

Art Buchwald Oral History Interview – RFK #1, 3/12/1969
Administrative Information

Creator: Art Buchwald
Interviewer: Roberta Greene
Date of Interview: March 12, 1969
Place of Interview: Washington, D.C.
Length: 87 pp.

Biographical Note

Art Buchwald, the journalist and humorist, discusses his friendship with Robert F. Kennedy, his impressions of the Kennedys, and the lines between the personal and political.

Access Restrictions

No restrictions.

Usage Restrictions

According to the deed of gift signed February 13, 1973, copyright of these materials has been assigned to the United States Government.

Transcript of Oral History Interview

These electronic documents were created from transcripts available in the research room of the John F. Kennedy Library. The transcripts were scanned using optical character recognition and the resulting text files were proofread against the original transcripts. Some formatting changes were made. Page numbers are noted where they would have occurred at the bottoms of the pages of the original transcripts. If researchers have any concerns about accuracy, they are encouraged to visit the library and consult the transcripts and the interview recordings.

Suggested Citation

Art Buchwald, recorded interview by Roberta Greene, March 12, 1969, (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

file

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

Gift of Personal Statement

by Art Buchwald

to the

JOHN F. KENNEDY LIBRARY

I, Art Buchwald of Washington, D. C., do hereby give to the John F. Kennedy Library, for use and administration therein, all my rights, title and interest, except as hereinafter provided, to the tape recording and transcript of the interview conducted at Washington, D. C., on March 12, 1969, for the John F. Kennedy Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. The interview is to be closed to general research for a period of 20 years, or until my death, whichever is the later.

2. During the term of these restrictions researchers may apply to me for written permission for access to the interview, and those receiving my written permission are to be granted access to the interview by the Director of the John F. Kennedy Library.

3. After my death, researchers may apply to Ann Buchwald for written permission for access to the interview.

4. Researchers who have access to the transcript of the interview may listen to the tape; however, this is to be for background use only. Researchers may not cite, paraphrase or quote from the tape.

5. I retain literary property rights to the interview for a period of 20 years, or until my death, whichever is the later, at which time the literary property rights shall be assigned to the United States Government.

This agreement may be revised or amended by mutual consent of the parties undersigned.

Art Buchwald
Art Buchwald

Feb 2, 1973
Date

James B. Rhoads
Archivist of the United States

February 13, 1973
Date

Para #1
nullifies

Para #3

Open 135 upm

death of donor

Alle Good

CA

3/26/04

Oral History Interview

With

ART BUCHWALD

March 12, 1969
Washington, D. C.

By Roberta Greene

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

GREENE: All right. Let's begin at the beginning. Would you tell us how you met Senator Kennedy [Robert F. Kennedy], how your relationship developed?

BUCHWALD: That's a very difficult question, because I thought about that many times. I can't remember how I met him, or where I met him. I never was part of the Kennedy clan, when President Kennedy was in the White House. I knew President Kennedy slightly. I knew him enough to say hello to him and I know he was a reader. But I met him on only two or three occasions. I really didn't know the Kennedys, and I wasn't part of the whole scene. And I really don't know when I first met Bobby or on what occasion. It seems to me that I got involved with them more through Ethel [Ethel Skakel Kennedy], which was, I think, the way most people got involved with Bobby; people were either politically involved with Bobby, or

[-1-]

socially they got involved with Ethel. Ethel loved to have a lot of people around. And so you found yourself being invited to Hickory Hill and suddenly becoming part of the thing there. And you never know how you got there.

GREENE: Can you remember the first time you went to Hickory Hill?

BUCHWALD: Well, that also is something that I couldn't remember. They have a pet show every year. And it's a pretty wild affair where everybody brings an animal, and we have prizes for the best, longest tail, the shortest tail, longest nose, the shortest nose. And the Kennedys, naturally, always had thousands of pets in the cellar of the house so that no matter what you had, there was a pet for it. And the Kennedys always wanted to win first prize. This is something about the Kennedys, they will never settle for a second-prize ribbon. So I was a judge and so there was a tremendous amount of pressure being put on me by Ethel.

GREENE: Was this real pressure?

BUCHWALD: Sure. It's kidding on the square. They pretend they're kidding, but they're not kidding. And it is kind of unfair to the rest of the kids when the Kennedys came in with a hawk or with some animal that Bobby Kennedy, Jr., picked up in Africa, but we took care of them very well. I once gave them third prize, and I think that it was the worst thing I ever did to them. At the pet show, the most famous anecdote

[-2-]

about Bobby that I can remember.... Bobby supposedly had a great deal of courage and Brumus, who played a big role in Bobby's life--Brumus was the big Lapland black dog whom everyone hated. I mean there was nobody who had a nice thing to say about Brumus, and Bobby loved Brumus. After the show, people just sit on the lawn and they picnic there. And Bobby and I were sitting, relaxed on the stoop, watching everybody having a nice time and everything, and suddenly Brumus wandered down. And there were these two ladies that were, I guess, around sixty each, sitting eating their lunch. Suddenly Brumus lifted his leg and peed on one of them. Well, she didn't see him and I guess it took about a minute for this to soak through. Bobby went white and he ran into the house. So when it came to a profile of courage in regards to Brumus, he was a coward.

Bobby had many Brumus stories to tell. His favorite, which he told with great glee, was the time he was elected to the Senate. One day he said to Harry Byrd, "How long do you have to be here before you can bring your dog to the office?" Harry Byrd said, "Bring him anytime; we'd be very happy." So Bobby brought Brumus to the office. He called up Harry Byrd, and he said, "I've got my dog here." And Harry Byrd said, "Gee, that's great, bring him down; I've got my dog." I don't know what Harry Byrd had; it must have

[-3-]

been some little spaniel or something. So Bobby and Brumus went down to Harry Byrd's office. Brumus went over to the little dog, and the little dog was so frightened that he peed on the rug, at which point Brumus raised his leg and he peed on the dog. And that was the last time Bobby said that he had been invited into Byrd's office.

I advise whoever is pursuing this living history to pursue Brumus; they might find an awful lot of interesting things that happened about Bobby Kennedy through Brumus.

GREENE: What was it he liked so much about that particular dog?

BUCHWALD: Well, Bobby had a streak in him--it was very perverse. He knew everyone hated the dog, and it was like a haircut. He also had a perverse thing about a haircut. And he once said to someone, "If somebody would stop telling me to get a haircut, I'd get one." I think it was the same about Brumus. If somebody would stop telling him that Brumus was a mean dog, he might get rid of him.

Jackie Kennedy [Jacqueline B. Kennedy Onassis] hated Brumus, too. And Rose Kennedy wouldn't allow the dog up there in Hyannisport because everybody hated him. I think this kind of gave Bobby some sort of a pleasure--the thought that everyone hated this dog. I think it was a perversity in him, and he enjoyed it.

GREENE: Maybe it was his feeling for the underdog, literally.

[-4-]

BUCHWALD: Well, I wish you could say Brumus was an underdog. Brumus was an overdog, so it could have been his feeling for the overdog.

One of the first columns I did on Bobby, he gave me. It was on the day of the Army-Navy--we were going up to the Army-Navy game on a train. It had to do with Mrs. Kennedy. The Kennedys went to a movie.... Wait, I'll find it.

GREENE: Oh, I read that one. It was one of the very first, I think.

BUCHWALD: It was the first column I did on him. Oh, here it is.

GREENE: You say he gave it to you. He told you the story himself?

BUCHWALD: He told me the story on the train. And he thought it was the funniest story that ever happened. And what had happened is that he and Mrs. Kennedy and the children decided to go to a movie in Washington. And they chose *The Man From Rio* because it sounded like a good cowboy picture for the kids. When they got into the theater, they discovered that it was a French comedy with English subtitles. Mrs. Kennedy got very upset, particularly because most of the kids couldn't read. So she told Mr. Kennedy she would get their money back, and they would go to another movie. Well, she went outside to the box office and explained to the cashier she didn't know the picture was a foreign one, and she wanted her \$14.50 back. The cashier said it was against the policy of the theater to refund any tickets, and anyone should have known it was a

[-5-]

foreign picture just by the cast.

This got Mrs. Kennedy very mad, and she had an argument with her and she demanded to see the manager. The manager wasn't any more sympathetic than the cashier,

and he said it was the policy of the theater chain for there to be no refunds. Mrs. Kennedy said she had several children with her who couldn't read subtitles. So she argued with him, and she kept arguing with him and finally, the guy got so mad and so worried because it was Mrs. Kennedy that he gave her back her money. And so she went back into the theater, she said to everybody, "Come on, let's go. I got our money back." And all the kids said, "We don't want to go; it's a terrific picture." So she had to go back and return the \$14.50. Bobby thought it was one of the funniest stories in the world, and he told it to me and I printed it. But some of the family thought that I was giving the shaft to Ethel. So it was really funny about the Kennedys; you never knew when they thought you were giving them the shaft or when you weren't.

One of the points of the story which I might make, as long as we're talking about the whole personality of Bobby Kennedy and the Kennedys, is they never carry any money around with them. And they're not noted for being great

[-6 -]

spenders. They were great hosts and hostesses. In their home, you were very well feted. But when they went out, they never thought about money. This was true of Jack Kennedy too. They never carried any. This was true of Bobby too.

GREENE: Did this present some embarrassing situations?

BUCHWALD: Oh, it never presented an embarrassing situation. I must say it wasn't in my case, but in some cases friends constantly had to put up the money.

GREENE: Did they usually get paid back?

BUCHWALD: I'm not sure. There was always a lot of grumbling about the fact that the Kennedys never carried any money and, never gave any thought about money.

GREENE: Do you think this was a reflection of their general feeling and attitude towards money?

BUCHWALD: Yes. They just figured somebody was going to send them a bill. Somebody was going to get paid. I don't think the Kennedys ever knew how you bought something, that you took money in and you paid for it, and then someone gave you something for what you paid for.

GREENE: This is very interesting. It must have been a problem to their less affluent friends, just in terms of doing things. You know, what was permissible for some wasn't for others.

BUCHWALD: It could have been. Keeping up with the Kennedys could be expensive, particularly when they went to Sun Valley and

[-7 -]

places like that.

GREENE: Do you know of any instances where this was a problem for friends?

BUCHWALD: No, I don't. I have to be honest and say I don't know of that situation. I can't even say that in cases where the people couldn't afford it, that the Kennedys may have picked up the tab too. Money is something you just never discussed with them, or you never discussed in great detail. When we went on the famous river trip down the Colorado, the bill was rather high at the hotel, and Bobby really screamed about that. And they charged him for some boats that he thought they shouldn't have charged him for. And he was very angry about the whole thing.

GREENE: Did this happen from time to time where he would make a fuss like she did over the money at the theater?

BUCHWALD: That's the first time I actually saw him do it but...

GREENE: It had happened?

BUCHWALD: I think so. I think I have to be very honest and say that most of the times I saw Bobby was at Hickory Hill. I didn't travel with him much, except for the trip down the rapids. And I had no occasion to campaign with him. I didn't campaign with him. So from my own personal experience, the few times that I saw Bobby, there wasn't that much opportunity to see how he behaved about dollars.

[-8 -]

GREENE: Would you say that your first meetings with him, especially at home, were before the president's assassination or after?

BUCHWALD: No, after.

GREENE: Oh, after. You didn't really know him either when...

BUCHWALD: No. Well, I probably could have. I just made it a policy of not getting too friendly with people who are in the White House; it just doesn't work out. My relationship with President Kennedy was kind of good. I knew he liked the stuff, but I was never in there; I never had to discuss things with him, and I felt much better for that. And the Kennedys do envelop you and take you into their bosom. As a matter of fact, when Bobby announced he was going to run for the presidency, I told him and Ethel I just couldn't come out there any more because, you know, you can't get involved with one person and still do a column.

GREENE: Yes. Well we'll get more into that a little bit later. That's good to know. What were your impressions of Robert Kennedy when you first met him?

