

**Barbara J. Coleman Oral History Interview—RFK #1, 12/8/1969**  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** Barbara J. Coleman  
**Interviewer:** Ann Campbell  
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**Biographical Note**

Coleman was a journalist, a White House press aide (1961-1962), a member of Robert Kennedy's (RFK) Senate staff, and presidential campaign aide (1968). In this interview she discusses Stephen E. Smith's running of the Democratic National Committee, Pierre E.G. Salinger's 1964 California senate campaign, and working for RFK's senate staff, among other issues.

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Barbara Coleman  
Barbara Coleman

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Barbara J. Coleman—RFK #1

Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	Working for the Democratic National Committee (DNC)
2, 8	DNC payroll and staff problems
5	Strategy for the 1964 presidential campaign
7, 13, 14	Stephen E. Smith's running of the DNC
10	DNC's personnel functions
11	DNC's relationship with government agencies
12	DNC's problems with New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania
15	DNC changes after John F. Kennedy's death
16	Pierre E.G. Salinger's 1964 California Senate campaign
18	Robert F. Kennedy's (RFK) effect on Salinger's race
19	Working for RFK
21	RFK's relationship with other senators
22	Personnel functions of RFK's Senate office
23	RFK's managing of New York political problems
25, 26	RFK's relationships with government agencies
26	Gerald J. Bruno's effectiveness in Syracuse, New York
28	Office of Economic Opportunity and poverty program
29	RFK's relationship with other congressmen
30	Countering hostile upstate New York press
31	RFK's relationship with upstate New York mayors
33	RFK's involvement with Indian Affairs
34	First time leaving RFK's staff: Summer 1967

First of Two Oral History Interviews

with

Barbara J. Coleman

December 8, 1969  
Washington, D.C.

By Ann Campbell

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

CAMPBELL: When were you contacted to join the staff of the Democratic National Committee?

COLEMAN: Actually I started it myself. I initiated it.

CAMPBELL: You did.

COLEMAN: I had come back to town from California, and I'd looked around for a month or so without any success. So, I finally had taken a job at the *Louisville Courier-Journal* office here in Washington. It was a three-man operation, and I was just supposed to be sort of a Girl Friday or something. But there really wasn't anything to do.

It was another one of those periods when I was trying to get some sort of writing related job. Robert Riggs who was the bureau chief at the time had agreed that I could do some writing on the side, and I did do a couple of stories, but it really didn't work out very well. I was supposed to be there answering the phone, so I knew that this wasn't something that I could very well stay with.

I saw a story in the paper that Steve Smith [Stephen E. Smith] was coming down to Washington a couple of days a week to start working out of the Democratic National

Committee and organizing the President's [John F. Kennedy] '64 campaign. So I just wrote Steve a note, whom I knew, of course, from the '60 campaign, and said I'd like the chance to work for him if he needed anybody. He got in touch with me and said come over and see him, and then he offered me a job working for him.

It was never really clearly stated. I was afraid that he was expecting that I would be his secretary. Of course, I couldn't even take shorthand.

[-1-]

I never quite knew what he expected me to do, but it didn't really matter. He was certainly not very demanding in terms of the use of a secretary. He allowed me the option—well, not option, I mean I could kind of coordinate with other people on the committee on things he wanted. He wanted to set up a filing system by states, for instance, and start to accumulate data, election results from different states and different districts—that kind of material. So I was free to work on that to some degree myself. Also, when he came down—which was like he'd come down on a Wednesday and go back on a Friday—for that period of time he was seeing a lot of people, talking to a lot of people so there was a lot of office kind of work to do, secretarial work.

CAMPBELL: How did your operation fit into what went on ordinarily day by day at D.N.C. [Democratic National Committee]?

COLEMAN: It was kind of awkward. The people of the Democratic National Committee tended to be rather insecure, in my opinion. I don't know if that's always true, but it was certainly true of people there at that time. They had been operating on their own. They had not—it's my impression—been in the center, by any means, of the political activity which was really being directed out of the White House.

I don't know—I never heard any conversations about—why Steve was sent there particularly as opposed to setting up an independent operation. I do know that there was a concern at the White House about the size of the D.N.C. payroll and the staff and what they were doing for that money. I know I saw a memo from Kenny O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] to Steve saying the President was very upset. He'd seen the payroll figures, and he was very upset with that and wanted it cut back immediately. So one of Steve's first chores when I came on in March was to see who could be replaced. Now, it's very difficult because you had older people there, in particular, who'd been there for a long time. There was no pension system, and there was no way of just, you know, simply firing people.

The way they tried to get around that was Steve tried to place them in federal agencies. And, of course, that goes against civil service rules in lots of cases, and all of this. It's very difficult when you've got somebody of sixty; the agency certainly doesn't want to pick them up. But this is what he was attempting to do in lots of cases and to sort of go around some of the people who were there and just use others, which is a tactic I've seen used before. It's not unusual; rather than fire the people you have, you just put in other people around them or use people outside, and use the Committee for whatever it could do.

CAMPBELL: What was the Kennedy assessment of John Bailey [John Moran Bailey], for

example, his effectiveness? Was he somebody you went around?

COLEMAN: Yeah, I think so, but, you know, I can't be factual about this. It's just an impression I always had. And maybe it's 98 percent personal impression, you know, and then just assuming everybody

[-2-]

else felt the same thing. But it was my general impression that they had. As a matter of fact, from the time he was appointed I think it was fairly clear that that was a figurehead kind of appointment.

There had been a lot of talk about Larry O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] coming over to the Committee—I mean talk about that time that Steve was there, I think. And there was the whole idea of what to do in '64. I think there was more talk then about Larry or somebody that had that actual operating skill coming over and running the committee instead. But they got along well with John Bailey. He went out and made speeches and did all kinds of things that a head of D.N.C. needs to do. I think the system, to some degree, functioned all right in that sense. I mean, Steve was there to do certain things, and Larry was at the White House.

He really didn't need to replace Bailey although I do remember one incident that Steve was a little bit upset about. That was the cost of keeping Bailey on. Bailey did not get a salary at D.N.C. However, what they did was furnish him with an apartment at the Sheraton Park Hotel which cost something like a thousand dollars a month. You check this out; it may even be more than that.

Steve, when he came down, asked me to look around for places where he [Steve] could stay. He finally did start looking for a house or an apartment. As a matter of fact, I think just before the President died, he may actually have rented a house in Georgetown, as I recall, for his family because he was anticipating being down full-time by winter or by the beginning of '64. In the meanwhile, he wanted me to find some hotel that had sort of apartments that he could have a regular arrangement with. Apparently, Bailey had mentioned the Sheraton Park apartments to him. Steve said something to me in great horror about how much the Sheraton Park cost. But I don't think they.... You know, that was one element of the payroll problem, not necessarily the only one.

CAMPBELL: Who on the regular D.N.C. staff was useful? Who did you work with?

COLEMAN: Well, Jerry Bruno [Gerald J. Bruno]. Well, let's see now. There was a Bill—not Bill Battle [William Cullen Battle]. Who is it? Whose office did we take? When I first came in Steve was using some little hole-in-the-wall without any windows, an inside kind of tiny office that had been Paul Corbin's.

CAMPBELL: Bill Keel [William A. Keel], the research fellow?

COLEMAN: No. He was at the other end of the building. But there was this Southern fellow.

CAMPBELL: Brawley [Hiram W. Brawley]?

COLEMAN: Brawley, that's it. Bill Brawley. And Brawley had an enormous—he was deputy chairman, wasn't he? That's right. He had an

[-3-]

enormous office. Steve didn't want to do anything about an office, but he couldn't use the room he had; it was too bad. I couldn't see him to tell him that he had a phone call; you had to knock on his door all the time. There was no way of putting me anywhere near; I had the outside room, of course, and he couldn't see people in there. So we moved Brawley out of his office. Steve didn't want to do it because he was afraid that Brawley would get offended and everything, as I'm sure he did, but we just sort of did it.

I don't know how much he used Brawley. Brawley left, I think, somewhere in that period of time. I don't remember what he did either. But he seemed to have faded fast so I take it that they didn't find him that helpful.

CAMPBELL: Well, how about Paul Corbin?

COLEMAN: Well, Paul Corbin is very useful in a lot of ways. It's hard to get into a kind of rational discussion of Paul Corbin. So many people get excited about him and find him.... He's extremely loyal, and always has been, to the family. Steve could trust him, and Paul was always running around getting inside dope, supposedly. I had to throw him out of the office a million times. Unfortunately I can be, you know, rather nasty myself so Paul Corbin doesn't bother me too much. He bothered a lot of people around the Committee who were afraid of him, actually. People around the Committee were so, as I said, terribly insecure, and a lot of them were not very effective type people—ineffectual, you know—so that they were insecure. So Paul Corbin could bully them, unfortunately.

Steve would listen to him, and he had pretty good access to him. I'd try to keep him out from time to time just because if you'd let him alone he would have been in there seventeen times a day every time Steve was in town. But I take it that they used the information that he picked up. He had a fair number of political contacts.

He and Jerry Bruno hated each other with a passion, which is a long fight that went back to Wisconsin days—where they were both from. And, of course, his tactics are not Jerry's kind of tactics. In the long run, of course, I tend to think Jerry was much more effective in the kinds of things he did, but then, a Corbin can be useful.

I think by and large the family trusted him. And there's, you know, a very high premium in that family on loyalty and their, "You can trust a Paul Corbin. You could tell him to go out and jump off a bridge for you and he'd do it." I mean, that's just how it went. So, I think Corbin and Bruno probably had the best access to the office.

It was incredible, though, when Steve would come down. They'd all try to flock in there to sell their latest project or tell him what a great thing they had done. It was really



pathetic. Bailey would be in; Matt Reese [Matthew A. Reese, Jr.] would be in; Bill what's-his-name from research...

[-4-]

CAMPBELL: Keel.

