Where would the complaints....

GWIRTZMAN: Let me say, Peter's decision, Peter's sense of the thing, was right—Adam and Jeff were the only two guys who could write well for Kennedy, could be given up to traveling. Maybe Sorensen could have, but he had other responsibilities in Washington.

GREENE: Where would the complaints about Adam, do you think, have come from?

GWIRTZMAN: On what score?

GREENE: Well, on this, those who might have felt that he was too brittle or that....

GWIRTZMAN: Have you asked him? Did you interview him?

GREENE: No, not yet, Larry's [Larry J. Hackman] going to start doing him very shortly.

GWIRTZMAN: Because he could probably tell you.

GREENE: Yes, but from your own perspective, do you have any feeling for that?

GWIRTZMAN: Not from any individuals, no. There was an ideological split in the campaign between those people who felt that Kennedy had to appeal to a more conservative group and those who felt that the campaign could be conducted as a revolution. There was a basic difference in judgment as to the climate of the country. Those who felt that Kennedy should be a more conventional figure realized—personalities completely aside—that Adam was not a speechwriter for a conventional figure, that he had certain strong ideas, that the ideas were liberal, or liberal-radical ideas, and that he was an effective advocate for those ideas. As a speechwriter who was willing to work all day and all night to put those ideas into speeches and as a

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very eloquent advocate of those ideas, he would be much more influential in making sure that the senator stayed with those ideas if he was writing his speeches on the road than if he were writing them in Washington. That's the first point.

Secondly, Adam did not compromise or bend. I mean, he felt that this was the right approach to winning the election. In the meeting we had on March 16 in Edward Kennedy's [Edward M. Kennedy] office he made a strong presentation with which most of the people there disagreed, about the sort of direction speeches should take. So they knew he wasn't willing to compromise either his ideology or what he thought was the best kind of politics for Robert Kennedy. That fact itself—having nothing to do with brittleness or anything like that—could have caused some people to feel that he wasn't the right person to travel with him.

Dick Goodwin didn't want to travel and write speeches. He had done that several times and he didn't feel that it was the most effective use of his time. He felt there was a need for someone who was as close to the senator as he, to superintend the making of the media, the television spots. So he wasn't available. There weren't very many people available. But it could have come from any one of the large number of people who felt that Robert Kennedy should be more conservative. This could have included O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien], O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell], you know, any large number of people.

Arthur Schlesinger [Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.] told me he was too old to write speeches. So, you know, there wasn't anybody left to write them besides us.

GREENE: You mentioned before the research that was being done on McCarthy's record. I don't think you said who was working on this primarily.

GWIRTZMAN: Well, I prepared the initial presentation out of the Congressional Quarterly voting index with the help of some people at Congressional Quarterly [Inc.]. This was a short, maybe eight page, nine page, memo of those votes on which McCarthy and Robert Kennedy differed since 1965, with a few votes prior to that for McCarthy. Some of McCarthy's committee votes, also. I showed that to Robert Kennedy one Sunday when he was back in Washington, and he was very, very interested in it. And he said, "This should get maximum distribution."

GREENE: Was he surprised?

GWIRTZMAN: Yes, he was. Because as Pierre Salinger put it once, most people thought that McCarthy was first born at the New Hampshire primary of 1968—that he had had no previous record. Well, he had been a liberal senator, but he hadn't been a leader any more than Keating [Kenneth B. Keating] had; and on certain things, especially in the finance committee, he had played interest group politics against the public interest and the liberal Democratic position. So once Robert Kennedy showed enthusiasm for the McCarthy piece, we tried to put it into wide distribution in the primary states.

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Now at the same time, we were hearing from the reform group people in New York, where they were having a very difficult time persuading people to get away from McCarthy on to Kennedy. They said that they badly needed a McCarthy broadside. And one group up there started to distribute one on their own, which had a lot of inaccuracies in it. And that brochure was attributed to our campaign.

GREENE: And that made problems?

GWIRTZMAN: That made a lot of problems. It got McCarthy very mad and his people mad.

GREENE: Were you able to do anything to remedy the situation?

GWIRTZMAN: Well, we disowned that document. But it was hard to persuade people that there was a difference between that document and our document. I think our document had one error. It wasn't an error in the vote or the characterization of the vote. I forget what it was, but it was the Congressional Quarterly's error, not ours.

GREENE: You had that in your book, but I can't remember. I should remember that, and I've forgotten.

GWIRTZMAN: But when you're dealing with liberal Democrats, a voting record is a very tricky thing. Because these men have voted thousands of times. Whereas in Keating's case we could point out a pattern of votes—twelve, fourteen, sixteen votes against housing, votes that a conservative upstate congressman and a new senator who still had those ties, would normally cast. McCarthy did not have a conservative voting record, and we had to be very selective in choosing votes. And the very fact of selectivity itself could be seen as being unfair in the eyes of those people who were strongly for McCarthy.

GREENE: Was there anybody during this same period researching the Johnson administration and feeding the fires on that?

GWIRTZMAN: Not to my knowledge. Since Kennedy had supported a lot of the things that the Johnson administration had done, since he voted with the administration on most issues, we had to limit ourselves to those issues where the real difference was that he would do more, or where he had suggested things that Johnson hadn't done. And when you consider that there were only two weeks between the time Kennedy announced and the time Johnson got out, there wasn't much time to do that.

GREENE: What about areas of disagreement, aside from law and order which really comes up in Indiana, what about some of the general disagreements? You tended, the last time I asked you in a general way about this, to minimize it. But, I think there really were some distinct disagreements about...

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GWIRTZMAN: Well, very often in a campaign there's a struggle within the staff for access to the candidate, and it can't be put in terms of... [Interruption] So in order to get the ear of the candidate and to become a significant part of the campaign, you have to do it by advancing a view of the campaign strategy in whatever area it is that is your competence. Where you have a number of people doing that, advancing different views simultaneously there's always conflict. It's no different from any other organization. Only it takes place under conditions of much more strain and stress: the time factor and the possibility of publicity, because of the great deal of newspaper attention. So you had these conflicts.

