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Evans, Rowland, Jr.; newspaper columnist with Robert Novak, and television commentator; discusses his association with Robert F. Kennedy [RFK], RFK's personality, his involvement with civil rights, the impact of his brother's death, RFK's relationship with the press and senate colleagues, his thoughts on President Johnson, his thoughts on running for Vice President, his position on Vietnam, the feud between RFK and John V. Lindsay, and RFK's relationship with Jacqueline B. Kennedy Onassis and Red Fay's book, among other issues.

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Rowland Evans, Jr. – RFK #1

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Oral History Interview

with

ROWLAND EVANS, JR.

July 30, 1970
Washington, D.C.

By Roberta W. Greene

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

GREENE: Maybe you could begin with just talking about your early association and feelings about Robert Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy].

EVANS: They lived around the corner from us on O Street. We were at 35th [Street]. This must have been mid-fifties, something like that, but I didn't know Bobby at all. I'd see him occasionally. I went up to the Hill and saw him at one point when he was counsel to the Labor Rackets Committee. I went with Tom Winship [Thomas Winship] — and I remember he was working in a basement office and he had his sleeves rolled up—and we had a chat. That was one of the first times I met him. I didn't know him at all well until '60, '61. I knew the president, then Senator Kennedy [John F. Kennedy]. He was the one I knew, I didn't know either one of his brothers.

Then I remember running into Bobby on the plane going down to West Virginia during the West Virginia primary in 1960. It just so happened we happened to be going down on the same plane; I had to cover the campaign, Bobby to help run it. I had an impression that I remember from that day that he looked more mature and not quite so young and boyish. He had a nice suit on and a tie and his hair was.... He looked terribly young, terribly young, and I remember thinking, "My god, this guy's running a campaign for president." He wasn't actually

running it, but he was a principle part of it, whether he had the—I forget who had the title. I guess Bobby was manager, sure. How ridiculous it seemed to me—although he looked more mature than he had—how ridiculously young and inexperienced he was to be running an operation like this.

But I didn't see much of Bobby. I took a ride with him one day at the Los Angeles Convention [Democratic National Convention] in a car. We talked about whether Jack was going to win the nomination on the first ballot. I remember that.

GREENE: Was he fairly confident?

EVANS: Yeah, he was totally confident. Then I really began to get to know him well in '61. [Interruption] Katherine [Katherine Winton Evans] and I were invited out to a dinner party at Hickory Hill in—my records would show the date, but it was early in the administration— January, I guess, '61. And Bobby had a bunch of southerners out there that he was courting for his brother. That was before the wing was built and, as you walked into the house, the dining room was on the right. We sat on the floor eating a buffet supper. And included in the guest list were some of the Louisiana congressmen, again a kind of incongruity: this kid performing political functions of that kind, entertaining southern congressmen to help ease the Kennedy legislative program.

Of course, the southerners controlled many of the committees in the House and the Senate. I think Bobby was very instrumental in the basic legislative approach of the Kennedy administration, which was to avoid civil rights for as long as conceivably possible, court the South. And of course, to go into a civil rights bill immediately would have been disaster, even though Jack had promised that his first major bill would be a civil rights bill, in September, October 1960. But for good political reasons, it was decided to move into the economic part of the program first and to avoid civil rights and to hope to bring the South into camp. And they had a fair success with that. I used to see him a great deal from after that first dinner that Katherine.... have you got Katherine coming up?

GREENE: No.

EVANS: Well, she'd be much better at this than I am. They didn't ask her? They should have.

GREENE: Maybe. She's not home, is she?

EVANS: No. She'll be home Monday. But….

GREENE: We'll try to do that. They have a thing about women and Robert Kennedy, you know.

EVANS: Well...

GREENE: I say that sarcastically, but it's true.

EVANS: I think Teddy [Edward Moore Kennedy].... I know Ethel [Ethel Skakel Kennedy] would agree, and Teddy ought to, maybe. Anyway, Bobby and my wife were close, and had a special relationship. She'd be very good to do with him. Maybe she wouldn't want to do it; I don't know. We got out there an awful lot in those days, and began to see a hell of a lot of Bobby and Ethel. What next? I mean...

GREENE: Was this largely as a social relationship, or did you also...

EVANS: I never pushed politics when I was out there. We talked politics all the time, but I wasn't really trying to develop columns. Although, when you're the second most powerful man in the government, you obviously listen very carefully to what he has to say and what his thoughts are.

GREENE: Was there any problem in knowing what was on the record and what was off?

EVANS: No, there was never any problem. I mean, I wasn't doing a column then; I was writing political news for the *Herald Tribune*. I can't recall that it was ever an issue, but I remember there are countless examples of how important he was in the scheme of things that Jack Kennedy had laid down.

I remember being in the president's office one evening at 6 or 7 o'clock—talking to the president—and I had picked up a rumor on the Hill that the Republicans were going to start a major political assault on Freeman [Orville Lothrop Freeman], who was then the secretary of agriculture, based on the Billie Sol Estes scandal. I told President Kennedy this. He listened rather gravely and he said, "I don't like that at all," picked up the phone, and called Bobby and told him. He said, "I have Rowland here, and he tells me that so-and-so and so-and-so, Freeman, Billie Sol Estes. You'd better look into it." It was an automatic, spontaneous reaction.

Then we used to do a lot of things with Bobby and Ethel. We went up to Camp David for a weekend with them, with Don [Donald M. Wilson] and Susie Wilson [Susan Neuberger Wilson]. Have you done Don Wilson?

GREENE: Yes. I just finished him.

EVANS: We went for a weekend, played a lot of tennis. Bobby, as you know, was always rather taciturn and inside himself in the sense of he wasn't terribly outgoing. But I always found him extremely candid on subjects that he could be candid about. There were certain things he couldn't be.

Oh, I just thought of something. It must have been April, May 1961, and the Bay of Pigs was, what, April 12 or 20? In there. Starts April 12, I think.

GREENE: Around there, right.

EVANS: Yeah, because I'd say within two weeks of that—I could date that, too—we were having dinner right there across the street at Steve [Stephen E. Smith] and Jean Smith's [Jean Kennedy Smith] house. You know who Steve and Jean are.

GREENE: Of course.

EVANS: We always had a hell of a good time with Steve and Jean. I mean they lived across the street. We saw them all the time; we played around a lot; and they'd always ask us over for dinner when the president came. And we had a very sociable.... Politics, you know, I'd listen and pick up a lot of interesting ideas, but it was mainly social, because they were a hell of a lot of fun. This particular night Bobby arrived very late, and I can remember distinctly—I don't know what the issue was, but he was in a very dour, grave, unpleasant, and unhappy mood. He hopped on me for something that I had written; I can't remember what it was now.

He was very aggressive that way. If he saw somebody, it would stick in his mind that he had an issue to pick up, a bone to pick, and he would just move right in. There were no preliminaries. So, he jumped on me, but that didn't disturb me. But anyway, we had a very good dinner, a lot of fun, and Bobby was kind of—you know, he'd be quiet, not saying very much. And it was a very bad evening; it was either raining or foggy or a gloomy evening, to fit his mood. This was just after the Bay of Pigs catastrophe. The issue was Laos and whether we would send troops into Laos. Soon after dinner, Bobby got up and said he was going out for a walk. He walked out the front door and walked around for half an hour and then came back.

The point of the story was that the pressures on the administration at that particular moment were such that I remember thinking later that night, after we came home, "This

whole glorious experiment is about to crumble, collapse; and it's all going to be a marvelous, brief, tiny whisper of a dream. The whole thing is going to collapse." Because they were really in a jam in Southeast Asia, and they didn't know whether to send troops in; they had the Bay of Pigs, et cetera. Things were just terrible. I remember Bobby leaving the house and going for this walk. That's the end of the story. You see, he came back, and he was in a bad mood, and they went home.

GREENE: He never put into words, though, the extent of his concern at that point?

EVANS: No, you could smell it, you could just tell it. When he was in that kind of a mood, you could kid him up to a point, but he would get angry—moody, not angry; he never really got angry. He'd get very moody, and he'd give you some flip, smart answer and kind of withdraw.

GREENE: Was this...

EVANS: And then all the girls would kid him all the time, his sisters, and Ethel, and Katherine; they were kidding him all the time. But this particular night was a deadly serious business. I think he felt as I did that the whole glorious experiment was about to end, or could.

GREENE: Was this moodiness exaggerated after the assassination?

EVANS: Well, we'll get into that, yes. [Interruption] Well, let me think now.

GREENE: Do you remember anything in particular about the steel crisis and the inquests that went on after that with reporters?

EVANS: Well, I remember his giving me, and I'm sure everybody else, what he considered as the simple truth of the matter, which was he had asked a U.S. attorney, I think it was a U.S. attorney, in the appropriate place—I think it was Wilmington, wasn't it?— to.... Well, they made a check on all the reporters who had been at this particular press conference, wasn't it?

GREENE: Yes.

EVANS: And he said to me that he had no idea that anybody was going to make a telephone call at 3 o'clock in the morning, but that some U.S. attorney—they got a job of work, and they did it immediately. And he was not

resentful that he'd been attacked. You know, it was kind of a no-knock breaking and entering at 3 o'clock in the morning. It disturbed him, I think, but not.... He knew it wasn't true, or he thought it wasn't true, and handled it very matter-of-factly, to say, "I didn't give any orders; that's just the way the fellow worked." I don't think it bothered him particularly. I...

GREENE: How was he generally in this period about press criticism, especially as compared to the president?

EVANS: I can't answer the question. My feeling is that I don't think the critics.... I think he accepted a lot of criticism. I mean in a sense he saw himself as a lightning rod of criticism, taking it off Jack. I don't think he brooded about it. I think he gave a tremendous damn about it. If there had to be criticism of the administration, I think he'd rather have it fall on his shoulders than on the president's.

Then we went cruising with him. I guess the first year was '63. Will you check this? I can't remember it.

GREENE: I know that the cruise on the Palawan was in '64.

EVANS: Was that the first?

GREENE: I'm not sure.

EVANS: I guess that was the first. So we were invited to go on this cruise. It was on the Palawan. Yes, it was the first. We picked it up at North Haven; I remember it now, Camden. They came over with the boat to Camden, Mr. [Thomas J. Watson, Jr.] and Mrs. Watson, and again there were eight or ten of us packed into this boat for five, six days. And we went way up that time, all the way up to Campobello.

There was a remoteness even there, in those close quarters, about Bobby. He didn't keep to himself, but he seemed to be within himself. And we'd kid him mercilessly about what he was.... I may be putting the wrong impression on it, but Bobby was a very individualistic and private person. That's it. And even on a cruise like this, he was that way.

He was also extremely dictatorial on a cruise. He ran it. And the hired captain of the boat—his name was Paul. They never had a clash, but I think Paul had some reservations about Bobby's sailing capabilities, and he should have, because Bobby was a reckless sailor. We never had a serious problem in the three or four cruises we took, but we could

have had serious problems, definitely.

GREENE: Do you think that was true in most of his sporting activities, that he liked the danger?

EVANS: Well, I never went skiing with him. I played an awful lot of tennis with him. I mean almost every day in the summer, spring, and fall, and often in the winter. But you can't be reckless playing tennis. I never saw him lose his composure on the tennis court as I have seen a great many people. I never saw him really get mad. He'd get mad at himself sometimes, but it would only last for a minute. He was impatient to keep the play moving. If Ethel took too long serving, he'd turn around and say, "Eth, what's the matter? Let's.... We're playing tennis out here, aren't we?" He was constantly moving that game forward.

On skiing, I don't know; mountain climbing, I haven't done. I've seen the pictures. I think that there was definitely a reckless streak in Bobby, a kind of fatalistic streak, that .... Although, you didn't see it in driving; he drove rather carefully. So, the cruise.... You don't want details on the cruise.

GREENE: Well, details, I think, are important on that cruise, because that was at the time he was making his decision about New York.

EVANS: Well, I think you can get a.... New York was talked about off and on

constantly. And it became more and more clear that he was going to run in New York. He announced it, of course, the day we got back, or made the decision to announce it the day we got back to Hyannis Port. I guess the decision was made inside himself, but I didn't know for sure. I have forgotten the details, but the question was.... I remember on Wagner [Robert Ferdinand Wagner, Jr.], he had to get Wagner. All through that cruise, I kept quizzing him about Wagner, and he never had any question in his mind. "We'll get Bob Wagner." He had this feeling that the power was such that Wagner would have to endorse Bobby for the Senate, which, of course, he did—and I don't think entirely happily, somewhat reluctantly.

