

John E. Nolan Oral History Interview – RFK#6, 01/18/1972
Administrative Information

Creator: John E. Nolan
Interviewer: Roberta W. Greene
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Biographical Note

Nolan was the administrative assistant to the Attorney General, Robert F. Kennedy [RFK], from 1963 to 1964. In this interview Nolan discusses RFK's 1964 Senate campaign in New York State, including working with Justin Feldman; dealing with the press; campaign appearances and scheduling; problems with over scheduling and crowds; how RFK ran on the record of John F. Kennedy's Administration; and the Columbia University appearance, among other issues.

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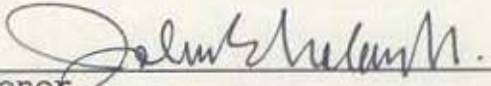
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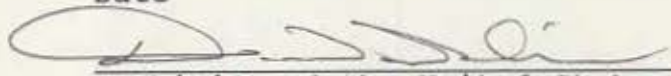
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John Nolan

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April 7, 1971

Sixth Oral History Interview

with

John Nolan

January 18, 1972

Washington, D.C.

By Roberta Greene

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

GREENE: I was going to ask you how much discussion you remember about the overall approach to the New York campaign before you actually got underway, or in the early stages. Strategy and that sort of thing. There's been some controversy and that sort of thing on how much of that there was to begin with. Do you remember meeting some . . .

NOLAN: Well, I don't know, you know, how you measure it. There was all of the discussion as there was time for between the time that he decided to go into New York, and when the race there came to actually doing things, executing plans. All of us who were working on the campaign spent all of the time that there was available, that he had available, on it from the time the decision to go in was made until we were all there. Now, I suppose that's over a period of--oh, I really don't remember--a month and a half, two months, or something like that. Some of it is intermittent because we were at the Justice Department at the beginning of it, leaving there and going to New York; the Democratic National Convention occurred during that period in Atlantic City. Most of the political figures in New York were in Atlantic City at the Democratic National Convention, so that meant if you were working with them, you were working in Atlantic City rather than in New York. There were a series of

meetings with media people, advertising people. I think we talked before about specialists in different areas -- Horthy Gabel [Hortense Gable], Dick Lee [Richard Lee], you know, that sort of thing.

GREENE: When did you and Feldman [Justin Feldman] actually start to set up the scheduling, do you know?

NOLAN: Dates? No.

GREENE: Was it after the convention?

NOLAN: I am quite sure that it was, or at about the same time as the convention. I would say that it was within a week of the convention either way, perhaps before. We met, I think, here in Washington. I think I met Justin at Ted Kennedy's [Edward M. Kennedy] office, the first time I had met him.

GREENE: Did you think it was logical the way that was set up with the two of you, one of you being a New Yorker and one an outsider? Did that work out fairly well?

NOLAN: Yes, it worked out well. I didn't think particularly one way or the other, but if I was going to work on it there had to be someone like Justin, because there was so much that I didn't know about the state, about the people, so I don't think I thought particularly about it at the time; to the extent that I did, I think that I thought it made sense. I still think it made sense.

GREENE: Did you see yourself as kind of a "no-man" in part? You know, that since you were not going to have to deal with these people later, and they couldn't call up on you later as a friend in the way they could Feldman, that you could sort of say no more easily than he could, and that might be one reason that it was arranged that way?

NOLAN: No, I didn't think of that consciously but the way I did think of it, which is maybe close, maybe comes out the same way, is that in dealing with many people there I think I was more detached from them than Justin was, and more objective in the sense that the only thing I thought about was the campaign. It is substantially true that I had no previous relationship, political or otherwise, with anybody there. It is also substantially true that I had no interest in anything past the election in terms of a relationship. So I think I was looking at a screen that didn't have any of those considerations on it. That's bound to leave you freer to deal with situations as you see them on that screen. That is the basic theory of coordinators in politics. A coordinator is somebody who is from another state and represents a candidate's interest there. You have to know what you

are doing, you need a lot of information and you need a lot of background and you need a lot of knowledge. But having that, without any entangling other relationships, personal or political or financial or professional, is an advantage assuming that you know you are able to deal effectively with the situation. It is better to deal with it clean, than encumbered by those other kinds of considerations.

