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Table of Contents

Page	Topic
1	Ziffren's early interactions and impressions of John F. Kennedy [JFK]
1	JFK's speeches throughout California leading up to the 1956 Democratic National Convention held in Chicago, Illinois
2	JFK's role in the film shown at the 1956 Democratic National Convention
3, 10	JFK and Paul Butler's relationship
4	1956 Democratic National Convention and the vice presidency
7	Democratic Advisory Council, establishment, organization, and staff
11, 13, 19	Ziffren's role in California Democratic politics and national politics
12	JFK's early campaigning for the presidency
13, 17, 22, 24	Los Angeles, California as the host of the 1960 Democratic National Convention
16, 23, 27	JFK's presidential campaign in California and the California primary, 1960
19	Choosing the California delegation for the 1960 Democratic National Convention
25	Reaction to the selection of Lyndon B. Johnson as the vice-presidential candidate
25	Ziffren's role in building a western campaign committee for JFK's presidential campaign
28	Kennedy Administration and presidential appointments involving California
30	Robert F. Kennedy's decision to run for president and his campaign in California, 1968

Oral History Interview

with

PAUL ZIFFREN

November 11, 1970
Los Angeles, California

By Anne M. Campbell

For the John F. Kennedy Library

CAMPBELL: Mr. Ziffren, let's start this afternoon by me asking you if you recall when you first met John Kennedy and what your impressions were of him at that time.

ZIFFREN: My best recollection is that I met John Kennedy for the first time at his sister's house — [Patricia Kennedy] Pat Lawford — I think it was in 1954 or 1955. My impression was that he was quite young and rather immature.

CAMPBELL: Then I believe that you — at least before the 1956 convention was held — had a conversation with then Senator Kennedy and with Dore Schary there?

ZIFFREN: Oh, well I had so many conversations with Senator Kenendy. As a matter of fact, he told me that he would like to come out to California and make some speeches here. At that time, I was a Democratic national committeeman. I used to schedule the speeches for most of the Democrats from Washington, so I was delighted to schedule some speeches for him because he was a very attractive person. I notice on the schedule here that he spoke at town hall; he spoke at the [Los Angeles] World Affairs Council. We had him out here, I would say, at least half a dozen

times before the 1956 convention. The reference you make to Dore Schary had to do with the 1956 convention, but before I get to that, I think I ought to tell you about an incident that stands very clearly in my mind.

On these trips to California I would schedule a number of speeches. I remember the day that we had the speech at town hall, which apparently was April 13, 1956. After the

town hall speech, which was at noon, I took him over to the University of Southern California to make a speech to the Trojan Democratic Club. The speech was in a large auditorium . The auditorium, I think, would have seated about fifteen hundred people, but it was very sparsely attended. I doubt whether there were a hundred and fifty people there, and I was rather embarrassed to take him into such a small group in such a large auditorium. Obviously, he was affected by it because he was not particularly effective. Then after he got through speaking, we had some questions. I remember that one of the questions that was asked was why did he abstain from voting on the censure of Senator [Joseph R.] Joe McCarthy. He bristled at that question; this was a very sensitive point with him. He explained that he had been in the hospital, that he did not know the facts, and therefore he did not feel that he should have voted on it. This was not very satisfying to the questioner, and he practically told the questioner he wasn't interested in discussing it any more. When we left there, he made some comment about the fact that he really did not like to talk to audiences of that kind because they weren't interested in what he had to say, they were interested in just embarrassing him. I mention that because the development of Senator Kennedy was so dramatic from that kind of an immature person who had difficulty handling questions to the person he became. He became the kind of person who, I think, could handle questions better than anybody in public life. This whole development was a matter of relatively short time. It was the most concentrated, disciplined work imaginable, because later on — I happened to be with him at the convention in Chicago under circumstances that were quite traumatic and embarrassing, and he had already developed so much maturity that it was incredible to think of how immature he had been before.

CAMPBELL: In scheduling him into California in the fifties, were you in a position to suggest topics to him? I notice the topic here for the town hall speech, "Colonialism and American Foreign Policy." Was this strictly his idea or your suggestion?

ZIFFREN: No, that was his idea. He would ask me if I had any suggestions, but I know I never suggested this.

CAMPBELL: Now maybe we could — before we talk about the '56 convention — talk about your involvement in selecting a narrator for the film to be shown at the convention.

ZIFFREN: Yes. That was, I think, one of the things that was a springboard for Senator Kennedy's prominence in political life. At the 1952 convention, the keynote

[-2-]

address was made by Governor Paul Dever of Massachusetts, and it was a monumental bore. He talked for an hour, and by the time he got through, he was hoarse and the audience was absolutely bored to tears. So, Paul Butler, who was chairman of the national committee at that time, decided that he did not think that any one person should have that prime television time to make another boring speech, or even an eloquent one. He thought what we ought to do is use that prime time to build a Democratic party. He developed the idea that we ought to have a film and run the film as part of the keynote speech. He came out here, and we got a group of writers and other people in the picture business together to write a documentary which was called "The Pursuit of Happiness." It started out with the beginning of the Democratic party — Thomas Jefferson — and took it up through Harry Truman. The problem then was to find a narrator for that film. Obviously, we wanted somebody who would not be too obtrusive. The first choice was then Governor [Edmund S.] Muskie of Maine. We chose Muskie for several reasons. First of all, Muskie was an ideal narrator because he was not too obtrusive. Secondly, Muskie is a Polish name, and the Democratic party had lost the Polish vote in '52. So we wanted somebody that would be identified by the Polish people who, incidentally, are one of the largest ethnic groups in Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Michigan, all three pivotal states. Poles know that Muskie is a Polish name. And finally, Muskie was then running for governor of Maine. In 1956 the Maine gubernatorial election was in the middle of September, and we felt that if Muskie did well in Maine — there was an old adage, "As Maine goes, so goes the nation." So we thought by giving Muskie this spot, it would build him up, and he could make a very good showing and possibly win the Maine election and have a psychological impact on the November election. Muskie agreed to do it. Then shortly afterwards, he called and said that he had decided that if he did narrate this film, it would hurt him in Maine because it would identify him too closely with the Democratic party and in Maine that was not an advantage. So he asked to be excused. We then had the problem of finding somebody else to narrate. Paul Butler, who was a great admirer of John Kennedy, decided on Kennedy. Kennedy happened to be out here at the time, and I remember that Paul Butler and I and Kennedy had dinner at Perino's one night. Paul Butler suggested it to Senator Kennedy, and Senator Kennedy thought that he'd like very much to do it. While he was out here, he started working with Dore Schary, who was sort of helping to direct and produce this film. Dore tried to help him develop his capacity as a narrator, and he did do a superb job.

CAMPBELL: Could you discuss for a moment the relationship between Paul Butler and John Kennedy as it developed? Was Butler always a strong Kennedy partisan?

[-3-]

ZIFFREN: Yes, he was to the extent that he could be as a national chairman. As national chairman, of course, he was supposed to be impartial, and he tried to be as impartial as he could. But there was no doubt — since I was a very close friend of Paul's, and he confided in me quite frankly — and I have no doubt in my mind that he was delighted when Senator Kennedy was nominated and was always a strong admirer of Senator Kennedy. One of the tragedies of Paul Butler's life was that after Senator Kennedy became president, the people around Senator Kennedy kept Butler away from him. And I think Paul — among other things — died of a broken heart. I think the only appointment he got from Senator Kennedy was on the Canadian-American Boundary Commission.

CAMPBELL: That's right. Why would that have been? Why would the Kennedy people have tried to keep him away?

