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Biographical Note

Dragon, an advance man in North Carolina and Illinois for John F. Kennedy's presidential campaign in 1960 and assistant general counsel for the agency for international development, discusses his memories of the campaign, his work for AID, and his work on Kennedy's stockpile investigation, among other issues.

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Ed Dragon

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Oral History Interview

with

Ed Dragon

March 23, 1976
Washington, D.C.

By William Hartigan

For the John F. Kennedy Library

HARTIGAN: Ed, would you care to relate to us the circumstances under which you first met President Kennedy [John F. Kennedy]?

DRAGON: Bill, I met President Kennedy just informally, I believe, in the late 1950's here in Washington. I don't recall the exact circumstances. But that's when I first met him. The first time I met him in a campaign was in Greenville, North Carolina, when I had advanced part of the campaign down there. I had followed Senator Kennedy's activities over the years. Of course, he became a very strong person in 1966, which, I'm sorry 1956, of course when he was running for the vice, nomination for the vice-presidency. There were many things that he said at that time, statements on the issues of the day were

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of great concern to me. I got involved in the campaign through a good friend Howard Corcoran [Howard F. Corcoran], now Judge Corcoran of the United States District Court for the District of Columbia. I wanted to participate in a campaign in support of the then Senator Kennedy. And Howard Corcoran talked with Dick O'Hare and then we got together on my

participating in the campaign. I was very happy then to be selected to do that. I had been involved in American Bar Association activities very heavily during 1960 and I was working for the D.C. Bar Association in working on the American Bar Association Convention in 1960. I wasn't free of those duties until late August. So that was the earliest that I could get involved in the campaign.

HARTIGAN: When you first joined the campaign, weren't you assigned to the scheduling department with Dick O'Hare, if I recall correctly?

DRAGON: Yes I was, Bill, I was assigned to the scheduling department, advanced part of the campaign in North Carolina, part of the campaign in Southern Illinois, and then along with Jim Corcoran [James T. Corcoran] we worked the advance scheduling desk on Connecticut Ave. from six o'clock until the wee hours of the morning whenever we learned that the campaign had gone to bed, when

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Senator Kennedy had retired for the night, then we would close up the office and go home. We had to be there to respond to questions from our advance men, and answer a lot of other questions and problems.

HARTIGAN: Ed, would you care to relate to us some of your experiences in advancing trips that you did advance? I believe it started in North Carolina.

DRAGON: Yes, Bill. That was my first, that was the first assignment that I had. John Nolan [John E. Nolan] had called me to see if I could do it and I said yes quite readily. I went down to North Carolina with Ron Linton [Ronald M. Linton]. Ron was assigned responsibility for the entire state. And there was a group of other advance men assigned to individual cities. I was assigned to advance the campaign in Greenville. That's in eastern North Carolina. We had other advance men in Charlotte and Raleigh, not in Raleigh, but in other cities and towns in North Carolina. The campaign took, in North Carolina, took place on a Saturday, all day long. It started in Greenville. The airplanes came down from Washington D.C. early that morning. The campaign entourage landed at an unused airport just outside of Greenville. It

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had been an auxiliary naval air station, but there was nothing like a control tower there. The pilots landed on their own. And as I recall, Bill, you managed to have steps sent to us from Norfolk. We received one set of steps for one of the press planes. The other press plane we had to put up a ladder for people to get down on. I'll never forget the arrival of the *Caroline* that morning. It was a beautiful fall day. A little bit on the warmish side. I recall very vividly when Senator Kennedy, Senator at that time, came to the door of the *Caroline*, looked down to see who was down. And, of course, he had many friends there. He immediately spotted Senator Sam Ervin [Samuel J. Ervin, Jr.] of North Carolina and said, "Hello, Sam," and he

waved back. Governor Hodges [Luther H. Hodges] was there as well as Terry Sanford [James Terry Sanford] who was campaigning for the governorship of North Carolina. And it was that group that we put together in the lead cars. The speech that morning in Greenville was given at the high school stadium. But before going in we had arranged, staged a tobacco auction at the largest tobacco warehouse—so I'm told—in the world. The farmers had brought in some very fresh tobacco for the stage sale. And the Senator enjoyed that very much. We