GREENE: He was sort of trapped into it.

EVANS: Well, he was trapped into it, yes, and he had no choice.

But you get a bit of Bobby's toughness, his character, and his, you could almost say, insensitivity. Let's call it insensitivity in this example. We got up to a place called Rocque Isle, which is a privately owned,

beautiful little island, remote, off the coast of Maine, owned by Peabody Gardner of Boston, an old New England family. Teddy had had some slight acquaintance with his son or grandson at one point. So Bobby had Teddy write this boy a letter, telling him we were coming up, and could they take care of us. Everybody was a little trepidatious about arriving at Rocque Isle because nobody knew Peabody Gardner, Sr., the guy who owned and ran it, a tough, flinty New Englander. So we got up there, coming into the mooring, a couple hundred yards from the dock, and you just saw this lovely little emerald island with a couple of Grandma Moses houses, cottages, against the green hillside and the woods. This is an absolutely lovely spot.

As we were coming to the mooring, there was a rowboat rowing around, obviously waiting for us, one man seated in the rowboat. And Bobby called over, "Do you know how we can get in touch with Mr. Peabody Gardner? Is he here?" And the man said, "I am Mr. Gardner." And so the rest of us ran around picking up the junk on the deck and trying to spruce ourselves up a little bit. Bobby put his hand out to Mr. Gardner, "Bobby Kennedy, it's nice to see you, sir." And the assumption on Bobby's part was naturally Mr. Gardner was thrilled beyond belief that we were all there, while in fact he wasn't. And he didn't make this apparent...

GREENE: This is the elder...

EVANS: Yeah, this is the old man. And one humorous incident, we all said hello to Mr. Gardner and then he invited us to come up for a drink at six. And we went up. Red Fay [Paul B. Fay, Jr.] was there and...

GREENE: The Wilsons?

EVANS: I think the Wilsons, yeah. It was all very gay, and we had a lot of fun. But Mr. Gardner was a little bit, until he went all around to find out who we were, and he heard who I was, Rowlie Evans the reporter.... "Oh," he said, "you're no relation to Rowlie Evans from Philadelphia, the tennis player?" I said, "Yes, sir, he's my father." And that kind of broke the ice a little bit.

GREENE: You finally found someone to impress him.

EVANS: Exactly. I was the hero, which gave me a little oneupmanship over Bobby. And so we had a great— anyway, we had a great cruise. The whole thing was marvelous. But Bobby, you know, moved into these situations on a cruise. Blue Hill, a letter went up a week before we set sail from port, "We're arriving in Blue Hill,"

to Anne Chamberlin and her family. Well, I don't think they really wanted ten people coming, strangers. But they boiled us marvelous lobsters, a feast for us.

Bobby took these things rather—you know I would have.... He never tumbled all over himself to—what's the word?

GREENE: Effusive?

EVANS: Yeah, that's the idea. Effusive. I remember he used to tell me—he'd do something and I'd say, "Gosh, Bobby." [Interruption] "Gosh, Bobby, thanks. Gosh, thanks one hell of a lot. Really, I can't thank you enough. That's really nice of you to do that." And he said once, "Rowlie, don't you ever just say thanks?" This was his style.

Another incident while Kennedy was president, which I would have forgotten. I was doing a piece on Dick Goodwin [Richard N. Goodwin], saying that Dick Goodwin was about to be sacked from the State Department. I think it was the State Department, but whatever. Maybe it was OAS [Organization of American States], whatever the job was. I talked to Sarge Shriver [R. Sargent Shriver, Jr.] about it, and this must have been '62. Fifteen minutes after I'd hung up the phone on Shriver, Bobby called me and said, "I hear you're doing something on Dick Goodwin." I said, "Well, who the hell told you that? I haven't even written the story yet." "Well," he said, "I just want you not to hurt Dick Goodwin." I said, "Look, Bobby, I haven't even written the story. How did you know about it?" He said, "Sarge told me." I said, "Well, God," I said "Yeah, I'm doing a story on Dick Goodwin." And he said, "Well, you're not going to hurt him?" And I said, "Well, I don't know if it's going to hurt him or not. It's going to be a factual story." But he was protective, just like the Freeman story. Well, that was Jack Kennedy called Bobby, the Freeman story. But he called me to protect his friend, Dick Goodwin, and an administration person, very much so.

He was into all kinds of things like this. And I'm sure that reporters—I mean, I could have taken deep umbrage at that telephone call; and if it had been maybe another administration and another attorney general, I might have said, "Well, you go screw yourself.

I don't want to talk to you about what I'm going to write." I didn't, because I really liked Bobby and I had a relationship with him. But I could see why.... Earl Mazo, for instance. He will tell you stories about Bobby that are scarcely credible. But...

GREENE: The same type of thing?

EVANS: Yeah, pressure, pressure. And there was a lot of

that. And a lot of reporters really resented Bobby, because they felt he used too much pressure.

GREENE: Did he do this more in the administration than when he was in the Senate?

EVANS: Oh, I think much more. Because he was backed by the president, he owned the administration, he had this tremendous power. I don't think he misused it, but I think that he rubbed a lot of people the wrong way. Of course, this was Bobby's problem. He often, I think, didn't realize that he was rubbing people the wrong way. He half didn't realize it and half didn't care—that kind of combination.

GREENE: What about his own press operations at Justice [Department]? Did you get much of a chance to observe that?

EVANS: I never worked through his press agent. I knew what's-his-name...

GREENE: Guthman [Edwin O. Guthman].

EVANS: I knew Ed Guthman pretty well, not very. So whenever I went over there, I'd go and see Bobby, and....

GREENE: Was it generally regarded as effective?

EVANS: His press relations? As effective?

GREENE: Yeah, well, the operation at Justice particularly.

EVANS: You mean the whole, not the press operation.

GREENE: Yeah, well, I'm speaking now of the press operation.

EVANS: I don't know anything about press operations. I think that the operation at Justice was remarkable when you think what they finally did when they started moving on civil rights in '63: setting up the lawyers committee, all these innovations, the work he did directly with Wallace [George C. Wallace]. It was unsatisfactory, but they

had that two-hour conversation down in Wallace's office. I had versions from both Wallace and Bobby on what happened. Bobby would talk about Wallace as though he were an absolutely, utterly ruthless, thoughtless monster. He'd tell you the quote from Wallace, and say, "Do you imagine, do you imagine a fellow saying that?" That was the way Bobby spoke of Wallace.

I think the operation was very good, and when I wanted to get into something—and I did want to get in very deeply to all the committees they'd set up from Washington: businessmen's committees, restaurantmen's committees, theatremen's committees, et cetera. That was really Burke Marshall and Bobby. They did that whole thing, and Nick Katzenbach [Nicholas deB. Katzenbach], and Lou Oberdorfer [Louis F. Oberdorfer]. Lou Oberdorfer was a key in that. He opened up all the files for me. I read all the letters in and out on the problems these committees were having, how this restauranteur or this theatre owner, this bowling alley owner would react to their pressure.

GREENE: Was this as a friend, as one specific journalist, or was it something they allowed a number of people to do?

EVANS: Oh, no. I mean I wasn't the only one, but, no, I don't think this would have.... I think he opened up stuff for me that he might have opened up for other people if they'd asked him, but it's hard to say. He was always very generous and kind in facilities for me, if I wanted to get something. Let me just see now.

But again, you know, he was difficult. There was very little small talk with Bobby, as you know. And he and Ethel and Katherine and I often used to go to things in the evening, and go out to.... What's the open theatre, the outdoor theatre?

GREENE: Shady Grove?

EVANS: No. The one near here, on 16th Street.

GREENE: I don't know.

EVANS: Oh, yes, you know.

GREENE: The Sylvan?

EVANS: No, no. The big one. I'll get a paper and look it up. Named for a former Commissioner of D.C., the ...

GREENE: I'm going to be very embarrassed when you say it. I really don't know what you mean.

EVANS: Well, I'm going to find out. You can't think?

GREENE: We'll look it up.

EVANS: It's a big, outdoor amphitheatre in Washington. There's only one. Carter Barron.

[-11-]

GREENE: You know, when you said—that's right. That is on 16th Street, yeah, that's right.

EVANS: Carter Barron. We used to go out there. We went out to hear Ethel Merman once; we went out to hear.... And we went to the theatre with them a lot, and it was always kind of ceremonial because Bobby and Ethel were always recognized by everybody. He'd give these kind of shy hellos. I think he loved it. I think he loved being recognized, but he'd always respond rather shyly. And yet even in those situations, in the car together, it was hard to get an easy, simple conversation going.

You just accepted this with Bobby. You'd tease him, and he'd respond, and he'd tease you. He was a tremendous teaser, of course; he was really teasing all the time. And I like to tease a lot, so there was that. But easy small talk didn't come easy with Bobby, and you'd even find it in that situation.

GREENE: Did this continue...

EVANS: Then we went down after that '64 cruise; we ended up at Hyannis Port, flew down there. I think it was in the Caroline. I think it was a Sunday, and we all went right over to the Smiths. And Steve was then instructed.... It was very funny, very funny. Bobby said, "Well, have you got Wagner?" And Steve said, "Now, Robert, what's the hurry?" "Get Wagner." "Go on, Robert, let's just...." "You get so-and-so; you talk to so-and-so; how about so-and-so?" And I remember thinking, "Well, Steve, here you are. You're right in the middle of a new campaign on an untested terrain." They had never run a New York State campaign before. But the whole thing started to gear up right that day when we came back from the cruise.

Then I campaigned a little bit with Bobby. I thought that he had this very distinctive and different style, particularly with kids. He loved to kid the kids, standing up in the van talking through the loudspeaker. We've skidded an awful lot of stuff here, though.

GREENE: Yeah, I misunderstood...

EVANS: That was '64. I want to go back to '63 and the assassination.

GREENE: I wanted to ask you, too, on civil rights, since you were close in on this. Do you know anything about the speech that the president finally gave in '62 and Robert Kennedy's position, whether he was in favor

of it at this time, whether...

EVANS: Which speech? In '62?

GREENE: In the summer, excuse me, the summer of '63. The big civil rights speech following the problems in…

EVANS: Oxford?

GREENE: Oxford.

EVANS: Well, that was a crisis speech. It wasn't any civil rights speech. Yes, it was; sure it was.

GREENE: Yeah, it...

EVANS: Yeah, it.... Sure, sure, sure. I don't remember what Bobby's position on that was.

GREENE: I had just heard that he had strongly opposed the president giving it at this time and the president had overruled him on it.

EVANS: I don't remember, I don't remember. That was a very powerful speech. That was the one where he said, "We've got to face up to the fact. Either these people are first class citizens, or they aren't, and they've never been treated as first class." I don't remember what Bobby's....

GREENE: What about the missile crisis? Could you see that coming by his mood?

EVANS: You know, I wish I could think of all these things. I was out in Pittsburgh campaigning with President Kennedy when he broke off his campaign and came back to Washington. I'm trying to think. Can't help you.

GREENE: Maybe some other time. I...

EVANS: No, no other time. I don't remember.

GREENE: Is there anything else you can think of on the…

EVANS: Well, what I can think of that's interesting was right after the assassination. I went over to have lunch with Bobby. I guess it was early December. Or I think of two things. The first time I saw Bobby after the assassination in a quiet conversation was when

he stopped in at Wilson's one evening; it must have been late in that first week after the assassination. There were the Wilsons and us. Even though I knew Bobby as well as I did, it was hard to get easy on this. I mean, in the first place, we were seeing him for the first time for a quiet evening since the day his brother had been killed. With some people it would have worked out, you know, but it was very, very difficult with Bobby. He wasn't moody, he was just withdrawn —his old self, but very withdrawn and kind of quiet.

And I remember stupidly trying to make a joke. The president had been after me for three years to resign from the Metropolitan Club.

GREENE: Segregated?

EVANS: Yeah, segregated, no black membership, and in fact they'd had a little scandal there in '62, '61. Do you remember that story?

GREENE: I remember that.

EVANS: When that happened, Bobby, who was up for membership, withdrew, and a lot of people quit. A lot of people didn't, including me. This had been a running joke with the president every time he saw me. You know, I'd be, "No, Mr. President, not yet. It's terribly important to me. You can eat here in the White House, but I've got to eat somewhere." But he was always rubbing this in.
That evening at the Wilson's, stupidly, I said, "Well, Bobby, one thing"—just trying to be totally kind of stupidly funny —"one thing, I guess I can stay in the Metropolitan Club now." There comes a time when you have to begin to restore normal communications. And Bobby looked at me and he said, "Yeah, do you think it was worth it?" Well, this kind of thing.

