

Clark Clifford Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 12/16/1974
Administrative Information

Creator: Clark Clifford
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Biographical Note

Clifford, lawyer and presidential advisor, 1961 - 1963; Secretary of Defense, 1968 – 1969, discusses his legal counsel to John F. Kennedy and his involvements with administration matters, among other issues.

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Transcript of December 16, 1974 interview
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Clark M. Clifford – JFK #1

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Oral History Interview

With

CLARK M. CLIFFORD

December 16, 1974
Washington, D.C.

By Larry Hackman

For the John F. Kennedy Library

HACKMAN: I guess the best way to start is just to ask you your earliest recollections of meetings with Kennedy [John F. Kennedy]. Were there any in the House years, when he was a member of the House and you were with President Truman [Harry S. Truman], or after you left President Truman?

CLIFFORD: Can you remind me when President Kennedy first went to the House?

HACKMAN: He went to the House in '46 and was there until '52 when he beat Cabot Lodge [Henry Cabot Lodge].

CLIFFORD: My recollection of Congressman Kennedy would be an indistinct one. I would have met him some time in that period from '46 to '50, at which time I was serving as counsel at the White House. And I got to know, either Congressman or Senator, Smathers [George A. Smathers] during that time and then met Congressman Kennedy through Smathers. The relationship was perfectly friendly but not a close one at all. And then he went to the Senate in 1952. After that I had some contact with him occasionally. It would be purely social; we'd be present at the same dinner party together.

And then I can recall on at least one occasion—I think it was more than one—he telephoned and asked that I come up and testify before a subcommittee of which he would be chairman. I remember one occasion because I found the subject exceedingly interesting as I

studied for it, writing up my testimony, and being prepared for questions. It had to do with whether or not the position of Vice President should be changed substantially. It didn't start out that way. It apparently started out as an inquiry into the functioning of the President and whether or not possibly the President had too much to do. And I recall at that time being prepared and then testifying about the number of different hats that the President had: one, he served as Chief Executive; two, he served as Commander-in-Chief of our Armed Forces; three, he was the ceremonial head of the United States; and four, he was the political head of his party; and five, he was the innovator of legislation by reason of requests of the Congress.

The major thrust of my presentation at that time was that we should change the office of Vice President and move the Vice President out of the legislative branch—where he mainly is under our Constitution—and move him into the White House and make an Executive Vice President out of him, as that term is used in corporate language today, so that he would be there to assume any number of responsibilities that the President had. He could perform much of the ceremonial functioning of the President; he could do much of the political work that the President did. And I commented at length upon what I considered to be the insupportable burden of President Truman in performing all of those tasks himself. I remember testifying before Senator Kennedy and his subcommittee at the time and I had no premonition of what might transpire later on. But he seemed to be curiously and even inordinately interested in the whole subject which certainly became understandable as time went.

Then at some period in there he, in an informal way, began to consult me with reference to problems that he might have. And I remember one, that certainly was near the beginning, was his concern over a broadcast—a telecast—that had taken place in which Drew Pearson [Andrew R. Pearson] was the person being interrogated. It may have been a Mike Wallace [Myron L. Wallace] show.

HACKMAN: It was a Mike Wallace show, right.

CLIFFORD: And I also did not quite understand the degree of concern and outrage that the family felt—particularly his father, Ambassador Kennedy [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.]. Later, I also understood the nature of that. Drew Pearson had said that it was a national scandal that Senator John F. Kennedy had received the Pulitzer award for a book that he did not write. I remember going to New York and possibly spending a day or more up there, maybe two days, and we conferred with the officials of the ABC [American Broadcasting Company] network and finally obtained a complete retraction from them.

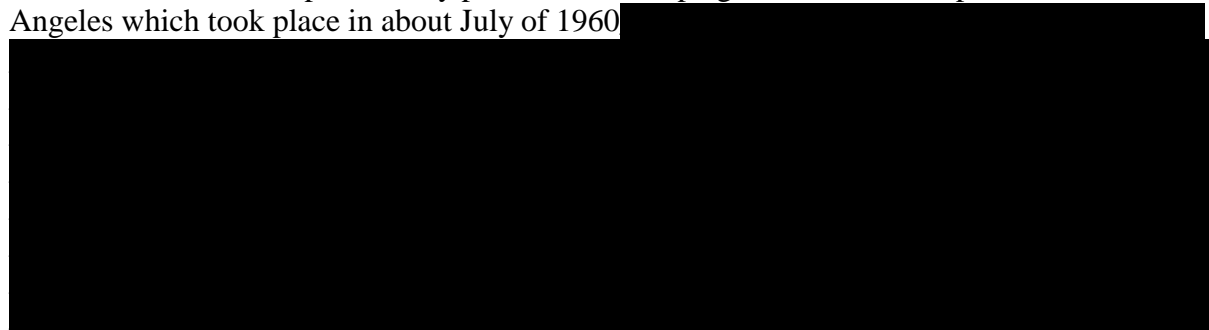
There were other matters in which he consulted me of a highly personal nature in which the lawyer-client relationship was involved and about which I would be unable to discuss. So by the time he decided to run, we had become friends—not so much social friends as we had become professional friends. And I recall one very interesting conversation with him. I do not know if I have mentioned this before. But at one time we were together someplace—whether it was in his office or whether we were on some trip that involved business I do not remember—and he indicated that he was preparing to run for the presidency.

And in the course of the conversation he wondered whether or not I would be able to perhaps be helpful in the campaign, at which time I told him that I had been a friend of Senator Symington [W. Stuart Symington] for some twenty-five years and that Senator Symington had spoken to me about it and that I was, of course, because of our long relationship,

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committed to Senator Symington. His reaction was a typically Senator Kennedy reaction in which he said, "Why I understand it thoroughly." And he said, "If I had known you twenty-five years and if you were going to be for somebody else, I wouldn't have considered you much of a friend—which put me completely at ease.

Even while the preliminary phase of the campaign was on—that is, prior to Los Angeles which took place in about July of 1960



Then, again in July of 1960, I would estimate about a week after the convention [Democratic National Convention] in Los Angeles [Los Angeles, California] had concluded he phoned me and asked if I would come out and have breakfast with him at his house on N Street.

HACKMAN: Right. Now, that meeting—on the microfilm that we have—you made detailed notes of. So that's covered very, very fully.

CLIFFORD: Just the thrust, to cover that chronologically, was that first he wanted to talk about the campaign. And I remember him saying at the time that he really wasn't interested in what I knew about the campaign of '52 or '56, because the Democrats had lost those. He wanted to go clear back to the campaign of '48 that President Truman had won and won so dramatically against such odds. And we discussed that through a very substantial part of the morning.

Then, it was at that time that he also gave me the assignment to prepare an analysis of the White House and the executive branch of the government. And I recall his saying at the time that his whole experience had been in the legislative branch of the government and those who had worked for him then, and who had been with him through the years had had the same experiences as he, and that this was going to be a very new challenge to all of them because none of them had been in the executive branch before. So I spent that summer, then, working on that.

The day after the election he, or someone in his behalf, telephoned me at my law office and said they were now ready to go over the memorandum that I had prepared, which by that time had become really quite extensive. And the Secret Service came by and picked it

up and took it up to—not Narragansett [Narragansett, Rhode Island]. Where the Kennedy family compound was.

HACKMAN: Hyannis [Hyannis, Massachusetts].

CLIFFORD: Hyannisport, because the father and the brother and everybody was there. And

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I think they spent a day or so going over that. And then it was just about that same time that he had been in touch with President Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower], and then he phoned and asked if I would take over the question of the transition from his standpoint. And I said of course. And then he made the announcement within a day or two after the election.

Then that next period, from November 6 or 7-until January 20, I gave almost full time to the transition. And I might say that I think it has become a model or a pattern for other transitions...

HACKMAN: It certainly has.