BUCHWALD: Well. He was a very retiring guy, and he very rarely opened up unless he trusted you. And the Kennedys had a habit, all of them of.... In order to stay on their guard, they always asked you a question. They always said, "Well, what do you think?" or "What do you do?" so that you don't ask them a question.

GREENE: This has come up in a lot of things I've read. Do you think

[-9-]

they do that sometimes almost as a defensive mechanism so that they don't have to speak?

BUCHWALD: Yes. That's why I was pointing that out, as a defense mechanism.

GREENE: Are they really interested in your answers?

BUCHWALD: It depends on what they ask you. You see, Bobby was very fascinated with people's lives. He had such a different life, and I had a different life than he did. I was an orphan, and I was raised in foster homes, and I was in a Jewish upbringing. And he was very fascinated with this because this is something that he had never experienced, knew anything about. So he was very interested in other people's lives, particularly if they weren't Harvard, Yale or Princeton, which he knew about. So, you found you could hold his interest talking about things like that. Half the time there was kind of a veil over his eyes; you didn't know whether you were getting through or not.

GREENE: Were you sometimes surprised by how much he retained, that came out later or....

BUCHWALD: Yes. He would surprise you. I remember one time, when I was very concerned during the Israeli war. I guess it was the last war, which was what?

GREENE: June, 1967

BUCHWALD: June, 1967. And I was very.... No, was it '67?

GREENE: I think so, yes.

BUCHWALD: And I was talking to him about it and I said, "Gee, what's

[-10-]

the answer?" He saw I was concerned, and he didn't say anything to me. But the next day he called me up, and he said he'd talked to McNamara [Robert S. McNamara] and this was the plan. He didn't violate security, but he was very sensitive to my feelings on it.

GREENE: Did he express his own feelings on the Mideast situation?

BUCHWALD: Well, he was very concerned that it would blow up into a war. He didn't want that to become a real war and, like everybody else, I don't think he was that certain that the Israelis could do it as well as they did it.

GREENE: Do you think he sided with them?

BUCHWALD: He may have, but he wasn't an ardent sider. He was more concerned about the peaceful aspects of the solution than he was about a military solution. So my opinion is that I don't think he was that much on one side or the other; he just wanted a peaceful solution to the problem.

Things happen to you in sort of scenes, and the thing that I remember most about Hickory Hill and my impressions there was how much time Bobby spent with the children. He was a fantastic father in that he would go home, and there wasn't a problem that the kids didn't have that he wouldn't interrupt whatever he was doing to solve. The kids were always around him; he was always playing football or some sport with them. And he would have people out there to

[-11-]

discuss business with, but at the same time, the kids were always part of his life. In spite of the fact that he was away so much, he was an awfully good father.

GREENE: Do you think the kids ever got the feeling that he wasn't around quite enough?

BUCHWALD: I don't think so. Mainly because it isn't how much time you clock at home; it's what you do with it, and he was such a good father. Mrs. Kennedy [Rose Kennedy] said this at a dinner one time, which I was at recently--it was a fund-raising dinner for Bobby's debt--and she said that Bobby.... She once said to Bobby and Ethel, "Why don't you go away alone for just a while. We'll take care of the children." And he said, "Oh no, they love to be with us and we have so much fun together." He really enjoyed the family. I think one of the things I got from Bobby--I think all of us who were touched by him got something from him--was his devotion to the family and his tremendous feeling for children. He became very interested in my son; my son was Irish and he was a loner. We'd go to Hyannisport and Joel would stay by himself. Well, the reason he'd stay by himself was because the Kennedy kids are like a mafia. It's pretty hard for a stranger to get in

there, unless you want to push your way. And Bobby was very concerned because Joel was alone; he couldn't understand it. He thought Joel should be part of

[-12-]

the group. He really thought Joel should be part of the group. I couldn't explain to him the reason why Joel wasn't in the group was because of the Kennedys.

GREENE: And you never did explain it?

BUCHWALD: No. Because he wouldn't understand it.

GREENE: He wouldn't have?

BUCHWALD: I don't think so. He was a loner himself, strangely enough, but I don't know if he'd understand it--someone else being a loner.

GREENE: It would have been interesting to have found out.

BUCHWALD: Yes. But I never probed too deeply with Bobby, mainly because I never felt that he wanted to be probed too deeply.

GREENE: Do you think this was true of most of his friends--that they felt he would volunteer what he wanted them to know, and that they should not be too pressing?

BUCHWALD: Yes. He was sort of a Hamlet figure, in a sense. He was polite enough, but you never knew if you were intruding on his time or on him. You never got the feeling except like a trip on the raft where a guy is much more relaxed; you never know whether you shouldn't volunteer more, or you should let Bobby talk. This wasn't true of Ethel. Most people were completely at ease with Ethel, and she made everybody at ease. But Bobby was different. Everybody was always on guard with Bobby.

[-13-]

GREENE: When you say everybody, do you mean everybody outside of the family, or would you include them too?

BUCHWALD: Well, I couldn't speak for the family because I don't know. You see, the Kennedys are very overpowering. Bobby was less than the others. But they're constantly putting people on the defensive. If you know it, and you can give it to them back, then that's fine. But you can't let them bully you.

GREENE: How do they respond if you give it back?

BUCHWALD: They loved it; then they laughed. Now, I don't know if it was somebody that they didn't respect, or if it was somebody that they had some control over. But if you had something to lose, and you gave it back to them, they really liked it. It's kind of like a ball game. And they're doing it to each other all the time themselves. The family is constantly throwing shafts at each other.

GREENE: And this extends to the children too?

BUCHWALD: I guess it's picked up by the children.

GREENE: Did he take a hand in the children's discipline?

BUCHWALD: Yes.

GREENE: Was there much discipline?

BUCHWALD: I think there was. He was a pretty strong father, in that respect, and very concerned about displays of bravery and displays of cowardice. And he just wouldn't stand for any kind of display of, "I won't do it," "I can't do it."

[-14-]

He always urged the kids to do far more than they thought they could. This is something else, I guess, all his friends got from Bobby, that he always expected more of you, and you always did more than you thought you could.

GREENE: Can you remember any instances where this presented an embarrassing or difficult situation for either a friend or a member of the family?

BUCHWALD: Well, during the telethon.... We had a telethon down here which was a benefit for children. Junior Village was the hospital. We were all on a committee. And the Kennedys, again, like to do everything the hard way. If it's the hard way, that's the way they do it. And most everybody else is used to doing it the easy way. If you're going to do a telethon and you've never done a telethon before, then you bring in people who know something about a telethon. Well, this was unnecessary as far as the Kennedys were concerned because they were just going to tell them what to do. So we had some fairly good battles, but Bobby stayed out of them. We'd fight with Ethel, and then Ethel would say, "Well, Bobby wants it this way." She'd use Bobby as kind of a shield.

GREENE: Was she really saying, "I want it this way?"

BUCHWALD: Of course. They're used to getting their own way.

GREENE: Would they balk and become belligerent, the adults as well as the children, if they didn't get their own way?

[-15-]

BUCHWALD: I would say so.

GREENE: Yes.

BUCHWALD: That's a whole tribe in itself, you know.

GREENE: Completely different way of life?

BUCHWALD: It's different than anybody else. This is the thing that you admire the most, but it also is the thing that causes the most unhappiness. Bobby was described as ruthless. I think that may not have been the right word, but he was pretty determined when he wanted something.

GREENE: Did you find yourself in situations where you had to do things you really didn't want to do, especially of a physical nature--sort of compelled?

BUCHWALD: They were constantly challenging you. They would do things that weren't smart, at least weren't safe.

GREENE: Do you think, sometimes, for the father of ten children, that he took unnecessary risks?

BUCHWALD: Yes. We discussed this.

GREENE: What was his reaction?

BUCHWALD: We didn't discuss it with him.

GREENE: Oh, you mean among other people.

BUCHWALD: Our friends discussed it: why is he doing it; why is he doing that? And I guess we spent some time thinking about all the reasons. One is that--and now we're just talking theory, not fact--that he hadn't been in the war. He didn't

[-16-]

have a war record, and Joe Kennedy, Jr. [Joseph P. Kennedy Jr.], and Jack Kennedy did. Therefore, he was cheated out of the war, which would have been an opportunity to prove himself, which was what he was constantly trying to do.

GREENE: Do you think he was competing as much, or more, with his family than

anybody else?

BUCHWALD: I would think that in some subconscious way he probably was with Joe, Jr., and with Jack Kennedy.

GREENE: Would this extend to the intellectual, too? Did he feel a sense of competitiveness or even inferiority to his brothers?

BUCHWALD: He might have had an inferiority. I think he did as a child right through, being so overwhelmed, and the other brothers getting all the attention in the family.

GREENE: Do you think it had to do with his size, also, being small?

BUCHWALD: His size, and the fact he was in the middle of a bunch of girls. But I don't think he competed with his brother. I think he became a complete servant of his brother, Jack, completely devoted, he wasn't thinking of himself at all. He was just thinking of Jack. Now, when Jack Kennedy died, he suddenly, for the first time, had to become his own man. And I think this was a rough thing for him.

GREENE: Yes. Let's get a little bit into that later on because I would like to know how he changed over that whole period. What kind of people did he enjoy having around him? And

[-17-]

what kind did he enjoy not having around him?

BUCHWALD: Well, I guess he enjoyed people that he was safe with, or he felt he was safe with and...

GREENE: Safe in terms of trust?

BUCHWALD: And trust.... But, strangely enough, he liked newspapermen. He liked to have a lot of newspapermen around him.

GREENE: That was true of the president, too. Why do you think that was?

BUCHWALD: I think they were attracted to the type of person a newspaperman is. They admired the gutty character of a newspaper person.

GREENE: And being in on things?

BUCHWALD: Being in on things, and also they were fairly interesting people. So they sort of enjoyed each other. They liked an awful lot of celebrities. John Glenn,

people like that, became friends of theirs.

GREENE: Do you think that was a personal attachment to the men involved or to their status?

BUCHWALD: It's hard to say...

GREENE: Both, then?

BUCHWALD: Yes, both. But these people stayed good friends after that. I think, here again it's a cloudy area because what he liked about John Glenn and Jim Whittaker [James W. Whittaker] and those people were what they had done, not who they were. He was very

[-18-]

fascinated, as we've said before, about bravery and what constituted bravery.

GREENE: They have proven themselves.

BUCHWALD: He would constantly ask questions about mountain-climbing and about space, and things that he hadn't done himself. Ethel's fascination was with television people, the Smothers brothers, and Andy Williams, and Perry Como. Bobby's fascination was mostly with people who did things. He also, I think, was fairly loyal to the kids he went to school with and he grew up with.

GREENE: Who, particularly, among these?

BUCHWALD: Well, David Hackett [David L. Hackett] was the closest friend he had.

GREENE: Did you meet him on many occasions?

BUCHWALD: Oh, yes. David was out there all the time. As a matter of fact, David is now acting father of the children.

GREENE: What do you mean by "acting father?"

BUCHWALD: He goes to all the parents' night events, and he takes care of the children, and he's out there every day practically. He's a wonderful guy.

GREENE: Kind of a Dave Powers [David F. Powers]?

BUCHWALD: More than Dave Powers because he is much more involved not only with the children, but also with Ethel's personal life, her affairs, and a man to talk to and everything.

[-19-]

GREENE: Would you say that things were pretty informal or even chaotic at Hickory Hill most of the time?

BUCHWALD: Completely chaotic. There's never any form. There'd be twelve people invited for lunch and twenty people would show up. So we all had to sit somewhere else. But that was the fun of it. You never knew what the hell was happening. Everybody got with it. You just threw up your hands. If you tried to be formal, you were in real trouble with them.

GREENE: Was it the kind of situation where you'd go if you felt like seeing them, or did you always feel you had to be invited?

BUCHWALD: Well, we weren't that close that we would just drop by. There were a lot of people who did because of the tennis court and the swimming pool, and they didn't object to it. You see, Ethel built a movie theater by the pool, and they used to invite people out for movies a lot. That was a way to get people out there.

