Charles U. Daly Oral History Interview – 4/5/1966
Administrative Information

Creator: Charles U. Daly
Interviewer: Charles T. Morrissey
Date of Interview: April 5, 1966
Place of Interview: Chicago, Illinois
Length: 76 pp.

Biographical Note
Daly, Staff Assistant to the President for Congressional Liaison from 1962 to 1964, discusses his role as a congressional liaison, staffing issues, congressional reform, civil rights, and President Kennedy's personal friendships, among other issues.

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Suggested Citation
Charles U. Daly, recorded interview by Charles T. Morrissey**,** April 5, 1966, (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

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CHARLES U. DALY

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Oral History Interview

With

CHARLES U. DALY

April 5, 1966
Chicago, Illinois

By Charles T. Morrissey

For the John F. Kennedy Library

DALY: My activities were primarily in congressional liaison. I think that a person interested in that subject should probably concern himself most directly with tapes made, when and if he makes them, by Larry O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien], with his book, and with the thought of Henry Wilson and Richard Donahue. I don't know if Donahue has made any tapes yet or not, but, if he hasn't, he certainly should. He's now a lawyer in Lowell, Massachusetts, but is still very active

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in Washington. I think they can describe to you better the beginnings and some special details of the liaison operation. It consisted of O'Brien at the head, on the Senate side Mike Manatos [Michael N. Manatos], and on the House side Henry Wilson, Richard Donahue, and myself. I came in at the beginning of '62. Also we had Claude Desautels as a staff assistant to O'Brien. My own background in coming into it was I'm an Irishman by birth; I served in the Navy and the Marine Corps; I was in business until I was thirty at which time I decided I didn't want to do that anymore; I became a free lance writer and got a congressional fellowship to Washington as a journalist and went into Stewart Udall's office on the House side under that fellowship in 1959. I went in there not particularly because he was strong for Kennedy, but just

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because he was a tough and imaginative liberal. He had, as did most people on the House side without independent means, a small staff, and that indicated I could really get involved in his activities. He was very active in D. C. Home Rule. He also became very involved in Kennedy's efforts to secure the nomination, his particular task being to get hold of the delegation of Arizona. As you can find out from his tapes or newspapers or whatever, it is quite an interesting battle in which he first lost the delegation one night to Johnson [Lyndon Baines Johnson] and then reversed the thing. His involvement in that brought him quite close to the Kennedy people particularly to Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen]. My fellowship involved spending half the time on the House side and half on the Senate side. When the opportunity came

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to go to the Senate side, he talked to Sorensen, and I moved in to Ted's Senate office. At that time I had developed a nodding acquaintance with then Senator Kennedy and a close acquaintanceship with Ted and one or two others on the Senate staff.

MORRISSEY: What kind of work did you do?

DALY: Well, research and writing. I did some things, even before the convention, on collecting statements and misstatements and contradictory statements of Nixon [Richard Milhous Nixon] and did other odd jobs of that nature at a pretty low level. It was interesting to me more as an observer than for what I was doing.

MORRISSEY: Did you work under Sorensen directly?

DALY: Yes. Then, after the congressional session ended, with some money collected by the Study Group (a group of liberal Democrats on the House side) and with

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some union support, I left the Senate office and whet over to a building behind the Library of Congress, collected a couple of Rhodes Scholars-to-be and a Woodrow Wilson Fellow or two, and put together a campaign manual for congressional Democrats, particularly the younger ones from the North and West.

Election day, I did what I had told Ted I was going to do before I ever came in the Senate office. In fact, the statement probably made it easier to get there because there was a considerable amount of nervousness about who else was coming on the team, and who was going to be doing what after election. I think there wasn't a very accurate concept of how huge the presidency was, and that there was plenty of room. But, anyway, I had told Ted my interest was through election time;

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I did not have a continuing interest in Washington; and that election day I was going to go to Europe and live as a free lance writer for six months or so with my family. Following that period in Europe, I went back to California and took a job as editor of some Stanford University publications.

Then, in early 1962 I came to the congressional liaison operation, which was drastically different than any other.

I think the change the President and Larry made in it, the amount of involvement in activities on the Hill, the development of a relationship with Rayburn [Samuel T. Rayburn] and, later, McCormack [John William McCormack] and with the Senate side meant that, even thought the votes were up or down by a margin of four or five in almost every critical time, we honed our tools to the point where we

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really got the most possible votes. In doing that, it involved getting all of the congressional liaison people throughout the whole administration interested in one Presidential program; it involved the weekly Tuesday morning breakfast with the congressional leadership with the President, Larry O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell], and Sorensen and a couple of others. It basically was a much more extensive and sensitive operation that, certainly, had gone on under Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] where it was just kind of a one-man show run by Bryce Harlow. In fact, I think Harlow advised O'Brien not to get into the patronage and personnel and serVice business because it would just overwhelm you. Necessity kind of pushed O'Brien toward that.

I think, the President and Larry came to feel there was a danger that the

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staunchest friends the President had on the Hill--the Northerners and Westerners primarily--first of all might feel they were being taken for granted because the concentration was on the border-line voters, the swing voters or whatever. And, secondly, that many of those persons who were friendly to the program came from districts where they were, in varying degrees, vulnerable--winners by 51 percent or 52 percent margin. So, O'Brien called me up and asked me if I was interested in coming out, working in the West Wing of the White House very closely with him, being responsible for the liaison with these Northern and Western members--with the division of labor then becoming Henry Wilson handling the Southerners and border staters; Dick Donahue, until he departed in '63, handled the big city people. (I,

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later, took that on, also.) I was handling the balance of the North and West. Those are somewhat academic lines because there were persons one would have a particular

relationship with in another area and, obviously, would continue to have. Also, Henry Wilson knew more about the substance of legislation than any of us.

MORRISSEY: Why?

