Wendell H. Pigman Oral History Interview – RFK#2, 06/16/1969
Administrative Information

Creator: Wendell H. Pigman
Interviewer: Roberta Greene
Date of Interview: June 16, 1969
Place of Interview: Washington, D.C.
Length: 18 pages

Biographical Note
Wendell H. Pigman was Legislative assistant for Senator Robert F. Kennedy, 1964 - 1968. This interview covers Iowa politics and support for Robert F. Kennedy [RFK], Pigman's appointment to the Senate staff, and RFK's primary interests as Senator, among other topics.

Access
Open

Usage Restrictions
According to the deed of gift signed December 18, 1970, copyright of these materials has been assigned to the United States Government. Users of these materials are advised to determine the copyright status of any document from which they wish to publish.

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 The copyright law extends its protection to unpublished works from the moment of creation in a tangible form.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

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

Suggested Citation
Wendell H. Pigman, recorded interview by Roberta Greene, June 16, 1969 (page number), Robert F. Kennedy Oral History Program of the John F. Kennedy Library.

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

By Wendell H. Pigman

to the
Robert F. Kennedy Oral History Program,
John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library

In accordance with Sec. 507 of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) and regulations issued thereunder (41 CFR 101-10), I, Wendell H. Pigman, hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America for eventual deposit in the proposed John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library, and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a tape and transcript of a personal statement approved by me and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. Title to the material transferred hereunder, and all literary property rights, will pass to the United States as of the date of the delivery of this material into the physical custody of the Archivist of the United States.

2. It is the donor's wish to make the material donated to the United States of America by terms of this instrument available for research as soon as it has been deposited in the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library.

3. A revision of this stipulation governing access to the material for research may be entered into between the donor and the Archivist of the United States, or his designee, if it appears desirable.

4. The material donated to the United States pursuant to the foregoing shall be kept intact permanently in the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library.

Signed Wendell H. Pigman

Date October 12, 1970

Accepted James B. Rhoads
Archivist of the United States

Date 12-18-70

GSA FORM 7016

GSA OC 67 19341

Wendell H. Pigman. – RFK #2

Table of Contents

Second Oral History Interview

with

WENDELL PIGMAN

June 16, 1969
Washington, D.C.

By Roberta Greene
For the Robert F. Kennedy Oral History Program
of the Kennedy Library

GREENE: Just to go back over some of the things we discussed last week, why do you think that Governor Hughes would have objected to [Robert] Fulton, Scalise and [John] Crystal who were your original suggestions?

PIGMAN: Crystal and Fulton I don't recall that well. But Scalise had run at the same time that Governor Hughes had run in '60--well it must have been the '66 election--and had been defeated by about two hundred votes, whereas Hughes had won his election. Secondly, there was a feeling that. . . . Or let's see, Scalise was more connected perhaps with the Democratic Party organization in Iowa than Hughes was. Hughes, in order to win, tended to play the role of Independent as well as Democrat and make some appeals to Republicans. And there was a feeling on the part of a number of party workers that he didn't do enough for the Democrats, that he was more concerned about Hughes' election possibilities than that of the candidates, that he hadn't helped the other candidates to the degree that he should have. There was apparently some bad feeling between the two. And it was the sort of thing which I didn't press at length, but that I was just well aware that there was some animus. But I also felt that Scalise would have been very strong with Hughes. That is, he would have, I think he would have been a strong Kennedy man, which is what, of course, I was looking for.

GREENE: Why the preference for Ed McDermott on the Governor's behalf?

PIGMAN: Well, they were old friends from what I gather. They had been closely associated although Ed had gone to Washington shortly after the, I gather, shortly after the Kennedy victory in '60. I don't know exactly when he went to Washington, but he had been away and been in Washington for some time and he was. . . . So that although he had been very active in politics and was a good friend of the Governor's, very close to the Governor apparently at one time, he wasn't that current with local Iowa politics, that is, with the people who were working in

politics in Iowa. And so he would have been, apparently was, very acceptable to the Governor but would not have the same following with other Democrats in the state.

GREENE: What was Culver's position at the time that you were out there?

PIGMAN: Culver was sitting on the fence, but I assume that didn't mean an awful lot. I assume that what it meant was a question of timing in relation to carrying the McCarthy element, not alienating the McCarthy element and a question of doing it at the right time, and also the question of not putting Governor Hughes in an embarrassing position. My assumption all the time was that Culver, as a close friend of Ted's [Kennedy], would be there when the crunch came, and that he would do something that was both best for Kennedy and good for himself as well at the appropriate time. And I talked with his assistant, [Richard] John Clark, called him for advice on a number of occasions while I was out there. So that Culver was not identified, but then neither had Hughes yet. And it was a question of timing and it was a question of. . . . And one could make a good argument then that Hughes should not come out immediately after the first primary which was to come off--the precinct election--should not come out for Kennedy, especially if McCarthy had a resounding victory in that because it would look rather funny for them to. . . . The timing didn't seem strange or anything to me.