GREENE: When you'd eat at the Kennedys', were there usually children at the table, or always children at the table?

BUCHWALD: Not eating, but underneath, yes.

GREENE: And Brumus?

BUCHWALD: And Brumus. And the other dogs. It was quite a few people and animals.

GREENE: Did you get the feeling that it was difficult for him to separate his official life from his private life?

[-20-]

BUCHWALD: I don't think it was difficult. I think Bobby did it very well. He'd have people out there working while he was.... You know, one time they were typing up his book in one room, and we were playing charades in the other room. He had three people out there typing manuscripts, and it was a wild evening.

GREENE: But you didn't get the feeling he was particularly preoccupied and unable to loose himself from his job?

BUCHWALD: Well, I got the feeling when he was with the children he was able to forget and to.... If he was with us, it depended on the day. If he had something on

his mind, he might have been removed from it. But none of us are very far removed from our work if we're doing it well.

GREENE: Did he share his work with you at times like this, especially if it was something important on his mind?

BUCHWALD: No.

GREENE: No?

BUCHWALD: No. I wasn't a confidant, and I didn't want to be. I wrote a column, and I didn't want to know the inside on things because it would inhibit me in my own appraisals of them.

GREENE: And this separation was distinct in his mind?

BUCHWALD: Yes. I think he felt it too. You know, even when I was friends with him, I gave him some rough times. This one he really got mad at--how he settled the strike.

[-21-]

GREENE: I was going to ask you about that because I thought that was the kind of thing that he might have...

BUCHWALD: Oh, he got pretty mad at this one.

GREENE: Well, what would happen on an occasion like that?

BUCHWALD: After this appeared I was invited out there to a dance or a party or something. I was dancing with someone and he yelled over. He said, "I want you to know Ethel invited you; I didn't."

GREENE: Do you think it was said seriously?

BUCHWALD: I don't know. I think he thought it was funny. You know, it was such an outrageous thing. What the column was.... He was out in Aspen, I guess, or Sun Valley, and poor old Lindsay [John V. Lindsay] got stuck with this strike for twelve long days.

GREENE: And he had just come into office, hadn't he?

BUCHWALD: Lindsay, yes. It was his first day. And so Bobby comes into New York with ski boots on. He spoke to Lindsay for forty minutes and then the Mayor

briefed him on what had transpired. And Kennedy grimly listened to the story. And then he went to face the TV cameras, with Lindsay standing there at his side, Kennedy said, "This is an intolerable situation." And I said in my article, "There was a gasp from the press. No one had put it that way before. Mr. Kennedy continued. He called on men of good will to reach a settlement, and he said, 'It is no longer a question of principle;

[-22-]

it is now a question of protecting the city and the poor people the strike has hurt the most.' Then one reporter said, 'He makes a lot of sense.' And then another reporter said, 'If he had only said that at the beginning, everyone would have been willing to listen to reason.' When Kennedy described the strike as a catastrophe, you could see a look of gratitude on Lindsay's face as the senator spoke. Finally Kennedy revealed that he had sent a telegram to the panel and the mayor urging the transit authority as well as the union to accept the findings of the mediation board. Well, no one knows if it was the telegram or Mr. Kennedy's appearance in New York that turned the tide, but the next day the strike was settled. And sources close to the Mayor Lindsay say the mayor's warmth and gratitude to Senator Kennedy for coming in at the end of the strike has never been higher. The mayor just had no words to express it."

GREENE: Do you know anything about the relationship between him and Lindsay?

BUCHWALD: It was cold. They both were about the same age, and they both had the same ambitions.

GREENE: Do you think this performance during the strike was a deliberate attempt on Kennedy's part to belittle Lindsay?

BUCHWALD: I don't think it was a deliberate attempt to belittle him. I think it was just the way a Kennedy operated. A marvelous

[-23-]

story in that area is that Teddy Kennedy [Edward M. Kennedy] had worked very hard to get some American, who was born in Czechoslovakia who had been arrested, out of Czechoslovakia. Teddy had worked on this for a month, maybe for three months, six months, I don't know. I don't remember how long he had worked on it. Finally he managed to get the Czechs to release this guy. And Bobby was at Kennedy Airport, arriving on some other business, and this guy happened to arrive on another plane. And Bobby went over to where the guy was and greeted him and welcomed him. Bobby got all the publicity about this guy getting freed and Teddy was absolutely furious about it. So this was just Bobby's way of taking advantage of a situation.

GREENE: Would an incident like that provoke real anger between the two of them? Did they see themselves as competitors?

BUCHWAID: No, they saw the humor of it. Everybody had to laugh.

GREENE: But if it had been somebody else, do you think they would have been...

BUCHWALD: Yes, they used to get very mad at other people for doing exactly what they did to them. Another Kennedy trait is that they do it to you, that's okay, but if you do it to them, then you're a rat.

GREENE: And I think that's just the word they'd use, too, isn't it?

BUCHWALD: Yes. They never cursed. I never heard Bobby use a curse word.

[-24-]

This was another interesting thing about him; he was quite strait-laced in his morals, as far as I know.

GREENE: Does that come from his upbringing?

BUCHWALD: Yes, it came from his upbringing. He was a strong Catholic; I never heard him curse. And he never particularly liked anybody who did.

GREENE: Did he object to off-color stories, also?

BUCHWALD: Yes. He didn't laugh at them. And you could never tell them around Ethel; she always objected.

GREENE: So this extended to her too?

BUCHWALD: More so to her. We kidded her about it.

GREENE: Did your impressions of him change over the years, or was he pretty much consistent from the beginning of your acquaintanceship to the end?

BUCHWALD: I think that most people that get involved with the Kennedys are fascinated by them. They're so different than anybody else, in their way of life and their attitudes and their way of thinking. So, they didn't change; I just got to know them better. Therefore, I guess the word would be we understood them better. With most friends you see their weaknesses and their strengths a lot clearer, and you become tolerant of their weaknesses, if you feel their strengths are worthwhile. I would say this was the case with Bobby. He had a lot of weaknesses and things that you hesitate to admire, and, at

[-25-]

the same time, what he was going for was probably the same thing I was going for. So I was for him.

GREENE: You accept the whole, kind of?

BUCHWALD: I guess you have to, if he's a friend.

GREENE: Yes. What were some of the weaknesses that you're speaking of?

BUCHWALD: A desire to get things done, and not caring about who they hurt or how many people they stepped on to get it done. The idea was to get it done, and not let anything stand in their way once they made up their minds. I'm more sensitive about people than they were, in that respect. He was sensitive about poor people, disenfranchised people, but he wasn't sensitive in a sense about.... If somebody was in his way, he didn't care, he'd knock him over. That's the kind of sensitivity I'm talking about.

GREENE: Would he then try to do something to make up to the person?

BUCHWALD: Yes. They always made you feel, the next time they saw you, just great. You get so mad at them during the telethon, and then you saw him you for got it. And they did a lot of little gestures, they'd send you a funny thing, not a gift, but a funny thing. Yes. They were very good at making up.

GREENE: Do you have personal experiences along this line that you could tell about?

BUCHWALD: No because I never really let myself get mad at them. And

[-26-]

I never let them get mad at me. I was mad at them, and then I would wind up going out there, then find out that I forgot about it. It was always something that they were trying I to do which I just didn't like. It was just the way they went about things that just isn't the way I went about it.

GREENE: Let's see. I wanted to ask you about Ethel's involvement in his career. Was this something that simply was not...

BUCHWALD: The thing about it--and this was told to me by a member of the family, and I think it was important--is that Bobby always had a terrible inferiority complex. He just couldn't live up to his brothers. And he was caught in the middle there, I don't think he got as much attention as the other kids. Therefore, he was always shy and always unsure of himself. Ethel was the one that changed him and gave him complete loyalty and ego building and whatever. She devoted her whole life to him. Whatever she did was always for Bobby. So, of all the wives I know, she was the least competitive when it came to her husband. She was 110 percent. She would be the one who

would get mad. I know of an occasion when Chet Huntley said something and she just called up Chet Huntley and bawled him out, which Bobby would never do. She read everything, and she used to get mad at people that Bobby wouldn't even have time to get mad at. And, Bobby, naturally, being in politics, was more sophisticated than

[-27-]

Ethel about his enemies. But boy, Ethel never forgot and she was tough.

GREENE: Do you think that she had any kind of resentment towards--well, perhaps resentment is the wrong word--did she have any feelings towards the president because he did give Bobby this inferiority complex?

BUCHWALD: President Kennedy?

GREENE: Yes.

BUCHWALD: That would be hard to say. I don't think so. I didn't know them at that period. Then after the assassination, she never expressed that at all.

GREENE: Did this feeling extend to Ted Kennedy, too? Did she consider him in some ways a favorite over Bobby also?

BUCHWALD: No. I don't think she resented the family's treatment of Bobby. I just felt that she--and someone said this, and I think it was a very lovely thing--they said that she never could get over the fact that she was married to him. It was the greatest thing that ever happened to her. He was very devoted to her. I remember a couple of times he would whisper to me, "Go over and talk to Ethel; make her happy, cheer her up, or something." He was always conscious of her. And it was a very, very interesting--I would call it a beautiful relationship. What went on in the bedroom may have been different, but in any kind of a social situation

[-28-]

they were completely balanced and worked off each other beautifully.

GREENE: Was he protective and deferential toward her?

BUCHWALD: Yes. He used to kid her about her naïveté. She'd say things. And he'd say, "Ethel, don't say that."

GREENE: Did he really like her that way? Do you think that he liked her naïveté and lack of...

BUCHWALD: Oh sure. Oh yes. She had everything that he admired; she had complete

guts. It was really a fantastic marriage, as far as I know, of two people who served a function for each other. There were no fights, no bitter fights, whatever fights there were, Ethel would get her way in some other way.

GREENE: Did he seek her advice, do you think? Did he consult her on his career, or was she simply there in a supportive role?

BUCHWALD: I don't know. I wouldn't be able to answer that question. I wasn't that close....

GREENE: But did he have any objections, that you know of, to her participating in the campaigns or anything like that?

BUCHWALD: No. He was thrilled by it. I was out there the night that he was preparing to announce, and she was rehearsing her role. She didn't want to speak to the press, so she said her role would be that every time a newspaper person came up and asked her a question, she'd borrow a Kleenex from him and blow the kids' nose. And she was rehearsing it out there with

[-29-]

Christopher and Maxwell

GREENE: They put on a good show, as I remember, the two little ones.

BUCHWALD: Yes.

GREENE: We'll get back to that night a little later. Let's go back to the raft trip down the Colorado. Who was involved in this, besides yourself and the Kennedy family?

BUCHWALD: Oh, Jim Whittaker, Andy Williams, Otis Chandler and his wife and their children, Tommy Corcoran [Thomas Corcoran], the skier, and his wife; George Plimpton and his girlfriend, who's now his wife; Susie Markham, the widow of Dean Markham. There must have been forty of us, with children.

GREENE: How did thing like this get going? Who organized it?

BUCHWALD: Bobby organized it. He had gone down on a different raft trip in Oregon, so he decided he wanted to do the Colorado. So he organized it, and he asked me if I wanted to come along, and I was going to come along with my son. But then my son couldn't make it, and my wife decided she wanted to go, so we went. And this was completely different for us because we're not campers, and we're not outdoorsmen the way they are. It was a great experience, but I wouldn't want to do it again.

GREENE: You wouldn't. Did you plan to write about it in advance or did you go strictly for fun?

BUCHWALD: No, I went for the experience. I didn't know if there'd

[-30-]

be a column in it or not.

GREENE: Did it present some problems to you, keeping up with them?

BUCHWALD: It really didn't because I didn't, I just decided at the beginning I wasn't going to keep up with them. If they wanted to climb mountains, that was their problem.

GREENE: And they didn't seem to mind that you were...

BUCHWALD: No. Here again, they try you out, so to speak. And they see if they can make you do something you didn't want to do. If you didn't want to do it, there was nothing they could do about it.