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went through two rows of tobacco. Senator Kennedy buying tobacco here and there. The auctioneer for that morning was a man that I had never met before but had heard a great deal on the radio. He was the man who used to be the Lucky Strike auctioneer on the old Lucky Strike Hit Parade programs. Agriculture, of course, was an issue in that campaign. Support of agricultural prices, and in North Carolina, of course price parity for tobacco was very significant. And the Senator did discuss, as I recall, in his speech basically related to agriculture.

HARTIGAN: This arrival or trip of the candidates was shortly after the ministers' meeting in Houston. Is that correct?

DRAGON: Yes, Bill, yes. I found that to be very significant. Before going to North Carolina I felt that this might still, this was a problem. When I arrived on the scene and talked with the people who were putting together the campaign locally, I found that the ministers' conference in Houston had caused a great change in their attitude. They all told me that the people of North Carolina were greatly, had been greatly concerned with that issue, but as far as they were concerned the ministers' conference in

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Houston had put that question to bed. They had felt earlier that they might not be able to get a great turnout. They were very concerned about not being able to get people out to see the Senator. But, that made a big difference. And we did in fact have a very good turnout. The Senator did discuss religious issues later that evening in his main speech in the gymnasium at the University of North Carolina at Raleigh.

HARTIGAN: What was the reaction to that at the time?

DRAGON: The reaction was outstanding. The issue just disappeared really. There was also a magnificent turnout of people at the gymnasium at North Carolina State in Raleigh that evening.

HARTIGAN: Did Senator Ervin, Governor Hodges, and Terry Sanford campaign vigorously for President Kennedy?

DRAGON: Yes they did. Yes, they did. They gave him his full support.

HARTIGAN: He really had no problems then with the local political constituents.

DRAGON: None whatsoever, Bill. None. Those people were very pleased, they were very proud, proud to be involved.

HARTIGAN: It's ironic or—I shouldn't say ironic—but it's

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coincidental that we're interviewing you about the campaign in North Carolina in 1960 and today is the primary day in North Carolina...

DRAGON: That's right Bill.

HARTIGAN: ...and I don't know if there's any significance to that or not. But at any rate, you did work and do some work in Raleigh which I believe, was that the major stop in....

DRAGON: That was the major stop. It was the last stop of the day. But was the major stop as I recall, too. That particular speech was televised throughout the state, too.

HARTIGAN: How successful was that trip?

DRAGON: We felt that it was a very successful trip. We organized of course, the buses to take Senator Kennedy out to the airport. He got on with a lot of the local, both state and local leaders. There was a large crowd waiting to see him outside the auditorium. And when we arrived at the airport in Raleigh there was a very, very large crowd of people waiting there to see him off. And despite the fact that it was now getting quite late, I think it must have been around 11 o'clock, even later than that, that we arrived at the airport in Raleigh. And yet, nevertheless, there was this huge crowd there waiting to see the Senator. And the Senator of course,

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went over and shook hands, went right down the line of the fence of people sticking out their hands through the fence, shaking hands. I could already see that his hands were, his hand was bruised but nevertheless went on. We arrived back in Washington D.C. sometime around one o'clock in the morning. Ron Linton gathered his advance men together to meet the Senator again as he got off the *Caroline*. And we kind of joked with him a little bit. We asked him what should we do with all of the tobacco that he bought at the tobacco auction. He kind of laughed about that, and said, "Now you guys stop kidding me." And despite the fact that it

was so late, I remember when we went into the terminal—I think it was the Page Airways terminal—and there were a group of reporters waiting there. One reporter, in particular, I remember was Roscoe Drummond [James Roscoe Drummond], who had not gone on the trip, and as I recall, had not been on any of the campaign trips and asked Senator Kennedy several questions. And the Senator of course provided the answers but at the same time invited him to come along on the campaign trip, that he had been missing a great deal. And Roscoe Drummond said that he would. There were a number of other reporters there that evening that I don't recall, and then finally at about one-thirty or so. Pierre

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Salinger [Pierre E. G. Salinger] felt that that was enough of a day. And he called an end to the press conference.