ZIFFREN: Well, you're familiar with palace politics. Some of the Kennedy people — I'm referring now to [Kenneth P.] Ken O'Donnell and [Lawrence F.] Larry O'Brien — the people that we called the Irish Mafia — felt that Paul was not tough enough, and Paul did not happen to fit into the category that they wanted. There certainly was nothing that Paul had done that they could possibly criticize. Paul would have been very anxious to serve as national chairman again, but he realized that O'Donnell, O'Brien, and some of the others had this terrible prejudice against him. I think that Senator Kennedy himself had felt somewhat guilty about it because he knew of Butler's loyalty, but it was not important enough for him to make a fight about it. As a matter of fact, if we can pursue that, I know when Butler died, his wife Anne [S. Briscoe Butler] had very serious financial problems, and she could not even get an appointment to see the president. Finally, she went to John McCormack, and McCormack called the White House for her. It was McCormack who made the appointment for her with President Kennedy. When President Kennedy saw her, he was very gracious and got her job in the Labor Department. But O'Donnell, who was the appointments secretary, would not even give her an appointment.

CAMPBELL: She had a lot of good company. [Laughter]

ZIFFREN: Yes. She's still living, by the way, in Washington, and I'm sure she remembers this.

CAMPBELL: Yes. Let's talk about your memories of the 1956 convention. What was your reaction of the open fight for the vice presidency?

ZIFFREN: Well, that was a great surprise because historically the presidential nominee always selected the vice-presidential candidate. But [Adlai

E.] Stevenson was in a very embarrassing situation because after the California primary, [C. Estes] Kefauver withdrew. If Stevenson had not chosen Kefauver, it would have been considered unsportsmanlike in view of Kefauver's willingness to support Stevenson. On the other hand, I'm sure that Stevenson personally preferred Kennedy. The people around Stevenson, [William M., Jr.] Bill Blair and the others, were very great admirers of Kenendy. And then, of course, Hubert Humphrey wanted the nomination also. And others wanted it too. So Stevenson sort of — in accordance with a certain tendency that he had of not wanting to bite the bullet on some problems — decided to do something very unusual, and that was to let the convention nominate the vice president. This announcement was made on a Thursday evening about eleven o'clock at night. I remember very clearly that we had heard just before the nomination that that's what he was going to do. But he got into a little hassle with Paul Butler because Paul Butler had told the television networks that the nominee would not appear on television until Friday evening to make his acceptance speech; Stevenson wanted to appear Thursday evening after the nomination in order to make the announcement that he was not going to select the vice-presidential nominee, that he wanted the convention to do it. Paul fought that, and the Stevenson people got rather angry. As a result of that, Paul was nearly shelved as national chairman at that time. But, nevertheless, Stevenson did make the announcement, and it meant that within a matter of twelve hours, the convention would have to select the vice president.

By coincidence, I happened to drive down from the stockyards, where the convention was being held, to the Morrison Hotel with Senator Kennedy. I think the cars got mixed up or something, and my car came along first. He asked me if he could ride down with me because we were both going to a reception that Walter Reuther was having Thursday evening. Reuther had planned the reception at a time when it looked as though Thursday evening would be a very quiet evening because we expected to have everything cut-and-dried. But as it turned out, all the candidates showed up for this reception because this was a reception for the labor people. I remember very clearly walking into the reception behind Senator Kenendy. Walther Reuther greeted us. Reuther and Kennedy both had the habit of looking you squarely in the eye, and they gave each other this direct confrontation, eyeball to eyeball. Reuther said, "Jack, it's very nice of you to come down here." Jack Kennedy said, "Well, I'm delighted to be here, Walter. It looks like a nice party." Reuther said, "I suppose you're

wondering what we're going to do tomorrow." Kennedy said, "Yeah, well, I'm interested in it, naturally." He said, "Well, we've told Adlai already that either you or Estes Kefauver or Hubert Humphrey would be agreeable to us, but we also told him that if we had to make one choice, we would have to choose Estes." Now he said that right squarely in Kennedy's face. Kennedy looked at him, never flinched. I got pale, I think, because it was actually just saying to the man, "We're not supporting you." He obviously did have one choice. Kennedy never blanched, never moved a muscle. He said, "Well, thanks very much Walter. I appreciate that. I understand it," and went off and had a few drinks and then started campaigning because all the candidates were campaigning that night very feverishly. Most of the state delegations had

caucuses, and they all had to appear before these caucuses. Kennedy's ability to handle that confrontation with Reuther was such a drastic contrast to his inability to handle the question just six months before at USC that it made quite an impression.

CAMPBELL: Was there a subsequent meeting that evening, a more private affair, with some people from California, I think in the [Edward H.] Heller suite or something like that? Do you recall that?

ZIFFREN: Yes. The California delegation, as usual, was hopelessly split. Most of the northerners….[Benjamin H.] Ben Swig happened to come from Boston, and he was for Kennedy for that reason. Mrs. [Elinor H.] Heller was a great admirer of Kennedy — I think she knew his father — and she was for him. [Edmund G.] Pat Brown, who was then the attorney general, was for him. There is no question that some of the Catholic delegates were for Senator Kennedy. But the majority of the California delegation went to Kefauver because Kefauver ran a very strong race in California and when he stepped aside for Stevenson, we felt an obligation to support him for vice president. And I made that perfectly clear to Kennedy, that I would have to go along with Kefauver for that reason.

CAMPBELL: Do you recall the day of the vote? There's always been some question about the announcement of California's vote, that it might have been changed and put Kennedy over the top.

ZIFFREN: Well, the vote was very interesting because I think the vote might have been changed if the totalizator had been kept. Part of the convention….Paul Butler decided that we wanted a totalized — is it a totalizator, a totalizer? They use it at racetracks, where you have an instantaneous reflection of the vote. So we thought it would

be interesting to have this totalizer — whatever you call it — there so that people could see what the standing of the vote was as each state voted. Now I think that cost us something like, I don't know, maybe a thousand dollars a day. But the party was so broke that we only kept it for the night of the presidential nomination, and we made no arrangements to have it for the next night because we assumed that there would be no contest for vice president. So the totalizer — or whatever this machine is — was gone. At one point Senator Kennedy actually came within a half a dozen votes or so of having the vice-presidential nomination, but because this machine wasn't there to show the vote, most people, unless they were counting the vote themselves, did not realize it. Some of the California people who were for Kennedy did realize it, and they immediately started a buzz-buzz in the delegation. "Kennedy has it. He's just six votes short. Let's give him the six votes and give it to him." Well, the rest of us who had not counted the votes did not realize it was that close. So before California

could do anything, [Samuel T.] Sam Rayburn recognized Tennessee, I think. I think to Sam Rayburn's surprise, Tennessee went for Kefauver instead of somebody else.

CAMPBELL: [Albert] Gore, who'd been a favorite son.

ZIFFREN: That's correct. That's right. I know that Sam Rayburn did not want Kefauver. There were a lot of banners trying to get his attention. He chose Tennessee in preference to some others, thinking that it would go for Gore. Instead of that, he did not realize that Gore and Kefauver had an understanding that if Kefauver came close, Gore would back out for him. So I think Rayburn was the most surprised when Tennessee went for Kefauver and Kefauver got the nomination.

CAMPBELL: That's been a long time ago, but do you recall yourself or others being concerned over the possibility of a Catholic as a vice-presidential candidate?

ZIFFREN: Oh, yes. Yes. But as a matter of fact, [Theodore C.] Ted Sorensen had prepared a memorandum in which he tried to show that the Catholic vote was the swing vote in the pivotal states, and that memorandum was rather well circulated.

CAMPBELL: And impressive?

ZIFFREN: It was impressive, yes.

CAMPBELL: Shortly, I think, after that convention, you were one of the founding members of the Democratic Advisory Council. What were your ideas, your goals, in founding that group?

ZIFFREN: Well, actually, I had been concerned for some time about the fact that the American political system did not give any structured position to the opposition party. Unlike the English system where the parties are well organized and there's a leader of the opposition, in the American system there is no recognized leader for a party which doesn't have a president. In most cases the congressional leadership would step in and assume the leadership of the party, or if you had a strong personality as a previous candidate for president, he might be the spokesman of the party. But this was not very well organized, very structured, and certainly left much to be desired. I had been thinking about this and developed the idea that the opposition party ought to have sort of a collective leadership, and that it ought to consist not only of the congressional leaders but of certain elder statesmen in the party in the party as well as the previous candidates for president and vice president as well as governors and other important party officials.