He came over here one night—in other words, the skilled and slightly, not dishonest, but the skilled politician, to that kind of a crude remark that I made, would have immediately sensed that the reason for it was that the guy was a little bit uneasy, and would have put him at ease. But Bobby didn't work that way. Now, he could; I mean he could be extraordinarily decent. And I'll tell you a couple of stories. But in this situation there was no effort to get me off the hook. It was really sticking me, "Do you think it was worth it?"

GREENE: Was it obvious to you and to other close friends at the time that he was inordinately sensitive?

Or do you see that now more in retrospect?

EVANS: No, I don't see it any more in retrospect. No, I don't. He came over here again...

GREENE: I mean right after the assassination.

EVANS: Right after the assassination, no. I think he handled himself awfully well. He came here to change his clothes one night, and again I don't know the date, but it was '64 sometime. And have you ever heard of Paul Corbin?

GREENE: Yes.

EVANS: I took him up—well, he knew the house. He went upstairs to change and I went up and chatted with him. And finally—I thought Paul Corbin was getting him in trouble politically—I said, "Listen, Bobby, I want to tell you one thing. I think you ought to just forget...." Oh, Paul Corbin had all these Kennedy people placed around the government—that was it—and Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] was just blaming it all on Bobby. In fact, half these people weren't Bobby's people. He didn't like them, he wasn't for them; but he was willing to let them stay as along as Paul Corbin was because Paul Corbin had come across for Bobby in the Wisconsin primary. I said, "You ought to drop Paul Corbin, because he's really hurting you." And he turned around on me before he went into the shower, and said, "Listen, Rowlie, when I want your advice, I'll ask for it." Just like that. And I said, "It's your life, but I'm telling you." It's this kind of thing.

So I went over to have lunch with him, it must have been in early December 1963, and lunch was on a tray on a small table in his big office at Justice. And the point he made was simply this: "I don't know whether I'll stay, or whether I want to go on the ticket in '64, or anything, until I know whether I think Johnson can be president of the United States and follow through with the Kennedy program. I'm not going to make my judgment on anything other than that. It's too early for me to even think about '64, because I don't know whether I want to have any part of these people. I don't know how they're going to be, running this country. And if they don't fulfill and follow out my brother's program, I don't want to have anything to do with them."

And as it turned out, of course, Johnson brilliantly did follow through with Kennedy's program. And although it's fashionable today to give Johnson all the credit for passing the civil rights and tax bills—those two big bills—the fact is that Kennedy had broken their back. But the tragedy is

nobody knew it, because he'd broken their backs just before he was killed, and Johnson then brilliantly moved in to exploit this and got them both through in '64. In fact, he got civil rights to go through in '63, I think, but anyway...

GREENE: Let me turn this before we go on.

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE I

EVANS: I think that was.... I don't know how serious he felt, but he certainly spoke it, and it seemed to come from the heart. To recapture that mood seems

very difficult today. But I knew that Bobby, the minute the president was assassinated—the Johnson-Kennedy thing could never work, you knew that. You knew it from 1960; you knew it from before that. You knew it from the personalities of the two men. You knew it from Bobby's position as head of the most powerful and able political aggregation inside the Democratic Party; and Johnson really knowing nothing about national politics seemed jealous of everything that Bobby did. There's nothing new about any of that, but I think that I hadn't thought of it in those terms until he put it to me at lunch that day. He said, "I don't know whether I want to have anything to do with this crowd." And I'm sure he must have been thinking in the back of his mind though, "I want to be president." The question was whether he wanted to be vice president in '64.

Kenny O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] has just come out with a—Yeah, of course, you've done Kenny O'Donnell?

GREENE: We've started him. We're going to finish him after his book is published.

EVANS: Well, it's being published the first. I read a big hunk of it yesterday.

GREENE: What do you think of it?

EVANS: Oh, I think it's very good stuff. His point is that he begged Bobby not to pull himself out of the vice presidential race. Did you know that?

GREENE: Yeah. Well, we know that from his interview.

EVANS: And Bobby did it at a tremendous cost to himself. He did it to protect the interests of the Kennedys, for Hubert Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey], to save that, and to keep Johnson off balance. But everybody thought that Kennedy was jockeying for it.

GREENE: Do you think that Kennedy ever realistically

thought that he could work with Johnson, as vice president?

EVANS: You mean Bobby?

GREENE: Could work effectively with Johnson, as Johnson's vice president. You know, there just seem to be two conflicting stories. Some people say that he would have never taken it...

EVANS: Bobby scorned Lyndon Johnson's character. Let me think. He used to get me.... I'd go out and have dinner with him alone in the summer when Ethel and Katherine were away, and he'd fill me in with all kinds of fascinating tidbits on.... Johnson would call him over to the White House every once in a while and

they'd have a chat. And he'd tell me what Johnson said in what he thought was an extraordinary statement. And he'd tell me and say, "Imagine, imagine the president of the United States saying that." Or he'd find out from his spies in the White House— he had spies all over the administration, but he had a guy in the White House who used to feed him a lot of stuff on what Johnson was doing, for instance, in using American soldiers to police the grounds down at the ranch or laying extremely expensive communications gear down at the ranch.

GREENE: Who was his underground in the White House besides O'Donnell?

EVANS: No, it wasn't O'Donnell. This wasn't O'Donnell. I don't know his name. I can't remember his name, but he was a guy, kind of a housekeeper type who went over all the bills. Something like that. The Kennedys may have appointed him, maybe he was old; I don't know. But this guy was filling Bobby in on a lot of stuff that Johnson was doing sub rosa. And all the aircraft and everything. He'd tell me this stuff with such incredulity and such anger —no, that's not the word—such disbelief that a president.... But you knew he felt it. What he was saying was, "Lyndon Johnson is a bad accident; he has no character." And he told me once that.... I think he said the last thing that Jack Kennedy had ever said to him about Lyndon was that —when is this going to be shown, all this stuff?

GREENE: Whenever you say, and not before.

EVANS: What is the normal....

GREENE: Some people have closed them for a hundred years, some have closed them for fifty, some...

EVANS: Oh, really? He warned Bobby. According to Bobby,

he said, "Bobby, just don't forget one thing, that Lyndon Johnson is a.... "I've got to get the right phrase here—not a constitutional, not a continental—he's a something liar. What's the word?

GREENE: Not habitual, but…

EVANS: Worse.

GREENE: Compulsive?

EVANS: Worse than that. I'll think of it in a minute. Not chronic. But he said the last conversation they ever had about Johnson before his brother was shot,

Jack Kennedy said, "Don't ever forget that Lyndon Johnson is a congenital liar." And he believed it. He thought Johnson was a bad man. Curiously, though in '66 I wrote a column on this. I guess it was '65. No, it was '66, January '66, when Johnson was wrestling with the problem of resuming the bombing after the thirty-eight, thirty-one, whatever-it-was-day bombing pause.

GREENE: Right.

EVANS: Kennedy read a line in the book about Lincoln [Abraham Lincoln].

GREENE: Yeah, and sent it to him.

EVANS: Yeah, I wrote that.

GREENE: Oh, you...

EVANS: Then Johnson used it in a speech or in something.

GREENE: Before Congress, I think.

EVANS: I think he may have used it before Congress, but never told, never...

GREENE: Attributed it, right.

EVANS: ... never attributed it to Bobby. That didn't bother Bobby, but it just filled in the chinks of his argument that Lyndon Johnson was a son-of-a-bitch. He told me in, it must have been early '64, spring of '64, maybe even early summer, that he couldn't—no, I take it all back. I mean in '67.

GREENE: But at no point that you can remember did he make it clear that he would accept the vice presidency if it was offered?

EVANS: See, that was the conversation at lunch that day. And his answer was "I don't know that I want to have anything to do, certainly not become a part, that much a part of the Johnson administration unless he's going to be a good president. I don't want to tie my future to somebody who isn't going to really do his job." And that was on the vice presidency. That's what it was on. I remember that was the question, and the answer was, "I haven't even decided whether I'm going to stay as attorney general." He was going to stay as attorney general to keep an eye on the Kennedy people. I think that despite—and Kenny may be totally right, late in '64, but I had always felt during this period that Bobby very much wanted the vice presidential nomination.

GREENE: I think that's the general impression.

EVANS: In other words, I don't know about Kenny. I don't know about that. Then when he learned that he wouldn't get it under any circumstances, I think it was then that Kenny said he wanted to get out of it and go to New York and Kenny made him stay.

Well, then, let's go on to February '66.

GREENE: Can I stop you before we go on?

EVANS: I want to get one thing in before I forget it.

GREENE: Okay, go ahead.

EVANS: To show you another side of Bobby. I've given you kind of a rough side of Bobby. He called me into his office before he made his famous February 19, 1966...

GREENE: I have the date in here someplace.

EVANS: ... February 19, I think, speech on Vietnam and gave it to me to read. And it was kind of impromptu; I didn't realize what really was up. I read it and he said, "What do you think?"; I had a couple of objections, not very important, but I said, "I think you ought to add in here something on negotiations or...." But the thrust of it, as I read it very fast, seemed okay. Then he made the statement and we know what the reaction was. The ceiling caved in on him; the roof fell in on him. And we wrote a fairly sharp attack not on the statement so much, but on its effect on the Democratic party, pitting Johnson against Kennedy. And all the Democrats had been coming out—I mean Hubert Humphrey and everybody else—on the president's side.

Bobby was kind of defenseless. And you remember he went on television...

GREENE: Right.

EVANS: ... several times, said he cleared it with Moyers [William D. Moyers], et cetera, and that Moyers had been for it and—God, what a memory. It all seems like so long ago. He called me. I told him we were writing a column, and he called me from New York to make sure that I understood certain nuances, and I said, "I understand that." Then the column appeared. And it was a difficult column for me to write because of my relationship with Bobby, but it was, in terms of an accurate political assessment, it was 100 percent, certainly an accurate account. And I talked to him on the phone, I guess, the next day or the day after. He was in New York. And I said, "Listen, you know I really hated to write that column, Bobby, and I wouldn't blame you for being really, really furious, and I understand all that." And he was very moving. He said, "Listen...." He

didn't say what Jack Kennedy said about Charlie Barlett [Charles Bartlett] once. He [JFK] said, "It's hard enough to get friends in this job; I want to keep the ones I've got." You remember that?

GREENE: Yes.

EVANS: What he said was, "Don't give it another thought. I know that you're going to have to...." It was a tough column; it was a rough column on him. I came right out, you know, "This doesn't make any difference, don't worry about it."

GREENE: Was that the one where Joe Dolan [Joseph F. Dolan] called you and objected to it?

EVANS: Well, he called us many times.

GREENE: This was one I remember. It was after Humphrey's fox in the chicken coop statement. And he called and objected to it and felt that you had given him the cold shoulder afterwards, the impression being that you thought Dolan made the call on his own initiative rather than at Kennedy's request. Was it more usual for Dolan to call than Kennedy to call himself if he was displeased?

EVANS: No, I think Dolan.... Well, Dolan used to work through Novak [Robert D. Novak] and he used to call Bob. Bobby, that's the only case I can remember where Dolan called me and.... The column had been written but he'd heard. I guess Dolan had been talking to Novak; I guess that was it. I can't remember, but the point was that after it was over Bobby was extraordinarily understanding

and then I went out and had breakfast with him the next day and said, "Well, you know, Bobby, when two people are writing a column, sometimes it doesn't come out to fit wholly the views of either one of them. Compromises and you know." I said something like, "Having a partner isn't the easiest thing in the world," something like that. So we were driving to town after breakfast and Bobby said, "I've spent my life with a partner." Meaning Jack. But he understood, anyway. He was very understanding about that. Okay, what were you going to ask me?

GREENE: I was going to ask you, going back to.... Maybe the best thing to do is to ask you when you first talked to him about the Senate race. He didn't discuss it with you at all until after Johnson had eliminated him in July, like in December?

EVANS: You know, I can't remember.

GREENE: Did he ask your advice about what you thought of that?

EVANS: He would constantly say, "What would you do?" And on everything. But I can't specifically remember the conversation.

GREENE: Did he talk about New York politics on this whole Palawan trip and when you came back, in terms of the problems he'd run into?

EVANS: Yeah, but only in a very lighthearted way, the kind of "Where is the Hudson River? Now, what's that big city upstate?" I think he went into the New York campaign not fully appreciating the odds that were against him. I mean, he won by seven hundred thousand votes, a million votes under Lyndon Johnson, and I think he felt he would do.... I don't know. I really can't remember, but my impression is that he thought he'd do a lot better in New York than he did. I'm useless on that. I can't remember.