HARTIGAN: Were there any other issues that you can recall in North Carolina during that trip other than the agriculture, tobacco, and religious issue?

DRAGON: Bill, I think those are the principal ones. And today I'm afraid I don't recall any of the others.

HARTIGAN: Your next trip was Illinois, is that correct?

DRAGON: Yes, it was. Then Southern Illinois, Bill. A trip was arranged for Senator Kennedy. Well, he was spending, again this was a day of campaigning, one day of campaigning in Illinois—there were other trips that were scheduled for the Chicago area—this trip was scheduled for the East St. Louis area. Alton, East St. Louis, and Belleville were scheduled for this morning. And then the afternoon was scheduled for Southern Illinois and then there was a television speech scheduled for Springfield, Illinois that evening. Ron, again, was the principal advance man for both those area and Ron assigned me to Southern Illinois, which covered... We planned stops in Carbondale, home of the University of Southern Illinois; Marion, Illinois; Harrisburg, and then to Herrin,

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H-E-R-R-I-N. Again, I had concerns with the religious issue, but upon arrival in Southern Illinois found that they had disappeared. I talked with many of the local people and local leaders, Congressman Ken Gray [Kenneth J. Gray], for example, was one of the leaders in that area. They all told me that while they were mostly of the Baptist faith that they had full confidence in Senator Kennedy. That the Houston ministers' conference clarified all of the questions that they had in their mind. Senator Douglas [Paul H. Douglas] was also campaigning in Southern Illinois during that period of that time. And so he was there to meet Senator Kennedy when he arrived, also.

HARTIGAN: Was that the trip that the late President Kennedy met with Adlai

Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson]?

DRAGON: No, no it wasn't that trip, Bill. No.

HARTIGAN: He was not in view during the trip to talk about now?

DRAGON: No he wasn't.

HARTIGAN: Were there any other interesting events taking place in Illinois before we move on to the next trip?

DRAGON: Yes there were. As I recall the day of, the morning of campaigning in the East St. Louis area was highly successful. So, the campaign was late in getting into

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Carbondale and we were quite concerned that perhaps people might be losing interest in just standing around waiting for the candidate to arrive. We were running at least an hour and a half, maybe an hour and three quarters behind. But nevertheless, as we drove into Carbondale, the people were out there in force, school children were out on the sidewalks. The speech in Carbondale was given in the stadium of the University of Southern Illinois, and the stadium was filled. We left Carbondale to drive to Marion for the next stop. In between both Carbondale and Marion I remember I was in the lead car with the sheriff and all of a sudden we lost all of our cars. We went back to find out what happened and found out that Senator Kennedy was thirsty and so he asked that the cars stop on the side of the road where he could have a Coke. We went on into Marion. The speech in Marion was given on a flat-bed truck. And then between Marion and Harrisburg we stopped at a....

[Interruption]

HARTIGAN: I believe you had reached the point where you were traveling en route to the Veterans Hospital. Is that right?

DRAGON: Yes, Bill. Right. That was our next stop. This was a hospital with World War II veterans, Korean War veterans. They

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were there on stretchers, on tables...

[Interruption]

...and also in wheelchairs. I could see that Senator Kennedy was very touched with the men there. And was very pleased to be there. Then men, likewise, were extremely happy to see

him. There were as many patients as possible, plus the doctors and the nurses. They were out there to greet him. And I could tell that he wanted to stay on there because—as I mentioned earlier, we were running behind rather considerably—and so I did walk up to Senator Kennedy and told him that we do have to get the caravan moving again. He said, “That’s fine. I realize that. I’d like to spend another five minutes here.” And I walked away. And he did spend another five minutes there chatting and talking and meeting as many of the men as possible.