GREENE: Did that lower their opinion of you?

BUCHWALD: I don't think it did because I didn't give a damn. If you gave a damn, it could.

GREENE: Well, there's been a lot said about Robert Kennedy's love of physical challenge and, of course, you've said a lot already about that. But, what happened on that trip that might be especially illustrative of this?

BUCHWALD: You're supposed to take those rapids in the boats, and the boats are built for them. And Bobby had a rubber raft, a mattress, and he decided that he was going to take it in the mattress. Now, a lot of the rapids were quite dangerous, mainly because there were a lot of rocks. You are wearing a life jacket but you can get caught in whirlpools, and anything can happen. There are pretty strict rules about

[-31-]

getting out of the raft. This didn't bother Bobby. The more they told him it was against the rules, the more he was challenged by it. So his big thing was taking these rapids in this air mattress, which was very dangerous. Those in the rafts were pretty frightened.

GREENE: Who else would that be, by the way?

BUCHWALD: Oh, Andy Williams, most of the people, even the guys like Whittaker....

Most people, when they do things dangerously, they know what they're doing, like Whittaker. He climbs a mountain, but he knows how to climb a mountain. But when you're doing something that you don't know too much about, then it's foolhardy; at least we think it is. Now the Kennedys don't think that way; this is just two trains of thought. So Bobby was taking chances that, as a father of three, I wouldn't take, much less ten.

GREENE: Did he encourage the kids to go along and to accept the same challenges?

BUCHWALD: Yes. He didn't discourage them. But they wanted to do it...

GREENE: And did they follow him?

BUCHWALD: Kerry did and, yup. But not the real bad rapids. We all had to do our own rapid on the air mattress, and it was hairy. And then when we got to the end of the trip, it was 119-degree heat. You either had to climb seven miles out of the canyon, or there was a helicopter that Bobby arranged, which

[-32-]

they don't like to send in. I went out on the helicopter and a lot of the kids did, and women. And most everybody else climbed out, which was quite a challenge. Two people had died the previous week, two Air Force candidates, so that shows you how tough it was. But this was a challenge, and everyone had to do it and they all came out of it okay.

GREENE: Did Mrs. Kennedy climb?

BUCHWALD: Oh yes. She went along with everything Bobby did.

GREENE: I was going to ask you, did she ever act as a restraining element, trying to hold...

BUCHWALD: No.

GREENE: Not at all. Not even when safety was concerned?

BUCHWALD: No. There was a lot of brinksmanship in there.

GREENE: No sense of trepidation, even where the children were concerned?

BUCHWALD: If there was, they weren't supposed to show it.

GREENE: Did you go along, after the rapids trip, to the Indian reservation and to Expo?

BUCHWALD: No. We pulled out after that.

GREENE: What about mixing groups, like this whole group that you just described sounds like a confusion of types and interests?

BUCHWALD: It was. People got along fairly well. The kids were a pain in the ass. They were fighting all the time and throwing peanut butter at each other. The lunches were pretty bad, as far as everybody dunking each other in mayonnaise and things like that. But that also was part of it, and water

[-33-]

fights the whole time. You just have to get in the spirit of it or you become a...

GREENE: A drag.

BUCHWALD: A blithering idiot too.

GREENE: Did he generally like to mix groups of people?

BUCHWALD: Oh, I think so. I think he felt the group was too big when it finally got together, but it was too late to do anything about it.

GREENE: But he didn't try to separate his political friends from his social friends in the same way that the president was known to do?

BUCHWALD: He did in a sense. You very rarely saw people on his staff with him when he was having fun. You would see people at Hickory Hill working, but you'd never see them there for social events.

GREENE: Did he deliberately try to prevent his social friend from mixing with his staff? Did you ever get that feeling?

BUCHWALD: I don't think he deliberately did. It was just...

GREENE: The way it happened?

BUCHWALD: Well, I think it was a way of keeping his lives separated. There were occasions when you might see.... At a large party, you might see the people who worked out there, but it wasn't very often. When he took a trip like this, there was nobody from his staff, or anybody that he was politically involved with.

[-34-]

GREENE: What were some of the social activities that they enjoyed going in for, in

addition to just regular parties and sports? Was there anything that he enjoyed?

BUCHWALD: No, I think most of it was sports. I believe parties was something that they.... They never liked to go out to parties. They did on rare occasions, but you would never see them at other people's homes. They always preferred to have people at their home. Ethel knew this, so she always had people over there. The big things were the ski trips to Sun Valley. They went skiing two or three times a year. They planned their summers around Hyannis Port. They had a constant flow of guests up there.

GREENE: Did you ever go up to Hyannis?

BUCHWALD: Yes.

GREENE: Any different from Hickory Hill?

BUCHWALD: Well, yes. It was nice. Bobby was very relaxed up at Hyannis Port.

GREENE: More even than in Virginia?

BUCHWALD: I would think so. He was very good company when he was relaxed. And so, it was kind of fun, and we enjoyed it.

GREENE: Of the places where he lived and vacationed, what do you think he liked best?

BUCHWALD: My guess would be Hyannis and Hickory Hill.

GREENE: Not too fond of Palm Beach?

[-35-]

BUCHWALD: Oh I wouldn't think so.

GREENE: No?

BUCHWALD: No, that wasn't his type of.... I think he only went down there alone to visit his father. I don't believe he even took the family down there; I may be wrong.

GREENE: What about this gala? How did that get started, the Junior Village Benefit?

BUCHWALD: Well, that started because Bobby wanted my wife to head up a movie, or some kind of a premiere for Junior Village. I hate premieres and I hate

galas, so I suggested, since Washington never had a telethon, it might be a good idea to have one. Everybody jumped on it. They thought it was a great idea. At the time Bobby wasn't running for anything, so this took up quite a bit of his interest, as it did Ethel's.

GREENE: How would your wife get involved? Why did they turn to her?

BUCHWALD: I would guess that they didn't want the Kennedy name to be on the top, so they got Liz Stevens [Mrs. George Stevens] and my wife to be co-chairwomen of it.

GREENE: What are some of the discussions you can tell about that went on in planning this thing? And did the senator participate?

BUCHWALD: What they always did--this is true of all the Kennedys--they would throw the idea out there, and then they'd let you do

[-36-]

it all, and they'd come back at the end. Ethel was very involved; she lined up all the talent and she got everybody to come. It was quite an assortment, the Smothers brothers, Perry Como, Andy Williams, Eddie Fisher, Roosevelt Grier. It was a hell of a show--five hours.

GREENE: You raised the money too, didn't you?

BUCHWALD: We got a pretty good sum, about two hundred and twenty-five thousand. Dave Brinkley [David Brinkley] was on it. Everybody got involved. And they involved everybody.

GREENE: Did most of the planning and preparation take place at Hickory Hill?

BUCHWALD: My wife opened an office downtown because she didn't want to get involved with their end of it. There was just too much stuff going on that she didn't want to get into.

GREENE: What are you speaking of, what kind of stuff?

BUCHWALD: Oh, you know, how many rehearsals Andy Williams would have, personal stuff. So Ann [Mrs. Arthur Buchwald] was involved with raising the money and a lot of other parts of it. They broke it down and Liz Stevens was involved with Ethel, and Ann was involved with her own thing. Ann never wanted to get involved with Ethel because she was afraid of getting into a fight with Ethel, and she didn't want that.

GREENE: Were they friends nonetheless?

BUCHWALD: Yes, they were friends, but they were only friends because

[-37-]

Ann never got into a situation where she had to go head on against Ethel. See, that's where you sort of got into difficulty was when you decided that you were right and they were wrong, and they just wouldn't admit to it.

GREENE: How did Robert Kennedy get involved in this? He finally did go on television, didn't he, and get his hair cut?

BUCHWALD: No. He never got his hair cut.

GREENE: There was some talk of doing that.

BUCHWALD: There was some big talk about it, yes. That was the idea. Mrs. Rose Kennedy was going to give ten thousand dollars if Bobby would get a haircut, and it was a great stunt. Perry Como, a former barber, was going to give him the haircut. Bobby wouldn't allow it. So we fought with him and we fought with him. The last day we argued with him, so then they faked it. They didn't cut his hair.

GREENE: But they pretended?

BUCHWALD: They pretended they were.

GREENE: Wasn't there some reluctance on Perry Como's part to doing it, too?

BUCHWALD: No, he thought it was a funny idea. No, it was Bobby who just was adamant about it.

GREENE: Anything else about that telethon?

BUCHWALD: Oh, there were just so many things that took place.

GREENE: Was Senator Kennedy pleased with the way it turned out?

[-38-]

BUCHWALD: Yes.

GREENE: Did he ever plan to do anything like this again?

BUCHWALD: No. And I have a feeling that had he decided to run for president, he would never have gotten involved with it. You see, Bobby always had to be

involved, he always had to be doing something. He wasn't much for the Hill; he wasn't much for that kind of thing. He wanted to always travel and always to be involved. This was just one involvement that he got into.

GREENE: Why did he choose this method of getting the money rather than just donating it or raising it through more conventional means?

BUCHWALD: For one thing, it did prove correct; we got the whole town involved in Junior Village. It wouldn't have happened if someone just gave the money, or if he asked ten friends to give the money. This way everybody was involved, Junior Village got tremendous publicity, and the ratings were very high.

GREENE: Did he ever try, to your knowledge, to get other people to do this sort of community fund-raising and participation?

BUCHWALD: He was very involved in the city. He really thought something should be done about it. Yes, he was doing lots of different things. He was on different committees for helping people get involved.

[-39-]

GREENE: What about your own career? Was he interested in your own problems as a columnist?

BUCHWALD: No. He was a fan, he liked the stuff, except when it was about him.

GREENE: Was that true of all the columns? He just didn't like it if it weren't flattering?

BUCHWALD: Oh, no one ever got mad at me, including President Kennedy. They had a good enough sense of humor to know what I was doing, and they really didn't get mad, at least not enough to not talk to me again. Here again was an example--I may not have had guts going up the mountain, but they sort of admired my guts in the way I refused to go. They were fans, they told me when they liked something.

GREENE: Did they ever advise you in any way?

BUCHWALD: No.

GREENE: Ever suggest material that they'd come across that might be helpful?

BUCHWALD: Not in a serious way.

GREENE: No?

BUCHWALD: No.

GREENE: Did he talk about himself much?

BUCHWALD: No.

GREENE: Do you think this was deliberate, that he just

[-40-]

did not want to reveal it?

BUCHWALD: No. I think this was part of his make-up. I don't know who he opened up to, but it certainly wasn't us.

GREENE: When you say us?

BUCHWALD: My wife and myself.

GREENE: Did you ever get the feeling that he felt the public misunderstood him or didn't...?

BUCHWALD: Oh sure.

GREENE: Well, what were some of the things he said on this?

BUCHWALD: He said he was the only one he knew who had both business and labor against him when he ran. And he could never understand.... But he was always trying to figure out how to overcome this image he had of being ruthless. Hew knew it was there.

GREENE: Did he ever ask your advice on how he might do it?

BUCHWALD: No, he discussed it, his knowledge of it. He said, "I know it, and there's not much I can do about it."

GREENE: What did he think were his weaknesses beyond the general ruthlessness? Where did he think he was most vulnerable?

BUCHWALD: I don't know where he thought he was the most

[-41-]

vulnerable, but he was fairly honest in his assessments of himself. He never

kidded himself, and never kidded the way things were going. I think one of the things that was really indicative of Bobby was one time I was at party, and I was standing with him and somebody came up and said something.... He was at his lowest ebb, everything was going wrong...

GREENE: When, about, was this, do you know?

BUCHWALD: I don't know, the wiretapping. When it was revealed, or someone said, "Boy, it's really bad, now." And Bobby got very angry, and he said, "Well, what's bad? Heck, life is full of these things." He says, "You got to meet them." And he was very annoyed if somebody was downbeat. That's another thing about Bobby, and about the Kennedys, they didn't like anybody around them who was downbeat, who would say it couldn't be done, or don't do it. Everything had to be upbeat. And this was a good thing.