CLIFFORD: ...because there was not the bitterness of feeling between the incoming President-elect and the outgoing president that there had been on other occasions. I have a greatly valued letter from him within a day after he was sworn in, in which he was exceedingly generous in his comments on my assistance during the transition. It's a warm and friendly letter; again, a typical kind of letter from him.

HACKMAN: Can I go back and go over a few of things we've talked about now?

CLIFFORD: Yes, you can.

HACKMAN: On the *Profiles in Courage*, the Drew Pearson matter, can you remember what exactly he posed to you when he asked you for advice and for help on that? What was he.... I know at some point you went up and looked at the manuscript, I believe, or some of Sorensen's [Theodore C. Sorensen] notes or whatever. Can you remember how that evolved in more detail?

CLIFFORD: Yes. Yes. He had written *Profiles in Courage* and received a Pulitzer Prize and had received, of course, very favorable publicity for that. Then when the Drew Pearson comment came out the Pearson comment was given substantial coverage in the media and he felt that it was a direct and serious charge upon his character and integrity and veracity. Particularly, his father was outraged by it. He called me on the telephone and he was going to sue ABC and Pearson and Wallace and one thing and another; he was really on the warpath. And I waited until he finished this long tirade over the telephone to which I said, "Well, it all depends on what you

want to accomplish if you want to drag the matter out for possibly two or three years without getting a conclusion, then that's exactly the best way to do it, and get occasional publicity about it and all. If, on the other hand, you would like to get a retraction—which is what we ought to go with—which would clear it up, then I think we ought to get in touch with them and let's don't talk about suing any more at all." And I think that possibly he recognized that that was the better approach.

I went to Senator Kennedy's office and we talked about it at very considerable length. He gave me some material to go over. I remember some of it were notes that he had prepared when he was laid up with a serious back injury and recuperating in Florida from it. And I went all through those notes and I concluded for my own satisfaction that the book was his; he had had research done—which every author really must have had—but the book was his,

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the planning was his, and much of the wording was his. I then got in touch with the President of ABC, a Mr. Golden....

HACKMAN: There's a fellow named Oliver Treyz [Oliver E. Treyz] or something like that who was involved also.

CLIFFORD: He was the Vice President. I got in touch originally with the President whose name was something in the neighborhood of Goldenstein [Leonard H. Goldenson] and made an appointment. And I remember we were having a very heavy storm, and we were to meet with them at 9:30 or 10 in the morning, and I became concerned about my ability to get there the next morning. And I went up by train the afternoon or evening before. That proved to have been a wise decision because his father's lawyer was to come from Boston to attend the meeting and never...

HACKMAN: Was this James Landis [James M. Landis] at that point?

CLIFFORD: No. It was somebody else. —

HACKMAN: But Landis was somehow—do you recall who it was?

CLIFFORD: Well, Landis was not involved in the part that I played. I never encountered Landis at all. But the man who was to come from Boston didn't get there and I think I was just as pleased with it because then it left us—him and me—in charge of it. And we had, possibly, a day long conference with the ABC officials. And I think the President of ABC took part in it. And then we went over this material and we took pages of the book and took original notes of Mr. Kennedy's.... It seems to me we needed some additional material which we had to wait for and I have some recollection of possibly waiting over and having another meeting the next day in which we had gotten this additional material. And by the conclusion of two days of close application, they indicated that they now were fully satisfied. And they had....

My recollection is the television show had appeared on, say, a Monday night and we were up there by maybe Wednesday or Thursday because we were anxious to get a retraction at the next scheduling of that same program which took place the following Monday. And on that occasion we did and we had worked with the ABC people on the wording of the retraction. And it was just what we wanted. First there was an apology to President Kennedy—there was the statement that a thorough investigation had been made; it was found that he had written the book—and in addition to apologizing to President Kennedy, they apologized to the Pulitzer committee for an incorrect charge that had been made. It disposed of the issue. It was as complete a result as I ever saw in a matter of that kind.

Pearson, interestingly enough, months and months later slipped into the bottom of a column as I remember it, a little reference to “John F. Kennedy, the author of the book *Profiles in Courage*”...

HACKMAN: That was his retraction.

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CLIFFORD: ...which has always amused me because it was kind of a—maybe he felt some moral obligation and slipped it into a column and that was it. But by that time, the issue had gone anyway.

HACKMAN: Had you talked with Pearson about it? I know you knew Pearson.

CLIFFORD: I knew Pearson and my recollection is that I did not talk with him. I believe I was concerned about talking with him because I had had—not any personal experiences, but personal experiences with other clients, in which a contact with Pearson might be handled in such a manner as to multiply your problems. So I believe I did not contact Pearson.

I do recall at the time, interestingly enough, having a talk with Philip Graham [Philip L. Graham] of the *Washington Post*, who was close to Pearson at the time. I think that came later. I believe it's possible that that talk with Philip Graham may have prompted Pearson to come along with that retraction of his, for Pearson valued his place in the *Washington Post* more than he did any other paper, because that type of columnist must really have a Washington outlet. And Phil Graham became an ally of ours and I think was instrumental in getting the final retraction from Pearson.

HACKMAN: Do you remember from either Joseph P. Kennedy or from John Kennedy their opinion as to why Pearson did this? Was this just the sort of thing he usually did or did they feel he had some particular reason he was...?

CLIFFORD: I think Ambassador Kennedy felt that it was a plot, that it was a deep conspiracy of some kind, on the part of his son's detractors. I do not recall that being Senator Kennedy's attitude; I think he thought it was

a typical kind of Mike Wallace-Pearson broadcast, telecast, that was sensational and would appeal to people. I doubted that there was any conspiratorial background in which they were trying to injure Kennedy in order to benefit some other contender. I never got that impression.

HACKMAN: In the ABC retraction, on the wording of that, was that something that came out of negotiations during that day or had that statement been reviewed by yourself and Senator Kennedy before you went to New York? Was it basically something you had agreed on in advance, as you recall?

CLIFFORD: It was written while we were in New York. I think that they had no notion before we reached there that there was going to be any retraction. They have this come up from time to time and they try to bluff it through—they despise making a retraction. So after they reached that decision that they should retract then, it's my recollection that, the lawyer for ABC and I—and maybe Senator Kennedy was present, I doubt that—I think we worked up the statement and then cleared it and I think maybe strengthened it. And then they agreed to go a little farther. They did it quite grudgingly; it was not a whole-hearted effort to cooperate. They didn't want to do it. And the question was after a while they became convinced and I think in fairness did it. And also, it, from their standpoint, had some ugly overtones if a suit were to be filed, of some kind, because the

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charge that a man had unfairly and improperly accepted a Pulitzer Prize was a libelous charge and could have made the basis of a dangerous law suit from their standpoint.

HACKMAN: I'd like to talk, then, some about the Symington efforts for the presidential nomination. Can you recall there being much disagreement among the group of people around Senator Symington at that point as to what strategy to follow?

CLIFFORD: I had the feeling that there was not a unified, cohesive effort in Senator Symington's behalf, it was a scattered effort. I suppose somebody later received the designation of campaign chairman—I even forget who that was.

HACKMAN: Well, I think Charlie Brown [Charles H. Brown] from Springfield at one time had that title. I did several interviews with Stan several years ago going over some of this. It seems to me the title at one point went to Brown.

CLIFFORD: Well it must have. And I know he was giving all of his time to it. I never quite understood that Brown, as a result of that experience which must have been a painful experience to him seemed to retire. He had

been a congressman, I think.

HACKMAN: He had, from Springfield.

CLIFFORD: ...and I assumed that we had worked well together—I thought we had—but in some way or another he finished that effort with the feeling that in some way he had been badly treated or unfairly handled. And I doubt that I have ever seen him or spoken to him since. And oftentimes in those campaigns, even though you lose, you make good friends. The Symington campaign was a curious campaign. He had some good people; he was a good candidate from the beginning—we did have trouble with the press, I remember that.