COLEMAN: Keel would be in. And, you know, Steve was a guy who liked to do things fast, and operated swiftly, and I think efficiently, and knew what he wanted. I think a lot of people wasted his time, but he heard them out, by and large. He wasn't terribly bad about keeping them out of the office. He spent a lot of his day on the telephone.

CAMPBELL: What sort of thing was he involved in at this early time?

COLEMAN: We were going to concentrate on certain states: on New York, Ohio, Michigan, Pennsylvania, California. I don't know; there were four or five of them. First of all, we had to try and retrieve all the card files—I think we had some of them there from '60—and then break up states into certain areas, get coordinators for those areas. He did divide the country, and he did pick up coordinators.

Now, what's-his-name across the street, Raskin, Hy Raskin [Hyman B. Raskin]. He was head of the law office across the street from us. We were at 1700 block of K Street at that time. Hy Raskin was to take a certain number of states. Teno Roncalio was to take some of the Western states. Who else? Pat Lucey [Patrick J. Lucey] was to take a certain number of states.

CAMPBELL: Was Bruno going to get involved there?

COLEMAN: Bruno was assigned to a certain number of states. I wish I had that sheet which had the breakdown. It's a memo. I guess we sent it over to the White House. These guys were supposed to start, I don't remember, probably early summer. It must have been, maybe in the summer itself, because by fall these guys were supposed to start sending in reports.

I myself thought he made a mistake on some of the people he chose because these guys had been around since '60, you know, and I didn't know that they really had that good contacts anymore around their states. Now, Roncalio did, certainly, since he was from there. Hy Raskin operated out of here, and I don't know how much he kept up with things. But to some degree, it's my own personal feeling—I never mentioned it because it wasn't my business to say so—it seemed to me they needed new blood, guys who were really up on what had been happening in the four year time period, or three years. It seemed to me, also, it was a Kennedy habit to reach back to the people you knew and trusted.

But at any rate, they were supposed to come in with the reports. In the meanwhile, as I said, we started adding some help from girls around, then started accumulating some data on these states, you know, and making up black books. I think we did something with

election data and names of office holders and all that kind of thing for the states, setting up card files on the people who were important in those states and taking the old

[ -5- ]

card files and, you know, putting them together.

Just before the President died there was a meeting which we hustled around about for a couple of days—I think I worked that weekend on it—in which these guys were going to report and in which we were going to pull together all this material on the different states. I have the feeling, I have the impression, it was disappointing. I heard later from my friend who worked for Larry O'Brien that he didn't think very much at all of the data that was presented. I'm not surprised. I mean, we put together a lot of junk, in a way, I mean, you know, things that you had to have at some point, like election data and all this.

The reports were very poor. We never really got good intelligence reports. These guys really weren't doing what they'd been told to do. And as a matter of fact, for several months, you know, Steve would come down and call these guys like Hy Raskin and say, "Where's your report?" You know, "What's been happening?" He really was having some trouble getting this stuff together. So I didn't know what was going to happen after that. I don't know what the President said about that meeting.

CAMPBELL: I think in Theodore White's [Theodore H. White] '64 book, [*The Making of the President, 1964*], he reports that at the meeting the President seemed less than fully interested, yet, in political plans for '64. Did you get the feeling that there was perhaps a certain lack of direction, at least from the President's side?

COLEMAN: Well, that's—I think maybe the President.... That may have been true about the President, but in addition he wasn't being presented with any sharp data or any sharp kinds of points. The only thing they really agreed to do was to go ahead and to put somebody into a state. As a matter of fact, maybe that decision had been reached before the meeting because I know Pat Lucey was out in Ohio setting up this first office at the time the President died.

It was Pat Lucey and Helen Keyes [Helen M. Keyes] who did not get along, it turned out. Well, Helen had a problem. Helen's a very competent woman who's been involved in a lot of campaigns. She went out to Ohio assuming she was going to organize things and Pat Lucey seemed to have gotten the impression she was just going to be a secretary for him. At least he apparently didn't know how to cope with a sort of equal partner, in a political sense, who was a woman—and a Massachusetts woman at that, I guess; I don't know. But at any rate, they had problems in Ohio with political leaders and trying to figure out which were the ones who were at the top.

I think Bill Coleman [William L. Coleman] was State Chairman then. And, I may be completely wrong about this, but it's my recollection they didn't think he was doing a very good job and they wanted.... You know, it was a question of who you could work with out there and who was really effective. There was this beginning effort, so, clearly, it would seem to me that some agreement had been reached that they would at least

start putting people into these states in advance. And I think a year in advance was quite a while to put somebody in Ohio. I don't know where they were going to go from there.

CAMPBELL: Was it your impression that the decision like that, the decision, for instance, to send Lucey and Mrs. Keyes to Ohio, was a decision made at the White House level? Did Smith make a decision like that?

COLEMAN: I'm almost certain it was a two-way decision. He was in constant conversation with Kenny O'Donnell when he was down. And the President would call from time to time. I know the D.N.C. operators almost, you know fell over in dead faints every time the White House called. [Laughter] So, I remember distinctly the President did call and talk to him. And he went over to the White House several times when he was in town. I mean, even to say it was Kenny O'Donnell is misleading; I'm sure he talked to the President and it was agreed on.

CAMPBELL: Was Smith's mandate from the White House a clear one? Was there any confusion at D.N.C. about what his responsibilities were?

COLEMAN: Well, there was confusion at D.N.C. I mean a lot of.... There's always confusion at D.N.C. Those poor people who didn't know quite what they—you know, they treated him as the Chairman rather than Bailey. They almost never worried about anything else but what Steve Smith was going to do to them, I think. You clearly could see that they figured he was there to shape up the place and they were all very scared about it. And he was running the campaign.

It was always a problem about what you were going to call him. I mean, he never had a title there, and naturally, you must have a title. They were always trying to get information from me on what he was going to do. "Was he running the campaign? Was he going to be campaign chairman?"

CAMPBELL: Was your answer, "Yes?"

COLEMAN: They were like newspaper men. I said, you know, "Yes, in effect. He would probably never have the title, but he was probably going to." Newspaper people sometimes would ask you that. There were a few stories at the time—the *Saturday Evening Post* story, which was quite good. And there was one other. I can't remember whether it was *Wall Street Journal* or not. It may have been because I think A.L. Otten [Alan L. Otten] did the story on him. They both were good pieces.

He was, I thought, a very capable guy and had changed a lot since I had worked with him in '60, although I really never worked directly for

him, of course. I worked for Pierre [Pierre E.G. Salinger]. We worked just a couple of doors down from him, and certainly I dealt with him a lot.

He had become a lot firmer and sharper and had just matured an awful lot in those few years, in terms of his sureness about what he was doing. He talked to political leaders just with a terrifically assured manner. And, of course, he was talking for the President of the United States so it's clear. But, in addition, he just was a very competent, assured type, political....

CAMPBELL: Does Robert Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy] figure into this early political planning at all? How much contact did you have with him?

COLEMAN: I don't recall very much at all. There was a joke about Corbin. One of the first things that happened was Steve sent a letter to Robert Kennedy, something about Paul having been seen walking Brumus. You know, it was a joke to say that Paul, who knew Robert Kennedy best of all of them—he used to go over to the Justice Department all the time just to sit around and see him, you know, give him all his political inside information. So, it was just a joke Steve was making about Paul's functions, like being supposed to walk Brumus.

But, apart from that, and I suppose calls—I know Angie [Angela M. Novello] (Robert Kennedy's secretary) came over one day. But I don't really remember. I really don't know.

CAMPBELL: As...

COLEMAN: It seems to me he dealt much more with the White House.

CAMPBELL: Other D.N.C. people: how about the ladies? Did you see much of Mrs. Bush [Dorothy V. Bush] in your operation?

COLEMAN: No. We were, because of having taken Brawley's suite, right next to Mrs. Price's [Margaret Price] operation. And I made some cracks once or twice to Steve about those women, you know, sort of of the nature that I didn't think they really did very much in there. And he kind of laughed and joked about it. I don't know, but it doesn't seem to me he took them too seriously.

Mrs. Price had a very serious tragedy. One of her sons committed suicide at that point—I think she has more than one; it may have been her only son—but anyway, that was very sad. She was gone for a long time then towards the end.

CAMPBELL: How useful did you people find the research effort? Under Bill Keel, I believe.

CAMPBELL: I don't know, he dealt directly with Steve and he came around a lot. They had something, I remember; they came up with

something called Operation Bootstrap or some other sort of support.  
[Laughter] Operation Support.

CAMPBELL: That's a poor....

COLEMAN: I thought it had the funniest name. And I remember thinking at the time, "Oh my gosh, how silly. Why do they have to, you know, give them names and go through all this nonsense?" I wasn't terribly impressed with him. I don't know how much Steve really used him.

CAMPBELL: In what direction...

COLEMAN: I have a feeling that the Matt Reese operations were more important at that point. It's a question of who they were going to give the money to. There were several things. There was the question of giving money to the registration drives. And I think the Southern Regional Council got five thousand dollars at that time. Then there were some small elections that were important. Chuck Roche [Charles D. Roche] was there and was sent out to Denver for the Mayor's election, of all things. Although that was supposed to be a non-partisan race we got involved in that and gave, I think five thousand, too. And I'd hate to say it was Currigan [Thomas G. Currigan] because I'm not the least bit sure of who it was; that's the only name I remember. I think he's mayor now and was up then. Then, also, Jerry went to Pennsylvania and Chuck did, too, as a matter of fact, for Rooney's [Fred B. Rooney] special election, Congressman Rooney. They really worked hard on that, but actually there was just the two of them to go. So, you know, in the terms of actual political operatives, in a sense, there weren't many people who'd be sent out for something like that. And it was probably Jerry and Chuck Roche.

CAMPBELL: Did Roche fit into your operation there at the D.N.C. other than being sent out?

COLEMAN: I don't really know what he and Jerry did when they were in Washington except keep track of races and keep in touch with political figures. They had, I think, at one point—well, no. Jerry got certain states because I guess we assigned those to him. I don't know whether he had them before or not.