Now in addition to that, Robert Kennedy had an unusually large number of people who had dropped what they were doing in order to help his campaign, and who had personal relations with him going back a long period of time. He had an unusually large number of people who had his ear, and no one person who could mediate these differences before they got to him, though that tended to evolve later in the campaign. Now that sort of a situation creates another reason for what you call conflict. I wouldn't call it conflict. I mean, all these people wanted very much for Robert Kennedy to be elected and to succeed in the primaries. They all had had significant political experience politically—many had worked for President Kennedy [John F. Kennedy]. Those who hadn't had worked very closely with him in campaigns or other activities. And so they were all just doing what they.... They didn't see a campaign as a way to fight with one another; they saw it as a way to advance what they thought was the best viewpoint. And if that was in conflict with someone else's viewpoint, you know, there would be a contest and often some bitterness.

In addition to that, of course, there was some personal bitterness, that went back a long time, between former members of the old White House staff themselves. Between certain factions, between people who had been competitive with one another in these sorts of situations before. And finally, we were in a campaign where there was probably more than one person for each job, in several areas. You had two first-rate press secretaries, Salinger and Mankiewicz [Frank F. Mankiewicz], and someone had to decide how they were going to

best be used. Fortunately, they worked well together. You had two research directors, where you only needed one, but we worked together well. You had both Ted Sorensen, who I understand was told—I think by the senator—that he would be in charge or be the campaign manager from the political side, and Ken O'Donnell who was told by the senator that he would be the campaign manager from the political side. So you had more than one person working in the same area. And there, too, it takes time for these things to settle down and get into a smooth working relationship. Sometimes they never do. But at least certain people emerge.

Then finally you had the candidate away all the time from at least some of these people, and the difficulties in communication that caused. For example, John Seigenthaler who was very, very close to Robert Kennedy was sent to be in charge of northern California. But at the same time, some decisions on northern California were made by Fred Dutton, who would talk them over with Kennedy while they were on the road, and Seigenthaler resented this. Not that he resented Dutton or thought that Dutton was trying to get into a favored position in case Kennedy was elected president, but rather that it was his

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assigned jurisdiction and he'd made arrangements and he'd made agreements and then suddenly they changed. He didn't feel that he had had the chance to have his input. Unlike a corporation which is all in one building—where you can call everybody in and work it out at a meeting—in a campaign you have people in different parts of the country, and that caused confusion. I think those were the basic reasons for the disputes.

GREENE: Just on the specific people that you mentioned, Sorensen and O'Donnell, to begin with, did that ever really iron itself out? Were there finally clearly defined lines of authority?

GWIRTZMAN: Well, I think it was that Ted Sorensen was in overall charge of the Washington headquarters and whatever political contacts took place from here. O'Donnell was in overall charge of the relations, I think, with labor and with certain leaders in certain states with whom he had had a long-standing relationship, and he did it by traveling to see them.

But some things changed. Ted Kennedy had originally been assigned, at the meeting at Steve Smith's [Stephen E. Smith] house, all the non-primary states. Yet, when Indiana became a very significant battleground he took over general charge of the campaign in Indiana and diverted his effort there exclusively. That left some of the non-primary states, at least for time, to be handled by other people. Ted Kennedy and Kenny O'Donnell did not have a warm personal relationship, dating back to the time when Kenny O'Donnell had strongly urged Ted Kennedy not to run for the Senate, and going farther on, to the time when Kenny O'Donnell himself wanted to run for governor of Massachusetts, he felt that Ted Kennedy should have given him more support than he did. So there were grievances on both sides. It was hard for those two to work together.

With Mankiewicz and Salinger, I think it was the fact that Pierre had been a presidential press secretary and thought that being on the road, where the chief action was

was his natural job and someone else was doing it. And the others felt that, having been the senator's press secretary for 2-3 years, he should continue as such. I think that was finally resolved when Mankiewicz went out to California to work there. Salinger did not travel, but he got more control of the press relations operation.

GREENE: What about Ted Kennedy's relationship with Robert Kennedy's staff, particularly Walinsky and Edelman? Did they work well together?

GWIRTZMAN: Well, I think that there was a difference in—what I was talking about before—emphasis: traditionalist against New Left or whatever you want to call it; which issues should be stressed and what sort of an image should be cast in the campaign which caused some difficulty. Now I think that it was easier, much easier, for Peter to handle that with Ted Kennedy than it was for Adam because Adam did tend to be more assertive. And I think Adam at times poor-mouthed Ted Kennedy on things leading up to.... See, the people on Robert Kennedy's staff who were strong for him to run, when he finally ran, felt that they had been proven right and the

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others wrong. And since Ted Kennedy had been one of the strongest and most influential in keeping him from running, there was that difference. And I think there were probably some tensions between the two of them when they got together.

GREENE: Was that true, do you think, during the Senate period, too, or didn't it evolve until the campaign?

GWIRTZMAN: I don't think so. Because during the Senate period, if Ted Kennedy had any complaints about what Robert Kennedy was doing or the stands he was taking as a senator, he took them up with Robert Kennedy and they were explained to him. On the other hand, whatever influence he had in moderating Robert Kennedy's views went through Robert Kennedy and was seen in Robert Kennedy not accepting some of the recommendations from his staff—if that happened at all. I can't give you any examples. But again, once Robert Kennedy got on the road, he didn't see Edward Kennedy for long periods of time; so he could no longer act as the mediator between those two points of view.

GREENE: Did, let's say Ted Kennedy's—I won't use the word animosity—friction with Adam, extend to his staff, too? Was there a spirit of competition or....

GWIRTZMAN: No, I don't think so, because David Burke [David W. Burke], who was Ted Kennedy's chief staff man, had a very close relationship with Adam, admired him very much. And the others, I don't think, were involved in the areas Adam was involved in.