After the ‘56 convention — after the ‘56 election — rather — when the Democrats did gain control of both houses of Congress again but lost the presidency, it seemed to me more urgent than ever that we should not have a party the spokesmen of which would be two Texans. Therefore, I talked to Paul Butler about it, and he was rather sympathetic with the idea. I remember we had a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Democratic National Committee in late November of 1956. That morning I had breakfast with [David L.] Dave Lawrence of Pennsylvania, who later became governor; [Jacob M.] Jack Arvey; Carmine DeSapio in New York; and, I think, Camille Gravel of Louisiana. There were four or five of us at breakfast, and I tried the idea out on them. They thought it made sense. So right after breakfast we went into our meeting, and I suggested an advisory council. Paul Butler was, as I say, very receptive to it. I think it was unanimously passed. And Paul Butler was authorized to invite persons to be on the advisory council. My recollection is that our members at large were Mrs. [Eleanor R.] Roosevelt; Mr. Truman; Governor Stevenson; Senator Kefauver; Governor [W. Averell] Harriman, representing the governors in the East; Governor Mennen Williams from Michigan, representing the governors in the Middle West. I forget who was the governor from the South. We had a mayor from St. Louis, [Raymond R.] Tucker, and then we had the executive committee of the national committee on it. In addition to that, we invited Senator [Lyndon B.] Johnson and Speaker Rayburn, and they both declined to serve. We then invited Senator Humphrey, and I talked to Senator Kennedy about serving. Senator Kennedy was very much interested in the concept, and I thought he was going to serve. But at the time, there was a vacancy on the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate, and I think that he used the leverage of the advisory council

to get that vacancy because he was appointed to this Foreign Relations Committee. And then he told me he decided not to serve on the advisory council. Knowing how deeply Lyndon Johnson felt against the advisory council, I’m sure he would not have given him that appointment if he thought that he was going to serve on the advisory council.

CAMPBELL: There’s been a suggestion someplace in print — and I’ve forgotten where I saw it — that early plans for the advisory council weren’t checked through with the congressional leadership or something.

ZIFFREN: No, that’s quite true because the whole thing came up just as spontaneously as I mentioned to you. I was thinking about it. I developed the idea on the plane going back to Washington. I saw Paul Butler the night I got in. I had breakfast the next morning with some of these other national committee people, and we did not check it with anybody.

CAMPBELL: Do you think it would have made any difference in their response?

ZIFFREN: Not at all, because they were not about — Johnson and Rayburn were not about to have any competing voice set up. As a matter of fact, I remember the reporter for the *New York Times* was William White, who was a very close friend of Lyndon Johnson. Johnson told White that the advisory council would never get off the ground. Before our first meeting — I think our first meeting was in January of 1957 — the *New York Times* had a story saying that the advisory council was going to have a meeting, but that the meeting would probably be a fiasco and that it would never get any place. It really was an obituary for the whole advisory council. I remember that so well because at the first meeting of the advisory council I was talking to another reporter from the *New York Times*, [William H.] Bill Lawrence. He's now with ABC [American Broadcasting Company]. As I was talking to Bill, Mr. Truman walked in and Governor Stevenson walked in and Mrs. Roosevelt walked in, and I turned to Bill and I said, "Gee, according to the *New York Times,* this is supposed to be a wake. This is a very lively wake." He looked at me and he said, "Well, I don't think that's a *New York Times* opinion. I think that's the opinion of Bill White. I'm writing this story." And the Bill Lawrence story was completely different.

CAMPBELL: Let's get back for one more question on the potential of John Kennedy being a member of the council. He did get an official letter, an invitation to join…

ZIFFREN: I know that.

[-9-]

CAMPBELL: … which I've found in the papers, and waited a month or two to respond in the negative. He was an unusual senator to be invited, I thought; the other senators — Senator Kefauver, a defeated vice presidential candidate; Johnson, a majority leader…. What led to his invitation exactly? On what basis was it issued?

ZIFFREN: Actually, it was an indication of Paul Butler's friendship for him for one thing. We rationalized it on the theory that he was one of the contenders for the vice-presidential nomination. Also, since we had very few senators anyhow and not very many senators were willing to serve, we could not be too particular. But I remember now that there was quite an extended period when Kennedy kept us waiting; then finally, when he got the appointment, he said no.

CAMPBELL: Were you pleased with the advisory council as it developed as a spokesman?

ZIFFREN: Very much so, because I think that one of the reasons the Democrats won in 1960 is because the image of the party was not the Texas image. The advisory council would meet regularly. We would take on the [Dwight D.] Eisenhower administration very boldly on issues. We made it very clear that

the Democratic party was a party of liberals; it was a party of innovation; it was a party of creative people. We had an extraordinarily talented group of people working on task forces. We had [John Kenneth] Galbraith and [Leon H.] Keyserling in the economic field, and we had [Dean G.] Acheson and [Paul H.] Nitze and Harriman and [Walt W.] Rostow. We had, I think, the best brains of the party working on all of these issues. Actually, the program that Senator Kennedy introduced when he became president was essentially a program that had been worked out by these various task forces.

CAMPBELL: There's been a suggestion someplace that at times the advisory council might have split down the middle between sort of Stevenson people and Truman people. Is that a fair thing to say?

ZIFFREN: Well, we had the staff.… In order to make sure that we would get Truman on and in order to make sure that we would get Stevenson on, we had to put on the staff — unknown to them — people that we were sure would be able to get them to join. One of the people that Truman was closest to was [Charles S.] Charlie Murphy — he had been his counsel — and so Charlie Murphy was on the staff. One of the people that Stevenons was closest to was [Thomas K.] Tom Finletter and so Finletter was on the staff. When we realized we had this

confrontation with Johnson and Rayburn, we very deliberately selected people that would buttress our position with Stevenson, Truman. Mrs. Roosevelt was fantastic. We had no problem at all with her. She felt as we did about most of these things and realized the necessity of having voice separate from the Texas voice.

CAMPBELL: Let's follow the advisory council out if we may. It was alive and flourishing up until the convention. Then at the convention in 1960, there was a wonderful resolution passed, I think, assuring its perpetuation past the convention. Were you involved in drawing that resolution and the...

ZIFFREN: Well, yes. We felt that the advisory council had made a great contribution and should be continued even though we had elected a president. But again, President Kennedy's advisors certainly did not want a bunch of kibitzers at the national committee working on programs that might or might not be consistent with his programs, and obviously it was just buried.

CAMPBELL: Yeah. That was no great surprise to you then?

ZIFFREN: No. Actually, as I say, when you have a president, there's no question that that's where the leadership should come from.

CAMPBELL: In the 1950's, there was a great deal of press coverage, a great deal of press coverage, a great deal of comment about your leadership in California — your power, if you will as national committeeman. Could you spend a few minutes just discussing your role in California Democratic politics and national politics in the fifties?

ZIFFREN: Well, I believe that was highly exaggerated. I had gotten into politics because I wanted to express myself and to try to do things that I felt needed to be done. The advisory council was one of the things that I thought was an important experiment in American politics. I also felt that we have to get volunteers involved in politics, and so in California, I helped to start this club movement which at one time was very successful. I think we had at one time over seventy thousand volunteers. The club movement developed a good deal of comment all over the country because it was completely opposite the machine politics. My feeling was that people have to get involved in their government because ultimately people will get about what they deserve. Unless they're willing to be involved, government will not be responsive, and I don't think that people will be satisfied.

The club movement was very successful in California because we started in 1953, and by 1958 we were able to carry the entire state and captured both houses of the state legislature. We had a majority in Congress. We had all of the statewide offices except for secretary of state. But I think that one of the things that made it easier for me and those who were working with me was the fact that Earl Warren left. Warren resigned as governor in September of 1953 and I was elected national committeeman about that same time, so that I think Warren's absence made me look much better. If Warren had been governor, I don't think we could have gotten the Democratic party started as effectively as we did.