CAMPBELL: In what directions would Steve Smith look when he was thinking of cost cutting at D.N.C.? What seemed like excess baggage? Whole offices or...

COLEMAN: No. Actually, he never got very far on that. I understand, or I know, when Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] came in, just before

Christmas of 1964, he knocked off forty employees. Fired practically the whole place, which isn't—when you consider—that there were forty employees to get rid of, you can see where the.... But, of course, that may have been extras they'd hired for the campaign. I don't think we had that many in '63. Well, there were a couple of people who were sort of variously listed as being in registration. An older guy, I think, named George Booker was one. There was a woman who was sort of assigned to—Helen Yowell was in charge of, I think, personnel, accounting, or something. She had a couple of people working for her that, you know, it was hard to tell who they were, what they were doing. There were, you know, just these extra people around, sort of; one never knew what they were doing. And I think they hoped to cut out some costs there.

CAMPBELL: How about Maguire [Richard Maguire]?

COLEMAN: Oh, yeah. Dick Maguire. Well, he had a very important office, of course, with locked up books on accounts and all on who was getting the money. I think there was some problem there because I think he'd gotten to be fairly independent of everybody else and wanted to work strictly through the White House and not through Steve. I remember there being some very definite coldness there. And I don't know how they tried to resolve that, but he had his.... I mean, there was a very political kind of situation, too.

Steve always approached him very gingerly and tried not to offend him. You know, he asked if he could see him, or sometimes he'd go walk down there himself to see him rather than make him come to our office. Just, you know, little things like that. And I think because Maguire had his good contacts in the White House, he just didn't try to offend him. That was one office that was sort of really leery of what Steve was doing then. Steve of course, had run financial things in '60.

CAMPBELL: Did...

COLEMAN: We did, from time to time, some of the President's Club things, too, like trying to determine who should be invited to a dinner. That had been going on before Steve got there, of course. But I do remember seeing lists from time to time of who should be invited to certain dinners because of their heavy contributions.

CAMPBELL: Sometime, I think in April or May, Paul Southwick is introduced into this equation as part of Pierre Salinger's staff. Did you have much to do with him?

COLEMAN: No. I don't really remember what happened with that. I seem to recall his being in the E.O.B. [Executive Office Building]. There were some other people who were also already E.O.B. in various kinds of—like they were supposed to be in personnel with Dorothy Davies or some other kind of, or sort of working for Ralph Dungan [Ralph A. Dungan] except that they were over in....

There are different kinds of personnel functions. Ralph Dungan's operations were the high level people for government agencies. And then he had several people, like— Terry Scanlon [Terrence M. Scanlon], I think, was one, over in E.O.B. We dealt with them on people in a political sense of, you know, who you wanted to clear. But, we also dealt with Dorothy Davies. As a matter of fact, Steve had several conversations with her trying to—I don't remember why—see how that whole operation worked. I think there was some unhappiness with how it worked at the White House.

CAMPBELL: How had it been handled before Steve Smith was around?

COLEMAN: Well, they had some sort of card system, you know. They had a list of names of people for jobs. Then when jobs came to them or they had been told that there were several openings in an agency, they were supposed to look through their files and see what they had, what kinds of people they had. Also, you were supposed to be able to check through people with them. If so and so had been recommended for a job, you were supposed to check through and see what they had on them. Well, the problem was they didn't have anything. As I recall, I think I saw some of the cards, or at least I heard about it. Maybe she brought several samples over to show to Steve or something, and it was just woefully inadequate in terms of information.

She's a high-powered female who was very clearly trying to prove how much she knew and how much she could do. I didn't like her. But then I think—I don't know. She got along all right with Steve as far as I could tell. I don't know whether they ever made any changes in that or not.

Paul Southwick was supposed to deal—I remember something about that now. Paul was, I think, supposed to deal with the agencies in terms of getting us data for the campaign. As a matter of fact, I remember seeing some of that stuff come in and it was bad, too.

The thing is the agency people—even those responsible for the political parts, you know, the political people in the agency—didn't understand what you needed in campaign material. They'd send all the voluminous material about every one of a thousand grants that an agency made under John Kennedy, under the Kennedy Administration, instead of simply providing you some highlights and focusing in on the really political items that you could use. So we had a lot of bad material coming over. Now, he was supposed to coordinate that. That was what his function was, yeah, to deal with the agencies and get that kind of stuff. And I think Steve had a number of conversations with him about what was coming in.

CAMPBELL: Do you remember what agencies were particularly cooperative or who did pretty useful stuff?

COLEMAN: I could probably, if I thought about it, more likely come up with the ones that produced unusable stuff. [Laughter] I don't think they really understood. I had the same problem when I

worked for Robert Kennedy in the Senate in '66. He was going out to campaign for a lot of people, and we wanted agency data on programs. We were going to highlight certain areas. You couldn't get them to come up with some simple facts.

CAMPBELL: Okay. This early, how is the voter registration operation going on under is—Matt Reese in charge?

COLEMAN: He is, and I don't really know. They were doing some Southern work as I mentioned. I remember that there was a film that they were putting together, too, on registration, because I remember seeing it. I don't know whether they decided to go ahead and put that film around or not. He was always endlessly busy. I suppose they were doing something then, but I don't really know about registration except some money going to the South.

CAMPBELL: Except money for the South? Did you get a sense of sort of an overall strategy developing? What major issues were going to be pinpointed?

COLEMAN: No, no. I think it was mostly organization at that point and not issues.

CAMPBELL: It was early for that.

COLEMAN: Political organization and registration are the important things.

CAMPBELL: You were there the month of the Rockefeller [Nelson A. Rockefeller] remarriage. How was that news received? Did that change things any?

COLEMAN: The only thing I remember about Rockefeller was—no, not the marriage. But Milt Gwirtzman, Milton Gwirtzman [Milton S. Gwirtzman], who had helped in '60 and had helped Ted Kennedy [Edward M. Kennedy] in '62, I guess, was used on sort of an occasional basis. I guess he had a law office of his own, but he came in once with some material that Steve had wanted on Rockefeller. He did a rundown on what kinds of issues you might look for with Rockefeller so there was apparently a concern of Rockefeller as a potential candidate. But that's the only thing I remember about Rockefeller at that time.

CAMPBELL: Let's talk about some of these individual problem states and see what you might remember. I think Steve Smith had spent a considerable amount of time and effort on New York. Do you recall anything particular about that? There's a party feud there.

COLEMAN: I don't know. I think probably Steve was doing the New York things a great deal while he was in his New York office, anyway, so that I would have heard and seen much less of that than I did say, about Ohio.



CAMPBELL: How about Pennsylvania? Was it a very—it was a very early concern.

COLEMAN: Yeah. Again, I remember Jerry and Chuck going up for that special election in Pennsylvania, but I don't remember any overall work with the.... I've heard the names so often of Mayor Tate [James H. J. Tate], Mayor Barr [Joseph M. Barr]. I can't remember what years I've heard concern about them expressed—all through those periods.

CAMPBELL: The Convention [Democratic National Convention] site was chosen, I think, in the summer of 1963. Do you recall what factors entered into that decision? Did you people get involved in that at all, the decision for Atlantic City?

COLEMAN: Yeah. That was discussed at D.N.C. I think it was finally resolved at the White House. Simply, the pros and cons were listed. I don't recall Steve having a preference. I think I recall Bailey talking to him about it a couple of times. I really don't know about that except that I think it was just the President deciding Atlantic City.

CAMPBELL: In the fall of '63 there were a series of Democratic conferences, regional conferences. Did you people get involved in that? I think Bailey attended every one and made speeches. There was one in the West and one in the Midwest; and that sort of thing.

COLEMAN: No. No, I don't remember getting—Steve was making trips out to Ohio from time to time. He was rapidly turning down speaking engagements. He didn't like to speak, didn't want to do it. He went to Michigan; he may have gone to Michigan once. I remember trips to Ohio and maybe Pennsylvania, but, as I say, it's my recollection that most of the time was spent on registration efforts and on certain states. And Ohio, really, was given a lot of attention, as I recall, in the fall of '63, from the fall of '63 to the President's death.

CAMPBELL: Was there any concern about the publicity regarding Smith's activity? I guess it started in April or May.

COLEMAN: First of all, there wasn't very much publicity at all. Smith was then, and to a large degree always has been, sort of an anonymous figure. First of all the name, Steve Smith; nobody knows what it is or who it is. He always had a tough time calling somebody. The operator said, "Who's calling?" We'd say, "Steve Smith." How were you going to identify him? They'd say, "Steve Smith?" You couldn't say, "The President's brother-in-law," but that was absolutely the only way people recognized the name. He was really very little known except, naturally, among political

people. But to the public at large there was no sort of awareness of who he was, nor do I think they would have cared. There was nothing unusual about the President beginning

[-13-]

to do some campaign strategy before the election.

CAMPBELL: Was it clear that Bailey would remain...

COLEMAN: I mean, the trips that the President was making, of course, by the time he died were political by nature.

CAMPBELL: Was there any question that Bailey would remain in his position as Chairman of the Party through 1964?

COLEMAN: Yeah. It was talked about a lot. There was a lot of speculation about it. Now, I may be remembering newspaper articles and that kind of thing, rather than actual talk around the Committee.

Steve was very taciturn. I mean, he did not sit around chatting with me or gossiping. He would from time to time, you know, make some crack about somebody, but, generally, by and large, it was only a question of whether I just heard rumors around the Committee. Of course, there were rumors around the Committee the whole time I was there that Bailey was going to go and Steve—it may be that Paul or Jerry kind of suggested that they thought that that was what was going to happen, too, and that's where I picked it up from.

CAMPBELL: Very early in November, I think Leonard Reinsch [Leonard U. Reinsch] was named to be in charge of convention arrangements. Were you involved in that at all?