HACKMAN: Why was that so? Can you answer that?

CLIFFORD: Well, yes. I had the feeling that in dealing with the press Senator Symington felt that perhaps they were not as friendly as he hoped that they would be. And I think that as a result he tightened up a good deal and was very cautious with them. And they're sensitive to that. As a result, he did not, I think, sell his candidacy to the press generally. Whereas, I think Senator Kennedy at least gave the impression to the press that he trusted them and spoke quite forthrightly to them, and he got really quite a good shake from the press.

HACKMAN: You're saying that some of the feeling of the reports in the press about Symington—that he didn't have much to say, that he didn't know a lot about some things—was that he just was maybe defensive and didn't...

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CLIFFORD: I believe that he was. And oftentimes in answering a question, Senator Symington has a tendency to stray from the question under examination. And in a number of instances I think they got the impression that he was giving them a great deal of extraneous material, whereas, they didn't really get an answer to the question that they had asked. I'm not sure that that was intentional on his part; I think that's maybe just the way his mind worked. But as the campaign progressed, I had the feeling that we certainly were not getting the help that we had hoped for from the press.

I don't know if I mentioned this before, but prior to the Los Angeles convention, Senator Kennedy had me come to his house again on N Street for luncheon—this was moving up close; this was probably within two or three weeks of the convention at which time he discussed with me in detail the availability of Senator Symington to be his running mate on the ticket. And then I saw him again about it, at which time—I would have to say if I am going to be accurate which I hope I am—he informed me that Senator Symington was his first choice as his running mate. I later learned—I do not know whether the reports are true—some others received the impression that their particular contender at the time was also first choice. So that when we reached Los Angeles....

At the time he also wanted to know if Senator Symington would throw the support that Symington had to Senator Kennedy on the first ballot. I discussed that with Senator Symington at length and he discussed it with his other advisers, and then I took the message back to Senator Kennedy that Senator Symington wanted to make a run at it on that first ballot; that later on he was disposed to favor Senator Kennedy if he did not make it, but he had had too many people working for him just to give up at that time. And so he wanted to go on the first ballot which, as you know, he did and received a certain number of delegates.

After Senator Kennedy was nominated, then I remember meeting with Senator and Mrs. Symington [Evelyn W. Symington] and their children to discuss with them the fact that Senator Kennedy had indicated to me that Senator Symington was his first choice if he, Kennedy, would be nominated. And we talked that evening and rather far into the evening about whether or not Senator Symington should accept it if it were offered to him and the decision was that he should. It was early the next morning that I had a call from Senator Kennedy, the morning after he was nominated—as I recall it was the morning after he was nominated, I think it was that morning—and I went and met him in a separate, secret room that he had in the hotel so that reporters would not see who was coming in and out of his regular room. And at that time, he informed me that because of a number of circumstances—I can't remember what day it was, but I think it was early in the morning—he informed me that it was to be Lyndon Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson], and he told me in some detail all that had gone on that night after his nomination and contact he had had with Sam Rayburn [Samuel T. Rayburn] who was there and others who were apparently pushing Johnson. I think he was thoroughly candid with me about it, the help that President Johnson—then Senator Johnson—could give to him in Texas and in the South. And I must say privately that it made perfectly good sense to me from a political standpoint. There was some duplication of strength between Senator Kennedy and Senator Symington, whereas, there wasn't much between Senator Kennedy and Senator Johnson. And, as it later turned out, the race was so close that that was a decisive decision in his winning.

HACKMAN: If you go back to the spring, say late '59 or early '60, and your own efforts

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 on behalf of Symington, can you remember any important decisions? People have often said that Symington seriously considered running in the Indiana primary, and I know the Kennedy people were very worried about Symington coming into Indiana, can you remember that decision at all?

CLIFFORD: Yes. My recollection is that I favored it. After a while, as that matter was studied and the deadline came for filing, I can remember one problem being the problem of money. As we were tempting to budget the funds that Senator Symington had those who were looking after his interests in Indiana indicated the amount of money that was going to be needed for him to make a real race there. I believe Senator Kennedy was entered in that primary; I don't know who else was.

HACKMAN: I don't think anyone else was.

CLIFFORD: And then the final decision, I believe, was that it just was not going to benefit the Symington candidacy to have a head-to-head struggle with Senator Kennedy in Indiana. I think we felt our strength wasn't sufficient to take it on and Indiana had been much more extensively cultivated by the Kennedy people. They were infinitely better financed than we. And, basically, the Symington candidacy was based on one hope and that was that there would be a deadlock and that he, Symington, would turn out to be the second choice of most of the contenders. And I think it was an accurate analysis of that candidacy. If Senator Kennedy had not made it on the first ballot, if we had gone through three or four or five or ten ballots in which no winner emerged and then the convention became impatient and anxious, others could very likely turn to Senator Symington. So it was felt that he should maintain that position because that was his basic strength and that that position would likely be eroded in the event that he entered Indiana and was defeated.

HACKMAN: Can you remember Frank McKinney's [Frank Edward McKinney, Sr.] advice being particularly important in Indiana or crucial?

CLIFFORD: I do not remember specifically. I'm sure his advice would be given the greatest consideration because he was a top professional from Indiana, a former chairman of the Democratic National Committee, and I'm sure that he must have agreed with that.

HACKMAN: What can you remember about President Truman's role in that period on behalf of Symington—in terms of the timing of his own endorsement or in terms of other efforts he made?

CLIFFORD: Senator Symington, I believe, was disappointed in the extent and nature of President Truman's support. I think that finally President Truman did support him; I think he felt it came late and was not perhaps as wholehearted as he hoped that it would be. I think I have never quite understood the situation. I do know that Senator Symington had served well in the Truman administration and I know that President Truman liked Senator Symington; yet they had not been personally very close—although

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Senator Symington was in our poker group. They were, of course, of a different generation. I think I have never quite understood that and I think that Senator Symington had the feeling that if President Truman had chosen to come out early for him and worked for him and maybe gone around the country for him.... But, I think that President Truman felt that as a past president he should not become a primary advocate. And there is very substantial justification for that view. He's a past president and he mustn't use that position in behalf of a personal friend, something of that kind.

HACKMAN: Right. Was Senator Symington making strong efforts to get President Truman to be more active, or were you, on his behalf?

CLIFFORD: I was not, but I think from time to time when he was in Missouri and had some contact and all, or others in Senator Symington's behalf, I think he wanted more concrete evidence of support. But I can understand President Truman's position. I do recall President Truman taking quite a whack at the Kennedy candidacy and Senator Kennedy's father—I don't remember just when that was....

HACKMAN: Well, I think there were several through late '59 and early '60 and then up to the convention especially just before the convention. Did you ever—did Senator Kennedy or Joseph P. Kennedy ever come to you with questions in that regard asking you to talk to President Truman about that?

CLIFFORD: No, I would think not because I think once Senator Kennedy knew that I was supporting Senator Symington, then I think he didn't violate the relationship that had come up then. In addition, I'm sure that Senator Kennedy knew that I would have nothing to do with that. The fact is that President Truman's position was not very well reasoned or very thought out; it was kind an off-the-cuff remark. I don't know whether it had something to do with Ambassador Kennedy's wealth or something of that kind. So I think they didn't associate me with that.

HACKMAN: At the time, I can remember there being great attention given to the fact that President Truman chose not to attend the '60 convention. Do you recall talking with him about that from the Symington perspective or talking with Truman during the convention?

CLIFFORD: No. And the fact is, I was not the liaison between Senator Symington and former President Truman. Although President Truman and I had been very close and all, Symington had Missouri people who were out there and who had politically supported President Truman every time he had run, and those were the people who were used. I was just too far away here in Washington.