GREENE: Can you recall anything about an attempt by McCarthy people to make a deal with Robert Kennedy in exchange of support for delegate votes?

PIGMAN: In Iowa?

GREENE: Yes.

PIGMAN: Seems to me at one point that I heard, when I was there or after I came back, that the McCarthy people were suggesting a unified Kennedy-McCarthy approach. But I didn't know of it beyond that. It was just something that was talked about, and it wasn't something that I was actively involved in.

GREENE: Do you have anything else on the campaign that's occurred to you?

PIGMAN: Just the memo which I gave you based on the February 18th conversation. And that has reference to my evening's talk with Assemblyman [Alan] Al Sieroty from southern California and also, I'm not sure whether it was [Edward] Ed Martin or--the name is in there--the other Assemblyman [Charles Warren] who was an announced Johnson supporter and maintained his position through the evening. Sieroty was a Kennedy supporter but Kennedy wasn't out at the time, but he was the

one that I advised to lend what support he could to McCarthy until such time as Kennedy might come in, if he chose to come in. But that's about all, I think.

GREENE: Then let's skip over to the Senate. Could you explain the circumstances of your appointment to the Senate staff?

PIGMAN: Yes. I was an American Political Science Association Fellow for the year of '65; they have an eight and a half month program where you're supposed to work half of the time in the House and half of the time in the Senate. And you had your choice of starting on either side and I, of course, was very interested in working for Robert Kennedy, among other reasons because he was the first Democratic senator that New York had had in a long, long, long time. And it turned out that two of my friends knew Joe Dolan, who was going to be the Administrative Assistant, fairly well. One is [James E.] Jim Clayton who is an editorial writer for the Post [Washington Post] and the other is Charles Clapp, who used to work for JFK as an APSA intern and then had worked with [Leverett] Saltonstall for some time. And both of them gave me recommendations to Joe Dolan, and I was one of a number of APSA people that Dolan could have chosen. I think I was the only New Yorker, and I also had a fairly--probably more experience than a good many of the other people on the program. And at that time I was sort of touting myself as a science and technology expert and that seemed to fit in with the needs as they, as Joe, saw it in the office. So anyway, they got me for free, of course, for what was expected to be four and a half months.

And I came in and met the Senator, and at the time I met the Senator--this is about three days after they literally moved into the old Senate Office Building--I had a memo at the time that laid out about eight or nine areas of, rather more like eleven areas, of technology and science which were problems. There were such things as water pollution and air pollution, birth control, oceanography. And we talked a bit and I asked him which ones he was interested in pursuing and having me pursue. And he expressed an interest in the birth control issue. He said he was interested in them all, of course, but the birth control thing was something that we'd probably have to look into quite carefully. And so I started out, I went to work in that office. In the early days there wasn't a hell of a lot of organization. I mean there just wasn't the sort of thing in which we sat down in a staff meeting and people decided that this was so-and-so's area and this was so-and-so's area. People started out and they sort of picked issues. And both Adam [Walinsky] and Peter [Edelman] had been writing for the Senator during the campaign and had a hell of a lot more experience in that than I had. And I began working on issues which, basically which they wouldn't get into. I mean it wasn't a question of they necessarily didn't want to, although I suspect there probably was some of that too, but the things like conservation and parks and problems of this nature. Also, in the early days, because of my

executive experience, executive branch experience, I was useful to a great many of the younger staff members who didn't know how to do things--just a matter of answering who to contact or what to do or sometimes in preparing mail and just in knowing what to say as an answer, what was an acceptable answer to a lot of these people.

And one of the first things I remember, and I forget whether it was the first time I visited the office or the second time I was in the office with the Senator, and he had at that time his stuffed tiger which he had brought up from the Justice Department. And my comment was, "Oh, the Tammany tiger," and he sort of scowled and said, "We'll have to get rid of that," which he did, of course. He sent it--I don't know whether it went back to the home, I think it went back to Hickory Hill. He obviously couldn't keep it there with the image of Tammany tiger. One of the things that came up quite early was a briefing by two top people from the Population Council up in New York city on the birth control issue, which we did one morning at eight o'clock. It was in the hotel that they used--the Carlyle--all the time. And all the kids were eating breakfast and it was fairly hectic surroundings. But I think it was [Dr. Frank W.] Notestein and somebody else from the Population Council came in and spoke to him for about an hour on the problems of population growth. And basically the policy that he evolved was to take a positive stand on the issue that was tempered with references to his children, and something to the effect that, "A man with as many children as I have can afford to be for population control," and something like this. He used to get dumped on a little bit in the press when he was in Latin America for saying he had eleven children or something like that, that this was sort of anti-population control. But I thought that for a Catholic that his stand on that was good, that he had taken a good position on it. He came out and backed [Albert H.] Blumenthal's--I think it was Blumenthal's--Abortion Reform bill in New York which was a. . . . This is about three years later which shows you how far his thinking had advanced. He didn't want to go out of his way to antagonize the church people on the issue, but on the other hand, it was very clear as to what the problems were. And his brother, JFK, had gotten into this, and it had become a problem and I think that's why it was one of the things that he highlighted when we first talked about various issues. There were a couple of park things that came up early, and you mentioned earlier the Hudson Highlands thing and also the Delaware Water Gap park came up, for which we played a fairly active role in getting set up as a national recreation area. But, well, ask me a question.