GREENE: Well, of course the early polls showed...

EVANS: This is why I didn't want to do this tape, because so much of this has been blotted out.

GREENE: I know. Well, I think you've come up with a lot of stuff. Do you have any recollection of the national convention and particularly of people pushing him to try to force Johnson's hand?

EVANS: In '64? No. I mean I remember the whole thing,

but I don't have any inside recollections. I remember that speech vividly. I'll never forget that. No, no.

GREENE: Okay, then let's move into the senate, be a little easier for you, anyway.

EVANS: I don't know. I should have gone over all my files before I started this tape, because I had a lot of this stuff written down.

GREENE: Maybe even the columns would have helped, if I could have had them and been more specific. Anyway, do you have any clear impression of how he felt about the Senate in the first year? Did he like it even less than he expected to?

EVANS: Yeah, I think he liked it much less. He said it was a hell of a way to get anything done. You couldn't get anything done in the Senate. He took his seat in January '65. You know, it's just a tragedy that I —I'm sure everybody says this—didn't write everything down.

GREENE: Did you keep some kind of…

EVANS: Oh, I've got a lot of notes. Let me get my notes. Do you want me to get them?

GREENE: Sure.

EVANS: The notes I had written to myself the weekend up in Hyannis Port, July 22 to July 25, 1966 [reading]: "On vice presidency: 'Johnson hates me too much, would never ask me to run, and I wouldn't do it. It would end my independent, special role in the Democratic party.'"

GREENE: He's now talking about '68.

EVANS: He's talking about '68. And I have no recollection of this conversation at all, or even the idea. Now, you think back on it, when Hubert was vice president I don't even remember speculation about Bobby running for vice president in '68.

GREENE: Oh, it was kind of always around. And there was also always talk that Humphrey was very concerned about it, that he might be dumped in favor of Kennedy.

EVANS: "'It would end my independent, special role in the

Democratic party.'" This is as the legacy of the whole Kennedy experience, which he felt very obviously very firmly, and which was his political base.

GREENE: Did he see that more, do you think, as a surety…

EVANS: "But he would have to find some good reason," that is, Johnson, "to say no if it came to that point that he might force his way on the ticket." And then, Bobby was very indecisive about the O'Connor [Frank D. O'Connor]- Nickerson [Eugene H. Nickerson] contest. He was really for Nickerson.

GREENE: I was going to ask you, because you wrote a column on that I know, speculating that. Maybe it came out of the same weekend in '66.

EVANS: "He said it would all be over by the end"—well, as soon as they had the state convention—"of this week. And he hit Franklin [Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr.]"... I'll tell you a little amusing, not amusing, but rather poignant thing. In 1960 in West Virginia, Franklin Roosevelt made that famous or infamous attack on Hubert. And on the night of the assassination, November 22, '63, Franklin was up in the west

hall in the White House. And believe it or not, ... Of course they were all reviewing Jack Kennedy's career, talking about Jack Kennedy, and they came to West Virginia. Somehow this attack on Hubert came into the conversation, and Franklin turned to Bobby and said, "Bobby, don't forget I did that on your instructions." And Bobby got up, left the room, and paced the hall from west to east parlors in the second floor of the White House. But that this was still an issue almost three years later....

GREENE: Do you know anything about the truth of the matter?

EVANS: Oh, I am convinced that Franklin wouldn't have done it without approval from Bobby, convinced of it.

GREENE: But he never admitted it to you?

EVANS: I never asked him. I don't think I ever asked him. I'm sure I asked Bobby. And I cannot remember any of that. I'm sure I asked him. But, you see, the thing about Bobby was it was difficult sometimes to ask him difficult questions. Difficult, that is, unless you wanted to get into a fight. Because you never knew when he.... Just like I said up there, upstairs, I only gave him some advice:

Get rid of Paul Corbin. "When I need your advice, I'll ask for it." Well, the hell with it. I mean I remember saying that many times, "The hell with it." I mean I had a lot of fun with Bobby and I really enjoyed him, but I thought, "Screw him; I'm not going to get in a fight." Don't get me wrong on that, though. I really had a tremendous affection for Bobby. I mean, he was unique as a friend of mine, totally unique. I never knew anybody like him, never will again.

GREENE: Did it ever stop you from speaking your mind, because you anticipated his reaction?

EVANS: Sure, sure it did. That's being very candid, but I'm sure it did. Where he'd say something, and you'd want to say, "Well, you don't know what you're talking about, because here's what really happened," you'd say, "Well, to hell with it."

GREENE: Would he sometimes surprise you in that you'd find just the opposite and he'd welcome your...

EVANS: Yeah, there was a certain mercurial—but he didn't like to be put on the defensive. And it was very easy to put Bobby on the defensive. And this was one of the things that I think he really overcame in the last two, three years. He got to live with that inner.... Where are we? Are we on?

GREENE: Yeah, we are. I...

EVANS: June 29, '66. I'll just read this. I don't know if it's interesting at all. Do you want me to read it?

GREENE: If it's interesting, sure.

EVANS: You remember he went out to elect Silverman [Samuel J. Silverman] in New York, the state judge. [reading] "The day after the Silverman election, Bobby was up until 4 o'clock in the morning in New York, flew here on the 10 a.m. shuttle, in the office all day, came for dinner with the Markhams [Dean F. Markham, Susan Moore Markham]" and that's here, I guess. Yeah, obviously. "Surprised at O'Connor's shortsightedness in not seeing the value to O'Connor of joining the fight for Silverman"—in other words, Bobby wanted the current, I understand see, to pick up that liberal—"and tying up Bobby and the liberals in reform, under any condition. An O'Connor endorsement for Silverman would have neutralized Bobby in the governor fight." Do you see why?

GREENE: Yeah.

[-24-]

EVANS: "It would have made it difficult for Bobby to go to Nickerson. He couldn't have endorsed another candidate. Now it seems a strong possibility that Bobby will endorse Nickerson." Which of course he did, didn't he?

GREENE: No, he never did. That was the big thing in '66. He never actually did it.

EVANS: That's right, he never, that's right. "I talked to Jack English [John F. English] today, and he asked"— Jack English had been the national committeeman in New York. Have you done him? "I talked to Jack English today and he expects Bobby to pass the word quietly in the next couple of weeks that he wants Nickerson. Bobby was not specific tonight, but the supposition is that he will."

GREENE: This is the column I was thinking of that you wrote, saying that Kennedy, if he couldn't dictate the governorship, could at least prevent anyone against him from taking it.

EVANS: "Bobby talked about campaigning for Silverman." Oh, yeah, I remember this now. Oh, now I remember it. "Riding out—he had the dog with him—Bobby talked about campaigning for Silverman in Harlem. He used the Albano [Vincent F. Albano, Jr.]"—Vince Albano is the Republican City Chairman—"used the Albano letter to Republican workers telling them to get their Democratic friends to vote for Klein [Arthur G. Klein]. He read the letter to the crowds and asked, 'And who do you think wrote that letter?' 'You, you,' shouted the kids. 'No, no,' said Bobby. Didn't finish the

story. 'And who are you going to vote for?' 'You, you,' shouted the kids. 'No, no,' said Bobby, 'for Judge Silverman' Quote, 'The best thing about campaigning are the kids,' unquote."

GREENE: He did a lot of that. He did...

EVANS: "O'Connor called in this morning to say congratulations. He knew O'Connor wouldn't back Silverman after the last forum. The conversation with O'Connor made that clear," et cetera, et cetera. "RFK didn't know what Jackie's [Jacqueline B. Kennedy Onassis] feeling...." Oh, yeah, and then this is interesting. Yeah, now I remember the whole evening then. "Bobby was very unhappy about Red Fay's book." Have you gotten into that?

GREENE: Not directly, but I know a lot about it.

EVANS: I can tell you for a fact that he was livid, most particularly that he had ignored Jackie's feelings

and refused to make certain changes. That, and the fact that, as he said, Red had promised to give him refusal rights on any incident in the book. And this is Bobby: "Why would anyone want to write anything to make Cardinal Cushing [Richard James Cushing] feel badly?" See that insight there?

GREENE: Isn't that something?

EVANS: Whether Cardinal Cushing is a son-of-a-bitch or a second Saint Peter, you just wouldn't do that.

GREENE: Was that ever mended?

EVANS: "He's dying, you know."

GREENE: Cushing?

EVANS: Well, this was '66.

GREENE: Oh.

EVANS: Cushing is dead, isn't he? Cushing died.

GREENE: Cardinal Cushing in Boston? No.

EVANS: I guess not. Anyway, "Bobby said, 'He's dying, you know.' He said, 'I spent an hour and a half at the White House with Johnson the other day,

and I got three or four invitations in the last ten days to the White House, compared to one or two in 1965.' Then he said, 'I had calls from two or three White House men. Bob Kintner [Robert E. Kintner] was one'—you know who he was—telling Bobby that he was calling without the president's knowledge to say that the president was very pleased with Bobby's report on Africa and particularly on Latin America. Bobby: 'Why didn't everyone else tell the president about Latin America that way? The president is supposed to have said.'" Get it?

"Rostow [Walt Whitman Rostow] called him with the invitation, and Bobby said, 'Fine. Can I tell him about my Indonesian and Latin American trips, too?' Bobby can't believe, he said, that Johnson would dump Hubert for the second term just because of that." But.... [inaudible]

"Bobby mentioned the California presidential poll several times showing Bobby beating Johnson among California Democrats 50 - 26."

"Dinner at my house, June 28." Blank.

GREENE: You'd come back and type these up afterwards, is

that it?

EVANS: Well, I'd do it in the office, This is all on my office typewriter.

GREENE: Did he ever object, for instance, to the column you wrote after the Silverman thing, that it was based on what you heard in private conversation, that you were conjecturing about something he was going to do? He wouldn't object?

EVANS: Well, he didn't. Yeah, he would. If there were a flagrant violation of what he would regard as a special relationship, certainly he would. He'd raise hell about it. But I....

GREENE: A couple of things from what you've said come to mind. First of all, what do you know about the later relationship with Fay? Were things mended?

EVANS: Never. Red Fay's son [Paul B. Fay III] is staying here tonight. He's been here for two days. I don't say total; I don't say there wasn't anything. Let me think. Of course, Red worked for him in California in '68. It was never the same. It was never the same with Don Wilson.

GREENE: What was with Wilson?

EVANS: Well, I think that Bobby and Ethel felt—you're not going to tell anybody this, are you?

GREENE: Really, I have never discussed anything...

EVANS: I know that Bobby and Ethel felt that Don Wilson—particularly Susie more than Don—was kind of grabbing for that main chance after November '63. And my own feeling was that Don Wilson had every right and obligation to himself to grab for the main chance.

GREENE: You mean to become head of USIA [United States Information Agency]?

EVANS: Well, to do whatever he wanted. Yeah, become the head of USIA or secretary of defense, that the loyalty.... Of course, you know how big, how tremendously strong Bobby felt on this. He made that statement on Vietnam, I think it was February 19. I think it was a Saturday. I know it was a Saturday.

GREENE: It was.

EVANS: And Katherine and I had lunch with him at Sans

Souci that day. And I'll never forget; he could not get off this question of loyalty. What he was saying and I kind of didn't like it, because I thought he was too strong this way. You could tell him that, and then you'd get into a hell of a fight. So, the hell with it, you listened to him. Bobby was saying how few people were left in this administration who had been made by Jack Kennedy who were still willing to fight the fight. They forgot, and now they were going all the way over to Johnson. Well, of course, that's human nature and that's politics. I resented it myself deeply, but that's what makes politics and human beings work and react to each other as they do. That's where the power is. The power changes.... But he spent the whole lunch talking, and it was rather moving, because he'd just come off this press conference where he read the statement, had lunch at San Souci—why, I don't know why we had lunch at Sans Souci—but he couldn't stop talking about the lack of loyalty or how few people were willing to stay loyal.

GREENE: How did that affect his feelings about people like McNamara [Robert S. McNamara], and Harriman [William Averell Harriman], and Taylor [Maxwell D. Taylor], who had continued to be…

EVANS: Oh, not a bit. They were all exempt. I'll tell you another thing about...

GREENE: Why?