HACKMAN: Can you remember, as Kennedy piled up victories through the spring, people who had been for Symington or who you thought you could count on that sort of came off the commitment or were particularly disappointing when they didn't come through?

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CLIFFORD: I don't recall individuals. I know only that as the Kennedy campaign progressed he gained strength; some of it he gained at Symington's expense; some he gained at other candidates' expense. But that was

not the concern to us that it might have been to others because by that time our strategy was to just be friendly with everybody and be everybody's second choice.

HACKMAN: I can remember DiSalle in Ohio, Mike DiSalle [Michael V. DiSalle], being someone that people had talked about as being particularly crucial early and his surprising endorsement of Kennedy. And I wondered if that had been one you worked particularly hard on?

CLIFFORD: I don't recall.

HACKMAN: What sort of cooperation, if any, was there then with other candidates to keep the selection from going on the first ballot to Kennedy? Was there much liaison with Johnson or Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] or other people that you recall? Were they coming to you frequently to exchange information?

CLIFFORD: From a personal standpoint there was none. I had no contact with the Johnson candidacy or with the Stevenson candidacy. I never heard of any. Now, there may have been but I do not know of it. I think, as a matter of fact, the Symington people did not take the Johnson candidacy seriously; I think I did not take it seriously. I was unable to see where Senator Johnson could get his strength. I think, as a matter of fact, as we considered, there at the very end, who the number two man would be I think that we really, at that time, did not consider Senator Johnson as a serious contender for the second spot. I knew how some of the Johnson people felt about Senator Johnson taking a second spot; I know they were unalterably opposed to it. At no time in the Symington candidacy did the Symington camp feel that there was any real possibility that Senator Johnson was going to be the nominee.

I doubt that we felt that Mr. Stevenson was going to be a serious contender—and as a matter of fact, he wasn't. I think that the speech that was made by Gene McCarthy [Eugene J. McCarthy] suddenly catapulted the candidacy into attention, but that was short-lived. Now, the Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] candidacy was a serious candidacy; he might have done well. I remember the West Virginia incident in which young Frank Roosevelt [Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr.] teed off on Humphrey for being a draft dodger—really rougher than a cob. So I know that Senator Humphrey was considered to be a very real contender. But the others, I think not. But I had no contact and I don't believe Senator Symington made any effort to develop some amalgamation of strength with others in an effort to stop Kennedy. I sure wasn't conscious of it.

HACKMAN: I found in the microfilm of your files a note dated July 1, which is a week and a half, I guess, before the convention starts—a week to a week and a half—entitled “Talk with Jack” followed by three categories: “Jack's Weaknesses;

Nixon's Campaign; Symington." One is "Jack's Weaknesses;" two is "Nixon's Campaign;" three is "Symington." I assume that had to do with the vice presidency.

CLIFFORD: Was it a week before?

HACKMAN: It's July first, so it's a week or a little more.

CLIFFORD: Yes. That's interesting. I suppose I must have had some kind of contact with Senator Kennedy about that and possibly was preparing to have a more complete talk with him about it because—I think this helps bring it back—one, if you wanted to advocate your client's usefulness on the ticket you would start out, I suppose, by pointing out the fact that his strengths were in those places where Senator Kennedy had weakness. That would be one. Then another area you would cover would be why Senator Symington was exactly the right man if the campaign were to be against Mr. Nixon. Then the third point there was what?

HACKMAN: "Symington." So Symington's strengths, I suppose, as a campaigner.

CLIFFORD: That would be Symington's strength and his usefulness and the fact that he was a good speaker and that he was prepared to go all out. That would be a memorandum to get my thoughts together so that I could make as persuasive a presentation as possible to Senator Kennedy.

HACKMAN: On the vice presidential question then at the convention, once Johnson had been chosen, did you get at all involved on behalf of Senator Kennedy in attempts to calm some of those who were upset at that choice? There was Walter Reuther [Walter P. Reuther] and Mennen Williams [G. Mennen Williams] and these sorts of people.

CLIFFORD: I did not. The one contact I had with him there was when he wanted to explain to me personally why it was going to be Johnson, so I could take the message back to Senator Symington. I'm sure he felt some personal obligation to do that because of the whole background. Second, he obviously did not want to incur Senator Symington's enmity or animosity with the campaign coming up. And this was the correct political course. He chose to do that with me personally; I'm sure there were some other people that he also did it personally. Then he would use fellows that were on his team. I was not on his team. I was in the enemy camp, you see, at those stages. But I always thought how really sophisticated it was of him not to get involved really in pre-campaign maneuvering to the extent where those bitternesses would exist after the convention. Because as I say, within a week after the convention my phone rang and it was Senator Kennedy wanting to talk with me and we picked up the old relationship exactly where it had been before.

HACKMAN: You said when Senator Kennedy told you that Johnson had been selected; he recounted some of the events of the previous evening. Can you recall what those were particularly regarding Johnson's attitude, which has been so

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controversial, toward accepting?

CLIFFORD: Yes. I don't remember the details but Senator Kennedy presented it to me on the basis that after he was nominated, he reiterated that in his mind his first choice was still Senator Symington. Then persons had come to him. Now, one I remember--no, I think I remember two--I think one was Russell Long [Russell B. Long] and the other was Dick Russell [Richard B. Russell]. They had come to him and had talked with him about the importance of the South and they had been working to get others. I have some recollection that Sam Rayburn was originally opposed. I know that Senator Robert Kerr [Robert S. Kerr], with whom I was very close at the time, was unalterably opposed to it. He was an Oklahoma Baptist and he wanted no part of it. And so I believe that when the decision was made sometime during that night, my recollection is that Russell Long and Dick Russell were leaders in the move and then they perhaps brought in others.

And then finally, I have some recollection that maybe it was Bobby Kennedy who got in touch with Lyndon Johnson early in the morning and they had to get a fairly prompt decision. And there was a lot of difference of opinion in the Johnson supporters. I think, as a matter of fact, if.... My own private notion of that is that--and I'm not sure I'm able to tell you why--I think that Mrs. Lady Bird Johnson [Claudia Alta Johnson] had a great deal to do with it. President, then Senator, Johnson took the leadership post very seriously; he actually gave it ten to twelve hours a day. And I think that she felt that he wasn't likely to last too long in that particular job and if there was any chance that you could get him out of that job, someplace else, he'd last longer. I think she was right. She always carried substantial weight with Senator Johnson and with President Johnson. And I think she had a good deal to do with it.

HACKMAN: Did you play any role in getting Senator Symington then to introduce Johnson the next day as the vice presidential nominee? Any involvement in that at all?

CLIFFORD: No. My guess is that maybe Senator Kennedy did it directly or Senator Johnson did it directly; I think that's about the way that worked. I played no part in that.

HACKMAN: Any conversations at the convention with Robert Kennedy [Robert F., Kennedy] that you recall?

CLIFFORD: No. I'm sure that I saw him there but I remember no specific meeting. He did not sit in the rather lengthy meeting that I had with Senator Kennedy. I knew Senator Kennedy much better than I knew Robert.

HACKMAN: What had your previous contacts with Robert Kennedy been and what had they been like? What was the tone of them?

CLIFFORD: One contact that I had had with him was when he was a staff member on Joe McCarthy's [Joseph R. McCarthy] committee. I can't remember exactly what the contact was but it was not a particularly felicitous one. I despised McCarthy and I didn't see how anybody could be associated with him. Then on two or three occasions—oh, more than that maybe—in the years prior to 1960, I'd be working privately for

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President Kennedy on some matter and on some occasions he called Bobby in. I would have to say that I was not particularly impressed with Bobby's judgment or wisdom in some of these matters that were pretty delicate. And I felt that whereas Senator Kennedy had the inclination possibly to use the stiletto or the scalpel, Bobby Kennedy used the meat axe and that bothered me. There was nothing unfriendly that occurred between Bobby Kennedy and me. It's just that we weren't close, our minds worked very differently, and we never developed much of a friendly relationship.