GREENE: What was your relationship to Walinsky and Edelman, and Dolan supposed to be? Were you and Walinsky and Edelman co-equals?

PIGMAN: Well, one thing about the office, the thing I always admired about the office was that there was no hierarchy. I mean you really could not. . . . You worked directly with the Senator and you had to fight, not fight, but I mean it took some trouble to get somebody else to

advise you if you had a problem. [Edwin O.] Ed Guthman was there in the early days and I remember one time I had a problem, and it was just a matter of people being terribly busy and I remember hearing one staff member--it wasn't Walinsky or Peter or Joe obviously--but saying he was unhappy because she or he didn't know what was going on. And I mentioned this to Joe Dolan and he made the remark at the time, "If you were to know everything that was going on in the Kennedy office, you wouldn't know anything else that was going on." I mean you wouldn't be able to do your own work. There was too much, there was. . . . I was supposed to be--at that time I was an intern, a legislative assistant, and it gradually evolved into, it evolved fairly quickly into doing everything connected with my parts of, my responsibilities. I prepared draft statements and the legislation and the like.

Organizationally I ought to continue, as the time came up for the House assignment, I wasn't particularly anxious to move out of the office and Dolan was interested in retaining me if I could work something out; so what I did was to come over and talk. . . . It's not really true that I came over but I talked to McCarthy, Congressman [Richard D.] McCarthy's legislative assistant, who I knew fairly well, and made an arrangement by which I would nominally be assigned to McCarthy's office but I would stay, in effect, in Kennedy's office. So that although nominally when the new period began for the APSA interns to switch, my duties didn't change at all and I continued right along with Kennedy. And Joe was happy about this, the Senator was happy about this, and McCarthy didn't mind it because I suspect it gave him some access. It was a favor he could do and he didn't stand to get me as an intern anyway, so it was a convenient arrangement. And then at the end of the period, which was August, Joe and the Senator--the Senator didn't--but Joe asked me to stay on. I mean, presumably anything he did, he did with the Senator's blessing.

So I was put on the staff as a regular l.a., and other than an awareness of what the pecking order was, if you will, in the office--I mean who was perhaps more influential with the Senator than others, there was no. . . . I mean Adam was more or less foreign events, foreign affairs, military to some degree, not to some degree, but I mean military as related to the Vietnam war and things of that nature--major speech writer. Peter did a lot of the legislative stuff, day to day legislation, and a lot of the social and domestic issues. And mine was sort of science, technology, military procurement, conservation, issues of that nature. Some of the big things were the water pollution effort, which we made a big thing. There's apparently a book out on the Coast a friend of mine told me about that has the speeches of Robert Kennedy and has some analysis. And he pointed out that after the first of 1967, that Kennedy rarely spoke about conservation matters. And that was about the time that I became sick, which is interesting. I don't take credit for being the sole voice. I do know that he did a couple of things subsequent to my departure, but I don't think he had the sustained involvement that staffing in that area would do.

Peter and Adam were aware of this area, but they were working very hard on the Bedford-Stuyvesant project and things of this nature and it just takes a lot of time.

GREENE: How were relations among the staff members in general? Were there any personality conflicts that got in the way sometimes?

PIGMAN: By and large, no. Damn little for an office that size! I mean there were people who were. . . . For example, I would say that my relationship with Joe and my relationship with Adam was better than it was with Peter. Peter was stiffer, or seemed to me to be stiffer with me than the others. That may also just be a matter of temperament and working experiences. I mean, Peter was a Harvard lawyer and Adam was a Yale lawyer and the difference in the education of the two as lawyers is rather significant. There's some interesting contrasts that can be made between the two philosophies. Altogether there was very, very little backbiting. I mean compared with the executive branch, where there's a great deal of this. As I told somebody once, in the Kennedy office it wasn't a question of doing your work, it was doing that part of your work which you considered to be most important. And a good deal of it you just felt--you just never got done, period. There was too much to do! It was a monumental task and you didn't have time for. . . . I mean, one of the problems, one reason you get backbiting is when there's a lack of things for people to do. And there was no lack of things for people to do. It was done on a crash basis, and one of the worst things of all would be to have to turn a project over to somebody else because it just might cut into their schedule in a way that was next to impossible.

GREENE: Did the professional staff have fairly free access to the Senator? Were you able to get in to see him when you felt it was necessary?