GREENE: And among the staffs in general, was there a problem at all?

GWIRTZMAN: No, there was.... When Ted Kennedy's organization took over the Indiana primary, I think there were press reports that this was resented by the Robert Kennedy people, but the fact is that Robert Kennedy didn't have that kind of a personal organization then available that he could throw into the field for that kind of campaign. He had a few people from New York, who in fact did go out to Indiana to work, but not enough to run a whole campaign. The advance men that Robert Kennedy had—there were more of them and they were very good, but they tended to work under Bruno, and Ted Kennedy tended to look to Joe Gargan [Joseph F. Gargan], his cousin, for advance work. So there might have been—I wasn't involved in that, but there might have been—some friction there. I know that some members of Ted Kennedy's staff felt that Bruno was too blunt and didn't take personal feelings into account as much as an advance man should. And there were some examples of that in Indiana where Bruno and his advance people went in and ran the advance operation within Ted Kennedy's organization. And that might have led to some conflict.

GREENE: Did you get the feeling that the absence of a sort of 1960 Robert Kennedy figure was a problem in '68—the fact that there was no chief of staff?

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GWIRTZMAN: Well, yes, that was alluded to a number of times. It was mainly the fact, as in 1964, that Robert Kennedy could not be the candidate and the campaign manager too. Now Steve Smith took on that assignment to a certain extent. But once he got the go ahead to go to California, he couldn't work too much in the other states. Authority was divided, I'd say, between Smith and Sorensen in some things, and Dutton. Dutton, traveling with Kennedy, gained more and more influence. He became the person through whom Robert Kennedy communicated with everyone else while he was on the road. So there was no one person, and where there is no one person, coordination between two or three or five becomes more difficult, especially when they're physically separated from one another.

Their coordination was the purpose of the meeting that they had the day of the Indiana primary, the purpose of the meeting that they had before the trip to Indiana after the King [Martin Luther King, Jr.] assassination. It was to have been the purpose of the meeting after the California primary. But again, at that level, I think it was more lack of coordination than you normally get in any presidential campaign, except one where you have one very strong person, like I guess John Mitchell [John Newton Mitchell], who was allegedly able to coordinate everything in 1968, But you just didn't have that. Steve Smith came as close as anyone, but it was hard enough for him to do that just in the state of California, which is as big and diverse and difficult, politically.

GREENE: Was there any problem at L Street with people knowing who they should go to on various matters?

GWIRTZMAN: I think L Street got itself worked out very well in the last six or eight weeks of the campaign, when Sorensen was there on a regular basis. Because he was here and Steve was in California, no one was able to stay in touch with Steve. But if there were problems, I wasn't in Washington enough to know about it. [Interruption]

GREENE: In terms of specific areas that people disagree on as far as the approach, one was the image of Robert Kennedy that you wanted to create and how you would create it. There was some disagreement about that, right?

GWIRTZMAN: Well, it wasn't a matter of creating an image of Robert Kennedy, because he was a well-known person.

GREENE: But rather where the emphasis would be put.

GWIRTZMAN: It was more a matter of trying to strengthen the justification for his candidacy once Johnson was out. Once Johnson was out, I assumed that there would be a great rush toward Robert Kennedy. You know, there wasn't, and his whole emphasis had to change. He had entered—as he stated, “I'm not running against a person, but to change policy”—to run against the policies of the Johnson administration, and now Johnson wasn't going to be the nominee. McCarthy was now an opponent, and he had a whole

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different set of policies from Johnson. It was not yet sure what Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] was going to do or how successful he would be. So there had to be a change in emphasis after that to a more positive emphasis.

[BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I]

...as identifying the concerns of people in putting forward positive programs directed at those concerns in order to outweigh the emphasis that was being given to the personal reasons for Robert Kennedy ruthlessly seeking to advance himself.

GREENE: Was there much you could do from a research point of view?

GWIRTZMAN: Well, we could prepare his stands on issues in such a way that they could be popularized and easily disseminated to as many people as possible. We could also be on the alert for new issues and prepare positions on them. But we could just prepare the basic material; the distribution of that material would have to be through printed matter, through television, and through other things.

GREENE: What about the coordination of the research—well, we talked about the research for speeches, but what about coordinating that with the scheduling? Did you get involved in that at all so that the right things were said in the right place and....

GWIRTZMAN: Well, there are two ways to approach that. The preferred way, but always the most difficult way, is for the people who are in charge of issues to determine what it is that the candidate should say and then for the schedulers to find an appropriate place for him to say it. It's always difficult, because you can't tell too far in advance what sort of things the candidate should say; the schedule has to be prepared farther in advance. So, usually in a non-primary state, for example, this could be done by accepting invitations to speak at major events. If you had something to say on economic policy or union policy, you could tell that to the scheduling people and urge them to accept an invitation, or drum one up for a union meeting. In a primary state it was more difficult because there you had to go into certain cities and certain places, and the number of forums for substantive speeches in primary states are limited. Most forums are out of doors and political rallies. So usually it was the other way around. The schedules would tell us what the schedule was and then we would prepare speeches to fit it.

I did prepare a memorandum for all the advance men as to what the needs of the speechwriters and issue people were. But that memo was limited to a request for information about the nature of the audience, the nature of the hall, whether it was inside or outside and other things that are useful in deciding what style of speech to write.

GREENE: Did this iron itself out in the course of the campaign?

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GWIRTZMAN: Well, insofar as it could. We kept in close touch with them so that we'd know as soon as possible what sort of events were being scheduled. Where we had types of forums to suggest, we did. But the creation of a schedule is a hectic thing and things change from hour to hour. So it's always catch it as catch can on that. But it worked out as well as I've seen it work out. For example, once the scheduling was concentrated in the primary states, after the Indiana campaign began, Bruno moved to Indiana. And I was in Indiana and I was in the room next to him and so I could go and keep in close touch with what he was preparing, give him what information we had, find out what information they had, and this proximity was what made it easy.