GREENE: Did Feldman do well? Was he a good person to work with, do you think?

NOLAN: Sure. He was fine.

GREENE: His contacts were good, and he really. . . .

NOLAN: Well, from my point of view his contacts were good. What he knew about New York politics from my vantage point was an immense amount. I didn't know anything.

GREENE: Do you remember a New York Times article that came out the first of October on the scheduling operation? It was written by Dick Apple [Richard W. Apple, Jr.], I think. I'm sure it was Richard Apple.

NOLAN: They call him Johnny Apple. It's R. W. Apple.

GREENE: Okay. Do you remember that article?

NOLAN: Yeah, I don't remember the date. I remember a long article on the Kennedy campaign done by Johnny Apple in the New York Times.

GREENE: This was almost exclusively on the scheduling, and was very detailed. Did you contribute to that? That was going to be my next question.

NOLAN: No. I don't think so.

GREENE: Well, then there is really no sense in going into the details of the way he explains how you arranged the whole campaign in terms of number of days and places. Do you remember that at all?

NOLAN: I know Johnny Apple. My recollection is I did not talk to him about that article. Generally, I tried not to get involved on the press side.

GREENE: I was going to ask you that.

NOLAN: A lot of us were maybe more visible than many of us figured that we should be, there at the time. So

that was the sort of thing that fell naturally into Justin's part of our operation, and from my point of view and from what my judgment of the interests of the campaign was, it would be fine if Justin had been the scheduler, as far as the New York Times and the other papers and everybody else was concerned. I remember the article, I don't remember the details.

GREENE: Was there any actual policy about dealing with the press, or was this strictly left up to the individual?

NOLAN: It was strictly left up to the individual. Well, Ed Guthman [Edwin O. Guthman] was there, and Debs Myers, I think, handled the press things. I suppose that through most parts of the campaign, or through many parts of the campaign, there was that kind of a parallel organization. In terms of thinking out the schedule in advance, I did that initially on the basis of population, either raw population figures or Democratic votes in 1960 and 1962.

GREENE: That's what this article said that you used as your precedent.

NOLAN: That was not, I might say, an inflexible rule or it wasn't even the way that it worked out. It was the initial guidelines that we adopted, because we had to start scheduling, and then we had to have some idea of where we were going to go overall, and that involved some kind of allocation. So we made the initial allocation, in the first instance, between the city and upstate.

GREENE: It was almost half and half, 23 days in the city, 22 in the rest.

NOLAN: Yeah. And then within the city we did it with boroughs and so on, and it just gave us kind of an idea that if thirty percent of the votes are in Brooklyn, and you're only spending five percent of your time there, maybe you had better take a hard look at that and see if that is what you really want to do. It was that kind of general rather than specific . . .

GREENE: Was there any guidance from above from Smith [Stephen E. Smith] or the senator himself on that?

NOLAN: No.

GREENE: It was just the two of you. Did you work on the screening of invitations, or was that Feldman's department? Do you remember? And did you seek them at all, do you remember?

NOLAN: Oh no, we didn't . . . Well, we certainly did not seek invitations, generally. We might from time to time seek a specific invitation . . .

GREENE: That's what I mean. . . .

NOLAN: But those were always special cases. We got a lot of invitations, of course. Many more than we could use. I think that Justin passed on a lot of those.

I don't know whether they all ran through him or not, but he certainly had a lot of knowledge and a lot of background for many of them. Initially we spent more time, or scheduled the candidate to spend more time, on county chairmen's dinners than maybe any of us would have thought we would have been doing going in. Whether that was really. . . . Whether we overemphasized that or not, I don't know. We might have.

GREENE: There are a couple of stories I understand about those, too, aren't there?

NOLAN: Well, yes. You would get the County Chairman Jones in Podunk County, upstate New York whose annual dinner runs two hundred fifty people. Bob Kennedy is going to come to it, his annual dinner swells to two thousand. It fills three halls and becomes in effect three dinners, so you have to go from one to the other to the third. It takes a lot of time. You have to say something in each place. At some point it may not be as productive as it was when you initially. . . . The thought of it was, you know, involving one dinner. So there were some of those kinds of adjustments.