This area, as I mentioned, was as the people referred to it, it was Truman [Harry S. Truman] country, Symington [(William) Stuart Symington] country. And of course, President Truman’s support for Senator Kennedy meant a great deal. We went on into Harrisburg, in Southern Illinois. And Senator Kennedy talked from the steps of the court house there. And that was the very same place that Harry Truman gave a speech in a campaign of 1948, which I thought was very significant. It was running

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very late by then. We had anticipated being finished early since the daylight, of course, was closing a little earlier. This was about the second week of October. It was already beginning to get dark. And we were receiving all kinds of telephone calls from Springfield as to where is the campaign, where is the candidate. And I remember Pierre Salinger getting a call on a sheriff’s radio to have Pierre call Springfield immediately because a very important speech was scheduled to be given in Springfield that evening. That was to be a state televised speech. And so I told Pierre about the call and he went into the sheriff’s office and somebody was on the telephone there just talking away. I came back five minutes later and Pierre still hadn’t made his call through. But just showing what the importance of advance work is, since I had gotten to know those people I said, “Look,” (to the gentleman who was on the phone) “Mr. Salinger has to get an important call through!” And the man immediately hung up. And Salinger got his call through. Of course, the call was to get the campaign moving and get back to Springfield as quickly as possible. Because otherwise we would just simply miss the television program

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altogether. But, Senator Kennedy apparently was enjoying his campaign in Southern Illinois. There were very large crowds and we continued on the course. We did have to backtrack through Marion and go to a small airport in Herrin, Illinois. That’s just outside of Marion. And by then the doctors had already come, there was a very large crowd of people at the airport. They had been waiting a long time to see the Senator. But, nevertheless, he insisted upon giving a short speech. I remember Ron Linton running around very excited and talking to me with a great deal of emotion to get these press people on the plane. I remember you being there too, that night, herding everybody on there so we’d be ready to take off. And I remember that night in particular because as I recall the Senator made that quote, I forget who it was, that “I have to hitch my horse to,” remember? “I have to hitch my horse to the wagon. I have other things. I have a long way to go into the night.”

HARTIGAN: Right.

DRAGON: Remember that, Bill? And so finally I think we got our candidate off just in the nick-of-time. As I understand correctly, I don't think he even had time to eat that night before getting to the Springfield auditorium to make that speech.

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HARTIGAN: Ed, there were many nights we didn't eat. Any other interesting observation on the Illinois advance?

DRAGON: Well, just one thing that happened to me that night was the fact that there wasn't any more room on the airplane for me because of the large number of press people. So, I had to just find my way back to Washington. Well, let's see, I'm trying to remember. Senator Douglas, of course, supported Senator Kennedy a great deal. And I recall doing advance that week and bumping into Senator Douglas on my rounds. We just ended up in the same place together a great deal. I think it was particularly remarkable about the tie-in with former President Truman. I think that meant a lot in Southern Illinois. As I remember, the vote was close in Southern Illinois. And I think we were very happy with that. Because there was some anticipation of there being a greater vote for the opponent. But it didn't work out that way.

HARTIGAN: So, it was a successful trip?

DRAGON: Yes, it was.

HARTIGAN: Was there another advance trip that you made?

DRAGON: No, Bill. Those were the only two that I made. Beginning around the latter part of September, John Nolan had asked me to come in to help out

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[numbering retained from original transcript; actual page 15]

at the advance desk. Since I was in private law practice those days, I came into the office at six o'clock. Generally Dick Maguire [Richard V. Maguire] and Dick O'Hare were still there but they were ready to go out to get some food and perhaps get some rest for the evening. Jim Corcoran was basically in charge through the evening. And Jim and I would then work the advance desk from six o'clock on into then evening, receiving calls from our various advance men and answering their questions, receiving schedules, getting schedules mimeographed, and back out to the campaign.