CAMPBELL: Did your role become more difficult as a party spokesman or party leader when you finally did elect a governor?

ZIFFREN: Well, in terms of party spokesman, obviously, because once you have a governor, then he's a spokesman. The governor and I had many differences of opinion. I think that the governor was essentially sympathetic to most of the things that I was interested in, and he often would say to me that he wished that I would be more willing to compromise. I was very inflexible on certain things. I was very inflexible on, oh, what was considered to be tax principles. I considered the oil depletion allowance and certain other tax loopholes immoral, and I was always fighting them. I considered the lack of an effective civil rights program a great deficiency in our party. I took very outspoken positions on things. It was easy for me to do so because I had no constituency to which I was responsible. I suppose in a way I was just freewheeling. The governor and elected officials have more difficulty. They could not afford to be as — what shall I say? — stubbornly independent as I was because I went in politics on that basis

that every day was the last day, and I didn't care whether I was in it or not. I simply wanted an opportunity to say what I felt and to do what I thought ought to be done.

CAMPBELL: In the 1950's, do you recall after 1956 your first conversations with Kennedy people about the potential of his running for president?

ZIFFREN: Yes. It was not very secret that he started to run practically immediately after the '56 election. When Stevenson was defeated, he felt — he was very close to Stevenson, but he felt that Stevenson would not run again. And he had told me that he wanted to get as many speaking engagements in California as possible. We brought him out here quite often, and he would be traveling all over the country.

[-12-]

He was building up an organization. As a matter of fact, he hired a fellow named [Hyman B.] Hy Raskin, who had been the deputy chairman of the national committee to Paul Butler. He started to develop a staff. His senatorial staff was probably the largest staff of all, outside of Lyndon Johnson's, because he was building up a presidential campaign.

CAMPBELL: At that time, did you in any way express your support for his candidacy, or were you helping him as you would have helped [Stuart] Symington or Humphrey?

ZIFFREN: I was in a very difficult position. I was very fond of him, but I wasn't convinced at that time that he <u>was</u> the best candidate. And I felt that there was no reason to make a commitment. So I was very friendly to him; I did everything I could to get him exposure in California; I did whatever I could to help him without any commitment. He and Ted Sorensen and some of the other members of his staff would from time to time try to pin me down. Finally, when the convention came to Los Angeles, then I told them that it would be inappropriate far in advance of the convention to take a position. As a matter of fact, just to get to the point, I did finally come out for Senator Kennedy — I think it was on the Monday that the convention opened. As a matter of fact, Sunday night we had a big dinner. We took two rooms at the Beverly Hilton [Hotel]. I was the master of ceremonies in the larger room, and I had to introduce all the speakers. I told Senator Kennedy that I thought that it would be improper for me to have made a commitment publicly when I was supposed to be introducing Lyndon Johnson and Humphrey and Stevenson and Symington and so forth. But the following day, I did commit myself at a press conference to Senator Kennedy.

CAMPBELL: Let's talk about your efforts to bring the convention to Los Angeles. How early did you get started on that?

ZIFFREN: Rather early. One of the things that I had hoped for was to have a convention here because Los Angeles never did have a national political convention. San Francisco had, the Republican National Convention in the twenties. But Los Angeles never did have a national political convention. I thought that we should have it. We had built the Sports Arena, which made it possible to have it, and the Sports Arena was right next to the Coliseum. I thought that it would be a brilliant idea to have the closing session of the convention at the Coliseum so that anybody who wanted to get in would have a chance to get in. It would be a very dramatic and a very democratic spectacle to have an open convention with a hundred thousand people, possibly. I spoke to Paul Butler about it, and Paul was such a devoted friend that he promised

that he would help to the extent that he could without violating his ostensible neutrality as chairman. The site committee had as its chairman my good friend Camille Gravel of Louisiana, I lobbied all these people very strenuously. Paul Butler, I'm sure, in his neutral way also helped. We did get the recommendation of the site committee. Then there was a very bitter fight with Chicago particularly. San Francisco was also unhappy about it, and we finally got the national committee to ratify the recommendation of the site committee.

CAMPBELL: What was [Edwin H.] Ed Pauley's role in this, early on?

ZIFFREN: Well, that was a very unhappy situation because when I started working to get the convention here, Ed was very helpful. He was sort of treasurer of the convention committee. I went to the chamber of commerce, and I went to the various other business interests and explained to them how important it would be to get the convention here. They were all very cooperative, and Ed was most helpful. But Ed and I came to the parting of the ways on the distribution of tickets, which was a very unhappy story, because in order to get the convention, we had to pledge I think it was four hundred fifty thousand dollars. Ed said that in order to get four hundred fifty thousand dollars, he needed five thousand tickets. Well now, the sports arena, after you take away the space for the press and television and the rest of the media and the delegates and alternates, ended up with, I think, about thirteen thousand seats, so that to take five thousand seats was to take more than a third of the convention for the people who were contributing money. I was determined to have as many seats as possible for people. We had seventy thousand club members, and certainly there were a lot of other people that should be in there, and I saw no reason to take that big a block away for money. Now Paul Butler absolutely agreed with me. We finally had a showdown with the mayor and the supervisors and Ed Pauley and myself. Paul Butler just said that he would not give the finance committee five thousand seats, whereupon Pauley said that he would have to resign. So I then went out and had to put together another finance committee, which we were able to do. But I felt very badly because, as I say, Ed had been most helpful, and I did not want to get into this fight with him.

CAMPBELL: What were the major sources of financial support? Local business?

ZIFFREN: Yes. I think we did get fifty thousand dollars from the city and fifty thousand from the county, and the rest of the money was raised from local firms,

such as the hotels and various business interests that would benefit from the convention.

CAMPBELL: Any problems with the Republican mayor at that time?

ZIFFREN: No. The Republican mayor was most cooperative; he did everything he possibly could. At that time, the city tried to get the Republican convention also. His position was that he wanted both of them, but if he could not get both, he wanted to help to get that one he could get.

CAMPBELL: How about Governor Brown? Was he all in favor of the convention coming…

ZIFFREN: No, he was not enthusiastic about the convention coming. That was one of the things that created a rift between Governor Brown and myself. I think Governor Brown was concerned that the convention was… [Interruption]

CAMPBELL: … Governor Brown's views of the convention coming to Los Angeles.

ZIFFREN: Well, not only was he somewhat equivocal about whether the convention should come to California but he was definite that if it came to California, it should be in San Francisco. San Francisco was my second choice, but not my first. So we had some differences. Then in connection with setting up the convention, we had a number of disagreements because I felt that it ought to be set up in a different way than he did. There's no question that he had every right to be upset with me because he was the governor; he had been elected. I think he felt I was arrogating — whatever the word is — too much authority. I think also that the national press had built me up too much. This also was a source of some irritation because *Life* and *Look* and *Harper's* [*Magazine*] and all the magazines would have stories about me, and he was the governor. I think this disturbed his staff if not him.

CAMPBELL: What is an example of the difference of opinion you might have had over convention arrangements?

ZIFFREN: Well, each state had a certain allocation of tickets. Outside of tickets that went to the finance committee, there was an allocation of tickets. I

felt very strongly that a good bunch of tickets should be put aside for the volunteers and the club people. He felt that more of the tickets should go to the officeholders. We had a lot of officeholders — the state legislature, Congress, and so forth. It was essentially this difference between my dedication to the

volunteers and his dedication to the incumbent officeholders. And I must say it was an inevitable split.

CAMPBELL: At the same time, Governor Brown was developing or having developed for him a favorite son candidacy for president. Do you recall how this developed in 1959 and early '60, the plans for the favorite son candidacy?