GREENE: I was thinking of ^{the} one where Resnick [Joseph Y. Resnick] was on the platform. Do you remember that? Supposedly his first meeting with . . .

NOLAN: No.

GREENE: Okay. I had heard that from someone else . . . It was a county dinner.

NOLAN: Generally, Justin was much more familiar with those dinners, going in and coming out, than I was. I really regarded them as a necessary evil--not evil, but necessary condition or factor in a campaign. And we discussed them, and agreed to do them or not to do them pretty much on that basis. And it was always a question of. . . . The pro side of it was, he's new and he's from out of town and these are the people who work in and organize the Democratic party in New York State and this is the best way to get to know them; and if you go to the dinner you insure its financial success and therefore the county chairman will love you. The other side was that, basically you are dealing with a limited number, a fairly restricted people. You

may meet them, and they may be very helpful, and so on. In the last analysis you're going to make it or not make it with what you've got. If you make it with the public, the pols are going to come along, and if you don't make it with the public the pols are not going to help you. So neither of them is an absolute point of view, and you try to reach the best decision or accommodation between the two of them. Bob Kennedy went to a lot of county chairmen's dinners.

GREENE: Do you remember his reaction to them? Or was it pretty much what his reaction seems to have been to dinners in general?

NOLAN: Well, he wasn't very thrilled with them. They are not very inspiring occasions. He was capable of adjusting to political necessity, and capable under the proper circumstances of carrying off something like that fairly well. On the other hand, he had not unlimited patience with them, or appetite for them, and where you get a triple dinner created out of one invitation like that, he was somewhat less than a hundred percent on that.

GREENE: Anyway, what do you remember about the problems of the initial phase of the campaign? With over-_x scheduling and that sort of thing?

NOLAN: Well, I remember that it was overscheduled, which was my responsibility.

GREENE: Why do you say that?

NOLAN: Well, because I really had the responsibility for saying yes or no to the schedule--all of the invitations and the particular appearances, and so on. We really could have started out with any kind of a schedule. The early part of the schedule involved the big three-day sweep around New York State. We wanted to start fast and hard with something that got out of the city, got maximum coverage throughout the state, and so I don't remember if it was three days or four days, but it was a substantial period of time right at the beginning, which was designed to hit that target. And then, having started in that way, the campaign could come back into New York City and sort out the other more complicated things. But you see, I still have never been in most of those places, you know, Oneonta or Oswearna [sic]. Some of those places with Indian names in upstate New York might as well be on the moon as far as I . . . You know, they were a place on a map. It wasn't really done deliberately, but if we were going to err, we wanted to err on the side of overscheduling.

The crowds are not bad; there are a lot worse things than running overtime. It would be hard to argue that it is good to run as much

overtime as he did on that schedule, and I am not trying to make that argument, but it is an imprecise science at best. Something like that is very hard, physically taxing, very grueling on the candidate. On the other hand, he was going to have a hard campaign because he was going to see that it was that way, directly or indirectly. That was his style of running for office. So a perfect sweep would not be packed as full as that was. It would be less, and it would be closer to the scheduled time. But running overtime and having crowd problems were not regarded as the most serious flaws in the campaign schedule, by me or even by the rest of the campaign.

GREENE: How much of the problem with overscheduling and crowds was his fault--the type of campaigner he was, stopping and getting out to shake kids' hands and nuns' and that sort of thing?

NOLAN: Well, some of it, but not . . . I really wouldn't say that it was his fault, because we had worked together before, and I knew what he, you know Many of us knew what was going to happen when he got out there.

So you know that it is going to take more time than it takes to drive from A to B if there are a lot of people there, and if they are there in big crowds, and so on. If the game was to run the schedule on schedule, we would do it very differently, but the game was to expose the candidate to as many people as possible and as many different kinds of favorable situations as possible, while someone who was going to report it for newspapers or television or radio has a chance to see it happen.

GREENE: Were the crowds much greater than you expected, or not so?

NOLAN: They were greater than we expected. And I suppose, much greater. You never really know. You know, you think and you hope that they will be favorable, but it's a new game there and you really can't be sure.