HARTIGAN: I must say that you did a very dedicated job, too.

DRAGON: Thanks, Bill.

HARTIGAN: Ed, after the campaign and the inauguration and the swearing in, you were asked to perform further assistance to the administration. Who contacted you with reference to the stockpiling investigation that you were requested to assist in?

DRAGON: Dick Maguire did, Bill. It was, I guess, early fall, September or so, 1961 when Dick called me up and said that the President was interested in certain matters. And he was wondering whether or not I'd be interested in participating in a study. He said

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[numbering retained from original transcript; actual page 16]

that he would call Tim May [Timothy J. May] in about it. And so Tim May and I met with Dick and as I recall Dick explained to us the serious concern that the President had with this enormous stockpile of all kinds of raw materials that had accumulated during the prior eight years. The value of the stockpile at that time was in the neighborhood of ten billion dollars. He was quite concerned with the cost of the stockpile, as to whether or not at that time in 1961 with the conventional type of warfare being pretty much a matter of the past, that we had to be concerned about nuclear type warfare. Whether or not those kinds of materials would be useful there. And in general just how was it that we came to have such, these enormous amounts of materials on hand at such a huge cost to the American Taxpayer. He was also concerned with the fact that if the materials were to be sold off from the stockpile that this might very well have a bad effect on the market too. Huge amounts of zinc, of copper, of nickel, of bauxite, that could really wreak havoc on the market. But, he was concerned principally with how it was that we got into this, and what could we do to remedy it. So, we undertook a study, Tim May

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was involved in it. Walter Shevley (?) was involved in it. And we undertook to review all of the contracts that were left for the purchases of lead, nickel, and so forth. And we felt that in many instances the prices charged to the government were unconscionable. And that's what we reported. And as I recall, the first time the President reported upon the study to the public he did indicate, those were the words that he used. That he felt that it was unconscionable that we should have spent such huge amounts of money on these things where possibly we might need them.

HARTIGAN: Do you recall the occasion that he made this announcement? Was it a special press conference?

DRAGON: No it was not a special press conference, Bill. It was one of his regular

press conferences. But it was the first lead off item that he had that day. I believe that while he held his conferences at the State Department

Auditorium.

HARTIGAN: Did you have any difficulty with the people holding positions in the government at the time to get information in this study?

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DRAGON: In some respects we did. Our principal problem was with the Department of State, where core executive privilege was usually quoted to us in terms of our seeking information. But, other than that we did get cooperation.

HARTIGAN: Well, what did you do about the defense of executive privilege when in fact the President was the one that asked you to go check it?

DRAGON: Well, this is exactly the point we made to those few officials in the department that sought to invoke executive privilege. Number one, we pointed out to them that executive privilege could be invoked only by the President himself. And number two, that the President wanted a study of this. He had asked Senator Symington to conduct an investigation into stockpile matters, and that he indeed had ordered that all departments and agencies cooperate with Senator Symington's sub-committee. And that overcame the obstacles.

HARTIGAN: I was in the White House at the time as Mr. Kenny O'Donnell's [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] assistant. I vaguely remember that.... Didn't he call in some people for you?

DRAGON: Yes, yes he did, Bill.

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HARTIGAN: Would you relate to that?

DRAGON: Yes, when we were having problems obtaining information from the various departments and agencies, Interior, Commerce, Department of State OEP [Office of Emergency Planning], where we were working, out of which office we were working, and Ken O'Donnell did call together principal representative from those agencies and departments and told them that the President was personally concerned about this matter, that he had ordered that all the agencies should cooperate.

HARTIGAN: I understand that was the shortest meeting on record.

DRAGON: That's correct, it was. It was very short.

HARTIGAN: And probably the most effective.