PIGMAN: I think so. I think within the limitations of the guy's time, which were fantastically occupied. [Angela M.] Angie Novello was sort of the guardian at the gates, and I had a good relationship with Angie. And I mean sometimes you just had to literally sort of wait outside the office till he came out and grab him for a couple minutes. You never had enough time. You never had enough time in the sense that you could do things in a relaxed fashion. That just wasn't the way it worked, and if you didn't expect it, maybe it never seemed wrong, and, I mean, I briefed him sitting on the can! I briefed him walking to a committee hearing, not having fully discussed it at all before. But he had a fantastic mind, and that was the pleasure of working with the man because he picked it up and saw the relationships very quickly, had a lot of experience and this very wonderful mind that made it so you didn't have to talk at great length. Burke Marshall, I think, expressed this very well. I mean, you know, "Sort of talk in very clipped shorthand if you can, to the degree possible, so that you don't belabor the points." And it's fun to

work that way, and if you do it you also get terribly impatient with people who waste a lot of time doing it the other way. It can lead to a certain amount of intellectual arrogance.

You mentioned personality differences. A lot of people, not a lot of people, a number of people on the Hill used to say that Peter and Adam were difficult. And I suspect a good deal of that was the fact that just on the time basis you have to get fairly ruthless when people want access to you. I mean, if you're writing something and you've got to deliver it at a certain hour, you don't stop; I mean you just don't answer phone calls. Although I do remember that Adam also used to make a little bit of a fetish of this because [Joseph] Joe Alsop called up and said, "Let's have breakfast together; why don't you come down to my place?" And Adam said, "Sure," he'd love to have breakfast but why didn't Joe come up to the Hill because Adam couldn't get away, which I thought was very brassy and lots of fun. I didn't object to it. It just is sort of indicative of the sort of thing that it was.

There's some interesting sidelights, sort of human interest things. I remember one time Kennedy said, "What's the matter, can't you guys write short statements?" you know, which was an interesting sidelight. And then we always used to have the fight about getting them ready on time, you know. Oh, you also asked about the sort of in-fighting. I had not had this experience then, and based on subsequent experience I realize it's very common--but I got tongue lashed by the Senator once for asking the New York office to run off a speech, calling it up. And he laid into me and asked why it couldn't be ready, and hadn't been done down here. And he talked about the fact that they didn't have much staff in New York, which I subsequently realized is a traditional problem between the home office and the Washington office. And the cardinal sin is to ask the home office to do anything. But at the time I didn't realize it, and he gave me hell on that. And he could be fairly strong when he was giving you hell. But I also, the thing that I always enjoyed about working with Bob Kennedy was the fact that when he complimented you for something, he meant it, and it wasn't the usual verbal garbage. And when he didn't like something, he also told you. And I like to operate that way, I don't believe in. . . . There are men in high position who take staff work and put it on the corner of a desk and it disappears, and if that happens once or twice, you don't put the same energy into what you do because you realize that the chances of its being used are less than ideal.

Oh, you had some more questions.

GREENE: I was going to ask you if there was any resentment on the part of other Senate staffs from the extraordinary amount of attention that was directed at Kennedy, especially in the very early days. Did you sense any feeling of either jealousy or resentment?

PIGMAN: No, because frankly we didn't have that much contact with other Senate staffs. Just to the degree you could avoid it, you avoided meetings and things that took up time. I remember at one time when he was moved in one of the perennial shuffles on rooms and a stink came up. I knew some of the people on Senator [B. Everett] Jordan's staff, a gal in particular. And there was some comment, you know, that Bobby was being put down because he was a Kennedy and all that. And this gal said, "Jordan had anticipated it; he knew it, but there was nothing he could do about it." I mean, they expected to have a certain amount of, well, this extra demand and that people would say that he wasn't being treated fairly, but that they couldn't do anything about it within the terms of the normal procedures of the Senate.

Kennedy got a very good room on the first assignment, on the corner. And the guards actually had signs up on their--the guard right at the door there had a sign up on his stand saying, "Senator Kennedy," with an arrow and the door sign, because the crowds were so great. And they used to pile in there, which was not--well, they expected it. But some people were. . . . There are some specifics of resentment. Sometimes crowds of New Yorkers would come in, some of these busload expeditions, and they'd pack the hallways in front of our office. And then some of the Senate appropriations staff members would sort of complain a little bit, but it wasn't vehement. I mean the thing was there were always a smattering of real Kennedy fans. My wife's office was diagonally across from us, Senator Saltonstall's office, and Senator Saltonstall's personal secretary was greatly intrigued, was greatly intrigued with Robert Kennedy. I mean she was in a way. . . . I think my wife commented once that Senator Saltonstall was a little irritated that his staff was so fascinated with the three ring circus that we had going on. And, you know, this would range from the dog. . . .

But there's a couple of interesting sidelights that ought to be thrown in. One time we were walking across from the new Senate Office Building to the old Senate Office Building and Senator [Harry Flood] Byrd from Virginia came out. The Senator sort of bolted away from me and went up to Senator Byrd and said, "Hello" and made his courtesies and said, "Where are you going now?" And he said, Senator Byrd said, "I'm catching a cab and going home." And Robert Kennedy literally flagged down a cab for him and held the door for him, which was the most amazing performance that you've ever seen. And Byrd was flabbergasted, you know, I mean his mouth didn't literally drop open, but you could see that this attention was very surprising to him. But I think it was the sort of thing that Kennedy tried. He also went to visit Byrd, this is the senior Byrd, this is not the young [Robert C.] Byrd. He also took his dog, I guess it's been repeated at some time; I won't tell the story about Brumus and Senator Byrd's dog, but the incident at that time was just sort of funny. But he went out of his way to be courteous to the Senate Establishment within the limits that were possible there.