DALY: Well, not only because he was a lawyer. Donahue was also a lawyer. But also Henry had been a state senator; he was interested in it more. Donahue was interested in some of the more political aspects of the work. Dick was, for example, the close tie with the Veterans Administration. He was the expert on the Post Office. He did somewhat less in the day-to-day liaison than other members of that team but more in the political end.

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MORRISSEY: More of the serVice functions that you…

DALY: Well, not really more of the serVice functions. More the more basic politics. In other words, working with what VA hospital goes where and so on, he had a scope that made him well aware of what the significance of particular decisions were in the individual states and areas.

So, anyway, I went there, as I say, and became involved. Larry operated so that clearly the primary--and the only regular--contact the team had with the President was through O'Brien. However, there were occasions when he felt the President should hear directly that we did have a personal relationship with the President. Just as an example somewhat of the day-to-day liaison work:

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I dealt with an outfit called Group Research, a kind of a one-man gang--I've forgotten the name of the fellow--that kept tabs on the far right wing. He had done a very considerable amount of research; he had a large directory of names of persons in the right wing; he had done a chart that showed the ties between various companies, major right wingers and the Birch Society and so on. He, I think, was quite helpful to Wayne Phillips (who had been in housing and then went over to the national committee and then, under Johnson, to the new Urban Affairs Department). Phillips kept tabs on literally hundreds of right wing radio broadcasts and started a system of getting equal time to respond to them. The President became quite interested in this--I think it was fairly early in 1963. One

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morning he had Pastore [John O. Pastore] in the White House, trying to get Pastore stirred up about possibly looking at the far right and, I would suppose, leading from that to look at the tax position of some of its so-called foundations. He asked me to bring down the Group Report chart showing these cross-lines. I remember him tracing some of the companies with his finger and thinking of, I suppose, past relationships with his family and so on with

business. I also mentioned to him that I had heard on the radio that morning one of these broadcasts which likened him to a communist and discussed the state of his health and a few other things. He said to me, "Who listens to that crap?" And I said, "A lot of people like myself, Mr. President, driving to work--some just spinning the dial, and other selling

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the gospel." He abandoned the idea of pushing Pastore because they agreed it would look too much like a purge, though he did talk to Mike Feldman [Myer "Mike" Feldman] further about it.

Naturally, the President on occasion would do some trading. I had to get a bill signed once as a means of keeping a congressman happy. I brought the bill in to O'Donnell, who said, "Why don't you bring it in and have him read it? He wants to talk to you about it." So I brought it to the President who said, "Chuck, I just want to be sure you understand that this bill is a goddamn boondoggle." Those were his words. I said, "I know that." As he okayed it, he said "Well, as long as you know that, and I know that, I think that's important."

He went out of his way on a couple of occasions, and Mrs. Kennedy on several more, to be pleasant to my family. I used to

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drag my kids down on Saturdays to have lunch. It was a big deal for them to eat in the basement of the White House, and it was also a good way to romance them after spending a few hours away from home during the week. On several of those occasions he went out of his way to say hello or walk over to them before taking off on the helicopter--the kind of gentle things he was quite good at doing.

MORRISSEY: Could you mention some more of these face-to-face encounters if you have them?

DALY: Well, there weren't many – not enough anyway – and most of them were, as I say, on matters related to legislature. For example, when I mentioned the problem of having persons taken for granted. I would quite often go to O'Donnell and say, "Look, if so-and-so from California or from Idaho wants to see the President

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or give him a copy of a Mormon Bible or some memento, it's not much. But, well, if the guy's fighting--the guy's got a 51 percent district, and he may not be much of a politician, you say this isn't going to help him a bit in his district. I'd say you're probably right, but <u>he</u> thinks it's going to help him. You know, we're getting the guy's vote 99 percent of the time, so how about it?" He would get me in there. We'd sit there, and the President would romance Ralph Harding, or whomever it might be, for a few minutes. I would try to mention a bill to him, and he would immediately take off on the support we needed and, also, on the larger

thing of what the bill would mean across the country X years from now. He was quite good at that. Once, we were out in Colorado and he was dedicating a water project which

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was going to bring water across the Rockies and into this very arid area around Pueblo.

MORRISSEY: Aspinall [Wayne N. Aspinall]?

DALY: No, it was not Aspinall. It was not a Colorado congressman; it was someone traveling with us. He said to him with some conviction--he later used it in remarks--that the reason this project was possible was that there were congressmen from Massachusetts and Illinois and, he said, "even Georgia" who are willing to stick their necks out as spenders for the concept of something bigger than just their congressional district.

He was damn willing--he seemed almost unendingly willing--to give the extra courtesy to the family of the guy who had helped us. We had, say, John Moss who is kind of self-effacing in some ways--in a few ways--and is deputy whip of the

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House. He wandered through the White House with his family and friends on tour one day. Homer Gruenther or someone had done me a favor of getting them all in the background of the Rose Garden ceremony so they could see the President, and go home and tell everybody in Sacramento how it was. They were nice people, and they had their kids and aunts and in-laws and all. I said to the President, "If you've got a minute, why don't you say hello to John Moss back there." Well, he did more than that. After the ceremony, he dragged them to the porch of his office. They had their little cameras, and they took a bunch of pictures. You would think that's the end of the incident, but it really wasn't because, even though Moss had a very, very good percentage of voting record, he did, and does, get a little feisty and feel independent, as anyone will.

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When he gets out in his district, it's tough to get him back on short notice. We had a vote later in the year, and I really put a very, very hard "ask" on him to get back. I said, "The goddamn thing. Believe me, it's too close to fuss with." He came back. I stopped by to thank him a couple of days later. He made some casual comment like, "I owe you a few" or "You can tell the President that was a very nice thing." In a job where the coin is almost indefinable that sort of thing was of a very direct and substantial value. Perhaps it bored the President, but he was awfully good at it.