DRAGON: And it was extremely effective, Bill.

HARTIGAN: You had also, I would imagine that, excuse me let me cross that question. Were there any presidential appointee holdovers from the Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] administration in the government at that time? In the area that you were investigating?

DRAGON: Not to my recollection, Bill. No, I don't recall offhand.

HARTIGAN: You had some difficulty, as I recall, with pinning down or even getting in contact with witnesses that you had a yearning to talk to. Do you want to relate to that?

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DRAGON: Yes.

HARTIGAN: I know you didn't get them.

DRAGON: I'll try to remember, I was trying to remember the particular witness that I had talked to. I remember going out to talk with a fellow who had been general counsel in GSA [General Services Administration] and was working as a lawyer out in Los Angeles. We did have trouble locating him. I arranged a meeting. He was very reluctant to come. But, finally our counsel or Senator Symington's counsel insisted that he be there. And issued a subpoena for his appearance and he came. I remember that.

HARTIGAN: This was a joint effort on that part of the executive and the legislative branch. Is that correct?

DRAGON: Yes, that's right, Bill. The President had asked some of the senators, Symington specifically, to look into this. Senator Symington as I recall, had had some prior experience with this. And I believe he was also chairman of the sub-committee on stockpiling of the United States Senate. So it fell within his bailiwick and he said yes, he had some knowledge of stockpiling, a good basic knowledge of stockpile activity. And he too was interested in what had transpired.

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HARTIGAN: What were you, what experience can you relate to us with reference to your experience, rather, in the part that was played in this whole area of

stockpiling by the former Secretary of the Treasury Humphrey [George Magoffin Humphrey], who was former Secretary of Treasury under Eisenhower? He was, his companies were involved in that, I recall it coming out in the newspapers.

DRAGON: Yes, one of the principal contracts that was let under the Defense Production Act which in turn provided for putting nickel into, ferro nickel, into the stockpile was with the Hanna Nickel Mining Company of Eugene, not Eugene, Rosedale or Rosebud, something like that, Oregon. The Hanna Nickel Mining Company was a subsidiary company of one of the Hanna Companies of which former Treasury Secretary Humphrey was the president. We looked at that particular contract very carefully. We felt that the prices charged to the U.S. government were excessive. We recommended that the Department of Justice pursue or reclaim funds unpaid under that contract. And indeed the government, the Department of Justice did end up filing a lawsuit against Hanna Nickel Mining Company in Oregon. And the U.S. District Court

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Court ruled in favor of the government. As I recall the judgment was in the neighborhood of \$250-\$300,000. The case revolved around a rather specific accounting issue. And the case went on up in the court of appeals for the ninth circuit. And as I recall that was upheld, and the court considered it a very classic case of unjust enrichment as we call it in the law. And interestingly enough, that case was to establish a precedent as far as the United States government goes with respect to the claiming of interest on monies advanced to firms under contracts. Prior to that case the government was unable to claim interest on funds advanced to contractors as advance payments or to pay for goods. And in this particular case that court did say that in this particular instance that interest was also to be paid by Hanna from the date of the payment, since Hanna had the use of that money. It would have had to go out to borrow that money otherwise. As a matter of fact, as a government lawyer, today we rely on that case. It was a case the Department of Justice itself was quite surprised with. But that principle has been upheld.

HARTIGAN: Can you recall the names of any other officials in the government that were involved in this stockpiling scandal?

[Interruption]

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DRAGON: No, I don't recall any names precisely, but I do recall that each time we looked into a different area of activity we were quite surprised to find that persons from the very industries concerned, which whom the government did have contracts, were there in official positions at the Assistant secretary level, at other lower levels, and so that was very astonishing to us.

HARTIGAN: Ed, it appears as though President Kennedy did not strive desperately to

put anybody in jail over this, and yet it was still quite a scandal. What's your attitude on that?