ZIFFREN: Oh, yes. It was inevitable. After all, you had Kennedy and Stevenson and Symington and Humphrey. Humphrey was really running against Kennedy in most of the primaries. Governor Brown felt, first of all, that if there was any chance that he could get the nomination, he wanted it. Secondly, if he could not get the nomination as president, he certainly would like to be the vice president. Third, if he could not get the nomination for either president or vice president, he wanted to be in a position to deliver a block of votes and have some trading and leverage with the candidate. It was certainly appropriate and proper for him to be the favorite son also on the theory that by being the favorite son, he could prevent the California delegation from being split up by not having a very bitter primary fight. So I was certainly agreeable to a favorite son delegation for Governor Brown.

However, Senator Kennedy did use me to pressure Governor Brown — and this was another area where the governor and I had some harsh words — because Senator Kennedy told the governor that I was encouraging him to come to California, and that unless the governor committed himself to support Kennedy, he would come into California and I would run his campaign here. That was not accurate. The governor challenged me about it, and I told him that I had not said that to Senator Kennedy. As a matter of fact, I insisted that Ted Sorensen send me a letter in which he admitted that I had not encouraged Kennedy to come in and challenge the governor.

CAMPBELL: Did he?

ZIFFREN: Did he send me the letter? Yes, he did, but by that time the governor had already committed himself to dump me as national committeeman.

CAMPBELL: I believe that you had a conversation in the fall of 1959 with Ambassador [Joseph P., Sr.] Kennedy about….

ZIFFREN: Yes, it was in the summer of '59. Pat Lawford called me — I'd been a friend of Pat's for a long time; I'm very fond of her — and she told me that

[-16-]

her father…. father was coming out and wanted to talk to me. I had a very interesting discussion with him. What he was trying to do was to pin me down to support Senator Kennedy. This was, as I say, in the summer of '59, and I just wasn't going to be pinned down. Then I remember his saying to me at one point — he had very cold blue eyes — "You know, we'll never forget [Abraham A.] Abe Ribicoff and what he's done by coming out for us now." He obviously expected me to say, "Well, Mr. Ambassador, you know, I want to be with you too," or something like that, but I just changed the subject. But Joe Kennedy was a very tough person and a very forthright person, and I enjoyed meeting him, but I was not going to be pressed into a commitment at that time.

CAMPBELL: I believe you had, however, discussed the advantages and disadvantages of John F. Kennedy entering the California primary.

ZIFFREN: Yes, I did. I had discussed them very frankly with Senator Kennedy. He asked me if I thought he could win here. I said that I thought he might, that it would be very close. I thought he'd have a very good chance of winning. He asked me if I thought he ought to come in. I said that I have a conflict of interest there, that obviously I don't want to encourage a fight in that primary, but by the same token I could see certain advantages for him. So I was trying to be as objective as I could, recognizing the conflict of interest that did exist. But to say that I encouraged him to come in was not an accurate statement of my position.

CAMPBELL: Chronologically, in early 1960, we come upon a western Democratic conference at Albuquerque. I believe you were there.

ZIFFREN: That's right. I think that conference was the high-water mark of Lyndon Johnson because one of the things that I had done was to reactivate the western Democratic conference. I thought — and I did this in connection with getting the convention for Los Angeles — I had to broaden the base, and if I could get some of the other western states to go along with this, I'd have more votes. So I got this western states Democratic conference which consisted of the national committee members from each of the eleven western states and the state chairmen and vice chairmen, and we had regular meetings. I think I was chairman of the executive committee.

[-17-]

The last meeting we were going to have before the convention was in Albuquerque. Senator Clinton Anderson of New Mexico was a strong supporter of Lyndon Johnson, and Johnson had a lot of support in New Mexico. So much to my surprise, they had worked out a

program to have not only Senator Johnson out there but to have Speaker Rayburn as the principal speaker at the dinner. The whole purpose was to try to make Johnnson out to be a westerner. Johnson was running on the theory that Texas is not so much South as it is West. When I got to Albuquerque and I found out — and actually I found literally dozens of Texans there, buttonholing everybody and putting on quite a show of their own — I had a press conference. Somebody said to me, "Well now, what about Senator Johnson? What do you think of him?" I said, "Well, Senator Johnson said that he's not running for president." They said, "Well, he certainly has a lot of activity going here." I said, "Well, obviously he's running to be from the West." Senator Johnson was very upset by those comments of mine, and I don't think he ever forgave me for being so sarcastic about running for the West and some of the other things. I also insisted that Speaker Rayburn should not be the principal speaker because I felt that since he was openly committed to Johnson, it would make it a Johnson rally. But I think that the result of that was to incur the very deep enmity of Senator Johnson.

CAMPBELL: At that time, I've heard that were were some discussions between Kennedy people and — was Governor Brown there?

ZIFFREN: I don't remember.

CAMPBELL: Either between the Kennedy people and Governor Brown personally, or a Brown representative. The Kennedy people asked a commitment that Governor Brown would release the delegates after the first ballot. If given the commitment, then John Kennedy would certainly not run in your primary. Were you involved in those discussions at all at that time?

ZIFFREN: No, but there was no question that Governor Brown would have to release the delegates after the first ballot. Actually, as you know, he released them before the first ballot.

CAMPBELL: There's also a suggestion that Ed Heller was involved at some time as an intermediary between, again, Senator Kennedy and Governor Brown in delivering pledges and promises. Do you know anything about that?

ZIFFREN: Well, Ed Heller was a very strong supporter of

Senator Kennedy. Ed and Ellie Heller, his wife, were very strong Kennedy people.

CAMPBELL: There's a suggestion — I think it came out in [Joseph W.] Alsop's column in the summer of 1960 — that Ed Heller had delivered a

promise from Senator Kennedy or asked a promise, I'm sorry, from Governor Brown that if Senator Kennedy won all the primaries, Governor Brown would step aside, and perhaps Governor Brown agreed. Have you ever heard that story, that tale?

ZIFFREN: There's no question in my mind that Governor Brown agreed to support Senator Kennedy. There was a firm commitment there. What it would entail I don't think was ever really pinned down because Governor Brown was not too specific in what his position was, except that there was no question he was for Senator Kennedy.

CAMPBELL: And committed in some way before the convention.

ZIFFREN: That's right.

CAMPBELL: You were part of a small group that met at Carmel Highlands Inn chapel — in a smoke-filled sanctuary or something, it's been called — to select the delegation. What goals did you have in that meeting? How were people selected?

ZIFFREN: Well, my goals were quite different than the goals of most of the people who were at the meeting because, again, I was interested in getting the volunteers on the delegation. As a matter of fact, in 1956 I introduced the resolution at the national committee to practically double the number of delegates. My theory was that the more delegates, the broader base of representation. And since I was anxious to get as many people as possible involved, I felt that if you had more delegates you would have more people involved. In 1960 I think that the Democratic convention had over three thousand delegates. At the Republican convention they had probably fifteen hundred. We had about twice as many, which was part of this whole program of involvement. On the other hand, most of the other people there were interested in getting officeholders on the delegation. In addition to that, at that time they had decided to dump me as national committeeman so they were trying to get officeholders who were committed to that objective so that it was not a very happy experience because most of the people I suggested for the delegation were vetoed.

CAMPBELL: At that time, it's been suggested, I believe, that

Larry O'Brien was present on the fringes somehow.

ZIFFREN: Yeah, he was. Larry O'Brien and Hy Raskin were both on the fringes, and they were sort of suggesting names from time to time. That's right.

CAMPBELL: Would it have been fair to characterize one member of the meeting as their spokesman?

ZIFFREN: Yes. I think that [Jesse M.] Jess Unruh and Fred Dutton, who were at the meeting, were their spokesmen.

CAMPBELL: Were they after obvious Kennedy supporters as members of the delegation?

ZIFFREN: Yes.

CAMPBELL: You did come out with a delegation that had an unusual number of officeholders, didn't you?

ZIFFREN: That's right. That was in spite of my fight.

CAMPBELL: Did anyone choosing the delegation look out for Adlai Stevenson's interests at that time?