One would sometimes get frustrated by his personal friendships not being related to the job, thinking particularly,

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not of Torby MacDonald [Torbert H. MacDonald] of Massachusetts, who was fine, but of George Smathers of Florida. While we could understand in ourselves the need in that terribly demanding job for the President to be able to remove himself, and admired the way he did that and the joy that he took in life, to do it with that particular person--first of all, because it complicated our job, and secondly, because of what we considered to be the caliber of the guy--didn't really help. So we'd keep repeating to ourselves the old truth that no President makes new friends after he gets into that building, and we tried to understand the premium placed on old ones.

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I assume that some of the incidents, for instance, where it was not a face-to-face encounter but I was simply an interested and delighted bystander, would be related best by others. I think of one when Goldwater [Barry M. Goldwater] was in the Rose Garden among a group of other senators. The President called him up--this was in '63--and the photographers had a field day, and Goldwater got a great spread of photographs across the country. O'Donnell muttered to the President afterwards some of the words that Kenny alone is capable of uttering, "Why did you ask that stiff to come up?" The President said, "Just leave him

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alone. He's mine." I think the President really did look forward to running against him. I think he would have run against him perhaps in a somewhat different way than was done, in that there would have been a bit more discussion of issues and a bit more exposure of the whole conservative philosophy.

I think, also, of another incident. On the President's birthday in 1962 or 1963 there was a little party in the mess. Ted Sorensen paraphrased the Inaugural Address with such marvelous things as "ask not what your country has done for you; ask what you have done to it" and so on. It'd s beautiful job. I have forgotten if Ted put it in his book, or if he just let the President go with it at a later Gridiron Dinner. But it had us in stitches.

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MORRISSEY: Did you get involved in any speech writing yourself?

DALY: No. None other than feeding in to Ted comments about particular districts and congressmen. This was information about what we thought was going on in the district; not only just who's going to win or who's not going to win, but the guy's financial problems, the issues there, some detail regarding the opponent, and so on. That material found its way to the President and, also, was used by Ted.

MORRISSEY: Who at the National Committee did you work with on some of these chores?

DALY: Chuck Roche [Charles Roche] was very effective over there. He's a very abrasive, very direct person, but he was I think, much

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more effective than most. Phillips was good in the public affairs part of it. Matt Reese on very special occasions. But, generally, the national committee was not viewed with great enthusiasm. We did our own staff work. When it came election time, as far as dispensing dollars to congressional races--whether they were races of new persons or of incumbents--we just got hold of the dough through O'Donnell or Richard Maguire. We got hold of the dough--not in the physical sense but the sense of the veto power--and, consulting with Roche and Maguire, decided where the money was going and also made sure that one of us went and said, "Larry (or the President) is particularly interested in your campaign." I remember flying into some pretty rainy

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airports out in the West and elsewhere in a position of extending funds or the promise of funds, talking to promising candidates: "Look, the President has decided that funds are not, as they have in the past, going to committee chairmen and others who run in 60 percent or 65 percent districts. He and Larry are going to put what dough is available into marginal races of incumbents who have been helpful and into the campaign of promising candidates." I think the benefit we got out of that--first of all, in the lift it gave the candidates in those races, not that the money was all that much--was substantial. Then, after '62, it was just one more little tie we had between the President and the Hill. I recall congressmen at receptions and so on going out of their way to say, "That was a hell of a thing."

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MORRISSEY: Did you ever hear the President comment about any of his own votes when he was in the House and Senate?

DALY: No, I never asked him about it. There was an incident in '59 – I wish I could remember the vote, but I can't--when Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania got on the floor; this was not about a vote but concerned a statement the President had made. I was sitting in the gallery or standing off the floor, and I heard Scott, without notifying the then Senator, call him a "turncoat." So I went back to the office. They Senator and Ted Sorensen were talking. I interrupted them to mention this, and Kennedy really did flush. He got disturbed and was going to go right over. Then he decided to wait. Scott later said he called him a "turnquote" or something else for changing words.

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MORRISSEY: Some of the critics of the congressional liaison operation have said that the administration would send up proposals and then express a willingness to compromise too soon.

DALY: Yes, I've heard that. You hear that, and you hear about the arm-twisting and the rest of that bit. There were, certainly, persons who felt that. I would say one of their primary problems is that they couldn't count. As I said, we really knew where the votes were, and we would know fairly quickly where they weren't. I think that it would be fair to say, also that we had a tendency to be stronger in our dealings with legislation than did congressional leaders in some instances, and that they would rather have compromised. Another thing I would say is that we

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talked about a whole program. If you had a fellow from Commerce send up one bill and we were trying to pass a tax bill or a farm bill--God help us--or one or two others, and we had to get the whole program through committees, and we had to get the votes on the floor, in the interests of advancing the whole program there would be trading going on that certainly would make the person at Commerce feel that "Well, Christ, we could've gotten so-and-so's vote." Well, maybe we could've gotten so-and-so's vote on one bill, but possibly it was a choice between going for that bill or another one.

MORRISSEY: Another criticism is that you didn't use the then Vice President.

DALY: Yes, I've heard that. I think that is--I won't say wholly wrong, but very,

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very largely wrong. I'd say several things about it: First, you can look at the congressional activities of the present Vice President, or of other Vice Presidents, and see that, no matter what their position was in the Senate, they damn fast lost their power when they moved downtown; that, furthermore, they are smart enough not to try to maintain that power on any day-to-day basis because they'd get their fingers burned by a rather jealous club up there. Having said that, I would make two other comments; one is, while Johnson did attend all the Tuesday leadership breakfasts and make some comments, he was smart enough not to get himself directly involved. When we did need votes out of Texas, we had a pretty good middle ground. And then we had some guys such as O.C. Fisher

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whom no one could get. When we ventured onto that middle ground, we did call on the Vice President for help. He almost invariably turned that liaison on the House side--he had nothing going for him on the Senate side of Texas with Yarborough [Ralph W. Yarborough] and Tower [John G. Tower]--to Walter Jenkins. Jenkins would give us quite an accurate reading

of which congressmen were going to do what. And he could move them on occasions, fairly rare occasions.