GREENE: Did he just accept the problems that went with being who he was?

BUCHWALD: That's a hard question to answer, if you "accept" them or not. I think he was going through, since

[-42-]

his brother's death, a real different adjustment in his life--who he was, where he fit into things--and I don't think this was finished. I believe it was going on; it was a process that was continuing. I think he accepted it a lot more after his brother's death than before, where he probably really didn't know who he was.

GREENE: Well, of course, he was put into a lot larger role, too, once his brother died.

BUCHWALD: Yes. And suddenly he wasn't in the shadow; he was out there in the limelight.

GREENE: What do you remember about this whole period after the assassination, for six months or so?

BUCHWALD: I did not know him right after the assassination. How I came to know him and the circumstances....But I know I wasn't with him or I wasn't part of the circle, after the president's death.

GREENE: Was he already a senator when you started to see more of him?

BUCHWALD: He was running, yes, he was running.

GREENE: Well, what do you remember about the whole discussion about whether he should run, or what else he might do instead?

BUCHWALD: All I remember out of it was that Averell Harriman was the one who talked him into it, as far as I know.

GREENE: Really?

BUCHWALD: Yes.

GREENE: What were the circumstances of that?

[-43-]

BUCHWALD: Averell was very involved in New York politics, and they had always been trying to look for a candidate, a Democratic candidate, and they've never had a decent one in New York. Bobby was the first one to come along. I think Bobby just had to do something, and Averell talked him into it.

GREENE: Do you feel he was kind of being dragged--that he really wasn't that anxious at first?

BUCHWALD: I couldn't answer that either. I was with him on election night in New York when he won.

GREENE: Could you tell about that?

BUCHWALD: It was just by accident. I was walking down the street, along 33rd Street, I guess. The Hotel Penn was there; I guess it's the Statler Hilton now. Suddenly Bobby pulled up in his limousine, and I said, "Hi." And he said, "Hi, come on." So we went in the side door and up the freight elevator, and I suddenly became part of the inner circle. And we went up to the room where they were counting votes, and it looked very good.

GREENE: Did he think all along that he probably would win?

BUCHWALD: Wrong guy to ask.

GREENE: He didn't say anything to you about....

BUCHWALD: No. That's the thing about this. Whoever's listening to this tape, I wish they'd keep in mind that I wasn't that close to Bobby.

[-44-]

GREENE: And it was mainly a social thing?

BUCHWALD: It was social, and I just never....The people who were much closer were George Stevens, Rowly Evans [Rowland Evans Jr.], and David Hackett, Bill vanden Heuvel [William J. vanden Heuvel]. And he may have expressed things to them, but I was kind of afraid to get that involved. I just would never say to him, "Do you think you'll win?" First, that would be an insult: he'd get sore if you said that to him. Obviously, he thought he was going to win.

GREENE: Did he seem really enthusiastic?

BUCHWALD: Yes. That was a big night, and kind of fun to be there.

GREENE: Who else was there?

BUCHWALD: Bill vanden Heuvel and his wife, and Mary McGrory was there, I remember. They finally threw us out. We were crowding the place too much. The kids were there, and they were getting to be a pain in the ass. So finally, the people who were renting this room where they were getting reports from everybody threw everyone out. Then I got lost and went on.

GREENE: You wrote somewhere about Ethel Kennedy's saying a prayer at the table, and you asked if you could say a Jewish prayer. Why don't you repeat that? That was such an interesting story.

BUCHWALD: Well, this was a true story. It was at lunch, and Ethel's very religious. Whenever we sat down, no matter who the guest was, she'd insist on a blessing, for lunch, or dinner.

[-45-]

So one time, kiddingly, I said to her, "Look, you're always saying a Catholic prayer, why don't we have a Jewish prayer?" And she said, in all seriousness, "But who would you pray to?" And I said, "Well, the god of rain, the god of wheat, the god of flour." And the whole table broke up; they thought it was the funniest thing; Bobby thought it was the funniest thing; he just howled.

GREENE: Did you get the feeling they were kind of naive in these things?

BUCHWALD: Ethel was. Ethel's got sophistication and naïveté, a combination which makes her a remarkable, interesting person.

GREENE: Were they interested, particularly Senator Kennedy in your in religious feelings, since you were of such a different background?

BUCHWALD: Yes, they were fascinated with that. And I made it a big joke all the time; I became far more Jewish than I am, just to...

GREENE: Suit them?

BUCHWALD: Not to suit them, just as a means of giving them the needle, saying, "You never see any Irish people who are doing anything decent in the theater or...." It was just needling. There was constant needling going on all the time, by everybody.

[-46-]

GREENE: Did you get the feeling that you sort of had to be funny, if you were going to remain popular?

BUCHWALD: No, I don't know if it's to remain popular because there were certainly people there that weren't. But the point is...

GREENE: You yourself...?

BUCHWALD: I enjoy it. It's part of my life, so if you do something well, you probably do it.

GREENE: Was the senator interested in the changes in the church? Did he ever talk about how he felt?

BUCHWALD: No, Ethel talked about that more. I don't know where they stood, if they were on the liberal side or not. But I think they were interested. She still is.

GREENE: But they still didn't speak specifically about certain issues, how they felt about them?

BUCHWALD: Not to me. Do you want to take a break?

[Interruption]

GREENE: We talked a little bit about women and family. Were there any types of women that particularly irked him, that he really did not like to have around?

BUCHWALD: He was very good with women. Women all went away very thrilled with Bobby. My wife was always happy to sit next to Bobby. I think he opened up a lot more with women than he did with men.

[-47-]

GREENE: They gave him greater confidence, do you think?

BUCHWALD: I think so. My wife would come home and say, "I had a marvelous talk with Bobby." And I knew that if I had that same talk, he wouldn't have opened up that much. All the gals I know loved Bobby.

GREENE: But it was somewhat different from the president, wasn't it? It wasn't the same kind of urbane charm; it was more protective. Would that be accurate?

BUCHWALD: I don't know because here again, I wasn't in that period where Jack Kennedy was. But I do think Bobby had more charm with women than he did with men, much more.

GREENE: Did he ever talk about the large families? Did he really love being part of one and having one of his own?

BUCHWALD: He never talked about it, but I imagine he did.

GREENE: He never seemed to think that you were at a disadvantage having a smaller family? Or wouldn't he comment on something like that?

BUCHWALD: I don't think so.

GREENE: No. He didn't think everyone necessarily ought to do that?

BUCHWALD: No. And, as far as I know, he never thought too much about what people should or should not do, in terms of personal lives. You know, he wasn't a moralist, in that sense of the word. He had his own ideas about raising family and about kids. He was concerned very much with the way the kids were going and what was happening.

[-48-]

GREENE: What do you mean by that, in terms of their careers or...?

BUCHWALD: No. What was going on with the rioting and the....It wasn't as bad then as it is now, with the schools. But he just felt very strongly that the kids needed a goal, that they had to have a role in life. There's where he was a moralizer, he really believed in direction for the kids. He wasn't very much for anarchy.

GREENE: Did he speak to you at all about how he felt towards the rioting and the general discontent in the country?

BUCHWALD: Yes. He felt there had to be new solutions to the problems, that weren't solving them.

GREENE: He felt that they were justified, to some extent?

BUCHWALD: Yes. Bedford-Stuyvesant was one of his things. He really wanted to find solutions to these things. He was very pragmatic about it. He not only believed that something had to be done; he wanted to do something. He felt that you just can't keep talking about things, that you have to do something. And this is where he was a doer. He was, I think, even more of a doer than President Kennedy, in that he really was man of action. Whereas I would say with President Kennedy, he might be more a man of words. That's brilliant. I never.... [Laughter]

GREENE: And we've got it on tape, too! Was this an emotional thing, to some extent, with him do you think? Or, did it become

[-49-]

increasingly emotional?

BUCHWALD: It was only emotional where he was very concerned. First, about his role in this--he knew he had a following; he concluded the war was wrong at a point; he had personal antipathy toward President Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson], and resentments, which some were normal, and some probably weren't. And he was against the war. Now he was fighting a battle with himself about what role to play. Does he just go out there and challenge the president and say the war stinks and maybe blow his career? Here was a real question of bravery or guts. He really wanted to do this. Then there was another part of him that said he can't do it. While he was fighting with himself, McCarthy [Eugene J. McCarthy], who had nothing to lose, whereas Bobby had a lot to lose, went up to New Hampshire and changed the whole ball game.

GREENE: Could you pin this down a bit in time? You say he came to the conclusion the war was wrong--about when did you get the feeling that he was really...?

BUCHWALD: I would guess about a year before New Hampshire. He was against the war. He thought it was lousy. And it wasn't getting anywhere, and it was ripping the country apart. But he didn't know how to do anything about it. He didn't know. And then there were these people who said, "Run." And then there were other people who said, "Don't run." So here again he was a Hamlet figure; he didn't know what to do.

[-50-]

GREENE: Were you involved in any of this introspection?

BUCHWALD: Yes. He discussed it with a lot of his friends. He said, "What do I do?" He said, "What do you think? What would you do?"

GREENE: How did you advise him?

BUCHWALD: I must say, at the time, I told him not to. I didn't think he could do anything. I thought Johnson was going to run, and it was just going to be a hopeless cause.

GREENE: Do you think all along though his feeling was that he had to do something?

BUCHWALD: He had to. Not only because of the country but for himself. He just was not a sidelines guy. He just couldn't sit on the sidelines. He had to be in there. Well, what happened was McCarthy went up to New Hampshire and McCarthy won big. And all of a sudden Bobby's following, the very kids that followed him, suddenly got caught up with McCarthy. And this hurt. He really was hurting very badly from having made the decision not to run. Then he decided to do it, at a very late date, or later than he should have, let's say, or he thought he should have.

GREENE: You don't have the feeling that before New Hampshire, before the results were actually in, that he really seriously considered running?

BUCHWALD: He seriously considered running, but he couldn't make up his

[-51-]

mind. I mean, you can seriously consider anything; it's the decision that you have to make.

GREENE: What were some of the occasions where you would have discussed this? Were these actual meetings? There were a number of informal meetings...?

BUCHWALD: No, I was never in on any meetings. I was never in on any strategy. I refused to become part of his political life. The occasion could have been sitting around on the lawn or in Hyannis on the sailboat or something. It was never a...

GREENE: Were you aware of how the other people who were advising him were split?

BUCHWALD: Yes. The young Turks wanted him to go, and the conservatives...

GREENE: Meaning his staff?

BUCHWALD: Yes. Yes. Adam [Adam Walinsky]...

GREENE: Peter Edelman?

BUCHWALD: Peter and those guys, they were gung-ho. And Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] and those people, I think, were against it. I don't know where Bill vanden Heuvel fitted in that.

GREENE: How did he feel about his staff's pressure on him, particularly, I guess, Walinsky?

BUCHWALD: There was more pressure than just his staff. There were an awful lot of people who just kept pressing him. It was just a tough place to be for a long time.

[-52-]

GREENE: Was Mrs. Kennedy sort of pressuring him, I mean Mrs. Ethel Kennedy?

BUCHWALD: I think she wanted him to go.

GREENE: She was in favor?

BUCHWALD: Yes.

GREENE: Did this kind of add to the fire? I mean really make it more difficult for him to stay out?

BUCHWALD: I think so. Yes. I would guess that it did. I just say that it was his toughest period. Once he had made the decision, he was a very happy guy.

GREENE: And you were there the night they were writing that speech?

BUCHWALD: Yes. But I didn't stay in the room because I didn't want to know what was in it.

GREENE: What was going on in the other rooms?

BUCHWALD: Ethel was rehearsing to be first lady. [Laughter]

GREENE: Oh, with the tissues. You're a funny man looking at another man who had a reputation for humor; how would you describe the Kennedy wit, the Robert Kennedy wit?