EVANS: ... Bobby. Well, wait a minute. I just thought of something. Dinner at the Harriman's one night. This must have been '62 or '63 because Jack

Kennedy was president. And Bobby was embarked on something, some anti-Communist thing dealing with Eastern Europe. I mean, it was some foreign policy dealing against the Eastern European countries. And he asked Averell about it. And I knew all about this, because I had talked to Bobby up in his office a day or two before. I knew what was coming off. Nobody else understood the conversation. Bobby said something to Harriman, "What about this situation?" And Harriman said, "Yes, we're looking into that." God, it was Eastern Europe and Harriman was assistant secretary for Southeast Asia. Anyway, Harriman said, "Yeah." Here was a man sixty-seven years old-hell, he's seventy, I guess, maybe seventy-eight now, so he was almost seventy-five—and Bobby looked at him with the coldest, most implacable look, and said something like, "Well, get on it, Averell. See that you do it tomorrow." Something like that. This was where that political comprehension of relationships broke down in Bobby. He couldn't have cared less if he'd been the Maharajah of Jaipur. I mean, Bobby was giving him an order, and it happened to be Averell Harriman; it could have been anybody.

GREENE: But people like Harriman took it from him?

EVANS: Absolutely, absolutely. Harriman loved him. Harriman loved Jack Kennedy; he loved Ethel, and I think that Averell was a little kind of skeptical. Mavie was, I'm sure, skeptical about Bobby. But as things went on and they hated Johnson, there was nobody but Bobby. And there was a very close relationship there at the end. Max Taylor always...

GREENE: The Vietnam thing didn't cause a rift? It was something they could still talk about?

EVANS: I used to play tennis out there almost every Sunday with Max Taylor and Bobby and Dave Hackett [David L. Hackett]. And there would be lots of kidding that Max Taylor.... It was gentle kidding, very gentle. Bobby really had a tremendous admiration and feeling for that man, you know, with Max. And that's another thing. You know, he was a kid, Bobby. But it was always "Max," which he liked, I'm sure, the general. But you wondered, you know, "God, Bobby, why don't you call him 'General'?"

GREENE: Do you think people took this because they realized that he was egalitarian about it, that everybody was treated the same whether they were a close friend or a stranger that...

EVANS: Well, Bobby had power on his side in this period. I mean Bobby was the second most powerful man in the country, maybe in the world.

GREENE: But the people didn't take offense with his brusqueness or frankness because they...

EVANS: If Max said—have you done Max Taylor?

GREENE: Yes. Well, Larry [Larry J. Hackman] did him.

EVANS: Have you read it?

GREENE: Yeah.

EVANS: Well, I don't know what he said, but I will bet you he never said anything nasty about Bobby. I think Max Taylor loved Bobby.

GREENE: Would they still talk about Vietnam, even though it got...

EVANS: No, that's what I'm saying; they used to kid all

the time.

GREENE: But not in a serious...

EVANS: Never long talks that I sat in on. I mean this is out on the tennis court. We'd chat, and then Taylor would put his towels and sweaters on and we'd chat for five minutes, and then he'd drive off home. And Bobby had a very genuine affection and confidence in Max Taylor.

I had never known, nobody will ever know, what motivated Bobby on Vietnam. I have my—well, I don't really have suspicions. He was surrounded in the Senate office with some very articulate, committed liberal types. You know, Adam [Adam Walinsky] was not even a liberal; Adam was a left-winger, still is. He was way over. And I think they had a tremendous influence on Bobby, but I think they played on the politics of this country rather than on a basic conviction about the war situation in Vietnam. I think; I don't know. But when Bobby switched on the war, how much of it was politics, playing a role in presidential politics, and how much of it was a genuine conviction that even though this country might go up in revolution, the war.... I'm putting that wrongly. How much of it was conviction and how much of it overrode the feeling that I think he had earlier that even if this country went up in revolution on Vietnam, this was such an important issue for the United States to carry through that, by god, you had to stay and carry through. And I don't know the answer to that.

I don't know whether— Max Taylor was totally at variance with Averell Harriman. Bobby had an extremely close relationship with both. Taylor used to make little side comments to him: "Oh, well, of course you, you want to pull out tomorrow. You know, can't do that, Bobby, can't do that." Then the general would smile and laugh and they never really came to blows. I never saw it.

GREENE: Did you get the feeling particularly by the time of ‘67 that there was a real inner conflict between what he was feeling and going through and what he felt he had to do because of the problems with the president and...

EVANS: In '67?

GREENE: Well, I would imagine it became increasingly difficult. Especially because he...

EVANS: I don't know. I don't want to impugn Bobby's motives. He used to tell me—out late at night

[-30-]

after dinner, we'd walk down to the car, and he'd say, "We've got to get out of Vietnam. We've got to get out of that war. It's destroying this country.” I can't answer the question.

GREENE: Did he ever relate it to his brother’s administration?

EVANS: I don't think he ever told me what Kenny says Jack Kennedy told him. You've read that.

GREENE: Well, only if it was in his interview. What are you thinking of? I haven't seen the manuscript.

EVANS: That he was going to pull all Americans out of Vietnam in '65 without failure. Couldn't do it in '64, because it would set off a McCarthy [Joseph R. McCarthy] type reaction on the right and probably defeat him as president. But after he was reelected, he was going to get totally out of Vietnam. I don't remember whether Bobby ever told me that. I did something on that.

GREENE: Do you have a copy of that book?

EVANS: What book?

GREENE: Of Kenny O'Donnell's?

EVANS: Oh, it's not even…. I just read it in page proofs. It will be in Life magazine, I think next week, the first—or I'm not even sure about next week. I've forgotten what the release date is.

GREENE: Before it comes out in hardcover?

EVANS: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

GREENE: I wanted to ask you also what you know about his relationship with Corbin, and if that has something with his taking umbrage at your remarks about Corbin upstairs.

EVANS: Well, he was very loyal to the people who were in on the ground floor. Corbin was one of them. And I never really understood the relation with Corbin. I thought Corbin was a terrible liability to Bobby, an ass. I just barely know Corbin. I mean, I'd know who he was if he walked in here with Mrs. Corbin [Gertrude McGowan Corbin]. But there was a loyalty to Corbin. I don't think of any other reason, but you couldn't criticize Paul Corbin. I mean, he got it from everybody, criticism of Corbin. Kenny, I'm sure, wanted to get rid of Corbin. Was there some hold that Corbin

had on Bobby? Not that I know of? Did he have something on him? Is that what you mean?

GREENE: Well, why was he protective towards him? Why did he take umbrage at people's criticism of him?

EVANS: I don't know. I always put it down as blind, and in this case I thought, stupid loyalty. Here's the lunch: "February 19, Sans Souci."

GREENE: February 19, by the way, was the date of that speech, wasn't it?

EVANS: Yeah, February 19, yeah. I see it here. Let's see if there's anything new in here. "The problem for Hanoi is to have assurance of coming out with something to offset the furious Chinese efforts to damage Ho Chi Minh if he negotiates. Otherwise no negotiations possible. The administration's badly organized for this war. No one to play the devil's advocate. Rusk [Dean Rusk] since '60 talks by rote. In the Cuban missile crisis, Rusk didn't understand the president's basic play. He offered to resign quietly, without a fuss. And after that it was hopelessly downhill." You ever heard that?

GREENE: It's vague. I don't know whether I heard it for fact or…

EVANS: "He offered to resign quietly, without a fuss. Johnson ought to have a...."

BEGIN SIDE I TAPE II

GREENE: I was asking about Senate colleagues.

EVANS: Fred [Fred R. Harris] would love to go out there and tell poor boy stories of how he was brought up in this little.... And Ethel was constantly kidding him. You know, "What's it like now? I mean here you are, Fred. You must have done pretty well. Here you are sitting in my damask.... I guess you never thought it

would come to this." And he looked around one night, kind of fingered the texture of this rich cloth that covered the chairs out there, looked at the pictures, and said, "My mother would turn over in her grave if she knew that I was sitting here in this lap of luxury," and then lots of laughs. And Bobby had a real relationship, he thought a very close relationship, with Harris. And he understood Harris going for Humphrey.

GREENE: He did?

EVANS: He understood it, yeah. I mean I think he felt Harris could have gone the other way. But he understood the political rationale. He never understood and, of course, he never did understand till he was shot in Los Angeles that Fred had never returned.... Ethel sent him a funny telegram when he announced for Hubert. You know that story.

GREENE: I haven't heard that story. I thought you were going to say something else.

EVANS: She sent a very funny telegram. And I've forgotten which way it went now. Whether Harris called Bobby to tell him and never got him on the phone and Bobby never returned the call, or whether Bobby called Harris and it was the other way. But they never got together on the telephone.

GREENE: The way I heard it is sort of a tragic sequence of events, I think, in my mind...

EVANS: A mix-up.

GREENE: ... because actually Kennedy had tried to call Harris but couldn't reach him, and Harris had been trying and trying and trying to get the Senator and never reached him either. And it's something I think that he still feels very...

EVANS: Oh, I'm sure of it, sure of it.

GREENE: ... very deeply about.

EVANS: But who else in the Senate? Jim Pearson [James Blackwood Pearson] he liked very much. He was crazy about Mike Mansfield. And whether it was because Mike was so easy, and gentle, and sweet, and was so fond of Jack Kennedy and Bobby and Teddy, or whether it was a more impersonal feeling, I don't know. He really loved Mike Mansfield. And this came out in any number of ways, what a strength Mike was to him, to the Senate, and to the country.

GREENE: What about Javits [Jacob K. Javits]?

EVANS: They had a very rough time at the start. Then really through Dick Aurelio [Richard Aurelio] they began to get together. I don't remember the specifics, but I'd say by '68, they were really very much on the same wavelength. Aurelio told me once—Dick Aurelio, do you know who he is?

GREENE: Oh, yeah.

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EVANS: He said—this is about '66, '67—about Bobby, that he was trying to establish some kind of relationship between the two offices because they were feuding and fighting as two opposition senators often do from the same state. Well, they don't often do. They were doing it because I think Bobby's staff was extremely offensive in this. I mean, they really were out to....

GREENE: Did you hear that from other people, too?

EVANS: About Bobby's staff? Well, I saw it myself. Oh, yeah, Bobby's staff was hated on Capitol Hill. I mean they were arrogant and all the rest of it. But Aurelio told me—'66 or '67—that the way things were going, who knew but that he and Javits would be backing Bobby Kennedy for president in 1968. If it was Johnson and Nixon [Richard M. Nixon], maybe a third party drive, but that he saw in '67 and '68 that Bobby represented a current brand of American politics. He's a very liberal Republican.

GREENE: Do you think that the senator was admiring of Javits even though they were so different in their…

EVANS: Oh, god, if I could only remember what he used.... He used to kid Javits a lot—to me I mean, not to Javits's face. My strong impression is that he ended up having quite a strong feeling for Javits.

GREENE: Do you think he was aware of the effect that his staff created and the problems that they made for him from time to time with someone like Javits who was offended by their aggressiveness? Did you ever talk to him about—are you speaking particularly of Adam, or do you include Peter [Peter B. Edelman]?

EVANS: Yeah, Adam mainly. Who? Peter?

GREENE: Peter.

EVANS: But much less so. Peter was gentler. You know, Adam in '65 was almost a bombthrower in his views. I don't think Bobby ever.... I don't think it bothered him. I think that his instincts were the same that governed his feeling about Paul Corbin: "He may be a son-of-a-bitch, but he's my son-of-a-bitch and I'm going

to...." Well, I don't know of any incident where Bobby dressed down Adam. Maybe he did, but I don't know. Could be obstreperous, but that's it.

GREENE: Do you think he had a great effect on him, that he

was greatly influenced?

EVANS: On Adam?

GREENE: No, that Adam greatly influenced the senator?

EVANS: Oh, tremendously, tremendously. I don't think there's any doubt about it.

GREENE: Was part of the feeling on the Hill jealousy, do you think, that maybe he was more competent?

EVANS: Yeah, but it's curious. I mean, that feeling did not apply to Teddy, and of course it never would have applied to Jack, because Jack's power would have been the source of jealousy of Bobby. It never applied to Teddy.

GREENE: Actually I meant more towards the staff. Do you think some of the criticism came from the fact that maybe they were more competent and were….

EVANS: No, never heard that, no.

GREENE: Anything about Fritz Mondale [Walter F. Mondale] come to mind? He worked pretty closely with him on a number of things.

EVANS: Yeah, very closely. I can't remember any special thing.

GREENE: How about Ribicoff [Abraham A. Ribicoff]?

EVANS: No good.

GREENE: The southerners?

EVANS: He always used to speak warmly of Jim Eastland [James O. Eastland]. You know, he always had a nice relationship with Jim Eastland. I don't know how it worked out with McClellan [John L. McClellan] in the Senate. He worked for him, for the committee. I've run out.