What else do you want to know?

GREENE: Well, one thing I wanted to know was, did your job extend to doing the research for your projects, writing of speeches, statements, committee testimony, everything?

PIGMAN: The whole thing. I mean, when you had a field, you did the work.

GREENE: How much of a staff did you have?

PIGMAN: I didn't have a staff.

GREENE: Nobody to help you?

PIGMAN: Oh, I had a secretary. The secretary did the typing and the like. I mean, nobody had a staff. I used to help Adam occasionally on projects, but I mean I didn't have people that helped me. We would call on outside assistants in the sense of advice and the like, but as far as preparing information. . . . I guess in some summers I would have a summer intern who would help me. And I think there were also one or two young school guys who did to some degree, but it wasn't something. . . . You just operated pretty much on your own; it's the way it went.

GREENE: How were decisions made as far as what measures to support with testimony, was it generally by invitation that he would appear before a committee or a subcommittee?

PIGMAN: Well, the decision would be as to whether it was appropriate or whether it was a good opportunity to say something. Or people from the committee would sometimes call up and suggest it. But if you were doing a bill, you were supposed to know when the bill came before committee. Or if there was an important subject and you felt that something should be done. . . . Very often, the whole group of citizens who were concerned about problems would ask Kennedy--there'd generally be a request for him to speak on something, or to testify on behalf of something--just because they were interested in the topic. And more often than not he couldn't, just in the limitations of time. But when he could and you felt you could prepare something, he'd do it. Or sometimes he would say, "I want to testify on such and such."

GREENE: Can you recall any discussions with Kennedy about what he hoped to accomplish as a Senator? Were there any particular things that he . . .

PIGMAN: No. That's not the type of thing that he. . . .

GREENE: Well, maybe something less specific, areas which he sort of wanted to map out as his primary areas of interest, where he wanted to concentrate his efforts, might be more of. . . . You were mentioning birth control, were there other areas like this that he was particularly anxious to. . . .

PIGMAN: One time very early in the game, I just recall his saying that he wanted us to follow the business section--it was strange; it was when I first went to work--to read, I guess, The New York Times summary of business conditions for the year when it came out. And he said he wanted us all to read it carefully, but not. . . . There was little of that. Now, it may be, I may not have been privy to conversations in which this was discussed. But he tended not to--well, to me at least, he didn't operate that way. He wanted, within the field of conservation, or he wanted within the field of pollution control to. . . . You assume that the position that he wanted to work on was that of the most constructive leader in the field. You didn't have to talk about what the objective was; it was more a question of whether he. . . . Sometimes we'd check and just say, "Do you want to get involved in this?" It was a question of just getting his assent, and he'd say, "Yes, let's do that" or "No, for a variety of reasons, I don't want to do that." But he was not, at least with me, long on--and I'm not sure he was with anybody--long on philosophy of what he ought to be--you know, the role in that sense. He may have discussed that with his. . . . I felt that it was hard to think of it that way because there are not that many years difference between us, but there were what, six years difference. But I mean I was not an intimate of Robert Kennedy in the sense that [Rowland, Jr.] Evans, of Evans and [Robert] Novak was, or any one of a number of his associates, who were just about right in his age bracket, that he'd gone through the '60 campaign with. And it may be that he discussed. . . . Although I'm told--and I tend to accept it because I never saw it--that he just didn't think so much in those terms. It was clear to us what we wanted to do and there were subjects, although I'm hard pressed right now to remember which, he didn't want to get into. Well, I know, on labor--he didn't want to do labor. He said he'd done the labor thing, and so he just didn't want to get involved in pushing that as a senator. Although we did some minor labor bills connected--and we worked with labor people on some labor related issue such as getting. . . . Adam, it seemed to me, worked with the Building Trades Council in New York in getting summer jobs for kids; and I did something on mine safety, this black death thing very early in it. Pneumoconiosis, I was the only one that could say that word in those days. So that they were there, but it wasn't a thing that he wanted to. . . . The Labor and Welfare Committee was not big on labor legislation in that sense, or labor rackets or something like that because of his association in the Department of Justice, I presume. But that's the only one that I can think of offhand.

GREENE: Do you know anything about . . .

PIGMAN: Oh, wait a minute. One other thing, whenever--we didn't have any sort of order on that; but we would not do things that Teddy Kennedy did first, and vice versa, they wouldn't do things that we did first. It was just a very simple arrangement. If they were there first, it was their baby; if we were there first, it was our baby. And it was an easy arrangement to work out because you didn't have to talk about it at great length. But you didn't try to duplicate or to tread on the other guy's toes.