GREENE: Because from some people you get the impression that the whole thing just overwhelmed you, you had never expected anything like this and were unprepared for it. You don't think that's true?

NOLAN: No. That's not true. We talked about, I think there was something first before the upstate trip. I think it was something like maybe a Labor Day appearance at Coney Island or Jones Beach . . .

GREENE: Nathan's [Nathan's Famous, Inc.]

NOLAN: . . . and I think Nathan's was involved in it. And we went out one day, and I went along just to see how New Yorkers did things, and then we went back, and I think we left from Fire Island and flew back to Glen Cove in a helicopter. . . .

GREENE: That sounds right.

NOLAN: . . . and then went to the house and talked about it and so on. Bob said at that time, he sort of sketched out his guess of how the campaign would go, and he said, "I think we are going to get off to a really terrific start. I think it is going to be very, very big for the first week or ten days or two weeks. I think the crowds are going to be good and I think the reporting is going to be good and everybody is going to be very friendly and very favorable and that's going to start it well. And then," he said, "I think it is going to start sliding out there about two weeks, and it is going to go down for a while when the newness of my appearance in New York sort of wears off, and it isn't just the matter of a new personality and President Kennedy's aura and large crowds and so on. And then," he said, "I think we are going to have a hard time around the middle of the campaign, and we are going to have to see how a lot of stuff that we are working on now comes out--position papers and the substantive side of it, and so on--and that's going to be a question of where we are and what we do from them on. Then hopefully if those things work, then we can start building up again, far enough away so that we've got something really going by election day." And I thought at the time it was kind of a top of the head, you know, off of the mark, but actually it came very The actual campaign worked very much like that.

GREENE: Yes. That's right. Did you discuss at all, at that point or at any others, the whole strategy about handling Keating [Kenneth B. Keating], and this sort of defensive posture he would take for the first part? Some people say that was an unplanned shift that came about just because of the way things developed, and others say that was always planned that way, to start out slow and not attach Keating, and that sort of thing. How was it in your mind?

NOLAN: Well, the first part of the campaign, in terms of Kennedy's approach to Keating, was planned.

GREENE: Was it at his direction personally?

NOLAN: No, I think it was more at the direction of other people who advised or suggested what his attitude toward Keating should be. The basic idea was that he was young and strong and aggressive, and had a record as a prosecutor and had many of the qualities of a young, strong, aggressive candidate; that if he were to attach Keating to engage

him directly on issues--Keating being older, slower, perhaps kindlier in appearance and manner and the kinds of relationships that he built up throughout the state--that the public reaction to that kind of engagement would be unfavorable to Bob; and therefore the decision was to avoid that kind of attack on Keating. We wouldn't attack him personally, or course, but attack his record, and engaging him directly on issues. That changed not because of a change in our strategy but rather because of a change in Keating's strategy, which dictated a different reaction.

The change in Keating's strategy I think was largely engineered by Herb Brownell [Herbert Brownell, Jr.], who is by nature and historically in the campaigns that he's worked in, a very, very aggressive campaigner. It was signalled by the tabloid that said, "Why Nasser is for Kennedy," the General Aniline story (General Aniline & Film Corporation), the Valachi [Joseph M. Valachi] case issue, and . . . I forget. They were all ethnic. There were three of four like that . . .

GREENE: The anti-Italian . . . Well, that was the Valachi.
 . . .

NOLAN: That was the Valachi thing. And I forget what involved the black community, but there were . . .

GREENE: Well, they did attack his civil rights record, the administration's.

NOLAN: Yes, but I don't remember exactly how. But I do remember that there were three or four issues, each of which was aimed at an ethnic target, each of which was a product of the Keating campaign strategy to which we were in the position of reacting. I think they all boomeranged. Some of them were more obvious than others--more obviously bad strategy--than others. Perhaps the General Aniline was as much of a mistake as the others from Keating's standpoint, because Keating had supported the General Aniline settlement on the floor of the United States Senate within a year of the time he injected it as an issue in the New York campaign. And that intellectual kind of an issue, or academic kind, you really have to read the story pretty carefully and see what the positions are. So, it isn't so much a trigger-word issue. Well, if you read the stories, then you see, in quotes, that Keating supported the issue that he was criticizing Kennedy for having endorsed. So it falls. And then the others were similar to that.