COLEMAN: No. I suppose he did. I guess Bob Troutman [Robert Troutman, Jr.] must've been on our list of the people to work with the South, too. There was a new fellow whom Steve wanted to see in Atlanta, a young guy. I don't think he was.... I mean, I think he just thought this young fellow was going to be a helpful young lawyer. But, I guess Troutman was down to do the South. Leonard Reinsch—I don't know why Leonard Reinsch reminds me of Troutman. I don't know, except that they both come from the '60 campaign. I don't remember much about that.

CAMPBELL: By November, how successful, was the Smith operation? Had things changed at the Democratic National Committee?

COLEMAN: No. [Laughter] Unfortunately, for all my admiration for Steve, they had not. I don't think we had lost any people. If we did, it was a very small number, though efforts were still underway. Steve, I'm afraid, wasn't very heartless, couldn't just lop a lot of people off the payroll. We were still operating with the people we had there. We hadn't added anybody either, as I recall, except Steve and I, really. But

actually, that wasn't even new; I'd been there since March. Steve, as I said, was just about to move down there full time. He'd rented his house and was going to move his family down there for awhile.

[-14-]

But there really hadn't been any considerable changes. It may have been the White House didn't push that hard, either, as you suggested before. We were going through what I consider a lot of—now, I don't know what was happening on the registration drive, really, and certainly an effort had begun with Lucey and Helen Keyes being sent out to Ohio.

Helen Keyes hated it right from the start, has sworn to this day she'll never, ever go into Ohio again. I think she must've been sent to Columbus. I'm not sure. But apart from that there really hadn't been any real changes around the Committee as such.

But I think the wheels were in motion. Guys had been selected and possibly they didn't feel the momentum in September; they may have later. The framework, a skeleton, was developing there, but an awful lot was sort of almost as if the D.N.C. was just our operating base without it actually being a focus for any of this. Clearly the White House was the focus and most of the people at D.N.C. were just peripheral to the whole effort still, at this point.

CAMPBELL: When, then, did you leave D.N.C.?

COLEMAN: Well, of course, Steve never came back after the President died. I don't even remember if he came in to pick anything up. Corbin immediately swiped some of the files because he was afraid somebody else would get them; you know, worried about a sense of loyalty.

I hung around because I helped Pierre with a project at the White House to put together tributes to President Kennedy. In the meanwhile D.N.C. was still paying me. There was no way the White House could put me on, I guess, so we just left it that way. Nobody at D.N.C. was pushing to fire me although clearly I didn't have a boss.

Really, just to hold on there for awhile until I figured out what to do, I talked about going into news and information. They started moving there you know; new people started coming in. And almost immediately—it was really something—Wayne Phillips came in and suddenly developed this news and information section.

Sam Brightman [Samuel C. Brightman] had been there all this time. Of course, Sam Brightman was another one, one must say, who was very ineffectual, and nobody really used him except to do these ordinary things that D.N.C. did which sort of had to be done; you know, like put out a press release that Bailey was going to speak someplace. It was all a very sort of menial kind of operation.

Wayne Phillips came in, and they went to a new building even. I forgot where we were, but we set up an operation someplace else. What's-his-name came from the Peace Corps—Lloyd something-or-other—to do some communications thing. Wayne set up an overnight, twenty-four-hour-a-day monitoring system for the news so they could put out an information sheet

[-15-]

on President Johnson's desk at eight o'clock every morning. So we had an overnight operation. I must say they really ran in there and started spending money like crazy. So I liked to work for him, but I really had no intention of staying. Frankly, it was just a staying operation.

CAMPBELL: Oh, one other catch up thing. What was the liaison like between your office at D.N.C., this early, and speech operations in other parts of the executive branch? Were you actively making suggestions?

COLEMAN: That's who—when you said "Paul Southwick," I was thinking of another Paul at D.N.C. who had to worry about speakers. Part of his function was to worry about speakers operation. But they tried again. It was never the big names. You really couldn't—at D.N.C., it's my recollection—get the cabinet level people for something. You were always trying for just, you know, small level people to come out to speak at small functions.

CAMPBELL: Let's talk just a little bit about your time with Salinger on his staff then, when he was running for the Senate and is in the Senate. When did you join his staff?

COLEMAN: Well, that was another case of the strange sequence of events in my life, in particular. I came here at the *Congressional Quarterly* in March or February—or whatever it was when I finally got a job—from the D.N.C.

No sooner did I come here than Pierre announced that he was going to run in the primary in California for Senate and asked me if I wanted to come with him. Well, I'd switched around so much, and I was so tired of the whole thing by then. I didn't really want to get into a campaign situation and wasn't sure he was going to win the primary against Cranston [Alan M. Cranston]. So I said, "No." Then he went on and won the primary. Then Engle [Clair Engle] died so he got appointed to the Senate so he asked me again.

I did keep in touch with him during this time. As a matter of fact, I did one little project for him on Indians. He needed to get some information on Indians for some speech he was going to give so I went over to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Philleo Nash, a Kennedy appointment, was still there. I talked to him about whatever it was and put together some facts for Pierre. So, I kept in touch and knew the people working for him, of course.

In August, after he got appointed, they offered the job again. It was a couple of thousand dollars more than I was making here, plus it was a chance to do writing for him, press and speeches and research, you know, that kind of thing. I guess my title was "research assistant." So I did come to work for him and worked in his Washington office although I went out to the campaign for the last couple of weeks, where I really wasn't needed.

[-16-]

The campaign headquarters was a chaos, in the sense that they had all kinds of bodies around that weren't doing anything. It was a most incredible waste of money. First

thing when you came out there, they were able to provide you with an electric typewriter. I remember somebody offering me a calendar, and I said, "What do I need a calendar for? It's only two weeks to the election." It seemed to me money was no object.

It was very depressing because you really couldn't see Pierre. He was terribly isolated at this point. And I remember seeing a copy of his schedule, and I couldn't understand. You know, you're used to a certain kind of campaigning, of the kind Robert Kennedy was doing at that point in New York or that you did in the '60 campaign, where you were moving all the time. In the California schedule, they had three rest stops of an hour apiece in one day, which is unheard of with the people I was used to working with. They were always putting him into these private dinners, private fundraising cocktail parties where he talked to one hundred people. In a state with as many people as there were there, you know....

I did go to a couple of functions he spoke at and it was bad. He spoke at some Polish hall one time and he looked terrible. It was a badly lit long hall, auditorium like hall, you know. He was up at the front and he looked dumpy and he didn't speak well. It was all very depressing; nothing was going well. I think he had been at that point, by the last two weeks of the campaign, very depressed by the polls, and he was just sort of sinking down instead of making some final heroic last minute effort. I blamed an awful lot of it on the campaign manager, what's-his-name. He ran Brown's [Edmund G. "Pat" Brown] campaigns.

CAMPBELL: Dutton [Frederick G. Dutton]?

COLEMAN: No. Not Dutton. Don Bradley [Don L. Bradley]. And just for, you know, the way they scheduled him, for just bad advice all the way along, bad running of the campaign headquarters, unnecessary expenditure of money. They were in debt for years, they may still be, out of that campaign. Pierre was speaking, you know, at a lot of dinners afterwards, continually trying to pay off that debt.

There were fights, of course, of the usual California variety. During the primary he had had Unruh's [Jesse M. Unruh] help. And Unruh did this, I think it's understood, because he was opposed to Brown, and Brown's nominee was Cranston. So there was this inter-warfare going on. After the campaign—and this was Pierre's fault—after the primary was over, Pierre chose to go back to the people he knew best, and that was Brown and his group. He used Don Bradley, Brown's guy, and he took on all the Brown people with him because that was where Pierre was most comfortable. Pierre has since said that Unruh cut him in the back, knifed him in the back, and all this kind of stuff. I argued with him about this one time, got into a rather heated argument because it seemed to me it was Pierre's fault in the first place. He used Unruh and then he turned his back on him. Anyway, the Unruh people were mad and didn't help out in any way. And the Brown people, seemed to me,

[-17-]

were not very efficient or very good at this. There were all kinds of other little fights going on.

CAMPBELL: What could you see about Robert Kennedy's involvement, or was there any at all in Salinger's campaign? He's got a campaign of his own.

COLEMAN: Yes. I don't recall that there was. He said at one point, Pierre said, that Robert Kennedy's running didn't help him very much.

CAMPBELL: Do you think that that was the general consensus on Salinger's staff and of his associates, that Robert Kennedy's race was a problem?

COLEMAN: The whole carpetbagger issue, of course, although I thought Pierre answered that very well; but unfortunately it hung over. I think a lot of things caught up with Pierre, the carpetbag issue being only one of them. Proposition 14 [constitutional amendment to nullify fair-housing law] was a very heated issue; braceros, the use of braceros for labor on farms in California, on big farms. So, he certainly didn't have the growers with him. He wouldn't likely have had them. He maintains Proposition 14 defeated him. I've since heard him say that really defeated him. I think he thinks the carpetbagger thing was troublesome, too.

I think if he hadn't had a primary he could have made it. I think by the time the voters in California had seen him that long and that often, had seen him trying to use the Kennedy affiliation that much, had had a chance to let these other antagonisms build up.... I would have thought that the carpetbagger thing, though, would have faded with time more than the other things which are subtle factors which may have built up. But the carpetbagger issue could fade because he was, after all, a native Californian and had gone to school there and all the rest of it.

He's very sensitive; if you tried to kid him about how he was born in California—I remember saying once, which I'm afraid was very tactless of me.... But he at least got more of a sense of humor, I'm afraid, after that race where he got terribly uptight about it. I think he really cared a lot about winning that. But when we were talking about possible jobs for me after he lost, I said something about Robert Kennedy. And I said, "Well, after all, I was born in New York; I was raised in New York; and I went to school in New York so I guess I can work for Robert Kennedy." He didn't think that was very funny, I'm afraid—and it wasn't, probably. So he did, you know, have to answer that all the time.

You know, as everybody always tells you, California is a strange state. There are a lot of reasons why a lot of them go for a conservative candidate. So, Pierre took a chance on the Proposition 14 issue; he was advised not to

[-18-]

by his advisors. I think some of them, really, just.... I really think Bradley sort of gave up on the whole thing in the last few weeks.