ZIFFREN: No. No, Stevenson was in a very equivocal position. We could not get him to say whether he was or wasn't a candidate. As a matter of fact, I remember telling Dore Schary, who was very strong for Stevenson, that Stevenson would have to make a commitment to be a candidate before the Wisconsin primary — I think that was early in April — and that if he did not do it, the train would have passed. It was just too late. Stevenson would not make a decision by that time. I don't think Stevenson himself knew whether he wanted to run or not. I think he was very equivocal in his own mind.

CAMPBELL: Did anyone, after the delegates were selected, feel that this was a controllable group, a controllable delegation?

ZIFFREN: They thought it was until we got into the election of national committeemen, when the thing just split apart and was never put back together again.

CAMPBELL: Was that perhaps the first meeting of the delegation…

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

[-20-]

CAMPBELL: Was that perhaps the first meeting of the delegation — the selection of the national committeemen? You've indicated that you had some forewarning that you'd at least have a fight. Had you discussed this with Governor Brown?

ZIFFREN: Yes, I discussed it with Governor Brown a number of times. He told me some of his problems. One of them was Lyndon Johnson. Johnson told him that he had to get rid of me. My recollection is that Johnson told him that unless he got rid of me California would not get any legislation through the Congress. I remember saying to the governor when he told me that, not to be concerned about it because that's very easy to handle. He said, "Why? What would you do?" I said, "Very simple. Just have a press conference and just say that Johnson said that unless you dumped me you couldn't get anything through the Congress. I think that would take care of him." Well, I think he turned fifteen different colors and practically fainted. In any event, he was very anxious to avoid the fight. He was very anxious to have me not run, but I felt that I had a commitment to these volunteers who had worked so hard for so many years. As a matter of fact, they were passing resolutions — oh, I think there were thousands of them — in support of me. I just could not, under the circumstances, run away from it. I had to go through with the fight, even though I knew it was a hopeless thing.

CAMPBELL: But it turned out to be a rather close thing, didn't it?

ZIFFREN: No, it really wasn't as close because the governor was sitting there. He insisted that the vote be by open ballot so that everybody had to stand up in front of the governor and say he was either for the governor or for me. It was a very unhappy experience because I hated to put so many decent people through such a traumatic experience. After all, the governor was the governor. He had two years to go at least. He had just been through the very traumatic [Cary] Chessman situation, and I felt this was not good for him politically. And it certainly was hard on my stomach.

CAMPBELL: Why Stanley Mosk?

ZIFFREN: Well, I think that — as a matter of fact, I was told — that they wanted somebody who was as close to me as possible. They wanted somebody who was supposed to be a liberal, as I was; who was Jewish, as I was, so that it could not be considered an anti-Jewish thing, an

anti-liberal thing. Stanley Mosk fitted all those requirements.

CAMPBELL: How did this acrimony influence the California delegation as it continued on into the convention?

ZIFFREN: I think it was responsible for the fact that the delegation was hopelessly split. I think that Kennedy never did get a majority. My recollection is that Kennedy got about a third of it, Stevenson got about a third of it. The Stevenson people were the people who had supported me. Part of this

whole legend was that some of the Kennedy people — Ken O'Donnell and Jess Unruh and Larry O'Brien, possibly, although I don't know — told Kennedy that I stacked the convention against him. If you recall at the convention, the Kennedy supporters overwhelmed it. He made an appearance on Tuesday…

CAMPBELL: Stevenson supporters.

ZIFFREN: Excuse me, the Stevenson supporters overwhelmed it. Stevenson made an appearance on Tuesday, and the roof nearly went off of it. There was no question that there were more Stevenson people at the convention than there were Kennedy. I had nothing to do with getting the Stevenson people in. I did have a number of tickets, but actually my own personal tickets I gave to friends without regard to whether they were for Kennedy or Stevenson. But if you were at the convention, you know there were hundreds of Stevenson people around the convention hall at all times. In order to have the convention at the sports arena, we had to build some temporary partitions. On Wednesday,which, I think, was the day that the voting took place, the Stevenson people just broke down one of these partitions and just moved in. It was just that simple.

Years later, in 1963, as a matter of fact, in August of 1963 — I think it was the last time President Kennedy was in the state — President Kennedy and Governor Brown and Senator Clair Engle had a meeting in San Diego to plan for the 1964 campaign. Senator Engle was a very good friend of mine. He told President Kennedy at that time that he thought it was important to have me run the campaign in '64. Ken O'Donnell was there, and O'Donnell — and this is what Engle told me — O'Donnell said, "Well, we can't use Ziffren because I'll never forgive him for stacking the convention in '60 for Stevenson." I understand that President Kennedy said, "Well, I think that was a perfectly legitimate ploy, and I don't think we ought to harp on that anymore." But I don't think President Kennedy to his dying day was convinced that I did not stack it.

CAMPBELL: What are your recollections of the convention, the give-and-take within the California delegation? I think you caucused several times.

ZIFFREN: Yes, we did. It was always very bitter and totally impossible to get anything like a majority for any candidate.

CAMPBELL: By that time, or at least by the second caucus or so, you were committed to…

ZIFFREN: Oh, I was committed. I was trying to get my friends to support Kennedy. They were telling me that if I wanted to be Christlike and go along with Governor Brown, I had a right to, but they weren't going to

do it. They were still fighting the national committeeman fight, and there was nothing I could do to change it.

CAMPBELL: Did the Kenedy people send — I guess Hy Raskin was around — in other people from outside to work with the California delegation?

ZIFFREN: Oh, yes. They were very disappointed in the California vote. [Robert F.] Bob Kennedy, as a matter of fact, had a list of Kennedy people in each state, and I think California was his greatest disappointment.

CAMPBELL: Was there any mistake that the Kennedy organization made in attempting to swing votes in California? Could they have fought a better fight?

ZIFFREN: Well, by the time of the convention, no. I think the vendettas and the antagonisms and animosities were too deep-seated. There was no way of changing it. I pleaded with some of my friends, and they just would not move.

CAMPBELL: It's been suggested that perhaps some tactics that Jess Unruh and Fred Dutton had used might have influenced some people in the wrong way. Would that have been before the convention, or was that during the campaign?

ZIFFREN: Before the convention and during the convention. They were somewhat arrogant. They were saying, "After all, you've got to go along with the governor." Well, most of these delegates, not most but some of these delegates, just were not that interested in going along with the governor. They felt that they had a right to their own position.

CAMPBELL: I believe that after the nomination you had a discussion with Robert Kennedy about the appropriate place for Senator Kennedy's acceptance speech.

ZIFFREN: Oh, yes. That was a very traumatic experience because, as I indicated, one of the reasons I was anxious to have the convention here was to have the final session in the Coliseum. The day after Senator Kennedy was nominated — he was nominated Wednesday night, as I recall, and Thursday morning Bob Kennedy came into my office and asked me how many people I could guarantee for the Coliseum session. I said, "Well, Bob, I'm going to be there and I hope I can get Mickey [Muriel Ziffren] my wife to come, but I don't know who I can guarantee." He said, "No, I'm very serious. Can you guarantee us at least seventy-five thousand people?" I said, "No, I

can't guarantee you seventy-five thousand people." He said, "Well, I don't think we ought to have the session in the Coliseum because you know that the cameras are going to try to find empty spaces, and this will be Jack's most important speech. I don't think that we can take a chance on not having a full house for it. Anyhow, Leonard Reinsch" — who was in charge of the convention and who's a television man — "doesn't think the acoustics in the Coliseum are very good so I think we ought to cancel out the Coliseum and go back to the sports arena." I was completely taken aback by this, and I said, "Well, I hope you haven't decided that." He said, "Yeah, I think that's the thing to do." I said, "Well, Bob, I think that's a terrible mistake." He said, "Why?" I said, Well, because we've had hundreds of people working on this. We've passed out about two hundred thousand tickets to people" — because obviously you always give more tickets that you have seats in order to try to make sure that you'll have a full house — "and I think this is betraying everything that we promised. I couldn't possibly go along with that." He said, "Well, but I think it's the thing to do." And I said, "Well, look, if you're telling me that Jack is not going to come to the Coliseum, then, of course, we can't have a session there. But if you do that, I'm going to have to explain why we cancelled it." He said, "Well, what do you mean?" I said, "I'm going to have to explain that you cancelled the Coliseum because you were afraid that we would not fill it and you did not like the acoustics." He looked at me and said, "Are you serious?" I said, "Yes." He turned around and walked out. We had the session at the Coliseum, but it took him a while before he ever forgave me for that.