DRAGON: That's right. Well, I think he was concerned principally with the taxpayers' money. And as to the role of the government in this I don't think that so far as I know he wasn't after any particular individual. And I never heard anything like that at all. Nothing of that nature at all. He was concerned with the amounts of money involved, he was also concerned with the policies for the future, as to what we'd do with the stockpile, how do we cope with it, what effect it might have on a market. I don't recall at all that he wanted to see somebody impaled in any way, shape, or form.

HARTIGAN: Did you agree with his handling of it?

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DRAGON: Yes I did. Yes, I did. He established a cabinet level committee, as I recall, under the chairmanship of Ed McDermott [Edward A. McDermott] who was then the director of the Office of Emergency Planning. The Secretary of Labor was on that committee. As I recall, the Secretary of Interior was also on that committee. They had a sub-cabinet level group working for them. They took all of the materials that we had prepared and put together, and based on that came up with some recommended new procedures and policies with respect to stockpiling activities for the government. The first step, of course, was simply to cease buying.

HARTIGAN: As a lawyer then, you feel as though the investigation had a positive effect.

DRAGON: Yes, I do.

HARTIGAN: Was Ed McDermott involved in the investigation at all?

DRAGON: Well, Ed McDermott was the Director of the Office of Emergency Planning and it was his agency, of course, that was responsible for establishing stockpiling policies. It was charged with that activity. So, yes he knew what was going on, and worked with us, cooperated with

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us. Yes, indeed.

[Interruption]

HARTIGAN: After the stockpile investigation, did you return to your private law practice?

DRAGON: Well, no, I didn't Bill. Work was over there but I wanted to continue to work for the administration and then I went over to AID, Agency for International Development, as a lawyer, and I've been there ever since.

HARTIGAN: Who contacted you on the AID position?

DRAGON: That was Dick Maguire, as I recall.

HARTIGAN: So, you did serve as an assistant general counsel in AID under President Kennedy?

DRAGON: Not quite, Bill. I went over first as an attorney advisor and I became an assistant general counsel subsequently.

HARTIGAN: You were in AID at the time in the legal section...

DRAGON: Yes I was.

HARTIGAN: ...during the Kennedy Administration. Can you relate to us President Kennedy's activities in the field that came into your jurisdiction?

DRAGON: Yes, well, Senator Kennedy, of course, was greatly in favor of foreign assistance. The foreign assistance program had fallen into some disrepute at the time. It was a difficult program to administer. There had been difficulties in finding a very strong person to head up the agency. And the President finally decided

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upon having David Bell [David E. Bell], who was his director of the Bureau of the Budget, to take over AID. And I remember David Bell, well I went to AID just about the same time David Bell did. And what I saw was reorganization of the agency. I saw a very strong man at the helm, a strong will, a person who developed very strong foreign assistance policies. David Bell, of course, subsequently went on, when he left the administration, went with the Ford Foundation where, as I understand it, he's headed up the international division of the Ford Foundation ever since.

HARTIGAN: So, there was in effect a reorganization, a reorganizing of the department, the AID agency?

DRAGON: Yes, under David Bell, that is correct. David Bell provided very strong leadership. He was a marvelous person to have testify before the

congressional committees. He had a remarkable memory, great in-depth knowledge too, about the foreign aid program and about the entire government in general. And so, he was a very strong proponent of the President's foreign assistance program.

HARTIGAN: I think the fact that Dave Bell was sent to AID from the Bureau of the Budget indicates the concern the President had for that program.

DRAGON: Yes, yes.

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HARTIGAN: Were there any other observations you'd like to make with reference to the AID program under President Kennedy?

[Interruption]

DRAGON: Bill, I think the most significant matter in my mind really was the President's concern with the administration of the program. And I have a recollection of talking about AID with Ken O'Donnell back then. And Ken indicated to me the very strong concern that the President had for the administration of the program, where it was going. The agency had been floundering and that was the reason why Dave Bell was over there.

HARTIGAN: So, in effect, new vigor was instilled into the program?