Bradley's been around California politics forever. He doesn't do it anymore since Brown lost. He lost Brown's campaign. He managed Brown's losing campaign, too.

[BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 1]

CAMPBELL: When does...

COLEMAN: It was Don Bradley we were talking about.

CAMPBELL: Don Bradley in California politics. When did you join Robert Kennedy's staff?

COLEMAN: Immediately after that, actually. Well, of course, after the election in November, you were really on the payroll, if you were a Senate employee, until January something. I did not really want to go to work in another political office or Senate office or any number of things so I really sort of postponed thinking about it for as long as I could. Pierre asked me in what way he could be helpful. Well, the only two things I could think about were the poverty program, which had just been passed in '64.... They were setting up their headquarters then and Sargent Shriver [R. Sargent Shriver, Jr.] was the head of that. I said, "That and Robert Kennedy," because it was the same Kennedy family thing. I knew Pierre had contacts there, I could probably get jobs there. So I did interview with the poverty program. Then I interviewed with Joe Dolan [Joseph F. Dolan] at Robert Kennedy's office. I told Joe that I was thinking about taking a job with the Job Corps. Job Corps recruitment was what I finally got linked up with at O.E.O. [Office of Economic Opportunity].

Joe called me that night to talk me out of going to work for the poverty program. I was so impressed with this big selling job that I got that I went to work in Robert Kennedy's office a week after he took office.

I was doing a project for Pierre then, I think which is why I needed some time. Pierre was affiliated with Seven Arts [Seven Arts Productions, Ltd.] or whatever they call it, some TV thing in which Peter Lawford, I guess, had an interest. Pierre had an interest, and Jackie Cooper was president of it. They were talking about doing a documentary on John Kennedy, so Pierre wanted me to do some chronologies for him of events. I did that, flew out to California. So that took some time.

I went to work for Robert Kennedy about a week after his office was set up. And it was chaos! It was just incredible. There was more paper all over the place. Nobody knew what they were doing. There wasn't anybody who'd had any [Capitol] Hill experience, I think, except Angie and Joe.

[-19-]

Angie had worked for the Rackets Committee [Select Committee on Improper Activities in the Labor or Management Field]. Joe had worked on the House side, I think, for a committee or a congressman. They had not hired the full staff yet. As a matter of fact, I think we went into March before we actually finished interviewing people.

During the interim period, after Robert Kennedy had gotten elected, he, of course, had gone off and done all kinds of things. You know, he went right back up to upstate New York on a fact-finding trip, the fact-finding trip. We had all that data from the trip, and we really weren't able to do anything for a long time about a lot of the problems that he was

told about. Unfortunately, we knew more about the things that needed to be done than we were equipped to deal with in those first few months.

And Robert Kennedy was immediately moving into the legislative activities. He sponsored the Appalachian amendment bill [Appalachian Regional Development Act]—it's the first thing he did—to add thirteen New York counties to the Appalachian program, which succeeded.

At the beginning I helped Joe, helped with staffing and any number of things, post office, anything that wasn't being done by somebody, which were an awful lot of little loose ends. We didn't have enough case workers to deal....

This, unfortunately, set us back a long time because we just got so far behind on the mail. And they had not had anybody to deal with it in the interim period. Although, supposedly, some effort had been made in New York to separate out all this mail and do something about it, nobody had. They just separated it out. We had cartons of mail. He always got an incredible amount of mail, you know, a thousand letters a day at a peak period. No telling how much behind we were when we started in terms of mail.

And then, we had temporary headquarters, temporary rooms, which they do in the Senate. They put you in some office and then make you move seven months later or something, just when you're beginning to get settled and organized.

CAMPBELL: What sort of thing in your staffing—you undoubtedly had a surplus number of applicants—what sort of thing were you looking for?

COLEMAN: Well, I'm afraid Joe and I were looking for different things. To tell you frankly, I thought we should have a Negro on the staff right away. Joe agreed and we just couldn't really figure out how we were going to do that. We interviewed a group of Negro girls for secretary, and I thought they were fine. I didn't see anything wrong with them. I don't know Joe—Joe was very, very fussy about anybody he hired, black or white or anything. He just had them go through this long involved process with him. I don't know what he was looking for in particular.

[-20-]

We did want some New York girls, and we did get some. One girl turned out to be very competent. Wendy Cimmet [Wendy Markson Cimmet], her name is now; she's married. She got married sometime during the time she was working there. She was the daughter of a guy who was from Elmira, who was a little bit involved in local politics. The county chairman had said, "Please, give this girl a job." Others, you know, you just looked at resumes and talked to them and just tried to see whether they would be competent. You know, could they type? And not very many can these days, certainly not take shorthand. You wanted a couple of New York girls on the front desk, if you could possibly get it, and you just wanted, hopefully, some girls who had Hill experience. But, also, we were paying very low salaries so we couldn't be terribly particular about getting girls who had Hill experience. And I don't think we wound up happy in the end, actually.

CAMPBELL: At this level of...



COLEMAN: Of course, the legislative assistants had already been selected by the Senator himself.

CAMPBELL: At this level, I just wondered if the Senator got involved at all.

COLEMAN: Well, Joe insisted on it. Every time he got into the final stage before hiring a person, he insisted on bringing her in to meet the Senator, which I thought was a waste of the Senator's time. But I suppose he didn't think so, since he went ahead and met them, each one of them. So, he did it, and he never vetoed anybody as far as I know.

He was moving around a lot in those early days. I don't remember seeing him in the office very much. First thing he did was he complained about the windows being locked—the air-conditioned buildings, you know, the new Senate Office Building. It was an air conditioned building and you're supposed to keep the windows locked; and he didn't like that. He wanted fresh air, kept insisting with some building man, what was he going to do if he wanted to open the windows one day? The building won; he never opened the windows.

CAMPBELL: What was your impression of how he was received into the Senate by his fellow Senators?

COLEMAN: Well, he made Javits [Jacob K. Javits] angry right away. That was the immediate problem we had because of the Appalachian bill. But thereafter, when he realized, he took great pains to be careful and always to let Javits know ahead of time what we were doing and try to work with him, as a matter of fact, on everything. Their relationship got much improved after those first days, but it was bad those first days. I don't really know what the others thought of him.

I remember he became very careful about a Senator's feelings. Because I remember once dealing with him. We wanted to get another county into Appalachia and insure some highway money for the program. We'd heard—I'd

[-21-]

told him that there were some rumblings—Muskie [Edmund S. Muskie] was unhappy about the highway money for New York. So, he said we'd better go see Randolph [Jennings Randolph], who was Chairman, and Muskie. We promptly went there, and he very quietly said, "This is very important to New York State. The program has been of great significance to the people in the state. They really want it and use it. Please may we have the money?" in effect. You know, really, he was very humble and patient and went to both of them that way. It soothed Muskie down and everything. So I know that kind of thing was important to him after awhile. I don't know how aware of it he was at first.

He was always very restless. You know, when he'd come to spend a few weeks in the office before going out on another trip, you could always see him pacing around all the time. From time to time he got concerned that he didn't know the staff well enough, and he'd have these office parties whenever he'd come in. All these girls would come in and cluster around

in one little spot. He'd stand at the other end of the room sort of not knowing what to say to them. Sometimes he made impromptu trips through the rooms.

We were separated, and we were on the first floor right next to the entrance in the new Senate Office Building at the beginning, which was a terrible location. Of course, anybody, in tourist season in particular, coming in the door and going to the elevators that were right there, turned around and saw "Robert Kennedy" on the door and walked in. So we had thousands of people, it seemed, all the time. You couldn't get into the office yourself.

We were also split up in three ways. We had a room across the hall, and then we had some space upstairs on the third floor, which was where our mail operation was. The people on the third floor were always having a morale problem about never seeing the Senator and never knowing who they worked for. So, from time to time he whipped through the office and would say, "hello," and say, "Who are you?" sort of.

CAMPBELL: What particular problems did you get involved in early on, besides this personnel business?

COLEMAN: Postmasters were always a hideous and sort of complicated problem because that involved, of course, the county chairmen. There was a never ending problem with the political figures in upstate New York.

The Senator on that early fact finding trip promised to open an upstate office. What had happened on Keating [Kenneth B. Keating] and Javits was that Keating had a Rochester office—Keating was from Rochester or someplace upstate—and Javits had a New York City office; and they just helped each other, you know, on these two things. Well, so then Robert Kennedy opened a New York office and a Syracuse office. I don't remember when he put Jerry Bruno on, but I would guess it was spring or sometime like that.

[-22-]

Jerry's main function was to take care of political matters upstate New York. The New York City office was supposed to take care of New York City and surrounding counties like Westchester, and the Island [Long Island]. Jerry was supposed to take care of everything else.

My function eventually became one of coordinating, with public officials mostly, upstate New York in terms of federal programs and in terms of poverty programs. You know, I would deal with community action agencies, public officials, school people. It was a kind of casework except it spanned all of the different categories of, you know, different agencies. Ordinarily you'd put people on casework to deal with given programs, like there's a person to deal with Social Security, a person to deal with veterans' problems, and then somebody who deals with urban renewal and H.E.W. [Health, Education and Welfare] kind of programs. I never really got into Social Security, veterans, or any of that kind of thing, but I did deal with a lot of the kinds of programs that public officials, in particular, were concerned with. Then I went to the Mayors' Conferences upstate, sometimes to meetings upstate. So I would coordinate with Jerry.

Jerry tried to handle some things upstate alone, apart from the political things, but it usually became a matter of his passing something on to me. As far as the political matters

went, it was very hard to work out a good arrangement. First of all, you're talking about political matters on a couple of levels. There are the county chairmen and the political party itself, which he [Bruno] dealt with directly.