MORRISSEY: Some people said after the Bobby Baker [Robert G. Baker] thing broke that perhaps you had been given some inaccurate readings of the Senate by him.

DALY: That's a question to put to Mike Manatos. I would suspect that he will tell you that at least normally was not true, and that, while the guy is a bum,

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he was not incompetent when it came to counting the Senate. No doubt it was tougher for him to count the Senate after Johnson left it, but not all that much tougher. I think that Frank Valeo [Francis R. Valeo], who came in afterwards, found that getting into a position where you could count them accurately was not easy. The only other think I would say is that under the liaison operation we had--on either the Senate or House side--I wouldn't depend solely on Bobby Baker or Jesus Christ to do any counting. You'd take their count, but you also would do your own counting. If counts matched, that was encouraging. If they didn't match, it certainly was a danger signal, and you'd go back to whether it was Hale Boggs or D.B. Hardaman or Carl Albert or the Speaker

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or Valeo or Baker or whomever and say, "This count says one thing and yours says another. Let's double check these members."

MORRISSEY: In your effort to swing some of these votes would you call upon independent lobbyists in Washington for church groups or civic groups, business groups, labor groups?

DALY: Yes. Almost always they were marked by how incredibly ineffectual they were despite some lofty pay levels. In fact, I recall Larry and the President laughing over that on occasion. But lobbyists would create an atmosphere of interest in a bill. Particularly, if you had a civil rights thing, with church groups or labor you could create sentiment. But by a large, they are not effective. The lower types had one or two pet congressmen

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they'd trot out when the boss came to town and go down to Paul Young's or something. But that really isn't the way to influence legislation.

MORRISSEY: Many people have commented on the President's extraordinary ability to comprehend a large mass of material--digest it and organize it. Was this your impression?

DALY: Yes. We'd work on Monday nights on an extensive report for Tuesday morning legislative breakfasts which would cover the whole range of his program and where the various parts of it were. It was a digest that would run to a good many single-spaced typewritten pages. He'd plough through that. He would frustrate O'Brien on occasion, I'm sure, just as this President does, by looking through it and then focusing on one thing that

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he had particular interest in. And, while O'Brien would put an agenda on the top of the report, the breakfast might or might not follow then agenda. But the President told us more than enough to be aware of prime legislative problems. You'd be standing around O'Donnell's desk outside the President's office. The President would come out for something, and he would ask, "Were you able to move so-and-so on mass transit?" That might be on page 5 of the discussion of bills – maybe a mention, say, that "Bizz" Johnson [Harold T. Johnson], who comes from a mountain district in California, is tough on mass transit. Well, if along about Thursday afternoon you were standing around there and he would ask you a question of that nature, you got the impression that, in addition to a few

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other things, he was quite interested--interested enough to be aware of details.

MORRISSEY: Did you attend any of the breakfasts?

DALY: No. Salinger [Pierre Emil George Salinger], O'Brien, O'Donnell, Sorensen, and Bundy [McGeorge Bundy], the Vice President and the President attended, along with the Speaker, the Majority Leader, and the Whip on the House side, and their opposite numbers on the Senate side. O'Brien would have Manatos, Henry Wilson, and myself available in the Cabinet Room or corridor. As they finished breakfast, they would come over from the White House to the West Wing and the legislative leaders would have a press conference. I would write drafts of what I thought they should say following the breakfast. Pierre would get a copy. The original

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went to O'Brien, who would hand it to the Speaker who, hopefully, could read it in the glare of those lights. These conferences were usually brief. There were some awkward times. Smathers would duck out after breakfast if there was some legislation which he couldn't go with. The President would give him a pretty good needle at breakfast. The President enjoyed doing it, he being a good friend. But even to his own Senate leadership, and certainly to the House leadership, Smathers was an irritant.

MORRISSEY: How long were you a member of the liaison team before Rayburn died?

DALY: Not at all.

MORRISSEY: You came afterward?

DALY: I came right at the beginning of ’62, and I stayed for a year after the President’s death. After the President’s death. After the President was murdered,

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O’Brien asked us to stay. Or President Johnson asked O’Brien to stay, I guess; O’Brien asked us; and President Johnson individually said to us, “I know you can’t have the regard for me you had for him, but we would like it if you could stay till the adjournment of Congress; stay until you finish (as he put it) Jack’s unfinished agenda. That would be a fine thing. And I hope you’ll stay even after that.” So I stayed until the adjournment of Congress.

MORRISSEY: In ’62; with the President’s younger brother running against the Speaker’s nephew, did that create any tensions?

DALY: That was hilarious. I can remember on many occasions talking to the Speaker about it. The Speaker, for some unknown reason, was very friendly toward me. And I was very fond of him. I took

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occasion a couple of times to say, with the President’s and Larry’s knowledge, “The President is so deeply appreciative of the way you look at this thing because he knows how close to you your nephew is.” I remember Larry saying something like that to the Speaker one day, and the Speaker turned to Larry and said, “Larry, you and I have gotten on in life, and we know that these young fellows have to have their fling. When they get to our age…” and so on. There was O’Brien sitting there thirty years younger than the Speaker. Then there was a drawing of Speaker McCormick--I think it was in *The Wall Street Journal*, one of those small sketches they do when they have a column on a person. They had a column about this election. The President got the drawing blown up and

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framed, and at a legislative breakfast gave it to the Speaker with some kind words of praise.

The Speaker was a friend of the President. I’m sure that he knew that Sorensen and others were fussing around on Ted’s behalf. I think he was terribly, terribly disappointed by the election because he is extraordinarily close to his wife and to the kids.

MORRISSEY: What was the policy in your shop about newspapermen coming directly to you for a story?

DALY: I made a habit of either pushing them toward O'Brien or making Larry aware that the guy was coming in. But as in most of the building, it was pretty relaxed.