GREENE: Do you know anything about which committee assignments he requested?

PIGMAN: I remember the time when the discussion was held and I know that he did not ask for--I don't think he asked for Government Operations in the first place. But I also know that my familiarity with the committee structure, as compared to Joe Dolan's, was considerably less. Joe had worked on the Hill before and so he was getting much better advice on that than anything I could have given him. I just didn't participate in those. I was an intern, too, at the time, and that perhaps excluded me from that particular range.

GREENE: Was Government Operations the only one of his committees that he didn't request?

PIGMAN: It's my impression that his first choices were not necessarily Labor and Public Welfare and Government Operations. It is that he had other choices, but that it didn't work out that way and that Labor and Public Welfare was clearly a choice at one stage. But it may have been, you know, first of the second choices. I just don't know on that. And then on Government Operations, I think the Executive Reorganization Subcommittee turned out to be a real fluke. I mean, who would have known that some of the biggest opportunities would present itself through that. It just fortunately turned out that they had an operator for their staff director by the name of [Jerome] Jerry Sonosky who was a very imaginative guy, and it turned out to be a good forum for the [Auto Safety Act] car safety in particular. It developed through that committee. Up until that time. . . . That committee is not a legislative committee and you don't, presumably, you don't write legislation in that committee. But what would happen was the real action would take place in the Executive Reorganization Subcommittee, and then the Commerce Committee would hold a final session in which they hack out the details of the legislation.

GREENE: Was there any policy, especially in the first year, to keep things as close to his own areas as possible? that is, within his committees and within New York State rather than rambling all over the map, which might have been the temptation?

PIGMAN: Well, there was a desire--and I didn't get the background on this, but I do. . . . Well, I don't know all the details that led up to it but the Appalachian Amendment, which is the thing for New York, we made a big point of that. And that was regarded as a major coup. There wasn't an attitude about that. . . . I never heard it expressed that way, you know. In other words, when we. . . . I'm trying to think of some issues that we got involved in that were broader than New York. Well, I mean just in the water pollution field and in the conservation field alone there were enough New York issues so that there wasn't any problem. There was an opportunity to get heavily involved in the Lake Erie Water Pollution Enforcement Conference, and so we did. And there was an opportunity to ask for a conference on the Hudson--so we did; that hadn't been done--to focus attention on it. They were New York problems and yet one thing that he always wanted to do was when we spoke, to speak in the broader context--we weren't just trying to clean up the Hudson, we were trying to clean up the nation's waterways, although the Hudson happened to be the focus of attention there.

I remember one time doing a speech on water pollution; I think on the first draft they intended to limit it to New York, and then he said, "Well, pull in some other examples." And I did, and I pulled in, you know, picked up a number of different rivers in other parts of the country just to give the full picture. And he wanted that sort of thing. Very informal organization, I mean, that was the beauty of it. We used to joke about staff meetings. You know, the press would want to take T.V. shots of the staff meeting, and we used to kid and say, "Well, those are the only times we'd meet," which tended to be true. Actually to stop and think about it, it was patterned on his brother's Administration. They did not meet in the Cabinet; they met with the guys who were concerned and didn't waste other people's time unless they happened to have a strong interest.

And there was one thing, we went down one--just a sidelight--we went down one time to see [W. Averell] Harriman sworn in as Ambassador at Large. And I can't recall the name of the Texan who was appointed as Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs. And we were talking about the. . . . He went there because he was a friend of Harriman's and he wanted to be there for the swearing in, and he spoke--coming back I asked him about people and I asked about Harriman. He said Harriman was the only guy in the Kennedy administration, or in the State Department during the Kennedy administration, who said that there was a chance to do something about a nuclear test ban treaty. Dean Rusk and everyone else had said, "No, you couldn't do anything about that." And he had the highest respect for Harriman, and I think that that, in all my own observation subsequent to that time, has been pointed up time and time again. Then this other guy--I'm damned if I can think of his name right now--but he's a big friend of LBJ's and he became, as I say, I think it was Assistant

Secretary for Latin American Affairs. And I asked him what he was like and he said, "Well, to give you an idea of what he's thinking of, we were talking about housing for Latin America or something like that under the Alliance for Progress program, and that fellow said that the Latins, 'Latinos,' didn't need houses because they had a warm climate down there." He was very disparaging of the guy. I'm trying to think of his name, but he didn't feel that he had an appreciation of Latins' problems.

GREENE: You don't mean Jack Vaughn, do you?

PIGMAN: No, Vaughn was at the White House and then Vaughn went over to the radio thing. No, it begins with a T or. . . .

GREENE: Assistant Secretary?

PIGMAN: Assistant Secretary or something like that. I just. . . .

GREENE: Not Mann?

PIGMAN: Mmmmmm?

GREENE: Not Thomas Mann?

PIGMAN: Yes. That's who it is. It was Mann. He was sworn in the same day that Harriman was sworn in as Ambassador at Large. The man is a Texan and my own personal observation is that Texans should not have anything to do with Latin America, period. As a rule--you know, there're exceptions--there's something about growing up there that I suspect is like growing up in Mississippi with regard to Negroes; you inherit something that doesn't help. But yes, that's who it was, it was Thomas Mann. But. . . .