He had some problems. There was friction between New York City and him. Tom Johnston [Thomas M.C. Johnston] in the New York City office was a fairly ambitious fellow and active and bright and really, I think, wanted more and thought he could handle more than Jerry could. I think there was a little bit of snobbery involved there, too, kind of thinking that he really understood the issues better and the problems better. And also, a guy we had briefly who—what is his name? He's a lawyer. He really wanted to get involved in the political things all over the state. Phil Ryan [Philip J. Ryan, Jr.]. He and Jerry locked horns quite a few times. This worked out when the Senator made it clear it was Jerry. The Senator's mode of operation seemed to be, "Let them all have a go at it and see what happens." He really didn't care, you know. He didn't want to hear about your petty problems or your squabbling with each other either as long as things got done. Eventually, I think, they may have straightened it out. It became clear that Jerry was to take care of upstate in these matters.

But then there were problems, say political problems, in terms of how you make a good impression upstate. This was very important, and we worked a lot on this. For instance, federal grants—you have to get through this business of announcing federal grants as if the Senator personally got each one of the grants for the area. Well, Jerry was unhappy about how that worked. The problem was at first we just didn't have people to do this. The press girl was supposed to do it. She was inundated with five hundred thousand other things so we finally got somebody just to do grants.

[-23-]

Sometimes if we thought it was a good enough grant, you know, we'd make a special press release, send out a notice to the area, call the papers in Washington and their offices here. Finally, when Frank Mankiewicz [Frank F. Mankiewicz] came on as press secretary, he instituted a radio beeper thing, too, on which the Senator would announce a grant or talk about some statement he made before a committee that day—put that out to radio stations. It was a never ending problem trying to do both the political and the other aspects of upstate New York.

New York City politics, of course, wasn't very easy to manage either.

CAMPBELL: Do you think that at first the Senator had some difficulty in identifying with the upstate problems in some of the essentially rural areas and that sort of thing?

COLEMAN: I don't think they were ever, you know, certainly his major focus, by any means. I think he was concerned, not just to make an impression, but he seemed to feel that he really had an obligation to upstate New York. He took it quite seriously.

He'd get very upset when he'd go on trips and people would complain about anything.

He was also very pleased when we could show him examples of how upstate New York gave him credit for helping them. The Appalachian program was one; he really got a lot of credit for that. He testified once on a water and sewer program—that's very, very popular with mayors the country over—and he testified in favor of an increase in funds. Actually he was one of about ninety-seven senators who cosponsored a bill to increase the funds, but I put out a press release—I used to do some of the press stuff on these upstate matters—I wrote a press release and put it out widely. At that point we were trying a mailing to weekly newspapers as well. Thus paper in Glens Falls wrote this editorial about how much Robert Kennedy was doing for upstate New York and used this particular example. I showed that to him, and he liked that kind of thing.

Mayors came down, and I'd bring them into the office; he'd try and solve some problems for them. He always jumped too much on those things. I brought in a mayor one time and his city council, having come down with urban and renewal problems. I had learned to go in ahead of time before a group and say, "Now, just tell them we're working on it because I'm taking care of it. It's very easy to solve. You don't have to do a thing. So just say...." At this point I hadn't done that, so he promptly got on the phone and called what's-his-name who was the head of H.U.D. [Housing and Urban Development], Weaver [Robert C. Weaver]. He called Weaver and said, "Bob, I have a mayor here...." I'm sure Weaver didn't know what was going on. But he [RFK] would tend to, you know, do that kind of thing.

We also had a conference on federal aid. We called one, set it up ourselves, and ran it in Washington. I wanted to do it alone, but he insisted

[-24-]

we go in with Javits on it. We had that federal aid conference. That was very successful.

He went up every year. He'd always go on these little tours. Unfortunately, he ran those things, and let Jerry run them, like a political campaign. It was always packed, seven hundred appearances in one day, and he was always late. In the wintertime—because he would generally go up at the beginning of the year when Congress wasn't doing much—the weather was always so bad, and, you know, you'd get stuck someplace. So we had our problems about that, but he took it seriously. I think there was no question he was much more interested in things like education, Vietnam, any number of other national issues, than upstate New York, but he certainly knew that the problems were there and tried to do what he could.

All you really had to do was to present him with a situation that needed doing, and needed *his* doing, and just tell him what were the alternatives. He didn't like to be presented with fuzzy kinds of ideas or anything. He wanted you to be concise, and he wanted you to know what you were recommending. It's very bad to go in and tell him something ought to be done and then not be prepared to say what ought to be done, what you wanted him to do on it. Because he'd always say that, "What do you want me to do? What is it I should do?"

CAMPBELL: It has been suggested that some government agencies were particularly difficult for your office to deal with, perhaps because of some influence from the White House. Do you remember running into any sorts of problems?

COLEMAN: Well, we ran into that kind of thing, and you never knew, exactly, whether it was a person at the agency or the agency's bad functioning. Anyway, we were terribly demanding on a lot of agencies. And we saw interference at every turn, where I think maybe some didn't really exist. We expected agencies, really, to fall over dead at our feet. So a lot of it was being, I think, overly demanding. But we did have some problems.

For instance, the one I dealt with directly was E.D.A., Economic Development Administration. Foley [Eugene P. Foley] was there at first. The Senator wanted to go into upstate New York, very far north New York. It's called the North Country, Plattsburgh, Massena, Malone, St. Lawrence County, whatever some of the others are. I've forgotten their names already. But anyway, we wanted to go up there. Jerry had an idea; we talked it over; and we worked it out that he would suggest that the counties up there work together on an economic development program. So, we asked Foley to come along. He went along and, literally, promised anything. He promised them a hundred thousand dollars right away without any application of any kind. His own agency wasn't very happy with him about that, but it was clearly political the other way, in our favor, doing what we'd asked him to do.

As we went through implementing that program we ran into a lot of

[-25-]

trouble with other people at E.D.A., including the congressional relations guy, Dooley [Francis X. Dooley], who I think never really had any use for us and had no intention of being helpful. We ran into a lot of flak and a lot of, I thought, efforts to derail the whole project. Part of that was bureaucratic, I felt, and not political. Part of the kinds of problems I think we had with Dooley were political. I don't remember who appointed him to that job; it may have been Johnson and it may have been Kennedy. But, at any rate, he was very carefully playing all sides against the middle, in my impression.

Now, that's just one agency I dealt with directly. Jerry was convinced that we were having a hard time because he knew a lot of people in government agencies, and he could find out things. He would say, "How come some so and so got the announcement before us?" We went through that periodically when another office would get the announcement; Javits' office would get it. Sometimes I thought it was because Javits' office had good contacts; sometimes I'd think it was because of the agency person involved. Sometimes it may have been some people in agencies seeing no percentage in being helpful to us. We had a number of people helping us, too; the Foley-type of thing, you know. So, I think it worked both ways. I'm trying to remember some. I know Jerry was in a stew all the time about that kind of thing, insisting that we weren't getting inside dope on things.

CAMPBELL: How effective...

COLEMAN: We were supposed to try—I remember we tried a system of finding friends in the agencies.

CAMPBELL: How effective was Bruno in Syracuse?

COLEMAN: Terribly active. He really never gave up on things. In terms of political problems in upstate New York, I don't know whether they ever really could be said to have succeeded or not. Their hope was to get new county chairmen in. A lot of them had just been around forever and were very ineffectual. They got some new guys in. St. Lawrence County, I think, was one—a new young lawyer. Down in Elmira, which is I think Chemung County, a young lawyer came in. But it was very, very slow, and there were some of them that never came around, some of them that never did anything.

Then Jerry tried to do some things outside of the party apparatus. He had the notion once about setting up some sort of volunteer corps that was really supposed to be nonpolitical, but in the long run would work out as being, you know, the good political force. They would be involved in community service projects. I don't know; that thing never really got off the ground.

They worked with whomever they could find. If they didn't have a county chairman to work with they'd work with somebody else. Joe and he coordinated that kind of thing constantly. Joe had books with the county chairmen, lists of each county, you know—or card files. I've forgotten now

[-26-]

how he kept them; I suppose both ways. They tried to go through this business of getting in touch with the county chairmen about postmasters. Finally they had to put a girl just on postmasters. The whole thing took so much time and effort trying to....

CAMPBELL: Did the Senator really get involved in decisions about the local postmaster for a small upstate town?

COLEMAN: No. He didn't get involved in that kind of thing. Joe handled a lot of it.

CAMPBELL: Let me just throw out a few other agencies to you that you might have dealt with. How about the Farmers Home Administration? Did you...

COLEMAN: Well, we dealt with them, but, you see, that problem.... We had problems with Agriculture [Department of Agriculture], too, but there's a bureaucratic problem in the Department of Agriculture. Actually, in a couple of cases, I've forgotten now.

Let's see, it's a resource conservation and development program or something. Freeman [Orville L. Freeman] picked a couple of New York counties to be pilot counties for this program, largely because he knew Robert Kennedy. I mean, you know, it wasn't even a case of having to do something. We had a good liaison with Freeman's assistant [Francis Kelly], whose name I'm afraid I've forgotten. Orren [Orren Beaty] just mentioned it the other day in connection with something. But, at any rate, this guy was a young fellow, and we had very good direct contact with him, so we were able to do these kinds of things. At a lower level you had lots of problems which were largely bureaucratic. You know, try and get a guy

in Farmers Home Administration to put through a real estate loan, or something, quicker. I forget what this was—some migrant labor housing thing. The guy wanted an application. We couldn't get them to move it any faster.

Well, we also had a man who was helpful in Syracuse. There was a state office of Farmers Home Administration in Syracuse, and Jerry was right there. The guy was Barthley Beach, and he'd do anything, practically, for you. Jerry either called him directly—he had very good liaison with him—or I'd be in touch with him, and we worked through him. This was a question of an application or trying to move something faster, trying to get them to go to see a guy. So, you know, it all depended on what particular office you were trying to work with.

I dealt with Indians, New York State Indians, and there was a guy working in Salamanca, Bureau of Indian Affairs guy working in Salamanca. He was really very helpful. Both he and Beach wanted something for all of this. They were ambitious guys who thought that, you know, they could benefit from this.