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MORRISSEY: Did it ever create any problems?

DALY: Yes, it did. One of the reasons I pushed it toward Larry is that there were occasions when one or another member of his staff would be talking to a reporter; Larry would be unaware of it and talk to the same reporter and kind of walk into a guy checking out a beautiful pitch someone would be giving. One of the reasons that--despite its great vulnerability because of the nature of the task--the liaison operation got belted very seldom and O'Brien even more seldom, was that we were quite frank with the press, and we were highly accessible to them. That was deliberate. I don't know whether it bothered Pierre or not; I don't think it did. We just didn't bother to mention to the press office that we had seen

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so-and-so unless we felt we needed help, or unless we felt the guy was on a more general story, or trying to nail the President or the administration.

MORRISSEY: Did you attend any of the pre-press conference sessions with the President?

DALY: A couple only, and that was because of particular legislative stuff. But none of the breakfast sessions or lunch sessions. That was pretty much the same crew who joined in the Tuesday activity.

MORRISSEY: Again, some of the critics have suggested the President was extraordinarily sensitive to what was in the press.

DALY: I think that's right. I think most Presidents are sensitive to it; they're politicians; they realize they the press and the television commentators and so on have a hell of a lot to do not only with their own personal future but with

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the future of their programs. However, I do believe the *Herald Tribune* thing was one that grew out of proportion. I think it's a lot of bullshit that the *Tribune* was banned. I'm a great fan and friend of Jimmy Breslin, and I don't recall ever missing him in an issue of the *Tribune* in the West Wing. I would have been irritated if I had missed one. But the little feud made pretty good copy.

At the time of that beef, the President was irritated by the stockpile scandal. While Billy Sol [Billy Sol Estes] and his gyrations were consistently on the front page of the *Trib* (even though they could not involve any high member of the administration in it, it was played as a Democratic scandal), the stockpile stuff was buried on inside pages. I

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know I heard on a couple of occasions after the breakfasts, he would be giving senators the needle with, "why can't [Senator Stuart] Symington dig into <u>that</u> investigation and really get it going?" This was not an effort to offset Billy Sol but just because the stockpile handling was, in his view, an appalling abuse, one that should be clearly and sharply exposed. So there was a double frustration during that period; the one being what he considered a rather inept, or at least grossly underplayed, handling of the stockpile investigation on the Hill committee, and, secondly, the newspaper approach to it--and, most particularly, the *Herald-Trib's* approach to it. I'm sure Pierre knows the details. In these comments, I'm not being particularly critical of Symington, who may well have

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had a different judgment of the stockpile affair and a different view of the substance of the thing, but I think the President's view was that it was not played the way that he would have liked to have seen it played.

MORRISSEY: How would you coordinate the White House legislative liaison with the legislative people in the various departments?

DALY: Officially, we did it by these weekly reports that came in on Mondays. That was quite effective. Also, we'd gather them all in the Fish Room about once a month or once every six weeks--gather the top one or two liaison persons from all the departments. Larry and his staff would sit at a table before the others, and we would call on the different persons from the agencies to give a briefing on a particular bill.

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I think that as far as those sessions along advancing the President's program, they did vary little of value in the detail of the day-to-day operation. What they did do, I think, was create a tendency among those liaison people to feel that they were, indeed, a member of a team headed by the President with O'Brien as lieutenant--they met across the hall from the President's office--that there was a program in its totality; and that they should be interested in the RB 70, or they should be interested in the farm program--and they should for these broad reasons that were given.

More basically, we felt there were certain highly capable people in certain agencies and certain persons who were hopeless. Those we felt were good and could really move--Wilber Cohen in HEW

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[Health Education and Welfare] would be an example; Hilton Semer, Housing, would be an example; Orren Beaty was good over in Stu Udall's office; Ken Birkhead [Kenneth M. Birkhead]was good in a very tough job in Agriculture. You'd get those individuals, and, if we had a tough bill, we would call them over to meet in a little conference room off O'Brien's office. Normally either Henry or I or a combination of Mantos, Henry, myself, and Donahue--anyway, one or more of us would sit down and go name by name and say, "Where can you help us on this bill with these guys? Now, ?Kenny, this guy is, you know, big on the Agriculture Committee." He might say, "Well, I think maybe I can move him or get him to take a trip" or whatever. That was, I think, very effective. Also, those same persons,

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when their congressman had a problem, could call in and say, "Look, we've got to do it for John McFall. Can you get it done?" If it was "doable", it get's done.

It took a very short time to find out which liaison people were hopeless, and you just didn't bother with them. Most of those we felt were effective the President was made very well aware of, and O'Donnell, Dungan [Ralph A. Dungan], and O'Brien, also. When their careers came to critical periods, we'd try to be helpful. For example, Foley [Eugene P. Foley] was fed up with Hodges [Luther H. Hodges] and going to leave Commerce and go back to being a lawyer; I went to O'Donnell and said, "We have a guy who was for Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] in Wisconsin and in West Virginia and all that, but he's

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been a hell of a guy for us." And Kenny said, "Oh, Christ!" "But," I said, "he's really been terrific in this liaison and so on." He said, "Who is he?" I said, "Gene Foley." He Said, "Oh, he's a hell of a guy." I said, "You're right. He's going back to be a lawyer in Podunk, Minnesota, because he's got a bad situation in Commerce." Well, O'Donnell, Dungan, and O'Brien figured out it would be a wild but good shot to put him in as head of SBA [Small Business Administration]. Particularly, why not do this rather than lose him? The President was relaxed about it, so it was done.

MORRISSEY: The fact that you mentioned Dungan causes me to ask if there was also a small group of people working on staffing problems throughout the administration?

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DALY: Right.

MORRISSEY: How did they coordinate with you people?