BUCHWALD: Oh, it was very dry. It was on himself; he preferred to have it on himself.

GREENE: How did he feel about being the brunt of the humor, even among his most intimate friends?

BUCHWALD: He didn't mind.

GREENE: He didn't?

[-53-]

BUCHWALD: No.

GREENE: And what about when it became an outsider, when it was an outsider pointing the humor at him?

BUCHWALD: He used to look at things politically. The time I wrote the piece about the subway strike, he said, "How many people take you seriously?" I said, "Oh, about 50 percent." And he says, "Then why don't you knock it off."

[Laughter] If it was damaging to him politically, which most of mine I were, he didn't enjoy it. He could have enjoyed it as a joke on himself, but he just saw it in terms of how many votes it meant.

GREENE: Where was he most thin-skinned about the humor?

BUCHWALD: I guess the same as most people in politics, about your family. I think most politicians can take it about themselves, but when they take off after the family....

GREENE: Was he very touchy about the Kennedy administration?

BUCHWALD: Yes. I would think so. And he was very touchy about his relationship with Hoffa [James R. Hoffa], and his relationship with the attorney general's office. He didn't like criticism.

GREENE: How did he behave when he didn't like it? Did he just turn himself off, or did he bite back?

BUCHWALD: I don't know if he was straightening out people on the phone because I never wrote anything that had to be straightened

[-54-]

out. I just denied it ever happened anyway. But I think he turned off on them for a while. He used to get mad at people for a while, then he'd make up with them. He was very loyal to his friends. I know several situations where.... This is in a personal thing which may go back some here, but I think it's a nice story. At the University of Alabama--this is not about being loyal to his friends, but this is a family story--I was down there the other day to talk to the kids and they told me the story. When Bobby came down there, and he was ready

to go on at 8 o'clock and, about two minutes of eight, one of his kids, David, came in and Bobby looked down and said, "Your nails are dirty." And he dragged David in the men's room. While everybody was waiting for him to speak, he's in the men's room washing David's nails. This is a typical example of him as a father. I know a couple of people who were having tremendous marital problems during Bobby's campaign and he took time off from whatever he was doing and spent time with the husband or the wife, or something. And he was very loyal to the people that he liked.

GREENE: In general, did you get the feeling he was interested in their careers because they were important to these people and, in addition, because they were of interest to him because they were interesting careers?

BUCHWALD: It's hard to say where one began and one stopped.

[-55-]

I think there was some of both. I think some of the people he was attracted to originally because of their careers, but then he got to like them personally.

GREENE: Do you know of any instances where he used his position to help friends along in their careers?

BUCHWALD: No, I don't think that. But I remember in one case, I was trying to help Melina Mercouri get to be an American citizen when she was kicked out of Greece. And I called up Jack Javits [Jacob K. Javits] and asked if he could do something about it. And Bobby got very mad that I didn't call him, instead of Jack Javits.

GREENE: Why would you have done that, by the way?

BUCHWALD: Why did I call Jack Javits? Because I never wanted to intrude on a personal friendship. You know, I have felt, and--I think Bobby lived up to it as much as he could--that if you had a relationship, it had to be on a personal basis, and not what I could do for him or what he could do for me. So I preferred to do it with Jack Javits whom I had no personal relationship with. I didn't want to favor.

GREENE: This is very interesting. We'll talk a little bit more about that when we get into the press because that's certainly an important factor.

Who do you get the feeling influenced him the most, especially after the president's death--well, that would be

[-56-]

the period you knew him.

BUCHWALD: Ethel.

GREENE: Really? And in terms of his career?

BUCHWALD: I think Governor Harriman had a great influence on his career.

GREENE: Did they see each other frequently?

BUCHWALD: Yes. I think Bob McNamara, Governor Harriman, possibly Byron White, Maxwell Taylor.

GREENE: Did he see a lot of these people like Secretary McNamara, when they remained in the Johnson administration? Did that present problems?

BUCHWALD: Yes. It didn't present any to him. It might have presented some to them, but that didn't bother them. He was still close with them. And then he became close with Bill Moyers [William D. Moyers] after Bill Moyers got out.

GREENE: How much influence do you think Edward Kennedy had on him, especially his political influence?

BUCHWALD: I don't think too much. I think there was a sibling rivalry I between them. It might have been the opposite. Bobby might have had much more influence on Teddy.

GREENE: Did they simply accept the fact that they operated differently and...?

BUCHWALD: Oh sure, they used to joke about it all the time.

GREENE: You didn't get the feeling that one was trying to persuade the other to his view? I'm thinking particularly of the

[-57-]

period of decision, when Edward Kennedy seemed so strongly opposed to it.

BUCHWALD: I don't know where Edward Kennedy fitted in Bobby's plans, but I'm sure that Bobby consulted Teddy about whether he should run or not.

GREENE: Besides these people that you've mentioned, the senior Kennedy advisors, that is, JFK advisors, who else, particularly historical figures, did he ever speak of those that he most admired or tried to emulate?

BUCHWALD: No. The person who came up most was Jack Kennedy. And it's very interesting, Bobby called him President Kennedy.

GREENE: Even in private conversations?

BUCHWALD: Even in a private conversation, he always referred to him as President Kennedy.

GREENE: And expected everyone else to do the same?

BUCHWALD: I guess so. Jackie was "Jackie," but it was always President Kennedy.

GREENE: Did you get the feeling that he saw a great deal of distinction between the time period that he was operating in and the period in which the president operated in, or was he always trying to emulate the president?

BUCHWALD: No, I don't think so because when he was working for the president he was more of an administrator; he was carrying out orders. How much he was creating ideas, I don't know.

[-58-]

When he became his own man, he became much more interested in ideas. I don't think that he was emulating Jack Kennedy. I think, as time went on, he became more and more of his own man, and he was looking for solutions to problems that even President Kennedy didn't have to face.

GREENE: What issues besides the Vietnam war, which you mentioned, and the student unrest, what other interests, did he have other strong interests?

BUCHWALD: Race. He was very concerned about the Indians; he was concerned about poverty. His main concern was the moral fiber of the country, and I think this is why he spoke so much to young people and everything. Everybody said he did it because that's where the votes were, but I think part of it was that he just felt that he wanted to pick up where his brother left off. His brother was the first one to inspire youth. And that's where he wanted to work, to get the kids to get involved in government, to support the government, and not to turn off, which they have done or did, under Johnson.

GREENE: Did you get the feeling that he was generally optimistic, or was he feeling that it was a pretty glum situation?

BUCHWALD: Here again, he was an upbeat guy; he would never admit it. That was the one thing we all learned from Bobby Kennedy is that he was so; he wouldn't let anyone say it couldn't be I done. So he wasn't pessimistic; he was obviously the optimist

[-59-]

because he always believed that it could be done.

GREENE: But he saw the situation as pretty bad?

BUCHWALD: He saw it as serious, and he was concerned with it. He was concerned with the war, and he was concerned with what we were doing. He didn't like the military. He wrote about this in his book, but he told me about it beforehand. After they had made the deal with the Soviets, he said the military still wanted to bomb...

GREENE: You're talking about Cuba, now?

BUCHWALD: Yes. And he really was for some sort of a detente with it the Soviet Union, a very serious one. I think what you might say in that area--was he emulating his brother. I think he wanted to pick up where his brother left off, rather than emulate.

GREENE: Do you remember any specific conversations about of these issues, things which haven't come out, particularly in public?

BUCHWALD: No, because here again, I wasn't privy to those things, and I didn't want to know. And he didn't offer.

GREENE: He didn't consult you either?

BUCHWALD: No.

GREENE: He didn't even ask how you felt about these things?

BUCHWALD: He might have. Yes. I think so, and I expressed myself. It

[-60-]

might have been triggered by something I wrote that day which he agreed with.

GREENE: Was there anything, any particular issue that you remember which got a lot of publicity that he didn't feel particularly strongly about--that it was kind of the thing to get on?

BUCHWALD: Give me an example, would you, dear?

GREENE: Well, I really can't think of anything specific. But, for instance, Israel--was that something that you almost had to do if you were going to be a New York senator, be a very strong supporter of Israel? Or did he really feel that...

BUCHWALD: No, but he was concerned about it because he was concerned about the big issues of war and peace. He was. And that was a big issue. I don't think he was a phony about poverty and about poor people, and about the Negroes. I think he really felt strongly about that.

So in the areas that counted, he probably was as sincere as anybody about it. A politician does have to go along with a lot of other garbage, and he probably did.

GREENE: He just accepted that as one of the costs of...

BUCHWALD: They have to. I couldn't give you examples of things that he spoke out about that he didn't really believe in.

GREENE: Did he discuss the Manchester [William Raymond Manchester] business with you at all? Were you around him very much during that period?

[-61-]

BUCHWALD: Oh, we kidded him a lot about it.

GREENE: Did you get the feeling he felt held been pretty badly hurt by that?

BUCHWALD: Yes, at the time. But this is my opinion, that he would have settled very easily except that Jackie Kennedy insisted that they give Manchester a rough time.

GREENE: For the sake of giving him a rough time or because of the issue involved?

BUCHWALD: No, because there was this question of the issue involved--who had a right to read it, you know. I don't know. It was so far back I don't even remember what the issue was. But it had to do with the understanding the family's supposed to have a crack at the book before it came out. And Mrs. Kennedy was the one who was very strong about it, and Bobby backed her up, as the family always will do, even if they're wrong. If you're family, this is part of the Kennedy clan thing, they'll stand behind you.

GREENE: Did he feel that the press had treated the whole thing unfairly, or that it had been given an undue amount of publicity; and, therefore, the issues came out that they were trying to cover up?

BUCHWALD: Probably. But by the time it reached me, I thought it was funny and I kidded him about it.

GREENE: And that he could accept?

[-62-]

BUCHWALD: Oh, sure.

GREENE: Did you ever get any feeling of conflict between his career and his personal happiness? Any idea that he might have wanted to do, at any time, anything but go into politics?

BUCHWALD: No. I think this was just.... And here again you get back to this Kennedy phenomenon of public service, where they all had it instilled in them. This is what they were born to do. When the oldest son died, the next son took over; and Teddy's doing the same thing now. I would say absolutely not; I don't think he would have done anything else.

GREENE: Did he pass this on to his children to the point where they couldn't consider anything else?

BUCHWALD: Bobby passed it on to his children?

GREENE: I mean they...

BUCHWALD: Well, they were pretty young. I think some of it has stayed with them but....

GREENE: There's one boy at least who has a real interest in animals.

BUCHWALD: Yes, Bobby, Jr.

GREENE: Was that encouraged or...?

BUCHWALD: Yes. Everything was encouraged.

GREENE: That came naturally?

BUCHWALD: Yes. They never said "no" to them. You know, they'd say "no" about getting in on time, or something. But anything these kids wanted to do that was creative or anything,

[-63-]

they were for it.

GREENE: Did he talk to you at all about any of his trips, his observations abroad, particularly?

BUCHWALD: No, it wasn't that kind of a relationship.

GREENE: Did he enjoy traveling? Did you get the feeling this was something...

BUCHWALD: Had to, had to keep moving.

GREENE: And liked to go out of the country?

BUCHWALD: Yes. Had to keep moving.

GREENE: What were some of the things in political life that you got the feeling he really wasn't comfortable in?

BUCHWALD: Well, I don't think he was too comfortable up at the Senate; he was a "loner." And he was never part of the gang up there, so to speak. So I think that's probably where he wasn't too comfortable. I think he was, like most people, uncomfortable with people who were boring.

[BEGIN SIDE II, TAPE I]

GREENE: Did Senator Kennedy ever discuss his feelings about Johnson or Hoover [J. Edgar Hoover] with you?

BUCHWALD: Yes. He didn't like Hoover, and he didn't like Johnson. It was a real personal thing....

GREENE: In both cases? Or perhaps we should take Hoover first?

BUCHWALD: Yes. Hoover, he didn't like Hoover, particularly over the

[-64-]

bugging thing. He thought that Hoover had double-crossed him.