It's fairly obvious that a tabloid that says, "Why Nasser is for Kennedy," is a piece of political work in a New York campaign. I think that the Fair Campaign Practices Committee got into that one, and they changed the tabloid to read, "Why Nasser is not for Keating," or something like that. They cut it back some, modified it. But it is the same kind of issue. And then they worked on the

Valachi thing in the same way. That brought out Robert Kennedy not attacking Keating so much, but actually defending his own record on the facts, which were pretty good.

GREENE: Do you remember specific strategy sessions about that, or is it something that evolved naturally out of the course that Keating was following?

NOLAN: Well, both. It did evolve out of the course that Keating was following, and that was the main thrust of it. But I think, in each of those instances the Keating shock, if you want to call it that, would be considered at strategy sessions and so on, and then whatever was going to be done would be decided thereof . . .

GREENE: Was there anybody who opposed this response--you know, coming back hard at him? Was there anyone who still felt it was better to hold back and not attack?

NOLAN: Well, yes, I suppose there were, but . . .

GREENE: You don't remember anyone of prominence?

NOLAN: . . . I don't remember it very distinctly.

GREENE: I just want to go back . . . Excuse me.

NOLAN: On that, I might say that if you get into that kind of an issue, Bob Kennedy's political reflexes at that time were conditioned enough so that with or without anybody's advice, I think his personal approach to that kind of an issue was so formed that I think he would probably have ended up doing the same thing whether anybody advised him to do it or not to do it. He really was a counterpuncher in that sense, and if somebody was going to attack his record on a public issue he was not going to leave it alone, even if he looked ruthless in counterattacking.

GREENE: Do you have the feeling that he was both more comfortable and happier once the shift in strategy took place?

NOLAN: Oh, yeah, very definitively.

GREENE: That seems to be what most people think.

NOLAN: Sure, it gave him a chance to be himself. He wasn't himself, really, in the other kind of campaign. It was very difficult for him. It was bad strategy on Keating's part. It was one of the best things that happened in the time of Kennedy's candidacy at least. To emphasize that, if

Keating, for example, had continued throughout the campaign as he conducted himself for the first month or so, or the first few weeks, and just gone from place to place shaking hands and saying, "Hello, how are you?" "Hello, how are you?" and so on. . . . Someone did a TV show--CBS [Columbia Broadcasting System, Inc.] or something--that had him, you know, and he had never raised the substantive issues that he did, he would have . . . [INTERRUPTION] . . . the campaign would have immeasurably more difficult from Kennedy's standpoint.

GREENE: What about the whole--well, not the whole, but the way that in the beginning, his whole emphasis was on his record at Justice, his brother's record and his hopes of continuing the Kennedy pride. Was this something of his own creation, or was this something that had actually been formed as again a part of the strategy?

NOLAN: Well, in part both. Running on the record of the Kennedy administration as an extension in New York State of President Kennedy's administration, what it stood for nationally, was Bob's natural approach to the campaign. It wasn't just, "Look at my brother and all he did," it was much more than that. It was, I am an extension of President Kennedy's administration. And in talking about President Kennedy he was really talking about himself, in many instances--his ideas, his leadership, his judgment, his attitudes. You know, it wasn't just that he stood for what President Kennedy stood for, but it was that he had been a part of the Kennedy administration from its very inception, and he was proud of it and he was willing to let that be the test. So that was his own, and although that was an evolving concept, and it changed to some extent and developed in the course of all of his public life from the time of President Kennedy's death until his death, and it was always changing and always evolving, but that was the core of it, the main theme.

Now, in addition to that, I think the input from the agency at the outset of the campaign was something like, let's put Bob Kennedy to work from New York. Shirtsleeve pictures. Bob Kennedy as man of work and action, as distinguished from scion of illustrious family and rich, young man, and so on. I think, that that concept came from the agency, Fred Papert [Frederic S. Papert] or someone had some validity and was a prominent factor in the early materials that were produced and early direction of the campaign. Bob wanted very much to run in New York State on his own. His own, meaning himself, the record of the Kennedy administration, and so on, as distinguished from the Kennedy-Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] administration. So the later adoption of that was a change in strategy, and not one that he found desirable or comfortable or

. . .