DALY: Well, in various ways and with varying degrees of success. We had Dorothy Davies who was kind of Kenny O'Donnell's girl Friday over in the Executive Office Building, and who could place people at low level jobs. She was very aggressive and tough and all that and got in plenty of beefs with Dan Fenn, particularly, from Dungan's operation, but was awfully effective though, unfortunately, tended to be too visible in things such as summer jobs. In the bigger jobs Ralph, within some limits--and he was smart to make the limits so we didn't end up with a lot of dogs appointed--was very cooperative. In those large jobs I think the decisions as to what to recommend to the President, and the decision was rarely vetoed, were

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made by Dungan in concert, and really in a sit-down session in O'Brien's office, with O'Brien and O'Donnell and, often, Dick Maguire from the Committee. I would say they were the critical group. As far as the talent hunting was concerned, I think that Dungan and Dan Fenn and a couple of other persons in that staff were vital.

MORRISSEY: The reason I asked that is I have heard that in some cases a congressman would be pushing somebody, and Fenn's operation might not know about it, and you'd get entangled with who was advising the President.

DALY: Well, I think that Fenn's operation might well not know about it, but I think that Dungan…. There's a question, I think, of level. Dungan and O'Brien, it is was a big enough job, would know

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about it. Now if you're talking about GS-12's or something like that, I don't doubt for a moment that happened. The other thing that would happen was we would screw Fenn--legitimately, because it certainly was Dungan's understanding that, trying to get votes and so on up there, we were not in the business of saying no to congressmen. We'd say, "Jeez, I don't know, that goddamn Fenn has had that thing for a month." You'd try not to put it on the White House too often, so often the line would be "Agriculture has got it," and let them take the heat. We could not be in a position of Larry O'Brien or the President saying, "Congressman, not. But will you please vote for this seashore in California even though you happen to live in Maine?" So we did slough off a lot of that, and we did

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load up some very good persons--Dan being one of them--with burdens that they may have felt were put on them unfairly.

[END SIDE 1, TAPE 1]

[BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 1]

MORRISSEY: We've talked for an hour, and the name of Robert F. Kennedy hasn't even come up.

DALY: Well, that's because no one brought it up. In our world he was, for the most part, extremely helpful when needed. His position on the Hill couldn't be, in some view of some of the basic things he was achieving in civil rights and so on, uniformly good, to put it politely. During the civil rights bills, Katzenbach [Nicholas deB. Katzenbach] was an able man for him up there. Nick was very, very close to our operation. Nick handled McCulloch [William M. McCulloch] and the Republicans and, I think, did quite well. I sat in on several sessions that Bob had with persons not only in the House leadership

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but the leadership, if there is leadership, of the most liberal persons there. I'm thinking of a session in Frank Thompson's office with Gill [Thomas P. Gill], who was then a representative from Hawaii, later defeated in a run for the Senate in '64, and Frank Thompson and Bolling [Richard Bolling] and that crew. Jimmy Roosevelt [James Roosevelt] was in there, and he pushed very hard on FEPC [Fair Employment Practices Commission] and other factors.

Later that day, Bob talked to some of the Southerners. While that meeting was polite, it was a very difficult one for him and for them. I suppose the other reason we haven't discussed him at great length is that I think there are many persons, including himself, who are much more competent to discuss his relationship with the President.

MORRISSEY: I was curious to know how frequently

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he got involved in legislative liaison.

DALY: I think, in our stuff, not all that often. With the notable exception of Justice Department bills, he was much more involved in--well, obviously, in the military and diplomatic crises and so on--the action part of government than in the formation or, more particularly, the passage of legislation.

In thinking over what we've said so far, one of the hazards of this whole taping operation--and I did an interview and have talked to some other interviewers--is the hazard that persons place themselves, or imagine themselves, on a more intimate basis with President Kennedy than they actually were. There are relatively few persons who were very close to him. I would not necessarily include Cabinet officers and so on as ones who

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had that true proximity. I didn't have it.

MORRISSEY: What's curious to me about that, as a historian, is the fear I have that so many views are fragmentary and partial and that, when history is written, nobody can do it with any authority. I wonder if, as a participant in many of these things, your impressions were similar.

DALY: Oh, yes. I think that's right. But I think the exercise here is a valuable one if you've got a historian who is willing to work hard enough. You're going to have a frightful mass of material, and you're also going to have, as I indicated, persons, who, consciously or unconsciously, are self-serving. You know, it's perfectly understandable. He was human; he was a marvelous man. I think that persons, such as myself, who were not sitting beside him, developed a tremendous regard for

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him as a man as well as leader. We felt then, and we feel now, a most awful sense of loss. I feel that my kids are so grossly cheated by his being snatched away. So, all that combines to inject some sentiment and all the rest of that into it. I think, had he been alive, he probably would not really appreciate all this, and might have laughed at it a bit.

MORRISSEY: If we were not doing this interview program and were relying entirely on the written documentation of what you did, how thorough would the documentation be, and, secondly, how accurate?

DALY: Well, I think that is would not be as thorough. I don't know how important that is or isn't. It would be published, I suppose, in some books. I would think that the book that O'Brien's talking about

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doing with O'Donnell and Dave Powers [David F. Powers] would be useful. I have urged him to do a subsequent volume on the Congress. If he does that, I suppose there's be some more documentation, but not nearly this much. So I think this is worthwhile. The political scientists would probably do a superficial, or possibly an erroneous, job. One of the things that surprised me is how little effort seemed to be made by political scientists to talk with persons within the White House while they were actually working there. For groups of students--not just the Boy Scouts from Des Moines but groups of serious students or even individual political scientists--a person such as O'Brien is available. I would think that Califano [Joseph A. Califano, Jr.] and

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some of the others in there now would hold themselves open. But there didn't seem to be that sort of digging on the part of the historians or the social scientists.

MORRISSEY: As a former journalist did you take notes, write memoranda on what you were doing when you were in the White House?