GREENE: And Adam would get in on this whole discussion, too?

GWIRTZMAN: Yes, when he could. Of course he was traveling. His traveling was scheduled to end temporarily before this Indiana trip began. So we had a period of time before the senator was going to come into Indiana

when John Martin and I could work with the scheduling people directly. Once a person doing the writing goes on the road, it's somewhat harder because it's harder to stay in touch. If you get a schedule three days in advance and you look at it and see what has to be prepared.

GREENE: I've got a memo here from Schlesinger where he says that he's had feedback criticism about Robert Kennedy's invoking the president's name too frequently and playing on nostalgia. [Interruption] He says that this is backfiring and you should try to stop it. Was there a lot of feeling, were there many people who felt that, and what was done about it?

GWIRTZMAN: Well, the very fact of Robert Kennedy running for president was an invocation of President Kennedy. So he didn't have to say much to create that feeling. But I guess he did use President Kennedy's name, and his policies on many occasions, especially in his extemporaneous speeches, and his answers to questions, and every time he did it, it was blown way out of proportion.

Just like the time in the 1964 senate campaign when he took John-John [John F. Kennedy, Jr.] to the zoo, and that was written as if he was pressing John-John into the service of his campaign. Now, the people who had worked for President Kennedy were the ones who were the most sensitive to it. I don't think it was done very much, but you couldn't control everything Robert Kennedy said. And since so much of his experience in national politics was related to the Kennedy administration, very often when he was answering a question, for example, he would make reference to that.

In addition, his book on the Cuban missile crisis came out at that time; his book on national policies, To Seek A Newer World, came out at that time, which also had references to President Kennedy. His speech on "no more Vietnams" referred to the Cuban missile crisis. So there are a lot of things that were hark-backs. When you were discussing Vietnam policies and talking about the difference between the policies that existed between the two administrations, that was.... But the thing is that other people could do it as a natural part of their campaign and it wouldn't be resented; but when he did it, some people did resent it. And so he was advised to keep it to a bare minimum.

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GREENE: Did he in any way disagree with this?

GWIRTZMAN: No. Let me say this also, that the polls we were getting, and the polls we saw, turned up a lot of sentiment that people didn't think as highly of Robert Kennedy as they had of his brother. I don't know the extent to which he was aware of that, but the idea that he was trading on his brother's name was high in the polls. I don't know whether that was a real determinant of how people felt, or whether that was just the sort of thing that people who opposed him for other reasons said as an easy answer to a pollster. But since it was there, we tried to respond to it.

It was hard. Without any encouragement from his organization, a couple of times he went to speak at a Democratic party dinner and they would have a big picture of President Kennedy in back of the rostrum. And so he would get up to speak and there would be a photo

opportunity that became a newspaper photograph of him with his brother's face in the background. And that gave people the impression that he was.... But that wasn't his fault.

GREENE: Did you deliberately try to avoid harking back, as you put it, to the Kennedy administration in research materials and speeches?

GWIRTZMAN: No.

GREENE: When it came naturally you just....

GWIRTZMAN: No, when it came naturally.... For example, in several political speeches he would end with quotes his brother used in the 1960 campaign in that community. My own feeling was that putting that at the end, as the way to end a speech, was not invoking the name because he had had the whole rest of the speech in which to make his own case.

GREENE: Well, were you in Indiana on the thirty-first when Johnson withdrew?

GWIRTZMAN: No. No, I flew up to New York on the last shuttle. After I heard Johnson's speech I instinctively felt I should go up there to be at his apartment. They were flying in; they didn't get the news till they arrived in New York. And I knew there would be a lot to do the next couple of days because the entire situation had changed. And I felt that one thing I could do was to try to anticipate the questions that would arise at a press conference that he had already had scheduled, and help work with him on what the answers should be.

GREENE: Can you remember the details of the conversations that night when he came back?

GWIRTZMAN: Well, I arrived at the apartment after he and the people who flew in with him were already there, so I was not in at the beginning of it. But when I got up there, they were having a meeting on

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what to do. And the first thing he wanted to make sure to do was to send a message to President Johnson and to arrange a meeting with President Johnson. I don't know whether that was his idea or whether Sorensen had suggested it, but they were discussing the arrangements for doing that. Next he wanted to, you know, have something positive to say at his already scheduled press conference the next morning because he knew it would get a lot of attention.

GREENE: You said yourself that you felt, I guess, a sense of elation, that people would start coming over to Robert Kennedy. And that seemed to have been the general feeling except with Robert Kennedy. Is that accurate?

GWIRTZMAN: Well, I guess.... Now, I don't know what his feeling was, but, you know, he must have felt there was an opportunity because he called up many of the uncommitted leaders that night, governors, senators, asking them to just hold and not make any commitments until he had had a chance to meet with them. I listened to some of the conversations and he said, you know, "This obviously creates a changed situation and I'm in this situation, and I'd like to have your consideration. I just hope that you don't make any commitments until I have a chance to talk to you personally."

GREENE: Did he give any indication of the kind of responses he was getting?

GWIRTZMAN: Well, a lot of the people he got out of bed, so they didn't give him much of a response. He didn't get any commitments. I think two things came as a shock to these men: one, the fact that Johnson had withdrawn; and two, that Robert Kennedy called so quickly. This was very much a Kennedy thing to do, but to the more traditional politicians, they'd probably assume that people would wait at least a day before trying to move into that vacuum.

GREENE: Do you remember a discussion that night about Humphrey being an obvious candidate at that point, or didn't that develop until later?

GWIRTZMAN: I don't remember. I remember at his house a couple of days later the talk was very much about Humphrey. I don't think they talked about him much that night.

GREENE: Well, what were the discussions in terms of what you ought to be doing?

GWIRTZMAN: Let me say that the filing date for all the primaries had passed, and to a group of people like us who knew from our experience that nominations are won in the primaries, there had been only three possible candidates in the primaries—Johnson, McCarthy, and Kennedy. And with Johnson out we looked at it in terms of just two, and if we could beat McCarthy we could win. But it didn't work out that way.