GREENE: Let's see if I can push you a little further. Do you have any impressions of the press staff in comparison, from Guthman to Barthelmes [A. Wesley Barthelmes, Jr.] to Mankiewicz [Frank F. Mankiewicz]? Did you see much of them?

EVANS: Yeah, but I don't see why that's important at all. Why do you want to know that? Why is that

interesting?

GREENE: Well, I think if you're going to understand the way he operated as a senator, you have to....

EVANS: I think Ed Guthman was kind of a private, quiet, effective operator. What's his name, Barthelmes was a failure because he felt he'd never had access to Bobby and he never really knew what Bobby was thinking. And it was an unfortunate experiment. It didn't work. I think the best press secretary he had was Mankiewicz, who knew how far, even was willing to push Bobby, and had a lot of self-confidence, was willing to move into areas where Guthman wouldn't. Guthman was more—not master-servant—you know, director-stockholder relationship. Whereas Mankiewicz was not equal, but I mean Mankiewicz wasn't afraid of Bobby. Mankiewicz really threw the weight around.

GREENE: Was the problem with Barthelmes at all a question of his professional ability, or was it more personality?

EVANS: Bobby used to say that he never felt he was getting through to Barthelmes, that if Wes didn't understand something, he ought to come and ask him. But Wes' point was that he never could see Kennedy. They were at loggerheads.

Then, of course, that whole Larry O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] situation was very convoluted, '64, '65, '66, and '67. Larry was almost regarded as an apostate for having stayed with Johnson. Kenny thought he had an agreement with Larry that they'd both go at the same time. And Larry, whom I know very well, told me that he felt sure, well, they never had an agreement in the first place; second place, so what? The president of the United States said he needed him. And it was a little bit of both. Larry's very ambitious, and I think it's a fair argument. Johnson was in difficult circumstances in '65 and '66, so Larry stayed. And Bobby never really liked that. But on the other hand, Larry was a source for Bobby. I mean, he used to go up and have lunch with him, very private. Have you done Larry?

GREENE: He is waiting for his book to come out. And then we're going to do him.

EVANS: Well, it's kind of late, though, isn't it?

GREENE: Well, we've got enough so that I think we could just go back and get the specifics that are missing.

EVANS: Well, Larry is very funny. You know he could hit Bobby. He could say, "That goddamned little son-of-a-bitch." And then in the next breath say, "Now, don't get me wrong. The guy ought to be president, and I'm never going to do him in." There was this same ambivalence. The only guy that I don't know with this ambivalence was Kenny. Of course, Kenny was Bobby's friend originally. And I didn't see much of Kenny after he quit. But Larry would be very, very interesting on this whole Johnson-Kennedy relationship. Because he was often caught in the middle of it.

GREENE: I had heard that Kennedy...

EVANS: Have you done Moyers?

GREENE: Well, he's had a couple of appointments that he broke, and we never got back to him. He's one of people that we'd really like to get to. He's an interesting figure in the whole thing, and sees both sides of the matter.

EVANS: Yeah, he was pushing Bobby on Vietnam all the time, but not telling Johnson.

GREENE: He was an inside source, too, from what I hear.

EVANS: He was. I wish Katherine were here, because she would be so helpful in jogging my memory and her own on so many of these things.

GREENE: I have heard that Kennedy once expressed great understanding for O'Brien's position, the fact that he had come out of such a poor background and found himself now in a cabinet position, and that he could really understand the problems and the motivations. Does that fit with your understanding?

EVANS: Yeah, absolutely, absolutely. And I don't think it was Bobby so much. It was more other members of the family that felt that Larry had betrayed them. Bobby I don't think ever felt that way. But when there were parties out at Hickory Hill with the old Kennedy crowd, Larry often was not asked. And he really bled over it. And I'd say, "Bobby, you know, God, you're having this big party, and why didn't you ask Larry?" "Isn't he coming?" "No, he wasn't asked." "Oh, well, I'll call him." Then on one occasion he was called and he came out. But other members of the family, I think, felt that Larry was just....

Disappointed, too, in the campaign of '68. Larry told me all through '68 that is through March. I left the country

March 12. He announced, what, the 16th?

GREENE: Yeah.

EVANS: He announced on a Saturday. I left on a Monday. And all through that winter, and up till the day I left, or three or four days before I left, Bobby's point—it's not news at all, everybody knows it. But he made it over and over again; he couldn't run for president because everybody would interpret it as an anti-Johnson, party-splitting move, even though in fact Bobby sort of knew if he didn't, the country was going to hell. That war was a disaster, and somebody has to save the country, and he was the only guy who could, under the circumstances. And I think he wasn't doing this in a boastful way. I mean, he was in fact the only one that could. But his motives would immediately be attacked and therefore he couldn't run. He told me this over and over again.

The Arthur [Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.] called me about it. Have you done him?

GREENE: No, we're waiting for his book.

EVANS: He should be down here in December.

GREENE: Yeah, he's going to be working over in our office.

EVANS: And he told me that Ethel had called him about three days before I left for the Middle East, and it was all set that he was going to run. The last thing I did was to call Bobby the night before I left. I guess I left on a Tuesday. I called him Monday night and he didn't tell me flatly. I said, "Well...."

GREENE: The day before the primary?

EVANS: What primary?

GREENE: The New Hampshire primary.

EVANS: Yeah, that's right. Yes, exactly. And I said, "Well, I got it hard from Jean, I get it hard from Ethel." But he toyed. He never told me flatly that he was going to run. And actually the decision wasn't made until Wednesday night, or Thursday night, out at Hickory Hill. Katherine was out there, she could give you a marvelous description of that evening.

So anyway, I went abroad. But then I came back, and he was in the campaign. And one night I was campaigning with him around Indianapolis and suggested dinner that night, which we had

very late, 10 o'clock. Freddy [Frederick G. Dutton] was there, Freddy Dutton, me, and Ethel and Bobby, and I think Ed Morgan [Edward P. Morgan] and Stew Alsop [Stewart Alsop]. And we sat at the big table in the only snappy restaurant in Indianapolis. I can't remember the name of it. And a steady procession of half tight, dirty, old, kind of middle age educators—there was an educational conference in Indianapolis; a lot of them were there—came up for autographs. And Bobby signed a lot of them.

Finally a guy came up who'd had five or six drinks. First he put his arm on Bobby—Bobby couldn't stand anybody putting his arm on him—and shoved his program or the menu, and said, "Senator, you'd really be doing me a favor. Just say, 'With love to Lucy from Bobby Kennedy.'" I was sitting right next to Bobby, and his face just whitened. He was dead tired. It was the end of the campaign; the election was a couple of days away. And he just shoved, gave the menu back to the guy. Which is pure Bobby. I mean, I can't imagine any politician.... Because Bobby had had it. He just wasn't going to sign any more.

GREENE: Was this the only night you spent with him in the Indiana campaign?

EVANS: I was only out there... Yes, the only one.

GREENE: How would you say he thought it was going? Was he very optimistic at that point?

EVANS: Yeah, he thought he was going to win. He was always objective about his political prospects. He thought he was going to win.

He was less sure in California. I spent, well, I guess it was Sunday morning before the Tuesday primary. I had a long talk with him and he was up. I'd gone to the debate. He had a debate with McCarthy [Eugene J. McCarthy] and I saw him right after the debate. He was very, very high. He thought, "Gee, we did it," and I think he was convinced that maybe we were going to win. Then on Sunday he was not wholly optimistic, but he felt that he'd gotten over the hump.

GREENE: Did he talk percentages as far as what he thought he had to get?

EVANS: I don't remember. I have no idea. I'm sure he did, but I don't remember what they were. You know, with the three-man race, they had the Humphrey group in there, they had the....

I saw him when he came down from Oregon. I went to a luncheon

he spoke to the first day he came into California. And it was a hell of a difficult time, because he was the first Kennedy ever to lose an election. Coming down to California, everything seemed to be going against him. He was being murdered in the press for Oregon. And he was relaxed, fairly confident, expecting almost anything. He'd had a long session with the press. I'm sure you know. Of course, a lot of it was written after Oregon. And he made this speech.

It was a women's group, I think, not at the Ambassador Hotel, but at one of those big hotels, packed with people. And he didn't know what kind of a reception he was going to get. It was very moving in a sense, because he had—and he was funny, he was witty. He had to somehow present himself as the first Kennedy—for the first speech—who'd ever lost an election.

That was the low point, and then the California picture picked up. I think he had one week to campaign. And, you know, there's so many…. God, I wish I had—I haven't really thought about this period. You know, you kind of blot it out. I wish I could think of more details. I can't.

GREENE: Do you remember any discussion about the problems they were having out there with Unruh [Jesse M. Unruh] and his people? Or Unruh in general? Did he ever discuss him?

EVANS: Well, he thought Unruh was too close, was moving in on him too much.

GREENE: Did they see it as personal ambition?

EVANS: Oh, yeah, totally. Oh, yeah, no question. But I don't remember talking to Bobby about it.

When I got to the hospital at 4 or 5 o'clock that afternoon, Unruh was there, and Unruh attached himself to me, for obvious reasons. I mean, you didn't have to like them [the reasons], but you could understand it. I don't think Bobby was.... I cannot remember that he was ever really anti-Unruh in that situation. Maybe he was. I didn't appreciate that, if he was.

GREENE: Did he talk about Oregon at all when he first came down, or...

EVANS: Let me give you a few more of the personal things.

GREENE: Yes, sure, go ahead.

EVANS: His style as a friend. They came over here all the time for dinner. Every time we had a party, we'd always have Bobby and Ethel. One night,

about 8:00, 8:15, just twenty minutes before we were going in to dinner, the whole staff arrived with their wives—Edelman and Adam and their wives—and they wanted to go over a statement that Bobby had to release the next morning, early. And you know, it just threw this house—it was an incredible thing. They went over the statement, and Bobby said, "I think you'd better do this and that. Just sit here and fix it up." So we all went into dinner and came back, papers all over the floor, and they were writing inserts, and.... Very few people would have the guts to do that. And it was funny. I thought it was very funny. It didn't bother me, but I think it bothered Katherine a little bit. But Bobby didn't register things

like that. He rolled right over it. If it had to be done, the hell with it. If it hurt somebody or got in their way, that's too bad.

GREENE: Would he have done this, do you think, with someone that he felt less close to?

EVANS: I think he would have done it with anybody. Sure.

Then he used to bring Brumus. And with all this stuff around here, Brumus' tail would knock over tables. Bobby thought it was funny. You know, he might say, "Brumus, get down." But his style was unique. I mean there was nobody who would handle situations like that as Bobby did. He was unique.

GREENE: Did he alienate people? Were there some who didn't smile at him?

EVANS: Oh, I think he infuriated a whole lot of people. And of course you know he always used to go into the dinner table and change the cards around. Oh, yes.

GREENE: If he didn't like the way, he'd change it?

EVANS: Oh, yeah. If he didn't like it, he'd pick the two prettiest girls. That's the kind of guy.... It never bothered us. I'm sure it bothered some people, though, who didn't know him well. But he comes out as I've described him as kind of a negative figure, but I don't mean that, because he had an extraordinary capacity to attract people.

We landed in Nantucket. We were going to go on another cruise. The boat was disabled, so we had to take a small, twenty-two...

GREENE: Was this in '65?

EVANS: What?

GREENE: '65. The one you wrote about in the Pat Lawford [Patricia Kennedy Lawford] book?

EVANS: Yeah, that's it. That's right. We took that to Nantucket. We got to Nantucket. Nobody knew we were coming, because we didn't know we were coming; got off the boat, walked into the main square there in town. It was September I guess. Extraordinary, hundreds of teenagers who were up there formed this massive, massive wave of humanity right behind, following Bobby. So we walked up the street, and they walked up the street; and it really became embarrassing. They wanted a speech. He didn't want to give a speech; he was on a vacation. No other political figure in the country could have done that. The president couldn't have. But the emotional fix that these people had on Bobby was extraordinary. I've never seen it, including Jack Kennedy in '60.

And I'm sure we'll never see it again. It was an extraordinary thing, and Bobby just took it in stride. I think, you know, he obviously was very pleased by it. But at the same time, it was embarrassing. There was no way to get rid of these kids.

GREENE: Do you think that he felt that the whole legacy was kind of a mixed bag? It was partly burden and partly a tremendous advantage?

EVANS: Yeah. I think—no, I don't think it was a burden. Why?

GREENE: Well, because it put so much pressure on him and there were so many things that other people could do, and that other senators could do, that he couldn't do.