GREENE: Could you explain that a bit?

BUCHWALD: It seems at the time there was a question of who had authorized the bugging. And Bobby said he hadn't, and Hoover said he had. And my guess would be, they both were in it some way. But he got very angry at Hoover, and they never did get along.

GREENE: Did he think that Hoover had brought this out deliberately to embarrass him?

BUCHWALD: Yes. Well, Johnson--I think it came through Johnson. He thought that everything that came out against him had been Johnson. And Johnson

thought that everything had emanated from the Kennedys. There was a real paranoia between the two of them.

GREENE: Do you think a lot of it was kind of paranoia rather than fact?

BUCHWALD: Some of it was fact. I think that he had bugged Martin Luther King. It appeared in Drew Pearson's column, and was leaked by the president to embarrass Kennedy.

GREENE: Based on fact, though?

BUCHWALD: Yes. But they were bugging Luther King on something else. The way it came out, it looked very bad for Bobby in California. So he was very...

[-65-]

GREENE: Did he speak to you specifically about that?

BUCHWALD: No. Because that was when he was running, but I had heard from other people that that was the maddest he had ever gotten at Drew Pearson.

GREENE: He felt it was a deliberate leak from the White House to Pearson, directly?

BUCHWALD: Yes. They had proof of it. I think Jack Valenti [Jack Joseph Valenti] was supposed to have called Otis Chandler because Otis Chandler didn't run that particular column, and said I'll give you more proof if you want it. So they had pretty confirmed proof that it came from the president.

GREENE: Did they try to stop it? Did they have any advance warning?

BUCHWALD: They didn't try to stop it, but Otis just decided not to print it. No, I don't know if they tried to stop it or not. I don't think you can stop a Drew Pearson column that's in seven hundred papers.

GREENE: Well, I mean going directly to Pearson, or didn't they have any advance warning?

BUCHWALD: No. I don't think they did. Pearson was being fed a lot by Johnson at the end. That's why his columns on Johnson were so favorable.

GREENE: Did you get the feeling that his relationship with Hoover took a real decline when the president died, or was it always bad?

[-66-]

BUCHWALD: I think it was bad when he went in. I think it was just they didn't hit it off, and Hoover doesn't like any attorney general. Hoover has his own bailiwick and Bobby.... I read this the other day, this isn't my own thought, but one of the things is that Hoover was never too concerned about organized crime and Bobby was, for a good reason. I don't think Hoover liked the idea of Bobby just coming in there and saying, "Do something about organized crime." When Bobby got out of the attorney generalship, they dropped their organized crime investigation.

GREENE: Did he speak of that?

BUCHWALD: Yes, he was concerned about organized crime, and he just thought that Hoover wasn't obeying the orders of the attorney general. He thought the attorney general should be in charge, and Hoover was protected.

GREENE: What about Johnson? Did he ever talk about that feud, and particularly how it was handled in the press?

BUCHWALD: He never talked about it seriously. There was a lot of joking going on about Johnson.

GREENE: Was there as much personal animosity as the public thinks?

BUCHWALD: Pretty much.

GREENE: Yes?

BUCHWALD: Yes. There was. They just weren't each other's kind of guys.

[-67-]

GREENE: Do you think this went all the way back to the convention [Democratic National Convention] when Johnson was selected? Or did it develop during the administration, or...?

BUCHWALD: I think it developed early in the game when Johnson was vice president. First, if you recall the history books on it, Bobby didn't want Johnson. Then Johnson became vice president, Bobby and all the Irish Mafia treated Johnson fairly badly as a vice president. And then Johnson, of all people, became president after his brother was killed. So I would guess it was emotional bitterness, the wrong guy, and probably subconsciously, you know, "if Jack had lived" type of stuff going on all the time.

GREENE: Do you know anything about the whole business of Robert Kennedy's accepting the vice-presidential nomination, especially for a man he supposedly disliked? Was he really that anxious?

BUCHWALD: I don't know anything about the inside on it. No, I don't know. I hope you're going to interview Angie Novello [Angela M. Novello] because I think she might know a lot. It would give you a trip to Denmark!

GREENE: I'm afraid they'll make us wait until she gets back.
Do you know of any alternatives that he considered besides the Senate?

BUCHWALD: No. I think he was floundering at that time.

[-68-]

GREENE: And, as you said, Harriman was the one that pushed him over?

BUCHWALD: Yes.

GREENE: Who were some of the people that he admired and valued most in the Senate? Did he ever discuss it?

BUCHWALD: Fred Harris [Fred R. Harris] was a very close friend of his, until Fred went for Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey]. He was very surprised because Fred was very close to him, and then one day he picked up the paper and he read where Fred had gone over to Humphrey. And he was very disappointed in this because he considered Fred a very close friend.

GREENE: What about McCarthy and McGovern [George S. McGovern]?

BUCHWALD: McCarthy he never got along with. And McGovern he liked very much. Governor Hughes [Harold E. Hughes] he liked very much.

GREENE: Senator Church [Frank Church]?

BUCHWALD: Church was a good friend. I'm trying to think of who else was out there a lot. Birch Bayh...

GREENE: These people were at the house frequently?

BUCHWALD: Yes. Senator Tydings [Joseph D. Tydings] was very close. Birch Bayh....

GREENE: Were these the people you'd say he regarded most highly as far as what they were doing, as well as people? What I should say is, did he like them politically as well as...?

[-69-]

BUCHWALD: Socially? I think so, in the case of Tydings and in the case of Fred Harris. I think it was personal as well as political. It's something that, you know, people, I don't think, are that political. If you have somebody into your home more than on one or two occasions, it's usually because you get along with them more than just politically.

GREENE: Whom did he dislike?

BUCHWALD: Lyndon Johnson. He liked Humphrey, and Humphrey liked him.

GREENE: Did this present problems once it became a Humphrey-Kennedy race rather than a Johnson-Kennedy, in the campaign?

BUCHWALD: No. Because Bobby always liked Humphrey and no one could ever get mad at Hubert. Hubert played fair, and they really liked each other as people. He didn't like McCarthy at all.

GREENE: Did it make it harder to run against Humphrey than it was running against Johnson?

BUCHWALD: I don't think so.

GREENE: No?

BUCHWALD: I don't think so.

GREENE: He just considered it all fair in politics?

BUCHWALD: Well, no. He realized that when he had to run against.... You see he told me this: he told me that once the Vietnam issue disappeared, he was in a lot of trouble because that was his big issue to get the nomination away from Johnson.

GREENE: Did you speak to him at all during the campaign when he'd

[-70-]

come back to Washington?

BUCHWALD: Just once. And on this occasion he told me...

GREENE: Was this before the president dropped out, or after?

BUCHWALD: No, after, and after the president said there was going to be a bombing halt. And so he told me he had a lot of trouble because the Vietnam issue

had sort of been taken away from him. And it wasn't the same thing as running against Johnson. Once he got into the race, he wanted to run against Johnson.

GREENE: Would you pin this down a little bit more specifically? Was it before the death of Martin Luther King that you talked to him, before the whole racial question became such a big issue?

BUCHWALD: It's hard to say. I can't remember.

GREENE: But you don't remember that being a question in his mind of whether he should pick up the race issue as a substitute for Vietnam?

BUCHWALD: No. But it became an issue. He said it didn't excite people like the Vietnam issue. He felt that his big chance of getting the nomination was the Vietnam issue.

GREENE: Did he ever speak to you of his political advisors, and who he considered most reliable and whom he depended on most?

BUCHWALD: No.

GREENE: It was pretty separate?

BUCHWALD: Adam Walinsky and Peter Edelman were quite close to him.

[-71-]

He respected Ted Sorensen. But here again, I would be just guessing because I just didn't know that much about it.

GREENE: Was there anybody that you got the feeling that he really felt uneasy about, who was generally associated with him that, you know, he felt he really didn't have much confidence in?

BUCHWALD: I don't think held let on if he did.

GREENE: No?

BUCHWALD: I also think that once he got in the race, he respected Teddy's judgment quite a bit. They were very close, once he got in the race.

GREENE: Do you think that this brought them together in a way that it had brought him together with his brother, with the president?

BUCHWALD: Yes.

GREENE: You had said that you didn't do any travel at all, even as an observer on the campaign. Okay, then let's skip over that and go on to talk about the press a bit. Do you think he had a good understanding of the working press and the problems involved in being a reporter?

BUCHWALD: Oh, he might have had an understanding, but like all Kennedys, he tried to fit the press for his own benefit.

GREENE: How about explaining that?

BUCHWALD: Well, he wooed them. He was gracious to them and he tried

[-72-]

to get you in his camp.

GREENE: Do you think that this was something that benefited him, or did he do it also because he realized that by making their job easier, he'd automatically gain their favor? Did he make any real attempts to make their job easier?

BUCHWALD: He was the most colorful of the candidates; therefore, the reporters were delighted to cover him because they got the play and their stories got the play. Whatever Bobby did was news. If, you covered Humphrey or McCarthy, you weren't quite sure of getting that much space, and if you covered Nixon, you got less. So Bobby was a good assignment for people because of all the color involved with it. And everybody felt, covering Bobby, that they were sort of.... And this is another thing about the Kennedys, there was a mysterious thing. There was a sense of excitement whenever you were around them. It's hard to explain, but everybody was sort of up, and on their best, and trying to do things. Nobody was dull. And Bobby was least-wise dull. He didn't make their job easier; he was just Bobby Kennedy, which made their job easier.

GREENE: Was he someone that they competed for--for his favor and to get him as a beat? Was there a lot of competition around that?

BUCHWALD: I don't know if there was competition about it, but....

[-73-]

GREENE: It was considered a good beat?

BUCHWALD: Yes. Yes. Oh sure, everybody liked him. In fact, the relationships between the press and Bobby are different than any other politician I know--that after his death, there's still a group of reporters who covered him who stick together and are very close. And on Christmas Eve, they went out to Mrs. Kennedy's. It was

raining; it was pouring. It was ten of them, and they stood underneath her window, and they sang Christmas carols.

GREENE: Could you tell who was involved?

BUCHWALD: Marty Nolan [Martin Nolan], Haynes Johnson, Hays Gorey. These were primarily people who traveled with him during the campaign? They traveled during the campaign. They were sort of like a club. And Ethel invited them to come up to the grave after Bobby's death. And Warren Rogers. So these guys, on their own, just went out there one night. She was pregnant. And they sang Christmas carols in the rain. And then they didn't even want to come in; she insisted that they come in, but they had agreed beforehand not to go in. I thought that was a beautiful gesture. So most of the guys who covered him liked him personally.

GREENE: Can you think of any who didn't? There was some discussion...

BUCHWALD: You have to ask the ones who were on the campaign.

GREENE: You don't hear too much talk about that yourself, among the

[-74-]

reporters?

BUCHWALD: No. Because a lot of people were turned off on him before they covered him, and then they got to like him. He had a great way of doing that. And I don't think it was an unnatural thing; I think it was really natural. I think he sold people, not in a phony way, but in a real way, on what he stood for.

GREENE: Was it harder to cover him than the other candidates because he was so unorthodox in many ways?

BUCHWALD: No. It was easier. A primary problem of a reporter on a campaign is that there isn't too much to write about; after the guy says his speech, he says it over and over again. So with Bobby, at least you always had some excitement, something happened. Here again, it's back to that everybody was having fun and everybody was having a good time. You were getting four hours sleep, or three hours, but you were part of the whole Kennedy scene. And this is something that Jack Kennedy had, that Bobby had, this excitement that, you know, Nixon doesn't have.

GREENE: What about TV and the writing press? Which did he consider more important? Do you know?

BUCHWALD: He was aware of the TV. It was more important as far as elections go, and therefore, he'd always do something that would... He'd either go to a

college, and speak to kids,

[-75-]

which would get on TV, or he'd hire a train. The train was nothing more than a way of getting TV coverage.