CAMPBELL: Do you recall your reaction, the reaction of those close to you from California to the selection of Lyndon Johnson as the vice-presidential candidate?

ZIFFREN: Yes, 90 percent of us were in a state of shock — not only shock, we were angry. Actually, Senator Kennedy had told me at one time that he couldn't possibly think of Johnson as the vice-presidential nominee. He said, "Johnson is making most of my problems. Why would I choose him? This is just absurd," because I confronted him with the rumor that he was going to choose Johnson. Now this was, I would say, six months before, and he absolutely denied it. So we were shocked and angry at the selection.

CAMPBELL: Did you discuss it with any of the Kennedy people at that time and receive an explanation?

ZIFFREN: No. As a matter of fact, I think most of the Kennedy people including Bob Kennedy were unhappy with the choice. I think that this was a selection that Jack Kennedy made himself on the basis that he needed the Johnson support to carry the South, he needed the Johnson support to offset the Catholic issue, and I think also that he wanted to get Lyndon Johnson out of the Senate. He knew he

could not work with him. In retrospect, he might have been right, but at the time it was a great shock to us.

Stuart Symington is a good friend of mine, Symington wanted to be president and then he wanted to be vice president. I remember on Thursday noon, just before we went back to the convention, I was having lunch at Perino's. I saw Symington there and I said hello to him. He looked at me and he said — this is after it was already announced that Johnson would be the vice president — "Well, your candidate certainly did you proud."

CAMPBELL: What was your role in the 1960 campaign?

ZIFFREN: After the convention, Pat Lawford came up to see me and said, "Now what do you want to do? Jack wants you to do whatever you want to do." I said that I wasn't sure what I wanted to do, but that I felt that it would be difficult for me to work with the people who were running the Kennedy campaign in California. During the conversation with her, I developed the idea that I ought to use this western campaign committee. She thought that was a good idea, and so [Edward M.] Ted Kennedy was assigned as the liaison with us for the West. A lawyer from Phoenix named John Frank — a very able person — and I and Ted Kennedy were supposed to work out a campaign for the West. We tried to do something in each of the western states. We had hearings on issues in different cities. For example, in San Diego we'd have a hearing on an issue that had to do with the navy. In Los Angeles we would have hearings, and we'd bring in people to discuss these things. Then we

filmed them, and then we would run these films as campaign material.

As part of this, we needed Kennedy to introduce the films and to comment on the films. I remember I went to Washington right after this second debate with [Richard M.] Nixon. I was going to spend the next day with him, flying from Washington through Kentucky and back to Washington, so we could discuss the filming and what we were going to do. It was a very intresting flight because we got on the plane — it must have been about eleven o'clock — when the debate was over. If you recall, in the first debate Nixon did very badly and Kennedy really did very well. When Kennedy got on the plane after the second debate, he said, "Do you know what that so-and-so did?" I said, "No." He said, "He was perspiring very badly in the first debate. When I walked into the studio, I was practically freezing; he had the temperature down to sixty degrees. I asked the technicians to put up the heat, and they said, 'No, Mr. Nixon said he wants it at sixty.'" And then he indicated what he thought about that. Then he said, "When we got all through and the photographers were around us, we were talking, and all of a sudden Nixon held out his finger and started pointing." He said, "I know very well the picture's going to look as though he's telling me off. We were talking about the weather or baseball or something else."

I developed a tremendous admiration for the way he handled himself because we flew from Washington to I think it was Lexington, Kentucky. That was our first stop. We got into Lexington. It must have been about two o'clock in the morning, it was raining, there were people at the airport, and he had to meet everybody and say hello. These were all dignitaries. Then we went to the hotel. By the time we got to the hotel and got to sleep, it must have been four o'clock. The next morning at seven o'clock he was up for breakfast with some people; at eight o'clock he had his speaking engagement. Then we flew from Lexington to Bowling Green and Louisville, you know, a number of stops. I just could not understand how a human being could go through what he went through that day and every other day because this was just a typical day. He was sitting there — I remember he used to sit and eat hot dogs and beet borscht with a lot of cream. He loved beet borscht with whipped cream and hot dogs, and apparently he felt that this gave him a lot of energy. But it was a gruesome and grueling day. Actually, we got into Washington about ten o'clock at night. He came over to the studio to do his taping. We had gone over the taping on the plane. I was exhausted, but I had done nothing except watch him. He went through this thing, and he insisted on doing it over and over again until he thought it was right. He was there until about midnight before he went home for dinner. I've never seen a man with

such patience, such discipline, and such energy. It was incredible.

CAMPBELL: I'm sure you followed the campaign in California with great interest even if your responsibilities extended beyond the state. Someone has suggested that the Kennedy people never really quite expected to win California and sort of wrote it off at the beginning of the campaign. Do you agree with that?

ZIFFREN: No. They certainly expected to win California because the Catholic issue obviously wasn't an issue here. Governor Brown had been elected governor. It's true Nixon came from California, but I know that the Kennedy people were telling Kennedy that he had California. When I talked to Kennedy about the various states, he assumed that he was going to carry California.

CAMPBELL: Why didn't he?

ZIFFREN: I suppose because Nixon got more votes. No, seriously, I really don't know. I wasn't that familiar with the California campaign. I don't know what could have been done that wasn't done. It was close.

CAMPBELL: It was very — 0.1 percent or something like that.

ZIFFREN: Yes, I think it was a matter of maybe fifteen thousand votes — fifteen to twenty thousand votes — so it was very close.

CAMPBELL: Did former Stevenson supporters go all out?

ZIFFREN: Some of them did. Some of them sat on their hands. But I don't think that was the thing. I don't think that the Stevenson supporters were responsible for the defeat. I don't know why. It was one of these close elections, and he just did not carry…. Actually, I think it could have been the absentee vote that swung the ballots. You know the absentee vote is usually Republicans.

CAMPBELL: He did run, I think, about half a million votes behind the rest of the Democratic ticket. Most congressmen and other statewide offices ran ahead of him.

ZIFFREN: Yes, but then don't forget that there you have a local situation. The Democratic congressmen had been entrenched for a long time so it isn't really

fair…. I know after the election, in rationalizing, we pointed out that the Democratic party did very well. But I don't think it's fair to compare his vote with the aggregate or the congressional vote.

CAMPBELL: Do you have other comments about the election or the interim period in there before he took office?

ZIFFREN: Not particularly.

CAMPBELL: If not, let me ask a few things about the administration. How about this appointment of a postmaster general — first Hugo Fisher, then [J. Edward] Ed Day? Were you involved in this at all?

ZIFFREN: To some extent. It was apparent that some Californian had to be at the cabinet. After all, California was the number two state. If he wanted to build a base here, he would have to do something for California. So he decided to have the postmaster general come from California. I think Dutton and Brown wanted Hugo Fisher from San Diego, but Unruh was somewhat jealous of Fisher because Fisher was a state senator and Unruh was in the assembly. And Unruh said, "If it's going to be a state legislator, it ought to be me." So Unruh was able to block Fisher, and then we had to find a compromise. Ed Day had moved here from Chicago just a few years before and hadn't been able to create as much animosity as most of the Californian politicians had. In addition to that, he was the vice president of Prudential Insurance Company [of America] and had a rather prestigious job. Also he had been in Stevenson's law firm in Chicago. He looked like a good compromise candidate. President Kennedy never even knew him. He finally

asked to meet him so Day flew to Washington, and Kennedy met him and decided to appoint him postmaster general.