Later on, when President Kennedy entered the White House, during that three years that he was there, the relationship that I had with Bobby deteriorated steadily because from time to time President Kennedy would call me in on serious matters that involved the Justice Department to get an outside opinion. Well, that fact in itself did not endear me to Bobby; and second, again, we approached matters differently. Bobby had never practiced law and by that time, 1960, I had practiced law for thirty-two years, you see. And also it didn't help Bobby's and my relationship when, on a number of occasions, in which, President Kennedy would consult with Bobby and me on administration policy and Bobby and I would differ, and by chance it might end up that President Kennedy would ultimately—I'm sure after consulting others—happen to select the course that I had advocated. That did not endear me very much to Bobby either.

So that relationship never flowered. Although, interestingly enough, after President Kennedy was killed, Bobby came to me one time. And I remember we had a long talk maybe a couple of hours or so. All of these other things I think had been washed out by President Kennedy's death and Bobby then consulted with me on that occasion and then came back about what decision he should make as to what he should do. And we talked a great deal about a number of alternatives that he had.


HACKMAN: Regarding his own personal future?

CLIFFORD: About his own personal future. He was thinking of teaching at the time; he was thinking of possibly becoming editor of a newspaper; he was thinking of going to Oxford for two years. There were a number of alternatives and we took them all and analyzed them at great length. So certainly whatever differences of opinion we had had earlier had pretty well been removed by the time that this conversation came on, which was after President Kennedy's assassination.

HACKMAN: Was that a conversation that he had instigated or did it come about because the two of you happened to be in the same place at the same time?

CLIFFORD: Oh, no. He called and asked for an appointment. I think it was a very important decision for him. It so happened that in the years that Senator Kennedy, President Kennedy, and I had worked together, I believe that President Kennedy had come to have substantial reliance on my judgment and advice. And I think that when Robert was faced with a very difficult decision that could, to some extent, chart his whole career from that time on—as I say, I'm sure he consulted others and I think he felt perfectly free to call and to go into this with me.

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So it was within that background that when Bobby had this important decision to make that he came to see me twice about it and we talked it out in great detail. Oftentimes, your relationship with a man when a presidency is involved changes after that presidency is over and I think that happened in this case.

HACKMAN: In those conversations with him, can you recall what he saw as the advantages and disadvantages of various alternatives? What was he attracted to particularly and what were his reservations about certain things?

CLIFFORD: I cannot give you the details. He had a number of ideas. And some way or another the figure eight sticks in my mind: that he came in and then when he began to talk at random and I have some recollection of maybe taking a pad and a pencil and beginning to list the alternatives. It's always been my practice when you have alternatives not to look at eight alternatives and say, "Well now,

okay, we've talked it all out. Let's decide on one." My experience through the years has been, what you ought to do is start in and reduce the alternatives and eliminate the least desirable. And he and I went through that eight I have a curious recollection of having a pad and then talking over and eliminating one and then ending up with just two or three.

HACKMAN: That's not on the microfilm, so maybe at some point, since we have Robert Kennedy's papers, we could get a copy of that if it's still around.

CLIFFORD: It's entirely possible. I might have some notes on that particular interview and it might be of interest.

HACKMAN: Any contact with Joseph P. Kennedy through that spring of '60 or at the convention that you can recall—evidence of his role in the campaign?

CLIFFORD: No, I did not. The next time that I would have had any contact with him would have been after the convention.

HACKMAN: Any other recollections of the convention that stand out in your mind that might be of interest, any role on platform, or rules, or any of these kinds of things? There were a couple of rules changes there that had an impact as to whether "favorite sons" could...

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CLIFFORD: I have no recollection.

HACKMAN: Turning to the campaign, that roll of microfilm on the campaign and transition is very detailed and very thorough. A good deal has been written about it: you did an interview with Lauren Henry [Laurin L. Henry] for Brookings [Brookings Institution] later and I don't see at this point—well, obviously it's very important and was a transition that set a model. I'd prefer not to spend much time on that because so much is on paper.

CLIFFORD: I would make just one quick general comment and that is that this was the first time that this type of transition had ever been conducted. As you look back at the previous transitions, there was always...

[END SIDE 1, TAPE 1]

[BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 1]

CLIFFORD: ...that existed between the incoming and the outgoing presidents. You just take a second look back at the Truman-Eisenhower candidacy [*sic*, transition]. Eisenhower had absolutely no use for Truman. He didn't want to see him, he didn't want to talk, he wanted absolutely nothing to do with him. If you go back to the one previous to that in which one party changed to another, you go clear back to Herbert Hoover-Franklin Roosevelt [Franklin D. Roosevelt]. And the story that's been told there—I think it is not apocryphal—that when the limousine came to pick them up and take them up there, they rode in complete, stony silence all the way from the White House to the Capitol. So they had none. What we had to do really was break a good deal of new ground. And the arrangement that was set up was, I think, absolutely ideal: with President Kennedy designating me; with President Eisenhower designating Jerry Persons [Wilton B. Persons]. Persons and I met everyday. And every incoming person, by the time he took over the job, he was thoroughly oriented. That's enough, I guess.

HACKMAN: Let me just say.... I do have one or two questions and that is in regard to the meetings between Kennedy and Eisenhower. What did Kennedy come a way with in terms of a personal impression of Eisenhower and the people around him, Gates [Thomas S. Gates, Jr.], and a few other people, Anderson [Robert B. Anderson], who sat in on those meetings?

CLIFFORD: Generally speaking, I think that President Kennedy found President Eisenhower to be agreeable. They got along all right. They had two talks, and I know I've given the dates of those.

HACKMAN: December 6 was the first and then January 19.

CLIFFORD: January 19 was the second. I do not know if I ever said this—this is a little off

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the track—but President Eisenhower said to a friend of mine named George Allen [George Edward Allen] that he was greatly impressed with President Kennedy and comforted by the fact that he showed understanding and acquaintanceship with some of the issues. And apparently, because of the great difference in their ages—I think President Kennedy being the youngest president ever elected and President Eisenhower being the oldest president ever elected—Allen said that prior to that talk Eisenhower had considered Kennedy a “young whippersnapper.” So the talk they had was good. The meeting we had in the Cabinet Room that consumed a full morning—I think I've gone into some detail on that—was a very valuable meeting. I also wrote about that at some length for *Foreign Affairs* because of the emphasis which was placed on Southeast Asia...

HACKMAN: Right. Laos.

CLIFFORD: You bet. And comments that President Eisenhower made that had great impact on President Kennedy. I think he thought well of the whole operation from a personal standpoint. If I had to give an impression, I think that President Kennedy thought that he could do a good deal better—and particularly the men around President Kennedy were inordinately cocky. It bothered me some. I think I've never mentioned this before. But the Eisenhower eight years looked to them like eight years of drift. And there is some merit to that. But there were some reasonably solid accomplishments as you look at it from a more mature standpoint. It's almost indicated that we needed somebody like Eisenhower. We'd had twenty years of Roosevelt and Truman and a good deal of progress during that period and I think the country was glad to settle down with a man whom they all admired. And not a whole lot happened, but I think they didn't want a whole lot to happen. President Eisenhower never understood the presidency; he never had any concept of the dynamics of the presidency or the possibilities of it. And if you want to be fair, why should he? He spent his whole life in the military, you see. I think he'd never voted before. He had never been a member of a political party.

But it disturbed me a good deal after President Kennedy came in. And there wasn't anybody I disliked, I liked all the young men, but my God, they were cocky. And that made the Bay of Pigs situation more cataclysmic than it might have been, because I think that they felt that this was a real pike—that if Eisenhower and that bunch of mossbacks could do the job, they were really going to....

HACKMAN: It may be useful though, too, in some ways.

CLIFFORD: The Bay of Pigs?