GREENE: Did he feel that he benefited by his TV coverage, that he came across well? Do you think that this was something that came out in later years, as he got more experience, or was he a natural TV person?

BUCHWALD: Yes. As he became more assured, he enjoyed it more.

GREENE: What about panel shows, like "Meet the Press" and "Face the Nation?" Did he find those tough?

BUCHWALD: I don't think he found them tough. I think he was a political animal, and he realized that all these things added up being a political plus.

GREENE: But he felt they worked to his advantage, just for the exposure, even if...?

BUCHWALD: I would think so. I think nothing came of that McCarthy-Kennedy debate that they had.

GREENE: What about the "Meet the Press" show right after he announced? In fact, it was the very next day. Do you remember that?

BUCHWALD: Yes.

GREENE: How did he see his performance?

BUCHWALD: Oh I don't know about that, but I do remember that he was very--from what I could tell--he was very happy with that trip to Kansas, when the kids turned out the way they did.

[-76-]

GREENE: Was that a surprise, do you think?

BUCHWALD: He didn't know. He didn't know what kind of a reception he'd get from the kids. And that was a big "if," after coming in that late. They had agreed--you might check this with vanden Heuvel and other people--they had agreed not to announce after McCarthy won in New Hampshire. They were going to give McCarthy at least a week or so. And the night I was there was a Friday night. The big discussion, out of

Bobby's range, was "Who the hell announced it? We agreed not to announce it." It turned out Bobby had; he just couldn't wait.

GREENE: He had kind of given it away, I think, to Walter Cronkite, wasn't it?

BUCHWALD: Oh, yes.

GREENE: On his show?

BUCHWALD: Oh yes. But everybody was absolutely flabbergasted at that.

GREENE: They felt he had blown it, right?

BUCHWALD: Yes. They thought it was pretty bad. [Laughter]

GREENE: Was there any explanation? Did they feel it was because of the deadlines in the primaries?

BUCHWALD: No. It was just something that Bobby just couldn't wait.

GREENE: Almost impulsive?

BUCHWALD: Yes.

GREENE: Did he ever discuss anything in particular, a certain event

[-77-]

or a position that he had taken which did a lot of damage outside, perhaps, of the Manchester business?

BUCHWALD: No.

GREENE: Did he like to avoid publicity where he could, especially when it was something that might not be flattering?

BUCHWALD: I think he did. But I think he also was wise enough to realize he couldn't very well. He didn't like his privacy being invaded at home. If people talked at a private dinner party at his house or something that upset him.

GREENE: You mean, talked about something that had gone on there?

BUCHWALD: If something appeared in the paper that took place at Hickory Hill. I think he was very burned by the swimming pool incident with Arthur Schlesinger.

GREENE: When they fell in?

BUCHWALD: Yes. And that was one thing he just felt that it was hard to recoup from. And it was, in a sense, because the image of Hickory Hill and of the Kennedys--that swimming pool incident--is still part of America.

GREENE: But in a way I think it's become a...

BUCHWALD: A joke?

GREENE: Something to cherish, almost as a...

BUCHWALD: Sure. But at the time it wasn't very funny, and this is the kind of stuff he always was afraid of, that something would appear. I remember, I was to judge a tennis game

[-78-]

between senators, Republican senators versus Democratic senators. And I was one of the referees. And he wouldn't appear. And I said to him later, "Why didn't you get in the game?" He said, "Because tennis is a rich man's sport, and I just didn't want my picture playing tennis."

GREENE: That image? With this swimming pool incident, do you think it was a question of feeling that it detracted from the seriousness of the administration?

BUCHWALD: Yes, sure.

GREENE: Made him the silly kid brother?

BUCHWALD: He was very aware. Everything he did was for.... Everything he did had a political purpose to it. He didn't mind jokes, but he didn't like them in the papers because he was aware that people misinterpreted everything he did anyway.

GREENE: Why feed the fire?

BUCHWALD: Well, he was very sensitive to it.

GREENE: Was this a problem among his friends in the press, how to do their job, and at the same time be a good friend and give him....?

BUCHWALD: It was a problem. It wasn't a problem for me because at the time, like I said, I bowed out when he ran for office. But as a senator, it was a problem.

GREENE: What about someone like Rowland Evans, who was a particularly

[-79-]

close friend?

BUCHWALD: He was a close friend of President Kennedy's too. I guess it posed problems, but Rowly was tough on the president and Bobby too. What's tough about it is not that the guys don't write the truth about you when they're your friends, but they go overboard to give you the shaft to prove that they're not taken in. That's what I think they resented more. Not that Rowly would write what any other writer would write, but that he'd go overboard to prove to Kennedy that even though he was his friend, he was going to show him.

GREENE: Was this writing, do you think, for Kennedy rather than, some ways, writing...?

BUCHWALD: I don't know. And a lot of it was wrong. You know, Kennedy told Rowly he was wrong on a lot of things.

GREENE: Did he resent inaccuracy more than anything else? Or was he touchy even when it was the truth?

BUCHWALD: I don't know if he resented inaccuracy; I think he resented kind of what he considered inaccuracy, with things he didn't agree with.

GREENE: Did he ever try, to your knowledge, to stop a column or an article by a friend?

BUCHWALD: Somebody else's?

GREENE: Yes.

BUCHWALD: Not that I know of. You'd have to ask other people, but as

[-80-]

far as I know....You'll probably get to Mankiewicz [Frank F. Mankiewicz]; he might know more about that.

GREENE: Did he ever ask any advice from you on TV technique or how to tell jokes or...?

BUCHWALD: No, the only relationship I had with him was I helped write a Gridiron

speech for him one time. And we were writing jokes.

GREENE: Which year was this?

BUCHWALD: This was the year he spoke, which I don't remember.

GREENE: After the president's death?

BUCHWALD: Two years ago. Yes. And all the jokes I submitted were a little too rough on Johnson, so he didn't use them.

GREENE: Would you say, in general, that your humor was compatible?

BUCHWALD: It's very hard for me to write for somebody else.

GREENE: But you enjoyed each other's wit even if it was different?

BUCHWALD: Yes.

GREENE: Who were some of his favorite reporters and columnists? Do you know?

BUCHWALD: Rowly Evans, Dick Harwood [Richard Harwood] he liked at the end. He was always fighting with Ben Bradlee [Benjamin C. Bradlee] of the *Washington Post*. I think he liked Herblock [Herbert Block]. Alsop [Joseph Alsop] had a very strange relationship with Bobby in that Joe was writing exactly the opposite of what Bobby thought. And yet somehow they seemed to see each other and

[-81-]

get along, which was very surprising. Kraft [Joseph Kraft] was close to Bobby.

GREENE: Was there anybody who particularly got under his skin?

BUCHWALD: I think Drew Pearson did at the end.

GREENE: What about White [William S. White]?

BUCHWALD: White, not so much. I think the *New York Times* people got under his skin a lot.

GREENE: Did he discuss that business with you at all, the whole feud with the *New York Times*?

BUCHWALD: No, because that was after he had announced.

GREENE: Oh, and you really kept it that much off the limits, off the record?

BUCHWALD: I only saw him once. And this was in somebody else's home.

GREENE: Can you recall any occasions when he was particularly angered at the press, when he felt he had been mistreated?

BUCHWALD: I think the Manchester thing--he might have felt that way.

GREENE: Did he do anything, to your knowledge, to try to stop it--to keep it more in the quiet?

BUCHWALD: Yes. But I'm not in on the intrigue. People were always making calls about things. He has tremendous amount of...

GREENE: People from his staff, you mean?

BUCHWALD: Staff, Frank Mankiewicz, and, I think there's a lot there, but I didn't know about it.

[-82-]

GREENE: Was this generally to follow up on something that they didn't like, or to try to prevent something that they...

BUCHWALD: Both.

GREENE: Both.

BUCHWALD: Straighten people out.

GREENE: Were there any people who usually went along, and those who resisted?

BUCHWALD: I don't know because I don't know who was called and what the circumstances were.

GREENE: What about this whole business of forecasting his activities? Anybody that does much reading on the Kennedys, and you look back, there was always somebody who knew what they were going to do. Did he resent this at all?

BUCHWALD: I don't know.

GREENE: Did he ever try to set them straight for an inaccurate prediction or just let it go?

BUCHWALD: I wouldn't think on predictions; no. What are you talking about?

GREENE: Well, there was so much written, you know, on "he's going to run for the Senate; he's not going to run for the Senate; he's going to run for the presidency."

BUCHWALD: I doubt it. If he did that, he'd spend his whole day just calling up people.

GREENE: But did he ever express to you the feeling that they

[-83-]

should be writing about what's happening rather than what they think is going to happen, or what they'd like to happen?

BUCHWALD: No. Here again, we never got on that wicket. When I saw him, it had nothing to do with what had been written about him that day or anything.

GREENE: Do you remember anything, any discussion among the press people about his trying to influence them too much or trying to...?

BUCHWALD: Yes. There was always resentment, but...

GREENE: Anybody in particular that he alienated for this?

BUCHWALD: Ben Bradlee and he used to fight all the time, but they saw each other...

GREENE: Socially.

BUCHWALD: Not as much as--Ben Bradlee was a good friend of Jack Kennedy's.

GREENE: Did he give a lot of stories to the press to try to prevent some of the speculation that was going around?

BUCHWALD: I would think so, but there again Mankiewicz was the guy who did that. You see, my job never required any calls.

GREENE: Yes. And you didn't spend much time with the Washington press corps people as such?

BUCHWALD: This is where I live. I don't leave here.

GREENE: All right, let's go down to this, and ask you if there's

[-84-]

anything in the public record, in the public's impression of Robert Kennedy that you'd like to see amended or corrected.

BUCHWALD: Not amended or corrected. I think that the tragedy of Bobby Kennedy, as it is with Jack Kennedy, is we really don't know what he could have done, and what kind of a man he could have been; what kind of a president he would have been. We don't even know if he would have won in Chicago, or had he won in Chicago, would he have beaten Nixon, if he would have become president. These are things that I think people think about--what kind of a world it would have been. One of the things that was so interesting about Bobby Kennedy was that when he died, a lot of the people that were going to vote for him voted for George Wallace. And you just couldn't believe that anybody who thought the way Bobby did would think the way Wallace did. And yet, we discovered, talking to people for Wallace, that they identified both of them as being strong individuals that would protect their individual rights, that kind of identification.

So I just think that for history we have a half a history. We don't have history. We just have a half history of a man who might have been. And this is the second tragedy in a row because Jack Kennedy was the same kind of a man.

[-85-]

People will speculate about this, and he'll become part of our folklore. But I think anybody who would predict what could have happened, and what would have happened, is a fool.

GREENE: Yes. Is there anything else you'd like to add.? Any areas we haven't covered or particular anecdotes that didn't fit anywhere else?

BUCHWALD: I think, as a personal friend, the things I got out of Bobby are things that will stay with me all my life, his devotion to his family, and his ability to make people do a lot more than they could, and his constant optimism about the future. When I think of him, I think of him as a man who inspires, who inspired a lot of people, strangers, as well as friends. He was much more complex than his brother Jack, even more complex than Teddy.

GREENE: In what ways would you...?

BUCHWALD: Well, you couldn't get through to Bobby. You never knew what he was thinking. He rarely opened up. I think he felt that it was a sign of weakness to show your real feelings about things. And so, people say to me, "What kind of man was Bobby Kennedy?" And we've been talking for three hours. I would be hard put to describe him in terms than I would somebody else who was a much more simple personality.

[-86-]

GREENE: Do you think that as a friend, and this might have been true of his other friends too, that there was kind of an intrigue because you felt you could never quite get to the bottom of the barrel?

BUCHWALD: Yes. The mystery, the word is mystery. He was very mysterious and this is why...

GREENE: Was he conscious of this mysteriousness, do you think?

BUCHWALD: Probably. I wouldn't dare guess, but, probably. And I don't know if he used it to his advantage or not, but it was there.

GREENE: Well, thank you very much.

[-87-]

[END OF INTERVIEW]