DRAGON: It most certainly was. Yes.

HARTIGAN: For the better?

DRAGON: For the better.

HARTIGAN: Ed, do you recall where you were at the time of the assassination?

DRAGON: Yes, I do, Bill. I remember that day quite clearly. I was here in Washington. I had gone out with a friend of mine for lunch. A fellow I had done some legal work for some years prior, during my days of private law practice. We had gone out for a late lunch. It was a beautiful sunny day here in Washington. And I had

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just come back and gotten on the elevator, gotten into the building. I saw a lot of people scurrying around. It was around one-thirty, as I remember, here in Washington. It might have been a little later. No, it was a little later than that. It was sometime between two and two-thirty. And people were just racing around, all around the building. I was wondering what in

the world was going on. I got on the elevator and somebody said that the President had been shot. Of course, I was just crushed. I just couldn't believe it. As far as I was concerned it just couldn't happen. And then by the time I got back to the office people did have the radio on and news was coming through. Of course, my wife was trying to reach me and I was trying to reach my wife. And of course nobody could get through on the telephones at that time. Then we just sat and moped around. That's about all we could do. I remember going then.... We really didn't do any work at all. I went home. My wife, of course, knew of my participation in the campaign and my great love and respect for President Kennedy. And she was in tears, my daughter was in tears. When we arrived home we didn't know quite what to do. We wanted to, seemed to want to do something.

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So, we went out to the Bethesda Naval Hospital and kind of formed a vigil out there with a group of other people out at Bethesda Naval Hospital where we learned that the President's body had been taken. And we stayed there for about two or three hours and then finally came on back home.

HARTIGAN: Ed, would you care to recap your personal opinion of President Kennedy, his organization and administration in closing out the interview here?

DRAGON: Yes, I would. As I look back on those days, Bill, in terms of the President himself, he had great ideas, he was very clear in enunciating his programs, his policies. They were good policies. I do think that they probably shook us up a lot, took us out of a kind of sleepy condition as I recall what I thought the country was in in 1960. And as I used to say, I want to get the country moving again. And that's what he did. He got us thinking, doing things, got people involved like the Peace Corps, young people involved in so many activities. I think you see the fruits and benefits of all of that today in terms of the organization. It was a very fine group of people, very well motivated, very intelligent, very friendly, good hearted, very candid, very honest. We

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look at the things that occurred in Watergate some years later on and my wife and I frequently comment, and I frequently commented to her that those kind of things were just never thought of, could never have occurred in the Kennedy administration.

HARTIGAN: How do you answer the question, though, that has come up many times during this Watergate investigation that all administrations did these things? What's your answer to that?

DRAGON: Well, what I saw, I was involved of course in the investigation into stockpiling, and we just didn't do any of those things. We weren't out to

get any person, we weren't instructed to, there was no such goal. And I really take that as my prime example. And I didn't see there and just didn't think that the President was capable of doing such a thing.

HARTIGAN: Ed, thank you very much for the time you've given us today. I hope that if time permits you may look through your old cardboard cartons that you have from the campaign days and if you come across any memorabilia that you feel as though you'd like to donate to the library, we'd be very happy to take it off your hands. Or if you have a lot of it we'll have somebody come down and evaluate it for you. I'd appreciate it if you do have the time to look into

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that.

DRAGON: Bill, I personally am not too much of a collector of memorabilia, but I do recall some photographs that were taken at the tobacco auction. I do want to get one of those out to you showing Senator Kennedy at the end of the tobacco auction. That might be an interesting picture, I think, for the Library.

HARTIGAN: And also if you can think of anybody that I may not have thought of that you feel would be valuable in this oral history department of the Kennedy library, if you'd let me know the name I'll be very happy to contact them and see if we can get them to give us a tape of their experiences.

DRAGON: I sure will, Bill.

HARTIGAN: Thank you very much, Ed Dragon in Washington, D.C.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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