HACKMAN: Yes.

CLIFFORD: That's an interesting comment. The benefits from the Bay of Pigs might possibly have outweighed the detriment because it brought that whole operation down to earth.

HACKMAN: Let me skip back then just a second. One of the things that you were involved

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in during the campaign was this small group with Fulbright [J. William Fulbright] and Albert Gore [Albert A. Gore, Sr.] which met frequently to serve as sort of an outside campaign advisory group. The Peace Corps idea has been suggested as something that your group pushed on and brought to the forefront of the campaign. Is that accurate do you think? Do you recall that being so?

CLIFFORD: It is my belief that it was so. Oftentimes, you know, when a man says in England that he invented something he'll find that just about the same time somebody in Moscow invented the same thing. So there may be differences of opinion about that. I had the impression that a good deal of the thinking and a good deal of the propulsion behind that concept came from that small committee.

That committee, I believe, was exceedingly valuable to Senator Kennedy. He knew the three of us well and I had already worked together so he had some regard for my judgment. He valued Fulbright's judgment in the foreign policy field, and he had a lot of regard for Albert Gore's political judgment. And at that particular time—it's changed now, but—Albert Gore was looked upon as a real comer and a liberal fellow from a border state. And we met regularly and there were two functions: one, when you're in a campaign of that kind you have a lot of decisions to make and there's something very valuable in a) being able to be out some place and then phone and say, "Would your little group please look at the following problems that have come up?" And there might be three or four. And we would meet and meet right away. If we got a call one afternoon, we'd meet at breakfast the next morning and talk about them, and then the word would go back, "This is the way the three of us think about them." I'm not suggesting that every time he followed the advice. But it's great to be faced with close questions and not know just how to decide it.... You get a lot of conflict around you from the local people who might not be seeing it from a broad enough standpoint, so you call and say, "Will the three of you look at this?" And then if you get the answer back, "You've presented us with three alternatives on question one; the three of us are unanimous on choosing course B," it's very comforting. And in that regard I think that the group was valuable.

In the second place, we did some innovative thinking of our own. We came up with suggested courses of action, with suggested policy decisions, and I think those proved to be valuable to him. I know that when it was all over, to each of us, he commented on the fact that this proved to be a very comforting arrangement.

HACKKAN: Now, I know Fred Dutton [Frederick G. Dutton] sometimes met with you and maybe he carried the message back and forth. What was...?

CLIFFORD: It seems to me that he was part of the liaison. It'd be different people at different times. Sometimes it would be by phone; sometimes he would designate a man to come in and meet with us if he thought that we would want to question the man closely.

HACKMAN: What about Robert Kennedy's role vis-à-vis that group or other contacts that you had during the campaign?

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CLIFFORD: I have some recollection of seeing him maybe three or four times. They had some headquarters in an office building over here; maybe it was on Connecticut [Connecticut Avenue] someplace. And I have

recollection of three or four times either being called there or being sent there to talk to Bobby about some phase of a matter that had come up. I don't have any recollection that he ever served as liaison between President Kennedy and this small policy group.

HACKMAN: Was there ever any time during the campaign when you felt that the views of your group simply were not getting through because of barriers put up, wherever, on the campaign trail?

CLIFFORD: I do not have that feeling about the campaign. I did find out after Senator Kennedy became president that the group around President Kennedy began to close in on him and do their best to keep what they considered "outsiders" out. I know I had a number of experiences when President Kennedy would phone and give me an assignment and then say, "If you could get to this I'd sure appreciate hearing from you in two or three days." I would get to it, I would be prepared to report to him, I would call Kenny O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] and say, "I've received an assignment; I'm ready to report it to him," and then nothing would happen. So what I learned after a little while—without causing any difficulty—I would learn that my message was not transmitted to President Kennedy. And then finally I might see him on some other occasion and say, "I'm ready to report." "Oh," he says, "you are? Well let's get to it."—like that kind of business. So I found out after a while the thing for me to do was to go through Mrs. Lincoln [Evelyn N. Lincoln]. So I didn't try to break through what has become know as the Irish Mafia. So I went through Mrs. Lincoln.

That situation bothered me a good deal. That's bad for a president. I've seen it happen before: when you get around the President, by god—particularly younger men—they want to be the whole show. And it's too bad because you shut a president off from outside contacts that can be very valuable to him. You may disagree.

HACKMAN: Did you ever raise that with him during that period?

CLIFFORD: I did not. I didn't think that was the way to go about it. The way I raised it, or the way I settled it, was just to go through Mrs. Lincoln. And then I'd go see him the same day.

HACKMAN: Can you remember the group—Fulbright, Gore, and yourself—offering advice, which was particularly important, which was simply not taken during that campaign?

CLIFFORD: I cannot.

HACKMAN: What about your efforts...? I noticed that a couple of times there were meetings on finances during that campaign, one in which Johnson, Kennedy, Jackson [Henry M. Jackson], McCloskey [Matthew H. McCloskey] were

involved—I don't know whether at committee headquarters or where—that you were involved in and a couple of notes that you sent to Sid Salomon [Sidney Salomon], the Missouri fellow, sending in substantial contributions from Chicago or New York. What do you recall about that whole side of things?

CLIFFORD: I'm surprised that I was involved in it at all. I have no recollection of being involved in the financial end of the campaign. And if I was, it would be minimal, maybe Sid Salomon got in touch with me in some way or another or maybe.

HACKMAN: There were only a couple of pieces of paper on it; it doesn't add up to anything.

CLIFFORD: No. I have no recollection of being involved. It is not the part that I have ever played in any campaign. Some men are good fundraisers, I've never been a money raiser.

HACKMAN: Right. I noticed in a letter that Kennedy sent to you on July 29, after the convention; there was a P.S. attached. It said, "Lyndon said the President is in a difficult mood. Perhaps you could intervene as I would like to see him." I assume he is referring to Truman, not Eisenhower. And I wondered whether this was a request to have you raise with Truman the possibility of him campaigning for Kennedy and exactly what he would do. Do you recall that?

CLIFFORD: I'm surprised. I reach the same assumption as you, I think by referring to the President, I suppose, he is referring to President Truman. Because if he wanted to see President Eisenhower, I was talking with him all the time. Oh, well this was in July—he hadn't been elected then.

HACKMAN: No.

CLIFFORD: Oh, well, that's obviously Truman. Oh, sure. As far as I know I did nothing about that unless I passed it on maybe to Symington or something of that kind. That very clearly means Truman.

HACKMAN: Did you get involved at all then with any contacts with Truman, working out his schedule or anything during that campaign, where he was going to go?

CLIFFORD: In no way. Again, as I say, those were handled by close contacts in Missouri.

HACKMAN: Were there any former Truman associates that you can recall sort of trying to activate during that campaign, Dean Acheson [Dean G. Acheson] or anyone that you knew closely that candidate John Kennedy wanted to become more active?

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CLIFFORD: I cannot recall. I know only that I did anything that he asked me to do during that time. And it's entirely possible there were people that he wanted me recall to see. I would have no independent recollection.

HACKMAN: Do you recall any conversations with Acheson during the campaign?

CLIFFORD: No.

HACKMAN: One of the recommendations in the transition study that you gave—not exactly a recommendation, but you said, “With Johnson as the Vice President there may not be a need to set up a formal congressional liaison office.” Can you remember discussing that with Kennedy at the time you gave him the report and then at any time in the future as to what Lyndon Johnson's role should be vis-à-vis the Congress?