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GREENE: I was going to ask if you remember conversations about what specifically had to be done immediately, besides preparing for this press conference, by way of shifting the emphasis of the campaign and what that meant to you in research.

GWIRTZMAN: No, because the only thing I know that was really discussed was how to shift the emphasis to take into account the new national feeling for Johnson. Kennedy sensed that Johnson's popularity would increase with the two things that he had done: one, getting out; and two, stopping the bombing. We had been prepared for some degree of stopping the bombing, and we had been prepared to criticize it as not enough. But with his instinct that Johnson would become a beloved figure temporarily, we didn't want to criticize the other thing that he had done.

GREENE: When you say you were prepared to criticize the stopping of the bombing, you mean as only a half measure, or....

GWIRTZMAN: As only a half measure, and also the fact that it was the same sort of promise that had been made before and not kept.

GREENE: Did you get any indication in these conversations about the proposed meeting with Johnson and the other telegram, about what Robert Kennedy hoped to gain from it, whether he actually hoped to convince Johnson to stay neutral or even perhaps more than that?

GWIRTZMAN: I don't know. I think he felt it was an important personal gesture to show his respect for that decision and to show that he had nothing personal against Johnson. I think he also wanted to establish some sort of liaison with the incumbent Democratic president because, you know, it would be important, he would still be president and he had control over certain foreign intelligence and other things that it would be useful for Kennedy to have. The third, I think, overriding thing as far as the country was concerned, was that to see these two men together at this point would have a unifying influence and a beneficial one.

GREENE: Were you present when he came back from the meeting at the White House, or did you speak to him about that?

GWIRTZMAN: No, except I heard him say that it had been a good meeting, a very restrained meeting. But by that time he was already very much concerned with Humphrey because a day or two after Johnson withdrew, Johnson had a Cabinet meeting at which, it was relayed to Robert Kennedy, that Johnson had said that he had been a vice president and that Humphrey had been an A+ vice president and he was very strong for Humphrey.

GREENE: But then he did insist that the Cabinet remain neutral, which I imagine must have been a relief of some sort. Was it?

GWIRTZMAN: I don't know because there were some people in the Cabinet like McNamara [Robert S. McNamara] and Larry O'Brien who preferred....

GREENE: McNamara was out.

GWIRTZMAN: Was out? Well, I don't know offhand. I don't know who they were.

GREENE: Katzenbach [Nicholas deB. Katzenbach].

GWIRTZMAN: Udall [Stewart L. Udall]. Some people like that preferred Kennedy.

GREENE: Do you know of any attempts by Robert Kennedy or others to talk to Humphrey before it became apparent that he would be a factor himself?

GWIRTZMAN: O'Donnell might have. I think O'Donnell was asked to do so. I don't know whether he was able to.

GREENE: Was there any discussion of how to handle McCarthy at that point and if he could be talked to?

GWIRTZMAN: No.

GREENE: Maybe, since we were sort of talking about Humphrey, do you know how Robert Kennedy regarded Humphrey in this period and how he felt? You know, he had expressed himself very strongly about not feeling he could support McCarthy if that became the choice, but....

GWIRTZMAN: He never said that about Humphrey. He had had some disputes with Humphrey, in connection with his speech on Vietnam. Humphrey said his proposal would be before putting the fox in charge of the chicken coop. But he realized that Humphrey had to do that as an administration spokesman. He had a warm relationship, not a close relationship but a good relationship, with Humphrey. He had a correspondence with him, which I think I mentioned in my book. He saw him as a future competitor for the presidency. I'm sure he had a great deal of respect for him, as everybody did, as to his abilities.

How that began to change, as he saw Humphrey move into the areas of the Democratic party where he was weak, you know, I don't know. I'm not sure that he ever really had a chance to focus on Humphrey's increasing strength. By the time Humphrey got in and started pulling together the delegates, he was so involved with the last primary and concentrating so much on downing McCarthy, who was rising up every place to combat him, that I don't think he got around to thinking about Humphrey. He might have, but if so I didn't know about it. I know that he was disappointed that Fred Harris [Fred R. Harris], who had

been a close personal friend of the Kennedys, had taken a position as the co-chairman of Humphrey's campaign.

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GREENE: Isn't that an understatement when you say "disappointed"?

GWIRTZMAN: Well, I don't know.

GREENE: Do you remember anything specific being said about that?

GWIRTZMAN: No.

GREENE: Were there other people like that, who did things like that?

GWIRTZMAN: Well, I don't know. Some he could understand. I mean, Walter Heller [Walter Wolfgang Heller] wrote him a personal letter saying that he had been supporting him but now that Hubert Humphrey, who had been his close personal friend of twenty-five years, was in, he had to endorse him; but if Humphrey didn't get the nomination, he wanted him to know that he would work for him strongly. He respected that, someone who came to him, you know, as soon as Humphrey had announced. There might have been some other disappointments He was disappointed with the labor leaders who were strong for Humphrey. But I think he realized that Humphrey was going to pick up strength in areas where he was naturally weak and where Johnson had been strong; but that not being in the primaries, Humphrey did not have the opportunity, which Robert Kennedy had, to show mass support within the Democratic party and to use that showing of mass support to get the delegates.

This was always Robert Kennedy's strategy from the time he announced: that he had a large following within the Democratic party, and to convert that following into delegates, either through primaries or through the influence of primacies, or through polls or by showing that he was a winner—the only one who could win—his strategy was to go from the bottom—the mass of voters—up. And again, if he had had a clearer field there, he would have been more successful in doing that. The fact that McCarthy did better than expected in Indiana, and certainly the fact that he won in Oregon, was an indication to some of these leaders that maybe Robert Kennedy didn't have the mass support that people assumed he had.