GREENE: Can you be more specific?

NOLAN: . . . naturally fitted into

GREENE: I mean, about his reactions to this apparently necessary shift in strategy.

NOLAN: Well, I think Bob Kennedy wanted to win, in running for the Senate, New York State. I think he regarded it as essential that he do win. I think that winning as a part of a landslide victory by Lyndon Johnson, then running for the presidency of the United States, was the least desirable of all possible ways for him to win. There was however from, oh, sometime around the middle of the campaign on, that very definite element in the campaign strategy, in the materials that were produced, and so on. And then Johnson came in and they campaigned together, and their always somewhat tenuous basis of mutual respect was exercised.

GREENE: Can you remember specific conversations with the senator at this time, about having to team up with Johnson and Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey]?

NOLAN: Well, I remember it more generally, I guess, rather than specifically.

GREENE: It's funny because vanden Heuvel [William J. vanden Heuvel] and Gwirtzman [Milton Gwirtzman] in their book make a fairly--well, I won't say strong case --but they make a big point of what they call early mistakes in strategy, especially this decision, and they say it was largely Robert Kennedy's, to run just as you described, on his record and his brother's, rather than on the specific issues of interest to the specific groups within New York; and the way you describe it, it doesn't really sound like that.

NOLAN: I don't think there ever was that kind of a conscious decision. Bob Kennedy from the very outset knew, one, that there were a lot of things about New York State and its issues that he was not fully informed on, and he did everything humanly possible to correct that. He studied hard, talked to everyone that he thought could contribute to remedying that, really worked at it. But he was at the outset of the campaign in New York, somebody who had come out of, oh, I guess ten or fifteen years of fairly intensive federal experience from the national government. Not only that, but he was by nature and attitude and approach to problems inclined to see them in their broadest aspect. And switching from that kind of a perspective to a perspective that aimed, directly at New York State issues is not as easy as it might seem. It wasn't that he consciously did it the other way. He tried from the very outset to get in on top of New York issues as fast as he could, and made every effort to do that, but doing that involved the kinds of changes that I have just suggested. But he never for example, made a conscious decision to

emphasize national rather than New York State issues.

GREENE: Do you think that a major factor in this whole thing was his personal mood and feelings at the time?

NOLAN: Sure.

GREENE: Was that a problem that you remember in the campaign, his testiness?

NOLAN: Yes, it was a problem. He was not as confident of what he was doing in New York as he had been with regard to everything else he'd done over the course of the last five or ten years. What he had done previously had involved more working with elements that he was pretty sure of or had more control over, or extensions of those kinds of experiences. In going into New York, he was going into a new arena. He was capable of analyzing the pros and cons and the different factors of that, and he was capable of making a rational judgment about what he would do and what the probabilities of success were. But it was still an estimate on unfamiliar ground and something where he didn't have the kind of assurance of his own performance, and assurance of success, that he had had in other things that he had undertaken. So that is the start.

Number two, it was very, very important to him. Winning in New York was the necessary connection to all of the rest of his future life. He was never very attracted to the idea of not winning any place, but this really was a go-for-broke proposition. And the campaign started well, as he thought that it would, and it ran into its declining period and its difficulties, as he also thought, fairly early on. Some of those difficulties were very fundamental at going right through to the essence of his personality, exemplified by the comment of many people in New York who would come to me or Guthman, or someone else who had come up with him, and say things like, "You've got to talk to Bob. He's got to smile." Or, "He has to change his personality." Well, you know, it's not so easy to change your personality. It is not any easier in the middle of a political campaign, particularly where the factors that I have referred to exist. So, a month in, the campaign is not going well, the polls do not indicate that he is gaining or . . .

GREENE: Well, he was losing actually.