DALY: No, I didn't. I'm a great writer of memos. I am partly because I felt trotting in to the President was not normally an appropriate way to use his time. So a lot of memos were bounced around. I suppose that's available. As far as keeping a diary, that would bother me a little bit to do it--in other words, to be talking with the President or others on things that, obviously, were sensitive and then go and write them down. I didn't think that was a good practice.

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MORRISSEY: Were there any internal guidelines about that sort of thing?

DALY: Not that I can recall.

MORRISSEY: Let me get off the tangent and go back to the circle. At the time you were working in the White House many people were writing about the need for congressional reform, and I think particularly of James MacGregor Burns' book, *The Four Party Deadlock*, which, as I read it, was almost intended as a broadside for the President's attention to do something about the committee system. Was this discussed within your shop? Did the President seem to be leaning in that direction?

DALY: Yes, we discussed it, and I don't think he was. He didn't have the votes.

MORRISSEY: But looking beyond 1964?

DALY: Well, if he'd lived beyond '64…

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it was an enjoyable topic on occasion to think what would he do when we were in that last four years--what he'd do with sacred cows such as the depletion allowance or, if he had the votes, congressional reform and so on. About the only reform we could come up with before 1964 was packing the Rules Committee, which was done by a handful of votes, a margin that was an indication of the difficulties of the game. I think that if we'd had the votes, reforms certainly would have been on the agenda. Following '64 it was not discussed at any great length. I know Mo Udall [Morris K. "Mo" Udall] and some others on the Hill mentioned reform to me, to Larry, and, probably, to the President, but it was not done.

MORRISSEY: On some of these close votes you depended very much on a small group of liberal Republicans.

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DALY: Well, damn, damn small. The saying was "That group will be with you, except when you need them." They were with you on final passage--Lindsay [John V. Lindsay] and others--but often, when a chance came to cut the guts out of a bill--a motion to recommit or a teller vote or whatever--they were right with Halleck [Charles A. Halleck]. In the final roll call on the farm vote, I believe it was '62, there was a single Republican voted with the Democrats--a guy called Weaver [James D. Weaver] who was a lame duck looking for a job. It was a pretty tough go.

I think if people look at that congressional record, probably the most interesting part would be to look and see how often we got Southern votes. I think it's a tribute to Henry Wilson on the liaison staff and to the President's

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willingness to listen to Wilson's view that in these tight Congresses we could break a dozen or more of these people away from a pattern of automatic conservatism and so on.

MORRISSEY: The other side of the coin to that is that some people think the civil rights legislation was postponed too long and sent up too weak.

DALY: There was that feeling. There's justification for at least parts of that. I think that the President, in no small part counseled or even prompted by Robert--who also learned a lot about civil rights and about the really atrocious state of affairs existing when he got into the administration--I think there was an increasing awareness that this was an absolutely critical problem that had to be faced. As I mentioned to you, when Bob went up there with a civil rights bill, Gill

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and others were highly critical of the fact that it didn't go far enough. Whether that bill passed or didn't pass depended on the decision of McCulloch of Ohio as to what he would or wouldn't back--and I'm talking about going through the whole Congress. I think his conversations with Katzenbach are really historic conversations. I think Nick's comment on this question would be much more interesting than mine. I do think that it's not without justification, particularly the timing, though you can say, "If it had been sent up before all the horror, maybe it wouldn't have passed." But, in my view, it probably should have gone up earlier. It might even have been defeated. But I doubt it would have had to take a defeat; it might have had to pull back and negotiate

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and prolong and so on. I think that's true of much of the Kennedy program. Probably, the part that's not too well understood is that he thought about his bills in eighteen-month terms or longer, as far as delivery is concerned. I think that we looked at the whole program with the idea we had a long time, with the probability of an increased margin in '64. That's pretty

much what's occurred under President Johnson with an increase of, I think, 86 seats on the House side, and it's actually more than that because we lost some Southern Democrats to the Republicans. I think it was a gain of seven on the Senate side. Things like the addition of four or five votes on Way and Means which had blocked Medicare legislation

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for a long time. I think it was thirteen or fifteen additional votes on Appropriation. I've forgotten the details of those, but it's an immense difference in the Congress. More so than, probably, you would have seen if President Kennedy had beaten Goldwater. But even if the change was half the magnitude, which is a reasonable expectation, you would have seen the whole program go on. I think President Kennedy did have, as you're well aware, a pretty good sense of history.

MORRISSEY: Did he seem especially mindful of that narrow margin of victory in 1960?

DALY: Yes. He certainly was mindful of the very narrow congressional mandate, or lack of mandate, he went in with and how unusual that was. He realized quite clearly we had an interesting situation up on the Hill.

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MORRISSEY: Did some congressmen seem to be playing it loose with the President--that didn't have that big mandate?

DALY: Well, it was strange. I think as time went on you got people who had margins that were just a hell of a lot bigger than his, establishing an identity of interest with him. They didn't need him; they wouldn't need him in '64 although I'm sure they were aware that if he had run again, the chances of having a substantial victory were strong. But you had guys like one guy from this city--whom I told the President about, as a matter of fact--who took a poll in his district that showed his constituents three to one against the civil rights bill. I said, "What did you do?" He said, "I sent out a newsletter and told those sons

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of bitches that were three to one for it." He is in an ethnic district here, and it wouldn't have hurt a bit to just say the bill's unreasonable or in some polite way say, "I don't like those black guys." In fact, it would've helped him. I think it was partly decency and morality; and in a very substantial part if was regard for Kennedy.

MORRISSEY: I was going to ask you how much evidence you saw of backlash, say, in 1963 when the word first came out into popular currency.

DALY: You saw nervousness about it. Cecil King, who comes from the district of

San Pedro in Los Angeles County, was nervous about it. You know, "his daughter said" type thing: he would say that to you. A very decent man--but nervous. You saw it when Dingell [John D. Dingell] ran against this guy Lesinski [John Lesinski],

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who was also a congressman in the redistricted area of Detroit. There was a deliberate effort on the part of Lesinski to play up the backlash--with failure. But there was definite nervousness in the Congress, a feeling maybe we've gone far enough. There were others, or course, who felt we should go much further. Mike Feighan [Michael A. Feighan], second in command in the Judiciary Committee and quite conservative on these matters, I'm sure, felt we'd gone way too far already.