GREENE: Well, is there anything else related to Johnson's withdrawal and the shift in emphasis that you can think of at this point?

GWIRTZMAN: I remember him talking to George Meany on the phone from his house, a couple days after Johnson withdrew, and after the conversation saying, gloomily, that Meany had told him Humphrey would run and all the important labor leaders, including himself, would support him. He was very disappointed at that news.

Also, in the days after Johnson's withdrawal, it was a campaign without a theme. It didn't get a theme again until after the Martin Luther King assassination.

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GREENE: Well, why don't we talk about that then. Were you in Indiana at that time?

GWIRTZMAN: No.

GREENE: What do you recall about the events that followed that?

GWIRTZMAN: Well, I recall that his primary concern after Martin Luther King's assassination was not political. As a former attorney general, he was concerned with the reports that there was a potential for riot in the cities, and he was in touch with Katzenbach as to things that could be done—and through Burke Marshall—to quell that. And he made a statement on television, I think, which Ted Sorensen wrote, urging blacks to restrain themselves. And as you remember, the assassination and its aftermath, for about a week, moved politics off the stage for a period of time, right through the King funeral. And he spent that time in Washington, he cut out his campaigning and was here. He went to the Washington ghetto after the riots and fires there; he went to Martin Luther King's funeral; he made a presentation in the hotel the night before the funeral to the black leaders who were there.

GREENE: Were you present at the funeral?

GWIRTZMAN: No, I wasn't. I just saw him once or twice—twice during that period: first, when he had just gotten back from the funeral and decided to make a speech in Detroit or Cleveland or somewhere...

GREENE: Cleveland.

GWIRTZMAN: ...on the riots. He actually made two or three.

GREENE: Well, the Cleveland City Club was the one I was thinking of. That was the day after the assassination.

GWIRTZMAN: Well, it was the one that said, "No martyr's cause has ever been stilled by an assassin's bullet." That was the one Sorensen wrote; that was speech number one.

GREENE: I think that was in the Cleveland City Club.

GWIRTZMAN: Yes. Then the next one was in Detroit, which was about the causes of riots and what the country had to do. That was a good one, I think.
And then there was another one that Adam wrote on the same subject, but, then you know, that was the overriding subject for a period of time. But I was out at his house when Goodwin came with the Detroit speech. Goodwin had to go through the police barriers in order to get out to Hickory Hill, to cross the Chain Bridge. He had a handwritten permit from Robert Kennedy saying that Goodwin was coming to see him. And at that time we discussed his desire for Goodwin to take charge of the youth operation.

GREENE: As opposed to working on the media?

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GWIRTZMAN: No, no, the media came later, the media came later. I do remember that he was very restrained after coming back from the King funeral. It had had a tremendous impact on him, and I think that, you know, while he was concerned about the election he was mainly, at that point, concerned with keeping the country together, what he could do. And it was an awesome thing because he felt that the president didn't have the confidence of the people. He felt that these forces were loose that were creating havoc and were playing into the hands of the right wing.

GREENE: Was there a discussion that you can remember about specific things he might do? I know at one point apparently it was suggested that he go on national television and make a mass appeal to people. Do you remember that or other suggestions that were coming in at that point?

GWIRTZMAN: Well, I think he did do that for a news show. He didn't do a paid program though.

GREENE: I think there was talk of him doing this.

GWIRTZMAN: No, I don't remember. I think those discussions would have taken place with the people who went with him to the funeral and came back with him.

GREENE: Did you get any impression in this period about how he felt about Martin Luther King personally, and about what his loss would mean?

GWIRTZMAN: No. I think that the best expression is the speech he made in Indianapolis as far as his own feeling.... I mean, he had had a mixed history as regards his own relations with Martin Luther King, but I think he appreciated what Martin Luther King meant to the black community. Am I wrong in thinking that Martin Luther King was going to endorse him?

GREENE: Well, I don't know if it's ever been proven. I don't know if Fauntroy [Walter E. Fauntroy] or anyone has ever said specifically that that was the case, but that was definitely the impression that the Kennedy people had at the time. I forget who was supposed to be doing that negotiating. There was somebody that was working on this. He had said that he was about to come out and endorse someone for the first time, but he was very vague about whom. Anyway, do you remember how things developed at this point, about what turn the campaign would take in Indiana?

GWIRTZMAN: Well, yes. The Sunday before that he went to Indiana, the time that I mentioned that I went out to him with a speech prepared for the evening rally. He had a lot of appearances during the day for which he had to have a stump speech. A group of us were sitting there in his home and he said, you know, "This is what I think I should say." And he launched into a presentation—I don't know whom he discussed it with,

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he might have just thought about it himself—that said, you know, "I believe in law and order, I was the attorney general of the United States." And then I suggested that he say—you know, a lot of people don't understand what attorney generals are—why don't you just say, "I was the country's chief law enforcement officer." So he ended up saying both those things. And he said, "I know something about preserving law and order. We can't have riots, we can't have breaking of the law, we can't have muggings." And he sketched out a presentation, at that meeting in his home, about that subject which was very natural and very good, but which some of the press interpreted as a change or a rightward shift, and I think some of the speechwriters encouraged that interpretation because they didn't think he should make it with that kind of an emphasis. I think he felt instinctively that he should because of the way he would respond to the things that people were concerned about. He didn't make any recommendations of a repressive nature or anything. But he just wanted to point out the fact that he had faced these kinds of problems in 1962, in 1963, even in 1964, that he had had some experience with it and that it was perfectly possible to preserve civil liberties, you know, while enforcing the law. And then he went on in this presentation on the need for eliminating the basic cause of some things, like crime and riots.

I think his first appearance that day was the Rotary Club in western Indiana—I forget the town, the northwest part of Indiana, not Lake County—which was a conservative business group. And he talked very strongly in answers to questions about the programs that were needed in the black communities, in answer to questions there. So those two aspects of his presentation—the need for law and order and the need for social programs—you know, one was just as strongly held by him as the other if not more so; yet, because the first one, on law and order was new, it got attention and it got him some criticism. But he didn't get off it.