GREENE: I think he had a run in with him at the State Department when he was being briefed for his trip to Latin America.

PIGMAN: Yes, he did. And well, I mean this is the day literally that Mann was being sworn in, and when we asked him coming back, he made that comment at the time.

GREENE: Do you remember receiving requests from ex-JFK people to sponsor bills which were relevant to what they were doing at the time?

PIGMAN: That's a loaded question if there ever was one. I'm going to be terribly frank here; it may be that you don't want to release this section of the tape for a while. But it used to fry me that [Theodore C.] Ted Sorensen, as a lawyer representing certain economic interests, oil interests actually, in Long Island, would come in and want

Bob to do certain things. And there were a couple of times in which Ted Sorensen came in and wanted Bob Kennedy to do things, some of which Bob would wind up doing which were not in Bob Kennedy's, or in the public's, best interests. And I remember one time mentioning this to Peter, and his reply, to be precise was, "Fuck Ted Sorensen." You know how courteous Peter normally is. There was a great deal of bitterness, some of it perhaps on the part of Peter and Adam regarding the fact that he had a great influence with Bob and maybe related to the fact that when the very top flight speeches on Vietnam or something like this came up, [Arthur M., Jr.] Schlesinger would show up and Sorensen would show up and they'd all be asked to take a look at the thing. And for a writer, sometimes this is tough. But also there was this conflict specifically with regard to an issue relating to oil or a port for Port Washington, and also in oil subsidies. Sorensen represented the interests, pushed the interests, and it just seemed to be. . . . Sorensen was a hero to a lot of us who knew Kennedy, and for him to be in this role--it just was very, very unbecoming and it was sort of disillusioning. And when Peter says--you have to understand that Peter is not of the talk-dirty, impress-people school--so when he says something like that, that was really a strong comment. I mean that may have been the only time I ever heard him use that word.

GREENE: Would that, or at least the feeling which provoked it, get back to the Senator at all? Was there any effort to point out that that was not in his best interest?

PIGMAN: No. Well, on any issue which at least I was advising him, I would tell him. . . . Well, I'll tell you one time I really got in a bind. . . . There's another one in which--it's the guy who runs the Manhattan Tribune now. . . .

GREENE: [William F.] Haddad.

PIGMAN: Haddad. Haddad had connections with the Senator in some way and was doing, I forget exactly, but Haddad had gone around boasting to some newspaper reporters--this was while he was in OEO [Office of Economic Opportunity]--that he was getting a retainer from somebody, you know, somebody like Westinghouse or something like that. And the reporter just about blew that all over the paper at the time, and I think we had to alert the Senator to that. The second one that was a problem was Dave Hackett who went to work for Westinghouse and some guys came in and they sandbagged me in one way. But basically they were complaining that Hackett's relationship with the Senator--and this is related to teaching machines--was one that had some questionable aspects to it; in other words, whether he was being completely ethical. And I had to--how the hell did that go? I had to. . . . I went in, and it really fried me to be put in the position of having to talk about Hackett because Hackett was a very close friend of the Senator. And I

said, "Senator," something to the effect that people are saying this and this, and it would be useful if you would write this sort of letter to show that you're not responding to any pressure along this line. And it seemed to me at the time that he okayed it. He said, "Go ahead, write the letter," which I did, but I hated to do that because first of all it wasn't something. . . . Those things are never clear cut, and in this particular case I had gotten put in a position, I think, with some people that I had talked to so that I had, more or less, had to do it by the time it came around and I didn't like that at all. I might have avoided it in the case of Hackett because Hackett was so close to the Senator, presumably he would know.

But I mean on any legislative measure--and these were not legislative measures as much as they were program content, you know. I mean if you pushed education and you were to talk a lot about education machines I mean, you know, that. . . . I think in that case the question was, "Was Hackett using the Senator's name to say that he was interested in the Westinghouse approach to teaching machines?" I don't recall all the details at the time. But there were a couple of things like that, not too often, surprisingly rarely. One of the things that I always liked about the Senator was the fact that there were a lot of guys around town who held their jobs by--they were competent, no doubt about that--but they held their jobs because of their relationship with the Senator. For example, a guy might be a representative for a company; now he would give them time--but he didn't have to by any means--because it made, because it happened to make the difference between their making in some cases a very good living and not making quite as good a living. And for a guy who had no worries about money, that sort of loyalty. . . . That was part of the picture of sort of total loyalty to people who were associated with him. You really couldn't help but--you felt that if it came to the pinch, he'd work for you, although you didn't necessarily think. . . . I didn't know about this when I went to work for him, but I gradually realized it and as I've watched around on the Hill. . . . Take Senator [Joseph S.] Clark who just retired. Senator Clark got banged by his administrative assistants because he didn't help place any of his staff. Clark's a millionaire, he doesn't have to be that. . . . You know, he personally doesn't have any money problems, but not to help his staff relocate was very poor.