EVANS: Nope, I never got that feeling. No, I think he enjoyed it; not in an unhealthy way, but I think he enjoyed the position.

GREENE: Well, what about the problem, for instance, if he'd give a speech, a substantive speech, or take a major trip some place, the fact that it always ended up in the press as "whether this means a Kennedy-Johnson dispute"? This kind of thing.

EVANS: It infuriated him. That infuriated him.

GREENE: That's really the kind of thing I meant.

EVANS: That's why he was so hyped on this question of running for president. He couldn't do it without it immediately being laid to a "He's out to get

Johnson." At the time I didn't know how he might go on a McCarthy-Johnson confrontation, he told me there was no question about it, he would have to back McCarthy.

GREENE: When was this, do you think?

EVANS: Let me think about it. This would have been January. I said, "Well, Bobby, you're crazy. You've got every reason in the world politically not to back McCarthy. Johnson's the president, McCarthy has split the party." And he was absolutely convinced there was no possible course he could take except to back Gene McCarthy in the primaries against Johnson, because of the way, the war issue. And this was a very poisonous pill for him to have to swallow. But he never equivocated on that. He had to back McCarthy, period.

GREENE: Did you ever talk to him about that during the campaign?

EVANS: During the campaign. Well, this was while McCarthy was campaigning, before Bobby got in.

GREENE: No, I mean once he got in.

EVANS: Well, obviously, he wasn't going to support McCarthy then.

GREENE: No, but if he lost. In other words, if he dropped out after California, as he said he would if he lost, and it came to a confrontation between Humphrey and McCarthy, would he support Humphrey over McCarthy because of the bitterness of the campaign?

EVANS: No, I never talked to him about this.

GREENE: But earlier on, he said he...

EVANS: In the first place, I don't.... The only thing I can remember talking to him about in that respect was that he wouldn't do anything in '68. That if he lost California—first place, I don't think he ever thought he was going to lose it. Have you talked to Steve?

GREENE: Larry talked to him for about forty-five minutes. And if you think you're having a hard time, he had....

EVANS: You'll never get anything from Steve.

GREENE: He wanted so much to do it. It was really sad, and he just found it so tremendously difficult

both to remember and to bring himself to remember.

EVANS: But Steve would know on that question, but I remember—well, I have to keep saying my impression was that if he'd lost, he would not have been involved in '68 at all. Now, he used to fall back, as all politicians do, might do, on that old bromide about, "I never see my kids anyway. It's been dreadful, and look what happened to David [David Anthony Kennedy]. He got pulled in for throwing rocks at cars. And just, frankly, you can have it. Fine with me." But that's you know, you just....

GREENE: Rationalization.

EVANS: But I think that was his feeling, that he wouldn't have. But I remember distinctly.... I kept saying, "Bobby, for god's sake, you can't, you can't

back Gene McCarthy. He's a charlatan, a fraud," which I believe. I mean, although he had a lot of guts, etcetera, et cetera. "But you're going to elect him president. He'd take over your party," no question about it.

GREENE: What do you know about the feud between him and McCarthy? Does it go back to where people say it goes, to...

EVANS: Well, it went back to Jack.

GREENE: Yeah.

EVANS: Gene McCarthy had no respect for Jack Kennedy. He thought he played his religion to the hilt and wasn't a good Catholic anyway. Kenny can give you great items, great items on this, stories. And Gene's a serious Catholic. He knows his theology pretty well. And Gene was more than a little bit bitter, I think. He was terribly resentful of the fact that Hubert Humphrey got credit for having helped elect McCarthy to the House in 1948. You know, he loved to tell you how Humphrey had nothing to do with his running for the nomination or his campaign. And he's a very bright man, and I think he just kept.... I mean he got jealous of Jack Kennedy, resented his using his religion—and I think there's a rationale for that. And that was the feud. I mean it was more a result of his dislike, or his inability to adjust to Jack Kennedy than anything specific about Bobby. But you can see that Bobby would have just doubled all those things in spades: arrogant....

GREENE: Do you think he was more serious about his religion?

EVANS: Yeah. Ethel certainly is. Yes, I think that's

true, but not in the sense that Gene McCarthy is serious.

GREENE: Not in a theological sense?

EVANS: I mean Gene McCarthy almost became—you know, I think he almost joined an order. Let's see, what else?

GREENE: Remember anything he said about Lindsay [John V. Lindsay]?

EVANS: That relationship, or the lack of it, started in this house in 1961. Have you heard the story?

GREENE: I don't think so.

EVANS: Another party here. We're great party-givers in this house. We had a party for George Lodge [George Cabot Lodge] when he left town since he lived

across the street. We used to see a lot of him. We had a lot of people for dinner including Bobby and John Lindsay. And they got in a terrible argument in the garden before dinner about the Kennedy wiretap bill, which Lindsay told Bobby, and had been saying publicly for weeks, was practically a fascist-type invasion of privacy. And Bobby didn't like that at all. I mean Bobby, he's attorney general and never liked Lindsay— well, I don't know that he'd ever even met Lindsay before he came. He must have met him, but this was his first....

So at dinner, after dinner, everybody got up and made a little speech. John Lindsay's speech was that when he and Mary [Lindsay] had come down here in 1954 or '55—whenever it was —to work in the Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] administration, they didn't know anybody. And thank God for George and Nancy Lodge, because they took them in and told them where to eat, and where to get a house, and where to send their children to school, and this long, dull, unfunny speech. And then five or six other people got up. Mac Bundy [McGeorge Bundy] was here, and I don't know, a lot of people got up and made talks. And then Bobby's turn. Bobby never made a toast. So, I said, "All right, Bobby, it's your turn." And he got right up and said, "Well, it's a very moving moment for me and Ethel because when we first got down here in 19—whatever it was—we didn't know anybody except for George and Nancy. And they told us where to do our laundry, and how to get our hair cut..." and did a parody, a very funny parody on Lindsay's speech. It went on and on, and everybody was rolling in the aisles.

GREENE: Except Lindsay!

EVANS: That was the origin of that feud; that's when it started.

GREENE: Did he view him as pompous?

EVANS: Pompous, not very bright, not very committed. Bobby could put it all over John in most.... Well, first, they are very different. John Lindsay is an actor and Bobby isn't an actor. Every politician is an actor, but Bobby is not an actor. That was one of the basic, fundamental differences about Bobby and everybody else in politics. There was no acting. Bobby was all right out of the heart or the mind. And yeah, he thought he was shallow. You know, he'd constantly make cracks at John.

GREENE: Did he ever change, like at the time when....

EVANS: Yeah, yeah he did.

GREENE: He did?

EVANS: For the Bedford-Stuyvesant, I think it was, he insisted that John be put on, or he did something about Lindsay being put on the committee, or….

GREENE: Well, he wanted to make it bipartisan, and he sought support from Lindsay and Javits.

EVANS: Yeah. And I think that, by that time, Bobby realized just what a serious condition the country was getting into and what a monster he thought Johnson was. I mean, he was reaching out, and people like John Lindsay suddenly took on a different coloration. They suddenly became potential saviors for the country, or that kind of thing.

GREENE: This is really just your own opinion, but do you think that maybe some of his feeling about Lindsay was a kind of jealousy? That's the wrong word, but competitiveness, the fact that here was this other young, attractive, liberal-thinking man in his own city.

EVANS: Who carried New York in '65.

GREENE: Yeah, and who was a potential rival for the presidency or the governorship, or any of a number of....

EVANS: I think he felt John was basically a lightweight.

GREENE: And never changed?

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EVANS: I don't know. I can't remember. But I think his.... I don't think he had much respect for Lindsay, until maybe the last, '67, '68. I can't remember now. I'm sure they saw each other. I can't remember where, or under what circumstances. But his feelings before that were that John was kind of a pretty boy, went to St. Paul's and Yale, lightheaded, and shallow, and not feeling. He even scorned him.

Did you talk to Dave Hackett?

GREENE: He's being interviewed now by John Douglas. They've done, I guess, one or two sessions.

EVANS: Well, getting anything out of Hackett is like like pulling teeth out of...

GREENE: Yeah, we were thrilled that he even agreed to do it, but he did. And I know there's a lot to be gotten....

EVANS: Oh, god, we used to have so much fun with the Hacketts, the Kennedys. What else?

GREENE: What about Manchester [William Manchester]? Did he talk about that, anything that hasn't already been written?

EVANS: I know all of it. I'm just trying to get the details. The deal was that—Bobby told me at least, that his worry, his chief worry, was Jackie, with what's in the book. But to go back to the Red Fay book, which we never really finished with...

GREENE: No.

EVANS: ... Bobby was, I thought, utterly unreasonable about the Red Fay book. He thought he had a commitment, and he recited chapter and verse over and over to me where the conversation took place and how it took place. Red, I think, went out to Hickory Hill and had a talk about the book. Bobby didn't understand, Ethel still doesn't understand, what is involved in writing a book. An author when he drags words, kicking and screaming, one by one, and puts them down on a piece of paper, there it is. I thought he was totally unreasonable. I never got into a fight with him over Red's book, but he knew that I didn't agree with him. It was such an emotional issue with Bobby, we really could hardly talk about it. Have you talked to Red about this?

GREENE: No, he unfortunately has not been interviewed.

EVANS: Why?

GREENE: Mainly because at the time he was first approached, he wanted to finish his book, and then nobody's ever gotten back to him. There are now…

EVANS: The book was finished long before...

GREENE: Yeah, well, this was for the John Kennedy part.

EVANS: Oh, no. You ought to do him with Bobby, because he knew a hell of a lot.

GREENE: Was it the question of invasion of privacy, or…

EVANS: Yeah. Using incidents that he had no right to use because they were a result of his close friendship, not an official.... Bobby was wild about this, I mean, unreasoning. As I remember it, I don't think he felt nearly so strongly about Manchester's, except that he felt that he had an obligation to protect Jackie. And Jackie was the one who was raging about Manchester, not Bobby. Of course, Bobby was forced to go to the publisher, or to send Burke Marshall, whoever it was, and take all the heat on it, but it was all for Jackie. One thing, I don't think he—I don't remember whether there was any specific passages he wanted out of there, but he knew Jackie was terribly unhappy, and that was it. That was enough.

GREENE: Was their relationship much closer after the president's death, or were they close even before then?

EVANS: Oh, I think it was closer after. But I never once saw the president and Jackie out at Hickory Hill. And I know I would have been there. I don't think they ever went out there. I saw them at the Shrivers [Eunice Kennedy Shriver] one night, at a party, both the Johnsons and the Kennedys, the Jack Kennedys. I think Jackie always liked Bobby. I don't think the relationship between Ethel and Jackie was all that close. It wasn't brittle, but it wasn't very close. I think it developed. It was always there. I think Jackie and Bobby had a relationship, but it obviously became much closer because he would see and protect her and do all her stuff, all her dirty work. But close in the sense that you used to read in the gossip columns, about some kind of incipient romance, it was totally not.

GREENE: As Lasky [Victor Lasky] says—that is the most amazing book. Someone should do an analysis of it. But that's a perfect example of the way he writes: "People have said that there's some kind of illicit relationship. However, I can say for a fact ..."

EVANS: "That I never saw it."

GREENE: "Now that I've planted it in all of your minds, it's not true."

EVANS: Well, a lot of people did, though; a lot of people thought there was something going on there that wasn't.

GREENE: Let me ask you this. And this is something also that is probably more gossip than factual. Did he ever discuss a remarriage...

EVANS: Let me say one thing before I forget it.

GREENE: Okay, let me just.... One second.

BEGIN SIDE II TAPE II

EVANS: One night, Bobby came over for dinner alone. Ethel was up at Hyannis Port, and he used to stop in here all the time. Because it was convenient to the Senate, maybe he'd go back to the Senate after he had dinner here. But this night he stayed, and I took him out to the car. It was that convertible Buick that they had, and Brumus was with him. So Brumus got out of the front seat, Bobby got in. He was pointed up that way, I think, so he went on up, turned around at the corner, and then came back to Wisconsin [Avenue]. I was walking back to the house as he passed, and at that moment, three or four Georgetown [University] or George Washington [University] students from

somewhere were walking down the street. And they looked up as Bobby was moving by, very slowly, and one of them looked at the car and said, "My god, there's Brumus!" True story.

GREENE: That's great! I'll bet he loved that.

EVANS: Oh, he loved it, sure. What were you going to say?

GREENE: Oh, I was going to ask you if he had ever discussed with you Mrs. Kennedy's remarriage, either in general or specific terms. This is something that nobody's really spoken to, but it's been an undercurrent sort of rumor for such a long time.