GREENE: That's what I was going to ask you. Was there any discussion about whether or not to continue along this....

GWIRTZMAN: No. Most of us thought it was a good idea. He made the television news with his remarks along that line.

GREENE: Was it mostly Adam that was protesting, or was it other people too?

GWIRTZMAN: Well, I think Peter might have too and Marian [Marian Wright Edelman], and some of the others saying this wasn't the appropriate time to say that because to say that was to imply that there was no justification for these riots, and there was. But, there were other proposals made later on that were more substantive, including one about allowing mayors to bring in the national guard, which Adam strongly opposed and which he succeeded in having deleted from the proposed speeches. I think John Douglas [John W. Douglas] made that proposal, and Adam opposed it with some rather dramatic examples which persuaded Robert Kennedy that it shouldn't be used, at this point, or persuaded Fred. Because with Robert Kennedy campaigning so hard, except for major decisions, to a large extent, at that point, he was relying on Fred Dutton to be the judge.

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GREENE: Was Dutton pretty successful in mediating these differences?

GWIRTZMAN: I think he was. He spent a lot of time on it. He would stay up after everyone else had gone to sleep, and Adam and Jeff would come in and talk to him and he'd hear them out as to their own complaints. And, I mean, they knew that a lot of people disagreed with them and they felt insecure, and they weren't getting the sort of time with Robert Kennedy that they had had when he was able to sit in the Senate office. So they weren't sure how pleased he was with what they were doing, and so they, you know, needed somebody to talk to. And on the other hand, Fred could also hear them out and explain why the campaign couldn't be conducted in exactly the way they wanted it to be.

GREENE: And Dutton had no problem communicating with the other side either—I don't mean the other side, but the older....

GWIRTZMAN: No, no.

GREENE: Well, what about your general observations on Indiana? At what point did you go back out there?

GWIRTZMAN: I was there most of the time that he was there.

GREENE: What were your observations on the problems in the state?

GWIRTZMAN: I was out there for a period of about three weeks. I was out there continually—I'd just come back weekends for a day and a half. My observations were that he was getting enormous crowds, but they were funny crowds—I mean, first of all, a lot of young people who couldn't vote were in them, and the older people weren't as demonstrative as the young. And we weren't quite sure his message was getting through, even though an enormous number of people came out to see him. The press was misled a little bit because they assumed big crowds meant a lot of votes. He had the enthusiasm without all the votes. He got the crowds partly because he was a curiosity. He had never been in these places; President Kennedy had never been in these places. Secondly, except for the UAW [United Automobile, Aircraft and Agricultural Implement Workers of America] he didn't get much organization support in Indiana. We really had to put a campaign organization together very quickly, by ourselves and we did. But there were pockets where the local political organizations were strong and so we didn't get those votes. I knew McCarthy was doing fairly well, but I didn't think he would get as big a vote as he did.

GREENE: Do you think that it was the general feeling in the campaign that the crowds were greater than the votes?

GWIRTZMAN: No, no. I think that they thought that the crowds meant that we were going to get a majority in Indiana. It had meant that in 1964 in New York—I mean, crowds usually mean votes, enthusiasm. Maybe if it's only kids, well, they go back and talk to their parents and tell them what they hear.

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GREENE: So would you say that the vote in Indiana was a disappointment?

GWIRTZMAN: Oh, yes. A disappointment. But in a way, he reacted to it. It was a disappointment. He was very upset when the first television projection projected him at 39 percent; because he knew he was going to do better than that, and he felt that leaders around the country, seeing that, would get a bad first impression. He was disappointed that he didn't get 50 percent, which was the bench mark that had been established for him by the media. He tried his best, the next morning, with some material that Pierre Salinger and I had prepared, to show that he had won in every place he had campaigned and, you know, won certain areas of the state that were more typical of the rest of the country than other areas. He took that memo to New York to a meeting of his supporters, and read it to them. But, you know, it didn't get the response. He couldn't persuade them and he hardly persuaded himself that the results were really good. And all he could think of was what President Kennedy thought of after the Wisconsin primary, which was, "Well, I'm going to have to do it all over again, and maybe we can do it better." What he had hoped—the reason he had decided so suddenly to go into Indiana—was that he hoped he could eliminate the McCarthy candidacy there and make it just a fight between him and Johnson. And he couldn't. The McCarthy candidacy persisted.

GREENE: Was there much of an effort in the last days, let's say, of Indiana, or right after the primary, to persuade some of McCarthy's people to come over?

GWIRTZMAN: Not that I know of. I know that Lowenstein [Allard K. Lowenstein] had been working on that sort of thing from time to time, but I wasn't aware of it.

GREENE: Just to back up a little bit. What changes did you see take place when Edward Kennedy and his people came out? Were they obvious to you?

GWIRTZMAN: Well, they came out right at the beginning. Jerry Doherty [Gerard F. Doherty], who was his chief political man in Massachusetts, came out and got the signature drive (signatures necessary to place him on the ballot) going in Indiana. I mean they were involved in it right from the beginning.

GREENE: But didn't they get much more heavily involved?

GWIRTZMAN: Oh, more and more people came out. At the end there were probably two hundred and fifty people from Massachusetts working in Indiana.

GREENE: Did they work well for the most part with the Robert Kennedy people?

GWIRTZMAN: Well, they did the best they could. You know, they probably could have done better if they had had more time, if they had had more local support.

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GREENE: Did you have much contact with Walter Sheridan [Walter J. Sheridan] and some of those people working in Indianapolis in the black areas?

GWIRTZMAN: They were in the headquarters, and I know they had an active office going.

GREENE: Okay. I think Goodwin and O'Brien came on in the period and we've talked quite a bit about Goodwin, but you haven't mentioned too much about O'Brien.