MORRISSEY: I can recall in the last couple of months before the assassination that there was some worry in the fact that, to win in '64, Kennedy had to carry states in the North and West that he lost in '60 because he was probably going to lose states in the south that he had carried--

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Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama. And backlash seemed to be the major problem in making this realignment of states. Was this a subject of some concern to you people?

DALY: We went through these congressional districts fairly often to see all these issues. I think the President was extraordinarily strong. I know almost all of the Northern and Western districts; offhand I cannot think of a single congressional district there where he was weaker in '63 than he was when he came into office. In almost every one of them he was stronger--and substantially stronger.

MORRISSEY: Did your shop commission polls in some of these congressional districts?

DALY: Yes, through the national committee. In some areas we would urge the congressmen

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to do it. Those were not polls oriented toward the President, though.

MORRISSEY: You'll have to check my memory on this, but, after Rayburn died, wasn't there something of a controversy as to who would become the majority leader?

DALY: Yes, there was. There was a fracas about whether or not Bolling would challenge Carl Albert for the majority leadership. Bolling and Frank

Thompson, who was his campaign manager in that effort, felt that his campaign had to be run through publicity and making the *New York Times* aware and so on--which may well have been the only route available to them. Albert, who is a real digger and a very underestimated person, just sat down and called every Democratic member in the House. That fight was over before it started. Of course, Bolling had some

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tremendous handicaps to start with because most members, I'm sure, felt safer with Carl.

MORRISSEY: In the spring of '64 when you were working on the Hill, and there was a flood of legislation passing, was a lot of that prompted out of the shock of the assassination?

DALY: Yes. Though, if you look at that flood, you'll find that the bills that couldn't be passed with the votes that Kennedy had at his disposal for the most part couldn't be passed, either, with the votes that Johnson had. I'm thinking, specifically, of medical care and the department of urban affairs; those waited until after the '64 election.

MORRISSEY: Could you tell me where you were when the assassination occurred?

DALY: I was in the basement of the White House, in the White House mess, sitting at the

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table with Lee White; Jack McNally [John J. McNally] had just gotten up and left; he came running back in. The Secret SerVice had told him the shots had been fired and the President was hit. We went over to the East Wing with him and got on a radio connection with the hospital. One of the Secret SerVice men reported the President had been hit in the head.

I had been a platoon leader, I had been shot, and I had seen a lot of guys hit in the head; not very many of them get up. I felt despair, and walked out of the room.

I went over to Evelyn Lincoln's office and stood around there. I went into the press office to be sure someone was there; Southwick [Paul Southwick] was there answering the questions. I talked to Ted Sorensen awhile. Then I didn't

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talk to anyone for a long time and went back up and sat in my office for a few hours.

MORRISSEY: How about that night and the next day?

DALY: I sat in my office on the second floor of the West Wing and studied the wall. Johnson flew in from Andrews and was downstairs on the back portico. I went down, looked out at that scene, and then went in to see if they were clearing the President's desk and putting things in envelopes and so on, which they were, and Mrs. Lincoln was there. Then I got concerned about the material in Kenny O'Donnell's desk--some sensitive papers about personnel, FBI reports, and that kind of thing. I didn't know how he would be feeling or whether he would be coming back to his office. So I thought about it a while, and then I

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called him. He was out in Bethesda observing the autopsy. I asked him if there was anything in his office or the President's that he particularly wanted taken care of. He told me, and I did it. Then I sat in my office some more.

MORRISSEY: You mentioned you saw Sorensen shortly after the news came through from Dallas.

DALY: He was there. I said, "Ted, I'll tell you something that's going to make it even more terrible. I don't think it was a right wing nut." We just stood there. I said a couple of things to him that were personal. It was a tough blow for everyone.

MORRISSEY: Let me go back to 1959 and 1960 where we started the interview. You mentioned the West Virginia primary. Did you get involved in that?

DALY: Only as a spectator interested in comments that Mike Feldman, who went down there, would make to Ted and, also, the material

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that Goodwin [Richard Goodwin] and Ted and Mike were bringing out for use down there. I think the interesting part of the West Virginia primary story, as I heard it later from O'Brien and O'Donnell, was the political part of it and the intrigue in what, politically, was quite a vulgar state. I'd push them on this topic.

MORRISSEY: When you were working with Udall, did you get involved at all in that Arizona delegation situation?

DALY: Just doing kind of routine research on persons involved there. Because he was so involved in that, I had a greater opportunity, I guess, to handle his day-to-day legislative stuff under Orren Beaty, who later moved with him to the Department of Interior and is there now. So it was intriguing, but it had very little direct relationship with Arizona.

MORRISSEY: Did you go out to the convention in Los Angeles?

DALY: I did not. My father had a heart attack. I had to go see him. He lived in Jamaica. While I was there, Mike Feldman called me and said, "Be sure to keep that stuff going on Nixon. We've got this thing won." This was before the end of the convention.

MORRISSEY: Were you in Senator Kennedy's office for the brief legislative session after the convention and before the campaign got started?

DALY: No. I, at that time, had left and was working with this Democratic Study Group--campaign group. I stayed close to Sorensen and sent him material.

MORRISSEY: Is that the job you stayed with throughout the campaign?

DALY: Yes. I stayed there until election day, as I said, and then took off.

MORRISSEY: Are we overlooking anything?

DALY: I don't think so. I think that I had a small part in a very grand operation, and I loved it. The President was a man who, much more than we'll soon realize, achieved a great deal; who achieved much more than we'll know until historians such as yourself write about it maybe twenty-five or fifty years from now.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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