EVANS: I know. But I don't remember. There were a lot of jokes after Bobby died about who Ethel was going to pick up in Greece. I'm sure that if he had—I mean, he may well have, I just don't remember—it would have been "That's fine, Jackie's choice, and that's the best thing that could happen." I'm sure that would have been his.... I mean, maybe he said something else to somebody, but….

GREENE: But you don't know anything substantive about the Lord Harlech [William David Ormsby-Gore Harlech] thing, or anything like that? Whether that was all just rumor?

EVANS: No.

GREENE: Okay. I have a couple of things on press stuff. I don't know how much—you've said a lot already. But what about the panel shows? I noticed that each time that either you or Novak would appear, it was Novak when Robert Kennedy was the guest. Was this coincidence, or was it design? Did you shy away from it?

EVANS: No, no, never. I was never asked. And I don't know. I think probably that it was fairly well known that I was a friend of Bobby Kennedy's. And maybe Larry Spivak [Lawrence E. Spivak] decided that the feeling that....

GREENE: How did you think he did on these programs, especially on the....

EVANS: Not well. I never thought he did well. Now, I'm sure there were exceptions. I can't think exactly which ones. But I always felt that in handling himself as a personality on television, he could have done such a smoother—he could have made much more mileage out of some of the stuff than he did. But then, you have to stop and think that this was Bobby Kennedy, and he was not Stuart Symington [Stuart Symington II], or George McGovern [George S. McGovern], or Dick

Nixon, who was trying to create an image. He was interested in an issue. He was trying to make an issue or explain an issue. I think this was a defect in his whole political public relations. And in a curious way, it might have turned into his greatest asset, of being so obviously not cut from the ordinary political cloth, being so unique, calling a spade a spade, being a real son-of-a-bitch when he felt like it. And yet, when he was with the kids, of course, he had a fantastic empathy, much more than Jack. There was no comparison.

The situation was different; the war had built this up. But I

thought he did a poor job. And I used to sit there and suffer watching him, because he seemed transparent kind of, in a— particularly on the February 19th speech. Didn't you say it was the 19th?

GREENE: Right.

EVANS: There was almost a pathetic quality about that "Today" show appearance, or whatever it was. I think it was "Today". You know, "I've got to justify myself. I cleared it with Bill Moyers." The shrewd political way to do that would have been quite different, you know. I mean I'm not going to give it to you, but I could.

GREENE: Yeah, right.

EVANS: No, I don't think he did a good job. But that's me looking at him; me, as a conventional political reporter, looking at him as unconventional.

GREENE: Did he ever ask your opinion? Was he concerned about this? Did he feel he didn't do well?

EVANS: Oh, he'd always say, "How did I do?"

GREENE: You'd just play around?

EVANS: I don't think he ever had a feeling he'd done well on a show. I don't think he was ever particularly proud.

GREENE: Did he ever complain at unfair questions, or questions that he felt were unusually tough? Or did he feel that was an advantage?

EVANS: I know I remember he complained bitterly about one question that Bob asked him. And I'd have to see the transcript. I don't even remember which show it was, but Novak, he felt, was unfair to him with some question.

GREENE: He was on with Novak the day after he announced, the 17th of March, of '68.

EVANS: Well, I wasn't in the country.

GREENE: Oh, so you didn't see that one?

EVANS: No. I made a brilliant calculation, about March first, that from March 15th to April 15th would be a quiet period. Novak and I made this decision together, and the Middle East was heating up. So I left on

the 12th of March. Two days later Bobby announced; March 20th, Nelson Rockefeller [Nelson A. Rockefeller] took himself out of the race, a major political development; March 31st, Johnson announced he wasn't running; April 4th, Martin Luther King [Martin Luther King, Jr.] was killed.

GREENE: That left your partner with quite a lot to shoulder.

EVANS: Incredible set of circumstances.

GREENE: And you couldn't change any plans at that point, I imagine.

EVANS: Well, I came back early, when Washington started burning. That's when I came back. I was back before the 15th. I didn't see the.... In fact, I didn't even know, or I'd forgotten that Bob was on the show. But that wasn't the one I'm talking about. It was a show in ‘67 or '68. And we had dinner with Harriman that night—a couple of days later with Bobby and Ethel. And Bobby—I don't say he was furious; that's too strong—was giving me a bad time on Novak's question. You know, I said, "Well, Senator, take it up with Novak. Don't take it up with me." "Well, he's your partner, isn't he?"

GREENE: "Can't you control your own partner?" What about favorite reporters and columnists, besides the obvious ones like yourself and Joe Kraft [Joseph Kraft]? Were there any that he wasn't close to personally that he particularly admired?

EVANS: I don't know. He never liked Reston [James B. Reston]. He used to say about Reston all the time that he never said anything. Reston never would take a position. That was his word on Scotty. I don't know how close he was to Joe. Joe used to write speeches for him, help him with speeches. I don't know what he thought of the column. I think he wondered about Bill White [William S. White]. He knew Bill White had been a friend of Jack's and knew White had said publicly....

GREENE: Joe Alsop [Joseph W. Alsop], what happened to that relationship that they once....

EVANS: Nothing. It never deteriorated. Joe didn't like anything Bobby was doing, but he was trapped. He loved the family, he loved the glamour, the whole Kennedy mystique. It still really has got Joe. But you never saw Joe out there at Hickory Hill, never. I mean, maybe once a year. But he'd been very close to Jack Kennedy. He was always at the White House. But he and Bobby didn't have quite that relationship. But you remember that column Joe wrote,

"Bobby!"?

GREENE: Remind me of the contents of that.

EVANS: It was '68. It was that if he could only understand what was going on in Southeast Asia, Bobby could be the savior.

Hated Mary McGrory. No, I mean Mary McGrory hated Bobby, and Bobby would explain it by the Irish, and how the Irish sometimes, it's the way it works out.

GREENE: But wasn't that sort of a result of the whole McCarthy thing?

EVANS: Oh, it was.

GREENE: Yeah, I mean before that they had been kind of admiring.

EVANS: Yeah, very, very, I don't know. Yeah, it was McCarthy, definitely. Let me think.

GREENE: What about people like Dick Harwood [Richard (Lee) Harwood] and, well, he's the one that comes to mind.

EVANS: Well, they came off the campaign trail, I think. Hays Gorey, Harwood, Blackburn [Daniel M. Blackburn]—Dan Blackburn of Metromedia.

GREENE: Witcover [Jules Joseph Witcover], would you put him in the same….

EVANS: Who?

GREENE: Witcover.

EVANS: Slightly different. I don't think he knew Jules well. Yeah, a pretty general idea. But Hays Gorey and what's his name....

GREENE: Dick Harwood?

EVANS: Yeah. Dick Harwood. We never saw them out there at all before '68. That relationship.... Harwood went in hating Kennedy and came out kind of favorable.

GREENE: Was this.... Well, you know, there's a thing with the press. You wonder. Well, he obviously liked journalists, but was it also a question of realizing that this wasn't going to hurt at all politically

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to have journalists on your side?

EVANS: Oh, absolutely, calculated, certainly.

GREENE: Did people get suspicious of this in the press corps? Resentful?

EVANS: Some people did. Yeah, oh yeah, sure. I mean, well, how do you mean? You mean people who were left out, or who were brought in?

GREENE: Both. Those who thought they were brought in to be used, and...

EVANS: I don't think anybody who was brought in ever resented it, ever felt that he was being used. Half the business of being a politician is to know how to use other people without them knowing that they're being used. You can't sell all this crap, doubtless, but.... And particularly with the Kennedys, because they were experts, and they had an enormous arsenal of weapons—the boats at Hyannis Port, tennis at.... You know, the whole thing was theirs.

GREENE: What about those that felt they were being left out and were resentful from a professional point of view?

EVANS: Yeah, but they weren't, you know, because I think everybody had a crack at it. And let's see. I don't think there was much resentment. I don't think I'm answering these questions fully. I don't.... My situation, though, was a little bit different because it had come from Jack Kennedy—he was my friend—to Bobby, which was slightly different than kind of forming a whole new reporter-politician relationship in '65 or '66. The other thing was that Katherine, my wife, is a close friend of Ethel's. So, you know, we could write these—as I say, we wrote some pretty nasty pieces.

GREENE: Yeah, well, I was really kind of excluding someone like you who was obviously close personally, but….

EVANS: Yeah. Well, I think those guys like Harwood and Hays Gorey, Hugh Sidey [Hugh Sidey] and Dan Blackburn; I think they went into that '68 campaign pretty skeptical about Bobby. They hadn't known him. And they came out very moved by him and emotionally involved with him.

GREENE: Was that considered the place to be in the campaign?

EVANS: In '68? I guess more so than.... McCarthy was the place to be for a while. No, I wouldn't say that, no. I'd say that.... Hey, these are hard questions. I don't know the answers.

GREENE: No, I think you're doing, you know, you're getting the basics. *Time* magazine is another sort of questionable thing. You hear on the one hand that he greatly resented the kinds of things that they were writing and on the other hand he liked Sidey and he liked Gorey and he never considered it their fault. It was always the editors. Do you subscribe to that?

EVANS: Yeah, I think that's right. It's my opinion; it's not really worth much on that. I think he had a very, very warm and strong feeling for Sidey and Gorey, and maybe other *Time* magazine people I don't even think of. And he knows how the news magazines work, where it goes to a factory in New York, and is churned around, and it comes out quite differently often.

GREENE: Would they call you, either Robert Kennedy himself or Mankewicz, or whoever it was at the time, with a story? Did they leak some—well, not leak, but would they give you the advantage of having a story first?

EVANS: Well, it was a funny thing with us. I mean, in our office, all of Kennedy's people knew that I had a close relationship with the senator. And if Mankiewicz wanted to leak a story on Bobby, he would call Novak, not me. Because it was a more normal reporter-source relationship. I can't think, I can't ever think of getting a call from Mankiewicz on something, "Rowlie, we want you to know that Bobby's going to...." No, not to me. But they used every device to get this published, obviously. I mean, it's standard.

GREENE: More so, would you say, than anyone else?

EVANS: I think the Kennedys have always been more aware of the whole media concept, including public relations. A lot of it comes out of the 1960 campaign. Yeah, I'd say more so in that sense; they understood the importance of the press, and television, particularly.

GREENE: Would he call and let you know if he thought you'd done a good story? Or did it usually work the other way around?

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EVANS: He called me every once in a while, but I….

GREENE: More likely the other way.

EVANS: The what?

GREENE: The other way, if he was dissatisfied.

EVANS: But I'd see him that night or two nights later and I'd get it then. Bobby loved the stuff we were writing about Lyndon Johnson, because we were knocking.... I mean our column is a critical column. We criticize every politician, which makes it very difficult to have friends in politics, close friends. And without question, the closest, and probably the last close friend that I'll ever have in that area of politics is Bobby. Still, it was much more difficult with him than anybody else. I mean, George McGovern, Fritz Mondale, or Chuck Percy [Charles Harting Percy] are acquaintances; they're not friends.

GREENE: How did Kennedy feel about McGovern?

EVANS: Very, very strongly. Very warm about George. Loved George McGovern. No question about it.

GREENE: Did he ever discuss the fact that he had, at least the story goes, recommended to Lowenstein [Allard K. Lowenstein] when Lowenstein was looking for candidates that he go to George McGovern?

EVANS: Oh, yeah, he sent him to George first. Yeah, it's true, no question about it. And George said, "Thanks. Why don't you see Gene McCarthy?"

I think George sent him to Gene McCarthy.

Are you ready? I'll be there.

GREENE: Okay, I'm just about through. The only thing, though, I wondered if you had anything further on the Vietnam speeches. Did he talk to you in '67, before the speech?

EVANS: I mean, now looking back on it, if I had read that speech in '66 as carefully as I should have read it—and I didn't, I just kind of glanced through it very quickly. No, he didn't with me, he didn't. He knew how I felt on Vietnam. I was on the hawkish side in Vietnam, and we'd talk about it, and you'd get the feeling of how

anti-Vietnam Bobby was becoming. I always, as I say, had this ambivalence in my own mind as to how much of it was pure, raw

politics, anti-Johnson politics, and how much of it was really based, in other words, on Adam Walinksy and that kind of thing, and how much of it was really based on a reappraisal of a very strong position that Bobby had in 1963, up until Jack's death. But he knew how I felt, and I knew how he felt, and we'd talk about Vietnam. He'd never try to make a convert out of me.

GREENE: I think you should go eat dinner.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

Rowland Evans, Jr. Oral History Transcript – RFK #1
Name List