NOLAN: He was losing. So the overall issue is very, very much in doubt. Nothing is working right. A political campaign has a lot more momentum than most other forms of human activity. It can go uphill or downhill much faster and with a great deal more force. If you are ever in a slide, you know, and you know what is going on, you can sense it, and it isn't a very quieting feeling. So that's a part of it, and

then the other part of it is that much of the criticism of his campaign, including that by many people who were very much interested in the success of his candidacy, was fundamental, and therefore more significant than something that could be easily remedied. It wasn't a question of making such-and-such a statement or something. It was a question of whether he as a person was attractive enough to be a winning candidate in that particular contest. Very significant kind of issue.

GREENE: This doesn't help the organization of this thing, but I wanted to ask you something that I overlooked before. After that first swing in New York, I understand he called you and Feldman to Glen Cove to talk about the overscheduling problem. Do you remember that, a meeting at the poolside, I believe it was?

NOLAN: Oh, yes, I do remember.

GREENE: Do you remember his mood at the time and the kinds of things that he said?

NOLAN: Yes.

GREENE: Do you want to describe it?

NOLAN: Well, he was very tired. He said that he had been overscheduled and so on. That really didn't bother me very much.

GREENE: You don't seem to have found the difficulty in working with him in this period that a lot of other people have expressed. Is that right? Is that because you just knew him better, or you understood better what he was going through?

NOLAN: It may have been both of those things, I don't know. I did not find him difficult to work with.

The real problem there, at the poolside meeting, or what after we talked it out . . . I think that Justin was there and I think Ed Guthman was there, and Bob and I, and I don't remember whether anyone else was there. But what ultimately became, what he centered his dissatisfaction on, was a scheduled appearance on, I think, Meet The Press, which we had discussed, we, meaning people other than Bob. Justin and I had discussed it. I had talked with Ed about it and so on, and I had agreed to it and it was two or three weeks away, and he was very concerned about it. And he said, "I don't want to go on Meet The Press then," because so and so and so. . . . I don't remember the precise reasons but they were fairly sensible reasons. And he said, "I don't want to get into anything like that, a major network television show, without having you know, us have a chance to talk, or my having a chance to

consider it really." And that did concern me because it was a date that I had agreed to and it was coming up, and I don't remember quite how we worked it out. I think we threw it over, maybe deferred it for a week or two weeks or something, and I think that Ed eventually worked out the details of it with NBC [National Broadcasting Company] or whoever Meet The Press. . . .

From a personal standpoint that was the only thing that I was concerned about. I mean, I knew he was tired; his hand was all swollen, cut, scratched, bruised, he physically had been bounced around a lot; he hadn't had very much sleep, he had been overscheduled; he had been consistently late and later and later as the week wore on. But basically the trip was, in a political sense, a resounding success. You know, if you've won the football game, you don't need to bother too much about the fact that you have a few cuts or bruises. So that didn't really bother me then. Maybe it should have, but it didn't.

GREENE: There was a lot of resistance to him of course, among the liberals and specifically among the Jews, and in that period after you shifted your strategy he does start to go out, as I understand it, much more after these groups, with sessions with rabbis and that sort of thing. Do you know how he felt about having to narrow his appeal this way, and go after the Italians and after the blacks and after the Jews rather than keeping, you know, his approach on perhaps a higher level, you might say, or at least a broader plane?

NOLAN: I don't think that ever bothered him. I think that he accepted that as a fact of life in politics generally, and specifically in New York.

GREENE: I have heard, too, that he disliked, or at least he expressed in '68 a dislike of, having to be so lopsided on the Middle East question; that as a senator of New York he always had to take strictly the Israeli position, and it made him uncomfortable; that he felt it was really much more complicated than that. Did he ever give you that impression?

NOLAN: No.

GREENE: We should be talking a lot about scheduling. Did this whole shift make your job very different, or were you and Feldman able to kind of shift fairly easily into going after more specific groups, and getting forums for that?

NOLAN: No, it didn't. . . . The campaign and the schedules are always changing. I don't remember that, actually, as a big deal or a significant change. A change that would compare in scheduling significance, for

example, with the change from an emphasis on personal appearances to pulling back more, in order to get the television shorts and spots and stuff ready, and the change in emphasis from personal appearances to televised appearances and televised advertisements and so on which also took place sometime around the middle of the campaign.