Now, you tried to deal with the New York City office of H.U.D. on urban

[-27-]

renewal, and they would generally act like they were helpful, as did the Washington office, but you really didn't get very far with them. So it all depended on what you were asking. I think realistically, you know, as I said, we asked a lot. And they were accustomed to dealing with congressional offices that really wanted them to write a nice letter and only a nice letter. So we pushed a little hard.

I think because of the Senator's contact on a high level we got some, any number of, things that an ordinary senator would not have gotten. We had the Mayor from Plattsburgh [John J. Tyrell], in on an urban renewal problem, and he wanted to see Weaver, himself. I really did oppose doing that kind of thing—I don't think you should bother cabinet members—but we'd do it for him. He was running for mayor again; he was a Democratic mayor. He brought his own photographer along. I went over there with him; he got his picture with Weaver. The Plattsburgh paper the next day had this headline, banner headline on the front page, with a picture of him and Weaver, about how Weaver promised him that he would try and expedite the money or something. Never once in the story did he mention that Robert Kennedy's office had anything to do with it or that Robert Kennedy helped him with it, which made me absolutely furious.

So, you know, you did this kind of thing endlessly on a higher or a lower level. You could do an awful lot of things that you didn't have to do on a high level. It was almost as good for a mayor to be sure that he got to see the right people within an agency rather than having to do something impressive like put him in touch with the cabinet member.

CAMPBELL: How about O.E.O.? Did you find that...

COLEMAN: Oh, yeah. We had very good connections with O.E.O. Phil Mullin [Philip J. Mullin] was there working for Shriver at the time. We worked through Mullin. We had good help in the congressional relations office. A lot of the problems with O.E.O. were just impossible. We had a big fight going on in Syracuse between

two poverty groups, and there was no way of picking a side in that issue. It was blacks fighting blacks. One group would come down and see me; then the next group would come down and see me; then the first group would come back and see me. In the meanwhile, all I could do was stall and ask O.E.O. to please settle the matter, one way or another settle the matter. You know, that was the most important thing.

We had busloads coming in from Nassau County, poverty people. We spent a whole day with them one time when they came in. They were demanding not to cut back their program. Well, it was in the midst of everybody's program being cut back. It was really unfortunate. The problems we had with the poverty program were horrible, horrendous, never ending, and insoluble. You couldn't solve them because the problem was money. They would want to go over and protest against Shriver. It wasn't his fault, so what could you do? You did what you could: you talked to them. The day they were in we had them in the auditorium of the Senate, and Javits and Kennedy both

[-28-]

spoke to them.

I used to argue with those people. I'd say, "Why don't you go argue with your congressman?" who was Pike [Otis G. Pike], I think. "He's not a real supporter of the program. Why are you coming to see Robert Kennedy and Jacob Javits?" We, you know, did what we could, and the agency was as helpful as it could be. I mean, on the question of getting grants through the agency, you couldn't really push the agency hard on a lot of things when they really didn't have it to do, you know. You could try and speed things up. You got into all kinds of complicated problems of, oh, "A check has to come faster than it's going to because we've got this bank account problem, you know," some complicated problem like that. So you could straighten that out and try and speed things along a little bit, but you really, you know, were limited in what you could do.

CAMPBELL: You mentioned Congressman Pike. What congressmen did you find it easy to work with?

COLEMAN: I'll tell you right off the bat which ones we didn't find it easy to work with. Sam Stratton [Samuel S. Stratton], for one, really was mad at Kennedy. And then, I did a foolish thing in the first few months that made him madder.

Some constituent wrote in, some lawyer in southern New York, about some dam projects that had been pending for a long time, hadn't been built. The guy said, "Well, you could really make some points if you'd get those projects off the ground." So I promptly got the Corps of Engineers [U.S. Army Corps of Engineers] who were delighted to say that they would go ahead and do it and all this, and Senator Kennedy announced it. I never checked with the congressmen. It turned out both Stratton and Dow [John Goodchild Dow] were involved, and neither one of them wanted the projects and had been fighting them forever. So there was this great flap. Everybody was unhappy.

Stratton put out a press release, you know, denouncing the Senator in the press release. It was really a very ugly press release. He just didn't even try to be polite about it.



Anyway, we backed off that one. [Laughter] But we never really recouped. I mean, seems Stratton really disliked us intensely, anyway.

Dow, on the other hand—who was an older man, who lost his seat this last time around—was very understanding and very friendly and, you know, thought he needed the Senator more than the Senator needed him and always tried to be helpful.

Hanley [James M. Hanley] in Syracuse was a problem from time to time although I remember when we went off to testify on the post office building in Syracuse, and that won some points back from him. But he disagreed with the Senator on Vietnam or something or the other, and he put out a press release, you know, again, saying, “Robert Kennedy is wrong,” which got everybody upset at one point.

[-29-]

Kennedy worked all right with Max McCarthy [Richard Dean McCarthy] and Ottinger [Richard Lawrence Ottinger] on things. We worked with Ottinger on the Hudson River project, scenic river bill or something. We worked with—I don’t recall anything in particular—water pollution with Max McCarthy. I think the Senator did make some water pollution speeches. Wendell Pigman worked on that. And then, I don’t recall that he got along with Pike, but I don’t know that Pike ever did anything in particular about it.

He got along with some of the Republicans, who were not at all unhappy at, you know, working in tandem, depending on the issues. Goodell [Charles E. Goodell], for that matter. I worked with Goodell’s A.A. [administrative assistant] on a couple of projects, poverty program things. We worked out fine. I worked with an upstate guy—I’ve forgotten his name now, but he was in the—McEwen [Robert C. McEwen], on the North Country project. Naturally, we made enemies on that North Country project because Kennedy just came in, announced he was for it, got these people together to form this project, and walked out again. The congressmen had not been advised; nobody had been advised, so they weren’t very happy. They finally came around simply because they were afraid of being left out.

So we did some things that were tactless. On the other hand, if you were trying to get something going, it was better really to do it that way. I mean, it wasn’t always just accidental on our part. If you got enough information on it ahead of time and tried to work with everybody in getting it started, you would have never gotten it started. So, sometimes just to walk in and do that was much more effective in the long run.

A lot of Republicans in that area were all unhappy with us in the whole project and didn’t want to do it, but in the long run the project was worthwhile to pull these counties together. Unfortunately, we hassled with that North Country project for all the time I worked in that office, and, for all I know, it’s gone downhill, anyway. But I think it was a good effort despite the political problems. And the newspapers gave it a hard time that way, too—especially if they were Republican newspapers, and they often were—about his just coming in and just doing things like that.

CAMPBELL: How did you attempt to counter the press upstate? I think it was basically hostile.

COLEMAN: We did a lot of things—started them and then stopped them. I tried a weekly column by Kennedy for upstate papers which became too much to do because I just didn't have any help on this. And I was also supposed to be doing all this mail and all these other things on the phone all day long. I don't answer a telephone to this day from that experience. I can't recall any worse experience about having telephone conversations endlessly except in the White House press office. But, we just didn't have enough people to do these kinds of things. I still think a weekly column was a good idea. We would get copies from our clipping service and a lot of newspapers would run it.

[-30-]

CAMPBELL: With the Senator's byline?

COLEMAN: Yeah. We sent it to them and said, "It's yours. It'll come out every week if you want to use it." We would try to talk about state issues like the water and sewer program or something like that. I remember writing a column on Operation Green Thumb as a project in the poverty program, I guess. Green Thumb was a.... Well, there was another one. There was a Department of Agriculture—I guess the one I'm thinking of on the poverty program was Operation Mainstream, and I guess the one in Agriculture is Green Thumb. But at any rate, you know, you could find rural and farm kinds of issues. You could find the issues to talk about; there was no real problem about that. But the mechanics—there are something like five hundred newspapers, weekly newspapers, in upstate New York.

The mechanics, even with the plate system, just to get the plates, the envelopes runoff takes a half a day. Then to get the thing mimeographed, and then to get the whole thing folded and stuffed and, you know, sent out. You get it out; then you have to worry about when everybody's deadlines are. We tried, I think, to send it out on Friday so they'd get it on Monday because I think I figured out that most papers had deadlines on Wednesday; but you weren't sure they were getting it. You had no way of separating out the clips from the clipping service. So we were just inundated with clippings, and we never could have somebody sift out the stuff and show us exactly how many copies of this column had appeared. We never knew what was happening.

I tried the same thing with a newsletter for mayors, and I just got no kind of feedback from mayors. I'd get two or three letters saying they enjoyed receiving it. That would make my day, make my week, to know that somebody had gotten it. But again, we had to set up a plate system on the mayors. The logistics of doing it are too considerable for one person. But then I started sending out just.... If we had a good upstate issue, we'd send out a release to all the papers upstate and not worry about the timing, just figured they could get it and use it if they wanted to. And, of course, the beeper system was used too and, of course, contacts with the papers, upstate papers, that have offices in Washington.

CAMPBELL: You mentioned upstate mayors. Which ones of those were easy to get along with?

COLEMAN: There were a lot of them; they were almost all easy to get along with. If they didn't like the Senator, they didn't come by and didn't use him and that was that. But if I'd go to a conference, for instance, I'd try and get a table or something. The New York State Conference of Mayors, which was a state affiliate of the National League of Cities, was very cooperative, usually, in providing me space. And I'd deal with them on some matters.

I would just go up there, and if the mayors would come by and discuss a problem I'd, you know, make a note and try to handle it in some way. Some

[-31-]

became, you know, close friends who were good contacts. Unfortunately, the ones who would try and use my help would come back and back and back. I really didn't get to such a large group of them as I would have liked to. I spent a lot of my time with ones I knew who would take advantage of the fact that they knew I was there and call, you know, when they had a problem.

That was the whole point of it, of course, but you could spend your whole life with five mayors. Mayor Rice [James P. Rice] of Suffern was very helpful. He became president of the Conference of Mayors and was very, very helpful in anyway he could be. And then Mayor Connors [John Connors] of Mechanicville, which is outside of Albany, was a young guy, and we really made points with him.