CLIFFORD: At the time that the report was sent up to Hyannisport, I know they went over it well because within a couple of days President Kennedy had some reason to talk with me on the phone and was exceedingly gracious and generous about the report. Then, we had some contact—not particularly important—about it, until Palm Beach [Palm Beach, Florida]. And I went down and I think I stayed maybe three days down there. And there we had long talks—either sitting in his room or sitting by the pool. And it was a wonderful opportunity. It gave me the great chance to impart my whole philosophy about the operation of the executive branch and the White House to him. He was in a very relaxed mood. At one point maybe Symington came down—maybe not, or maybe Smathers came. Or I know one day we went out and played golf together, three old friends and Senator Kennedy. But it was very valuable. Then we discussed the cabinet a lot; we discussed how he was going to use Johnson. I'm sure that I was able to get over the point then that Johnson was by far the best liaison. Lyndon Johnson was far and away the top majority leader that I have ever seen before or since. He was a master at it. He knew every man's strengths and weaknesses in the party and he was a part of the establishment which Senator Kennedy never really was.

I also remember President-elect Kennedy being irritated that he was being pushed to name John Connally [John B. Connally, Jr.] Secretary of the Navy. It seemed to me he resisted that quite a little. He talked to me about Connally, and I knew Connally quite well. And I told him that Connally was a good man, and he did make a good Secretary of the Navy: he understood Washington, he understood politics. Connally and I were never close, but I thought he would be an asset in the administration. I think he was. And then I think Connally went down and made a good governor. And had the situation been slightly

different, why he'd be in a very different posture today. But I know he was being pushed; I know he told me one time in Florida too that some people were pushing Franklin Roosevelt for something and he wanted absolutely no part of that.

Then he confided in me more than once down there—we had long talks about it—his father was absolutely determined that Bobby was going to be Attorney General. And President-elect Kennedy had very serious reservations about that. And my recollection is that one time he suggested that I might talk to his father about that—he had some other things that he wanted me to talk to his father about. And I went to New York after Florida and talked to his father.

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I also went to New York and talked to Bob Lovett [Robert A. Lovett]. He wanted Bob Lovett to be Secretary of the Treasury. And I went up and had luncheon with Bob Lovett. Bob Lovett's health was not good, and he said, well, he would check with his doctor. But I felt sure that that wasn't going to work out. And then Lovett phoned me back and said he couldn't take it. I've since heard that Lovett was offered State and Defense. That's not so; people were incorrect in that. I was the one sent up to see if he would be Secretary of the Treasury.

HACKMAN: That's in your notes. You report back on it and there's discussion of him coming to Defense for a few months and then Bobby Kennedy going over there and then moving up when Lovett moved out. There's that in there. But I don't think...

CLIFFORD: I remember Ambassador Kennedy was absolutely determined that Bobby be Attorney General. That's where he wanted him. I think he felt that that was the right spot for him. And, I must interject, at the Alfalfa [Alfalfa Club] dinner, which took place the night after the inauguration, is where President Kennedy got off that great witticism in which he said, "You know there are a number of people who have complained bitterly about my appointing Bobby, my brother, as Attorney General." And he said, "But I just tell them. I say, 'Friend, he's got to get experience someplace.'" That's a wonderful gag. It just exploded in that hall—that wonderfully disarming type of wit that he had.

HACKMAN: Well, on the Johnson thing then, he did pull O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] into that job and set up a formal liaison operation. Were there later conversations you had with him—Johnson not being used or with Johnson about his role in terms of congressional relations?

CLIFFORD: I think that there were positions that I took that Senator Kennedy just felt otherwise about. The people around Senator Kennedy did not like Senator Johnson. And it made it really very difficult. He wasn't used at all really. He should have been used, but there were people around him, around President Kennedy, that still thought it was a bad choice. And they were embittered by a ploy near the

end of the pre-convention efforts in which Senator Johnson's camp raised the question about Senator Kennedy's health. And somehow or another—maybe, I don't know whether Connally was tied up into that, or India Edwards might have been in it.

HACKMAN: India Edwards is the name usually mentioned.

CLIFFORD: Yes. That's right. And that embittered a number of the Kennedy people. And so they had no intention of giving Johnson the time of day. He'd done his job by bringing Texas in. It was really quite an unhappy time for Johnson and a stupid decision on the part of the people around President Kennedy. There was a smallness, again, of attitude of the close people around President Kennedy that bothered me. He had great potential, he ought to have used everybody that could help him, and yet this small

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group around him had their own views and their own prejudices. I'm not sure it was noticeable to the outside, but it bothered me. Also, I was concerned about some of the things that went on there. There was some political business going on there—I could just see the outlines of it—that bothered me.

HACKMAN: Could you carry that a little further?

CLIFFORD: Well, in the whole area.... Maybe I could just say political business in Massachusetts is conducted one way; political business in the White House ought to be conducted a very different way. And I began to see some little signs of the old Massachusetts political operation maybe being given at least consideration—not by President Kennedy, but by some of those around him—maybe possible preferment for contracts or something of that kind. I have no details and I'm not making a charge. I'm just attempting to give you the climate. It bothered me. The tight climate around President Kennedy bothered me a good deal. [Interruption]

HACKMAN: Your own concerns, did they come primarily from your observations while you were in the White House working on something or was this something that was being talked about around town, as they say?

CLIFFORD: I heard nothing being talked about around town. I was in the White House a good deal, and I merely received some impressions that possibly outside people were attempting to use their relationships for a type of preferment which should not have been considered. I cannot give you any specific instances; I'm talking only of a climate that you sense when you've been there—I was there five years in the Truman administration. And I wanted very much for the Kennedy administration to succeed. I wanted it to be pristine in its attitude on all questions: political, and economic, and contractual. And I got a little impression that in the three years some

things maybe were starting that might possibly lead to trouble later on. And all I can say is that that's just a personal impression of mine and I can't sustain it with any instances.

HACKMAN: All right. To go back to the transition period, were there discussions of an appointment in the administration for Senator Symington, that you know of, that you were involved in?

CLIFFORD: Now let's see. We're back in the transition?

HACKMAN: As appointments are being made. Did you ever talk with President-elect Kennedy about the possibility of an appointment for Senator Symington in the administration, do you recall?

CLIFFORD: No, but we discussed appointments down in Florida; we talked about State and Defense, talked about a number of people. And then later on I was involved in some way with McNamara [Robert S. McNamara]...

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HACKMAN: Right. The conflict of interests thing and the investigation of his Ford [Ford Motor Company] holdings and how to work that out.

CLIFFORD: Well, and then a custom—oh, I know what happened. As President-elect Kennedy selected them, after they had talked and they had agreed, he suggested that they would come in to see me. And they did. And I think McNamara is one I remembered because he had a substantial block of Ford stock and had some options and could have made some decisions to make his stock more valuable. But others came in too. Whenever there was some question, why, President Kennedy would send them in. I don't remember at any time of any job in the administration being considered for Senator Symington. Senator Symington wanted no job; he wanted to stay in the Senate.

HACKMAN: You were suggesting strongly that a Budget [Bureau of the Budget] man be chosen early and that David Bell [David E. Bell] was someone that you were acquainted with. Are there other people that you can recall urging on President-elect Kennedy in that period that were appointed?

CLIFFORD: I know that I urged Bell. I've kind of forgotten now, was he appointed?

HACKMAN: Yes.

CLIFFORD: Well, he was a top-grade fellow. And I explained why that should be the first appointment. That man had a big job to do. And I knew Bell to be very able and absolutely honest. There are certain jobs, you

know, where honesty is enormously important and he was completely honest. I don't remember having any other particular candidates for any posts.

HACKMAN: Can you remember getting involved in any efforts, conversations with Bell or others, or with the Senator then, in your contacts with the Eisenhower administration to deal with Eisenhower's last budget to make it more realistic? There was a problem with Eisenhower overestimating the revenues, I believe, and then Kennedy had to deal with a short fall very quickly.

CLIFFORD: I have some recollection of discussing that with President Kennedy and discussing it with Dave Bell. I think maybe I was the one who contacted Bell and had him come down. He and I had a long relationship from the Truman administration. I have a recollection of discussing that later with Bell. I don't know whether I discussed it with others.