CAMPBELL: How about the other California appointments? Libby Smith [Elizabeth R. Gatov] for…

ZIFFREN: Well, Libby Smith was appointed treasurer because he wanted a woman as treasurer. I think Eisenhower had a woman as treasurer; Ivy Baker Priest had been Eisenhower's treasurer. He wanted a woman. Again, this was something for California. Libby had been the democratic national committeewoman, and she was very well liked.

CAMPBELL: William Orrick, I think was…

ZIFFREN: Bill Orick, who's a very, very good lawyer. If you notice, most of them were from Northern California. That's where the Kennedy support was.

CAMPBELL: Did the president retain an interest in California politics as president?

ZIFFREN: Oh, yes, a very deep interest.

CAMPBELL: There were rumors in the press — I think that began the day he was inaugurated — that the White House was interested in dumping Governor Brown, or these rumors cropped up from time to time, particularly in 1961, that the White House felt he was a weak candidate, a weak person. Do you think there's any basis for that?

ZIFFREN: Well, President Kennedy never did have much confidence in Governor Brown because he felt that the governor hadn't been able to deliver at the convention. I'm sure that he knew he could not dump him, but there's no question that he built up Jess Unruh as a power base in California because he liked Unruh very much. Unruh was the kind of fellow who got things done. He told me that he thought Brown was sort of a pillar of jello and was too wishy-washy, and Unruh was tough and got things done. Unruh got along very well with O'Brien and O'Donnell and the Irish Mafia.

CAMPBELL: Were you involved at all in the problems that seemed to be created by a presidential visit — I think in late 1961 — and the rather hasty scheduling of a hundred dollar-a-plate dinner or something, which, I think, preceded a CDC [California Democratic Council] twenty-five dollar-a-plate dinner by two weeks or something? Some people here in town were very upset over that scheduling.

ZIFFREN: Well, yes, there was a constant pull between the CDC, the volunteers, on the one hand and the so-called money group on the other. Every time that Kennedy came into the state, there was a question of who would get most of his time. Lew Wasserman was the head of the so-called President's Club in California. That was a group of people who contributed a thousand dollars a year, and they would always have something for the president. Then the CDC people and the volunteers were always saying, "Well, it can't always be the money group." This was not the beginning. This was a development of this schism that broke the Democratic party in California into pieces.

CAMPBELL: In 1962 you had the Brown-Nixon race for governor; you had [Richard] Richards - [Thomas H.] Kuchel race for Senate. The president didn't get heavily involved. I think he had scheduled a trip and the Cuban missile crisis intervened. It has, however, been suggested that he might not have been too anxious to get involved in that race.

He rather was pleased with Senator Kuchel's record and perhaps didn't want to fight Nixon again. Do you have any recollections of that at all?

ZIFFREN: I think that's true. I think he did not want to get involved in a number of races in '62, including in Illinois. Sidney Yates was running for the Senate against Everett Dirksen, and he cancelled out and went back to Washington. He really did not like bitter political fights, particularly when he became president. He just felt that was demeaning.

CAMPBELL: There's been a change, I think. Before I started the tape you told me of an interesting conversation I think you'd had with the then Attorney General Robert Kennedy about J. Edgar Hoover. I wondered if you might say that on the tape.

ZIFFREN: Yes. Robert Kennedy made it very clear to me after his brother died. As a matter of fact, this was in '68 when he was running, we talked about Hoover. It was about the time that — I don't know if it was when Hoover tried to embarrass him with the Martin Luther King story. But Hoover was obviously very much opposed to Bob Kennedy, and while Kennedy was attorney general, everybody in the Justice Department knew that there was very bitter feeling between Hoover and Kennedy. In 1968, Robert Kennedy said that he knew that his brother did not intend to keep Hoover as director of the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] if he were reelected in '64.

CAMPBELL: What was your involvement with the Robert Kennedy presidential campaign in ‘68? How early were you contacted?

ZIFFREN: Well, I talked to Robert Kennedy I think it was around December of ‘67. He called me up one day and asked me what I thought about his running. This is before [Eugene J.] McCarthy really — McCarthy had already announced, but nobody took it very seriously. I said, “Well, it’s a question of whether you’re thinking of it from the standpoint of what I would like or whether it’s what you should like. Do you mean, do I think it’s good for the country? Do I think it’s good for you? What point of view do you want?” He said, “Well, do you think it’s good for me?” And I said, “Well, obviously, if you get into this race, you’re running against an incumbent president, and that’s going to be very bitter.” At that time, I’m convinced, if he had gotten in, McCarthy would have pulled out. He said, “Yes, that’s the way I feel about it.” The conversation made it perfectly

clear that even though he had mixed feelings, he wanted to run, but that he was not going to run. As a matter of fact, I talked to him again the following month, and we went over some things again. I said to him at that time, “Look, Bob, if you’re going to run, I’m with you all the way. I’ll be glad to talk to some people that I think might be able to help.” And we went over a list of people that I was supposed to contact. He says, “Why don’t you talk to them and then get back to me and let me know.” And I did. I got back to him. I told him that some of them could not do anything and others would, and I gave him a report on these. But he still sounded as though he was not going to run. As a matter of fact, I think I probably talked to him four or five times. The last… [Interruption]

CAMPBELL: Kennedy.

ZIFFREN: Well, I don’t want to say; you know, maybe there were four or five. The last time I talked to him was on Friday night before he declared. He declared on a Saturday morning in Washington in the same room that his brother had declared. He called me up and said he was going to declare. I said, “Wonderful. I’m all with you.” He said, “What do you think I ought to say?” I said, “Well, you know what the comments are going to be. They’re going to say that you’re a ruthless opportunist.” He says, “Yeah, I know that, but then there’s nothing I can do about that because if I’d have declared a month ago, they'd say I was a ruthless opportunist. I don’t think I can do anything about that.” He was totally fatalistic about certain of these things. He did talk about what he was going to say and what his chances were in California. I told him that I thought we could carry California for him. We had a very nice conversation that night.

As I indicated, I grew to love Bob Kennedy because I never saw a man with more compassion than Bob Kennedy had in ‘68. The difference between the Bob Kennedy of 1960 and ‘68 is incredible. The ruthlessness and arrogance of the 1960 was gone, and you had a

compassion — there was still the toughness, but it was a toughness on principle — a compassion for people and a dedication to principles that was incredible and most inspiring.

CAMPBELL: Were you involved at all in the conduct of his primary campaign here in '68?

ZIFFREN: Yes, very much so, very much. I was working very closely with [Stephen E.] Steven Smith, who was out here. Jess Unruh was very active. That's one of the things that brought Jess and me very close together. Jess

and I worked very closely in the Bob Kennedy campaign. He was very concerned about California and had some of his closest friends out here. We would discuss strategy, and we would discuss the kind of television spots to use, and we had meetings where we'd go over the spots.

As a matter of fact, I remember one of the meetings we had with Steven Smith, [Richard N.] Dick Goodwin was out here, and there was a fellow who had been a congressman from New York — I can't remember his name — and then a fellow named [Charles] Chuck Spalding, who was a close personal friend of Jack and Bob Kennedy. We were at a little booth at NBC [National Broadcasting Company], I think, watching some of these television spots which we were going to use on the night of the Nebraska, or maybe it was the Indiana, primary. Anyhow, as the election returns started coming in, Bob Kennedy was on television. They would ask him a question, and he would…. You know, he had a habit of letting his head fall; he was very shy and very diffident. Then anytime they said anything nice about him, he was very shy and diffident and really had difficulty handling it. Then they'd give him a tough question and he'd just bristle, and he'd be great. I know Steve Smith said, "If only they'd just keep on throwing the tough ones at him, he'd be great." He just could not stand anything except the tough ones. He would have been a great president, and I think the history of this country would be different if he'd been elected.

CAMPBELL: Are there other things we should put on, or have we about finished…

ZIFFREN: No, I think I'm hoarse and you must be bored.

CAMPBELL: I'm not bored at all.

[END OF INTERVIEW]