GWIRTZMAN: Well, O'Brien came out to Indiana and he worked, but I don't think he was there long enough to be able to do very much. I mean the whole O'Brien technique was to start a long time before the election and work up from the grass roots, and he wasn't able to do that there.

GREENE: How did he fit into the organizational scheme? Was that much of a problem?

GWIRTZMAN: Well, that was difficult because here was a man who had been the overall campaign manager, who had been the chairman of the Johnson campaign—who was a director. He came on late when other people were doing these things, and while almost everybody deferred to him and his judgment, he just didn't have time to catch hold. Now, I don't know what suggestions he made, and I don't know whether they were followed. It was tough for him because he had to leave the Cabinet to do that. He made a personal choice between Kennedy and Johnson. Kennedy respected that, and Kennedy wanted him to have, you know, an important role, because of his past and because of the fact that he had made that sacrifice. But his strongest relationships at that time were with the political leaders around the country, and those leaders for the most part weren't committed to Kennedy. I'm sure that Robert Kennedy's anticipation was that O'Brien would gradually start moving around among the delegates and the people with whom he had personal contact—and I think that's implicit—and be very important at the convention. But it would take some time to develop that.

GREENE: You talk in your book about coalitions of McCarthy people, and we've got a lot on New York, but what, beyond the general things that you say in the book, do you know about efforts to set up coalitions?

GWIRTZMAN: Not too much. Bill [William J. vanden Heuvel] would know more about that. But I guess in Colorado and some of the convention states where Humphrey was strong there were efforts to beat Humphrey by running, you know, a fifty-fifty group—half Kennedy supporters and half McCarthy supporters.

GREENE: Do you know of occasions where McCarthy himself broke this up?

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GWIRTZMAN: No.

GREENE: Or occasions where Kennedy's people didn't want to go along with it?

GWIRTZMAN: No.

GREENE: Well, anything else on Indiana?

GWIRTZMAN: No.

GREENE: What about Nebraska? Were you out there at all?

GWIRTZMAN: No.

GREENE: Is there anything specific about that?

GWIRTZMAN: No. The stuff in my book I got through talking to the people who did work there. Phil Sorensen [Philip C. Sorensen] and others.

GREENE: Then Oregon.

GWIRTZMAN: Oregon. I went right there after the Indiana primary. I went out to Oregon for two or three days just to get an idea of what issues were going to be important there. And I talked to Bill and I talked to Edith Green [Edith S. Green] and I talked to some of the other people out there. I got the impression that very little was going on, but I don't know whether that was par for the course or good or bad for Oregon.

GREENE: Did you have the feeling at that point that they were in trouble?

GWIRTZMAN: Well, Bill said very strongly that they were in trouble. Edith Green didn't think so. Bill thought that the McCarthy people had gotten organized early and taken a lot of the best organizers away. And that was confirmed by people from Oregon who I talked to who were friends of mine, who said that as liberals they had gone for McCarthy early in the year, before Kennedy announced, because McCarthy was against Johnson and they just didn't feel they could change. Others said that there were special factors militating against Kennedy in Oregon, such as the fact that as attorney general he had prosecuted the mayor of Portland, Terry Schruck [Terry D. Schruck]. So, you know, you knew there was difficulty, but on the other hand, those were individual reports, and rebutting those we had these polls which showed that Kennedy was way ahead, way ahead. So, like everybody, I tended to believe the polls because I thought that they were more representative of the voters than the individuals. But what happened was that the polls began to change when McCarthy came in, with his own type of campaigning, which was more in line with what Oregon looks for, and that, meshed with his superior, organization began to change those polls.

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GREENE: You said last time that the approach that you used in Oregon was wrong, that you were running a California type of campaign, thinking that media-wise it was being viewed in California but it should have been quieter. Is this strictly hindsight or did you get some indication of this before the primary?

GWIRTZMAN: We knew that some people in Oregon did not feel that Kennedy's appearances there—his early appearances there with the crowds and everything—were going down well with the Oregon voters. And we

discussed it. But when a man is campaigning as hard as Robert Kennedy was, it's very difficult to ask him to suddenly change his campaign style and adjust it depending on what airport he lands at. It's hard to ask the advance people who pull out the crowds, who work a certain way in every other state to work a different way in that state. And where Kennedy was depending on the crowd contact so much for personal nourishment, to keep going, it's just extremely hard to change it. And nobody was that convinced that he was hurting to make a big fight about it.

GREENE: What sense of the issues did you come away with from that initial trip, of what would be important?

GWIRTZMAN: In Oregon? Well, Vietnam was very important, but we didn't see that Kennedy's position was that much different than McCarthy's. What I didn't realize was that the fact that McCarthy had taken the issue into the field against Johnson, early, was an overriding factor. Then there were a mix of issues—education, inflation, things like that.

GREENE: It seems to me that Vietnam was deemphasized in Oregon. Was that because you didn't feel you could compete with McCarthy on the issue?

GWIRTZMAN: I'm not aware that it was.

GREENE: I thought it was, that Vietnam was not discussed that much in Oregon.

GWIRTZMAN: I don't know. But of course it might have been. You know, there were periods when the efforts to start negotiations with North Vietnam seemed to be reaching a critical point, and at those times it was hard. Kennedy sometimes didn't like to be critical or to talk too much for fear of dousing them, being accused of torpedoing the negotiations. I mean, just like the present time (1972) where there would be a North Vietnamese victory in the south which shows so clearly that the Vietnamization program has not worked; in fact shows the bankruptcy of the president's program. Yet the Paris peace talks are going on—and the secret Kissinger [Henry A. Kissinger] efforts to get an agreement. The media people themselves are saying, "How can these candidates criticize the administration at the time that the North is attacking? Won't it hurt the morale of the South Vietnamese troops?" If that argument hasn't been downed by now, certainly in 1968 it was even stronger than now. So I don't know that Vietnam was deemphasized in Oregon. And if it was, you'd have to look into what was going on at that time in Vietnam and in the negotiation efforts, to see whether that was the reason.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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