I mean Kennedy was very strong on honoring his obligations to people; he really was. And it just stands in such marked contrast to all the garbage that you hear about his being a ruthless person. Sure he was abrupt and sure. . . . I think that he tempered--he changed a great deal as he had to become more of a candidate--tempered in his public aspect, but I mean his private aspect was always very, very warm. Always great with kids and. . . .

GREENE: Can you ever recall having personal friends, social friends of his, get involved in things in the office that might have been over their heads, doing favors for him and things like that and then having to be bailed out?

PIGMAN: The only one that. . . . He called me in one time--who was Ladybird's [Mrs. Lyndon Baines Johnson] big money friend up there in New York, you know?

GREENE: Mrs. Ronnie Eldridge?

PIGMAN: No. No, no, you know, the one who gives the money for beautification. She's got the medical . . .

GREENE: Guggenheim?

PIGMAN: No, it's like that but it's Mrs.--not Guggenheim, but it's Mrs. [Mary Lasker] somebody or other. She's very big in this; she has an annual award. She came in one time with a thing on, was it water pollution? And he called me and I [BEGIN SIDE II TAPE II] began treating it as something serious that he wanted to look at critically. And I began to say, "Yes, well it looks good, but we ought to make the following changes." And I could see in his eyes that he was irritated but I, perhaps a little bit belatedly, realized that we were supposed to butter this lady up because she was expressing her interest. But she's the--who the dickens? She just had her dinner up there. Mrs. . . . Well, find out who donated all the money and the flowers in town for Mrs. Johnson and that's--from New York--and that's the woman. I mean she's a very wealthy patroness of a lot of the projects. It wasn't something that we wound up using but it was a case of somebody who wanted to be helpful and you wanted to. . . . I presume that she was a, well, she contributes to mental health also and he wanted to be nice to her. I'll see if I can think of anything else like that.

Also the Douglas aircraft people came in one time. They have an airplane that was too noisy, or so it was thought at that time, to go into LaGuardia field, or any of the fields that belong to the New York Port Authority. They apparently wanted Kennedy to get the Port Authority to change the noise standards. And again, I was sort of caustic about their analysis and perhaps too late realized that in this case we were supposed to sort of "umhmm" and listen and be nice and then forget them. But I began to have a frank discussion with them, and the Senator probably thought less of my political acumen in that case. But those are relatively few and far between. I mean, there were social friends who helped at home with Mrs. Kennedy and. . . . But I mean that wasn't a problem, for me anyway. Maybe it was for somebody else on the staff.

GREENE: What was his attitude toward meeting and talking with lobbying groups, especially those from New York?

PIGMAN: Usually he didn't have as much time for that; it would depend on who they were and. . . . I would usually get assigned to the Women's Strike for Peace Group and I know they got tired of seeing me, but. . . .

GREENE: Which was he particularly responsive to, and which would he rather not deal with at all?

PIGMAN: Well, we used to try to arrange it so that the routine groups he wouldn't have to see, and occasionally you'd get some in who had a genuine complaint. Adam had an interesting comment once, he said, "Anyone who could show up in the office in Washington probably didn't really need help," which was an. . . . In several ways there's a lot of truth to it, which is to say that if you find somebody sophisticated enough to come into the Senator's office they probably are sophisticated enough to carry out their own wishes. He wanted to talk to. . . . There were some that he sort of felt that he had to talk to. There were, oh, there was one welfare group I think who came down and he spoke to them at some length, and there were some West Virginians who came in and he spoke to them, and people to whom it made a difference. Or alternatively, he spoke to people who, I mean not groups so much but just a few individuals who might be influential in one or another group of New Yorkers. But he would see a surprising number of people.

I remember when the head of this arms exporting sales firm over in Virginia came in and he wanted to. . . . He had the most elaborate calling card that I've ever seen, with addresses in four different cities and elaborate script. . . . This is the time that we were working on the arms bill, the arms control bill, and I talked to him for a while. And this guy was a smooth enough operator to realize that he wasn't going to get very far with me and he wanted to see the Senator. And so I went into the Senator and asked if he wanted to see the guy, and he saw him very briefly. I mean he would see people who you wouldn't expect him to see, I mean who you'd think he was antagonistic to. And sometimes those were the ones who. . . . He would, of course, see [Ralph] Nader when Nader came in and was working with us on the Auto Safety Bill. And he saw the GM [General Motors] representative at that time. We had another interesting one where the author of this book on the, he was on the cruiser Indianapolis and kept a diary. He's a garbage man from the suburb of Boston; he was the garbage man who. . . . Well, he came out with this paperback edition. He came into the office one day and the receptionists were going to chase him out and somehow or other somebody asked me, "What about him?" or I saw him coming in the office. And I realized that the Senator would probably want to see him because, you

know, he had known President Kennedy. So I got him in to see the Senator and he spent quite a bit of time with him.

Listen, I'm afraid the time is getting. . . .

GREENE: Hours, yes. Let's stop now.