He just thought the Senator was the greatest thing going because the Senator went out there and campaigned for him. You know, that's unusual, but he did some mayor races. Jerry and I agreed he should go to that one. Connors became president of the Conference of Mayors. So we, you know, did what we could there.

We knew Sedita [Frank S. Sedita] quite well in Buffalo, Lamb [Frank T. Lamb] in Rochester. Lamb was a funny guy. He was a Democrat, but I never thought he liked the Senator. He'd come to us with some problems from time to time and we'd try and help him. The Syracuse mayor, Walsh [William J. Walsh] was a Republican, but we got along pretty well with him and we tried to help him on an airport thing. I forget how that went. So, you know, we dealt with a number of the big ones.

CAMPBELL: How about Mayor Lackey [E. Dent Lackey], was it, in Niagara Falls?

COLEMAN: Oh, Lackey, in Niagara Falls. Yes. He was a problem. He didn't like the Senator. He campaigned against him, I guess, and then came down and asked us for some help on the Falls project, I guess, with the Corps of Engineers, which we went ahead and helped him on despite the fact that he had sat out the race or whatever he'd done. I remember we didn't see him much after that. We didn't see him much and he didn't ask for our help much.

There was a mayor in—I thought you were going to say Lagonegro [Edward T. Lagonegro] in Elmira. He was one we worked with. Some of these guys were good political types, too. Lagonegro is one. Jerry used to work with him. There were a lot of them.

The mayor of this little town in the southern tier of New York in the Appalachian area.... The first thing the Senator did was, one of the first times he ever announced any

grants, he went on this trip in the southern tier, talked about the Appalachian program, and he announced this grant for this hospital that they'd been waiting for in this little town. The mayor just never got over it. He just loved him ever since that. "We've never had a U.S. Senator come to our town before"—was one of those things they used to tell you; just loved those trips. They'd always say, "We gotta have those

[-32-]

trips."

Hornell was another one we went into. He went into Hornell, and they were overcome with him. They were always big fans of his after that.

CAMPBELL: Who would get involved in planning the itinerary for one of these?

COLEMAN: Jerry, you know, with talking to me about it. I went on a few of them although I didn't really like to go on them very much. They were hectic, and there was such a limited amount of what I could do on a trip like that. But we'd argue about them ahead of time. Jerry pretty much decided what to do. Peter [Peter B. Edelman] worked on upstate New York things that first year somewhat. But then I didn't really like Peter or Adam [Adam Walinsky] working on those things, and I don't think Jerry did either because they really didn't know the issues, it seemed to us, as much as we did. It was just another finger in the pie.

I remember one trip that Peter and Jerry and I worked on. I was really in a foul temper by the time we got through. There was just too much of "Well, he should do this...." It seemed to me Jerry should make the decisions on that kind of thing, and pretty much that's the way it worked out, with time. Then they learned to leave me alone; [Laughter] said they shouldn't mix around with "my" upstate New York.

CAMPBELL: How did the Senator keep tabs on the Indians?

COLEMAN: He was very interested in the Indians. He always was interested in the Indians' problems. Well, we had—I forget how the problems came. I suppose they came to us; we didn't search them out. The Seneca Indians were the biggest tribe, and they were in southern New York. They had gotten a big settlement out of the Kinzua Dam question, and they were developing all kinds of things like an industrial park. They needed our help in getting E.D.A. assistance money and some other projects like that. So they came to us, and we worked with them a lot. Then I got interested in putting him in there for a speech. He agreed he wanted to do it. I think the first time we scheduled it a snowstorm happened or something, but he finally did go to the Seneca reservation.

The other Indians really didn't—we got Indians coming into the office from a number of other states. A limited amount, of course, we could do for them. He did go to Oklahoma to speak to an Indian youth group at the behest of Mrs. Harris, LaDonna Harris, a very nice woman. I wrote the speech for him and went with him on that. I really liked that very much. I was interested in the Indian problem. It turned out we spent a heck of a lot of time on the

Indian problems, or I did, which I think was a mistake on my part, because, I mean, there was.... We could go through these conversations with E.D.A., you know, but it's just that.... We tried to help them, but, you know, as I said, once you get involved in any group or a mayor or something, they come back to you. They come back to you, and you spend all your time on the problem. But he was very interested in their problems.

[-33-]

I had a contact with a guy named John Belindo, who was with the National Congress of American Indians here in Washington. He used to come in and talk, and he met the Senator once or twice. They talked about the Senator going out to one of their conventions. I don't remember whether he did or not—the National Congress of American Indians speech. He was supposed to; he talked about doing it one time. Belindo wrote a poem about it which is on something I saw recently. It must be a book or some tribute to Robert Kennedy. Mostly our focus was with the Senecas in New York State although we did some of these outside things. And, of course, when he got the Indian Education Subcommittee, that was after I'd left. So, I can't really tell you about that except that Margo Higdon could. She worked on that. Margo had been a caseworker on Kennedy's Senate staff and then moved to the Indian subcommittee.

CAMPBELL: Let's, before this runs out, just establish when did you leave the first time?  
[Laughter]

COLEMAN: "The first time." I thought I couldn't stand some of those urban renewal projects any longer. I left in '67, in June or July of '67. He went out to California in August and gave me a trip out there, just sort of let me go with him. Then we went to things like that. He was very kind.

CAMPBELL: What was your reason? Urban renewal projects?

COLEMAN: No. There wasn't any reason. I wasn't technically on the staff...

CAMPBELL: No. I meant the reason you left.

COLEMAN: Oh, oh. Well, I didn't—you know, it was, again, a question of.... I really didn't think he was going to run for president the next year, and so certainly there was no reason to wait around for five years to pass. I had my doubts that I really wanted to get involved again anyway, as much as I was intensely fond of him and highly respected him. But the nature of the work and the tensions and the pressures and just, you know, getting just tired of it and not wanting to do the same thing forever.

CAMPBELL: Good.

[END OF INTERVIEW #1]

[-34-]

Barbara Coleman Oral History Transcript – RFK #1  
Name List

**B**

Bailey, John Moran, 2, 3, 4, 7, 13, 14, 15  
Barr, Joseph M., 13  
Battle, William Cullen, 3  
Beach, Barthley, 27  
Beaty, Orren, 27  
Belindo, John, 34  
Booker, George, 10  
Bradley, Don L., 17, 19  
Brawley, Hiram W., 3, 4, 8  
Brightman, Samuel C., 15  
Brown, Edmund G., 17, 19  
Brumus, 8  
Bruno, Gerald J., 3, 4, 5, 9, 13, 14, 22, 23, 25, 26,  
27, 32, 33  
Bush, Dorothy V., 8

**C**

Cimmet, Wendy, 21  
Coleman, William L., 6  
Connors, John, 32  
Cooper, Jackie, 19  
Corbin, Paul, 3, 4, 8, 14  
Cranston, Alan M., 16, 17  
Currihan, Thomas G., 9

**D**

Davies, Dorothy, 10, 11  
Dolan, Joseph F., 19, 20, 21, 26, 27  
Dooley, Francis X., 26  
Dow, John Goodchild, 29  
Dugan, Ralph A., 10, 11  
Dutton, Frederick G., 17

**E**

Edelman, Peter B., 33  
Engle, Clair, 16

**F**

Foley, Eugene P., 25, 26  
Freeman, Orville L., 27

**G**

Goodell, Charles E., 30  
Gwartzman, Milton S., 12

**H**

Hanley, James M., 29  
Harris, LaDonna, 33  
Higdon, Margo, 34

**J**

Javits, Jacob K., 21, 22, 25, 26, 28, 29  
Johnson, Lyndon B., 9, 16, 26  
Johnston, Thomas M.C., 23

**K**

Keating, Kenneth B., 22  
Keel, William A., 3, 4, 5, 8  
Kelly, Francis, 27  
Kennedy, Edward M., 12  
Kennedy, John F., 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14,  
15, 16, 18, 19, 26  
Kennedy, Robert F., 8, 12, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22,  
23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34  
Keyes, Helen M., 6, 7, 15

**L**

Lackey, E. Dent, 32  
Lagonegro, Edward T., 32  
Lamb, Frank T., 32  
Lawford, Peter, 19  
Lloyd, 15  
Lucey, Patrick J., 5, 6, 7, 15

**M**

Maguire, Richard, 10  
Mankiewicz, Frank F., 24  
McCarthy, Richard Dean, 30  
McEwen, Robert C., 30  
Mullin, Philip J., 28  
Muskie, Edward S., 22

## N

Nash, Philleo, 16  
Novella, Angela M., 8, 19, 20

## O

O'Brien, Lawrence F., 3, 6  
O'Donnell, Kenneth P., 2, 7  
Otten, Alan L., 7  
Ottinger, Richard Lawrence, 30

## P

Phillips, Wayne, 15  
Pigman, Wendell, 30  
Pike, Otis G., 29, 30  
Price, Margaret, 8

## R

Randolph, Jennings, 22  
Raskin, Hyman B., 5, 6  
Reese, Matthew A., Jr., 4, 9, 12  
Reinsch, Leonard U., 14  
Rice, James P., 32  
Riggs, Robert, 1  
Roche, Charles D., 9, 13  
Rockefeller, Nelson A., 12  
Roncalio, Teno, 5  
Rooney, Fred B., 9  
Ryan, Philip J., Jr., 23

## S

Salinger, Pierre E.G., 8, 10, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19  
Scanlon, Terrence M., 11  
Sedita, Frank S., 32  
Shriver, R. Sargent, Jr., 19, 28  
Smith, Stephen E., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11,  
12, 13, 14, 15  
Southwick, Paul, 10, 11, 16  
Stratton, Samuel S., 29

## T

Tate, James H.J., 13  
Troutman, Robert, Jr., 14  
Tyrell, John J., 28

## U

Unruh, Jesse M., 17

## W

Walinsky, Adam, 33  
Walsh, William J., 32  
Weaver, Robert C., 24, 28  
White, Theodore H., 6

## Y

Yowell, Helen, 10