GREENE: Yes. Right around that same time was the Columbia [University] appearance. Do you remember that? A lot of people have cited that as being another sort of an important. . . .

NOLAN: Yes. I remember that very clearly, very distinctly.

GREENE: Did you think it was as good as everyone else did, and as significant in terms of its impact on him? Did you see it that way?

NOLAN: It was awfully tough. It was a very significant appearance in the course of the campaign for several reasons. One, it gave the best clue that we had had to date to the right format for television. Many people of experience and good judgment in this area had tried a lot of other things, none of which had worked very well. Street corner questions, staged questions, spontaneous speaking with individuals, speaking with groups, talking to crowds, and none of it really came off very well. It was hard to get, and if you didn't get him when he was really natural, you came off with a product that wasn't really very attractive. People who have more acting ability or something maybe don't have this problem to the extent that he had. Unless it clicked, was right in the personal equation issue sense, it didn't result in something that was a good product, campaign materials. So the Columbia University appearance, I think, the most significant thing about it was that. It indicated that in a relatively small crowd, a thousand people or something like that, on an unrehearsed, spontaneous answer to questions from the audience thing, when the questions were good he was at his most effective, and could be photographed and televised, and it came off well.

It was also significant from the standpoint that we had a meeting after that--some place back there in a dressingroom or something, which was another epic meeting, in the scheduling sense--which did pretty much signal the shift of de-emphasizing personal appearances and pulling him back to the point where he was more rested, where he had a chance to do the television, and where the campaign itself would go in terms of its emphasis into more television. Now, in part that was a product of what he had already done. I would guess that the campaign was about half over then. He'd been in many of those places. After you've made three appearances in Queens, the fourth is not as important as each of the others. As a result of that meeting, we canceled a set of appearances in Queens the

following morning. That was one of the things that, you know, in the great blow back from the local people. . . . But that's life.

GREENE: Who would cancel an appearance like that?

NOLAN: I think I did.

GREENE: The dirty work?

NOLAN: I don't remember it specifically. There ~~was~~ a fellow named Weinstein [Moses M. Weinstein] there who was the. . . .

GREENE: Yes, Mo Weinstein.

NOLAN: Well, I think I talked to him, and as I recall I don't think he was particularly pleased.

GREENE: No, he was a tough character in '68, too. Was the senator pleased with the Columbia appearance? Was he able to see it . . . I know it went on and on, it was a rather tiresome thing for him, but did he recognize it as the watershed it supposedly was?

NOLAN: He was very, very tired. That was the physical low point of the campaign, as far as I know, for him. It was a different kind of tiredness. It wasn't that he had come back from a three-day tour upstate and was all banged up. He had been in it then for a month or six weeks or something like that, and he was bone tired because he had been stretched way out past his physical limits over and over and over again.

One of the things that he said to me in the course of that meeting, he said, "What you have to consider, John, is what we are trying to do. If we're just trying to get me to election day alive and walking, I want you to know I'm going to make it." He said, "I may be tired, but I'll still be there and I'll, you know, be upright," and so on. "But". he said, "if it's different than that and more complicated, if I have to think and talk and be nice to people and say the right things, and if I have to do the television and so on, then maybe we are not doing it the right way now, and maybe we ought to think about how we change, so we do it, so. . . .

GREENE: That's a rather gentle approach, isn't it?

NOLAN: Well, it is and it isn't. It was actually a fairly substantial comment on the course of the campaign, and as a result of that meeting, which involved several things, the main one of which was changed emphasis, but another significant one was his condition in substantially the way that he stated it. I think his analysis was not too far off.

GREENE: So you agreed that it would be better if he could talk at the end as well as stand up?

NOLAN: So he got the next morning off. Mo Weinstein had some people out at the subway station that, I guess, he had to get somebody else to talk to.

GREENE: Do you remember anything specific about the preparations for Johnson's visit to New York on October 15, or anything specific about the actual appearances together, and the problems of working with their staffs?

NOLAN: Not much. I know Bob was interested in having Ethel [Ethel Skakel Kennedy] go with them to sort of make it a family, rather than Lyndon and Bob. No, I don't remember too much about that.