HACKMAN: We talked about Robert Kennedy for Attorney General. Do you remember discussing with President Kennedy other possibilities for Robert Kennedy? There was the Defense thing....

CLIFFORD: I'm sure we did. I don't remember the detail. I have some recollection that maybe Bobby was interested in Defense; I know that he was considered as

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Defense. I don't think—I'm sure State didn't come up in any way and Treasury didn't come up. I think that it was Justice and Defense.

HACKMAN: Do you recall any conversations about an appointment for Adlai Stevenson? Did you get involved in discussions about that?

CLIFFORD: Yes. We talked about that down in Florida. I do not recall exactly what recommendation I made. I think I urged that he be given careful consideration as Secretary of State. I don't know what happened to that; it seemed to me that it was kind of on the track. I think I had the feeling that it would have been a good. I know we discussed at great length Senator Fulbright, too, for Secretary of State. I can remember that. I think that some of Senator Fulbright's civil rights votes militated against him. He would have made a splendid Secretary of State, a better Secretary of State than Adlai Stevenson because Adlai Stevenson has an extraordinarily difficult time making up his mind. And I think maybe that's what finally may have decided President Kennedy.

HACKMAN: You recommended at one point in writing, I believe, the appointment of David Acheson as—what would it have been?—US Attorney in the District [District of Columbia] maybe?

CLIFFORD: Yes. And the reason I did that was because his father came to me. David, whom I knew, and knew to be an able lawyer, was bogged down in the labyrinth of the enormous law firm that his father was in. And he said David should get out on his own and do something; it's no fun being in this great big law firm and just being the son of Dean Acheson. And I knew him to be very able and I thought this was a good recommendation and made it. I'd forgotten I had made it in writing. And I think he was appointed, and I think he had a distinguished career as the federal district attorney. It was a good move for both parties.

HACKMAN: Any dissatisfaction on your part and John Kennedy's that there weren't more meetings with Eisenhower during that period between the election and the inauguration?

CLIFFORD: No. Not that I can recall. There were those two. And the liaison that I had with Persons was so close that I think it made up for it. And then I think I was generally conscious—I knew some people around Eisenhower, I knew them well, I knew that President Eisenhower had no real regard for this young man who he felt was untested and untried. And it didn't seem to me that it would be particularly fortuitous to press our luck in that regard. The two meetings that we had were really signal successes. That last meeting was one of the best meetings that will ever be held, where each president had his three top Cabinet men and the discussion was completely candid and open and forthright.

HACKMAN: No feeling later on, after that last meeting with Eisenhower and his men, that they somehow hadn't leveled on anything? You can't remember President Kennedy saying, down the line, "Gee, they didn't tell us this?" or "Why didn't

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they tell us that?" or something?

CLIFFORD: I have no recollection of that. I think as far as I was concerned, I would think the opposite feeling was there. I think that the three main cabinet officers that came in with Mr. Kennedy—that is State and Defense and Treasury—all were able men. I think they felt they'd been well briefed. They knew their outgoing counterparts; they'd worked with them before; I thought it was really quite a graceful and smooth effort and I think that my impression was that President Kennedy felt that same way. Now, you always learn facts after you get in the White House that you didn't know before, that and I'm sure that there were certain facts that came to President Kennedy's attention that he had not known before, and it's entirely possible that he said, "Well, I wish somebody had told us that," but that will always exist.

HACKMAN: One of the other things that you were involved in that period was that

committee on the defense establishment which Symington headed with Finletter [Thomas K. Finletter] and Gilpatric [Roswell L. Gilpatric] and a couple of others. I have a copy if browsing through it would refresh your memory at all. But, are there things which you can recall discussing with Senator Kennedy?

CLIFFORD: Yes. Yes, that was really quite a distinguished committee he appointed. And I think he felt that it would have some value. He appointed that committee, I believe, shortly after he was nominated...

HACKMAN: In September, very early, right.

CLIFFORD: ...so that it could be functioning and it showed his interest in it. The report was really quite far out, and purposely so.

HACKMAN: This is what I wanted to ask.

CLIFFORD: Yes. All of us involved in it had had a close relationship with Defense. Mine had been back in the Truman administration. I think almost the first matter I worked on in the Truman administration was to start in and consult with people about the possibility of having a unification of the services. So I had a substantial background and a great interest, as did the other men. What we wanted to do was go farther than anybody had ever really thought of before. And I think I can remember saying one time, if we're going to get half the apple, we've got to ask for the whole apple because the military will trim us down at every single step. So we asked for the kind of unification that no one anticipated we would get.

One detail, for instance, part of the recommendation, is that all members of the armed services wear the same uniform. Well, the navy would have died over that; the marines would have blown up the country before they ever agreed to do that. But this was the type of recommendation that we were making. The effect was good; it had a certain shock value. So when you asked for these exceedingly extreme developments, when you came back and

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retreated from them, you began to feel a sense of relief on the part of people, "Well, they're not going to be nearly so extreme." It led to developments that were valuable.

Secretary McNamara was a splendid Secretary of Defense—let's leave Vietnam out. Vietnam has destroyed thousands of people; it destroyed fifty thousand Americans in Vietnam. But aside from that his early years before the involvement in Vietnam were signal years of success. I had whole been so devoted to the whole concept of unification that I watched it with great interest, and we had never achieved it until McNamara. He really began to put it into effect. And it was working very, very well.

You see, President Truman told me after the end of the Second World War, he said, "We will never be able to fight another war with the organization that we had in the Second World War." He said it was so dismal, so unbelievably bad that unless you were close to it... There were times—I was in the war—there were times in the Navy, when I'm sure that our

major enemy was the United States Army rather than either Hitler [Adolf Hitler] or the Japanese.

McNamara got a good deal out of this report. He pushed hard for the whole unification and it was going very well. It was a very real accomplishment on the part of President Kennedy. He had started this group beforehand, that got good publicity. The report got a good deal of publicity for the extreme.... A number of people came out against it; the military despised it—that was a recommendation for it. And as McNamara came in.... If you will remember the three years of President Kennedy, McNamara was the star of the whole proceeding; it was just rolling great. It was just terrible that Vietnam had to destroy the progress that was being made.

HACKMAN: Another matter that you represented President Kennedy on, very early on—well, actually during the transition period—was the desegregation of schools in Louisiana, the New Orleans thing. Do you recall that at all?

CLIFFORD: Only as far as discussion was concerned. He did not send me down there. Somebody else was sent down—maybe then or later on. Was it Katzenbach [Nicholas deB. Katzenbach]? But we talked about it, I felt strongly about it, I felt that he ought to see it through. See, when I came into the Truman administration I got a very clear reading of what went on in the Franklin Roosevelt administration. Franklin Roosevelt talked a lot about civil rights and talked a lot about helping our black brothers, but he really didn't do anything about it. And Mrs. Roosevelt [Eleanor R. Roosevelt] had colored people to the White House, and that hit all the magazines and all. It was something of an illusion. President Truman really stepped in and did something. You notice all during the time President Roosevelt ran he never lost a southern state; President Truman ran in '48 and lost five Southern states. And I thought that that really set the way, and I wanted President Kennedy to take a good hard-nosed position on civil rights. And I know we talked about it, and I think that was the extent of my participation.

HACKMAN: I had thought you went down and met with some people, but I guess...

CLIFFORD: I did. Now wait a minute. I did go down and meet with—I did.

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HACKMAN: It seems to me, maybe, while you were in Miami some people from the state legislature of Louisiana came over and met...

CLIFFORD: Exactly. Good for you. Some people wanted to come over and see him and he and I talked about it. We both agreed it was unwise to see him and we both agreed that it was better for them to see me. And I sat in a long, long meeting with them. And they got to blow their tops and one thing and another and that cooled it off. Thank you for reminding me.

HACKMAN: Well, I'm ready to start on the administration.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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