

Charles Guggenheim Oral History Interview – RFK#2, 02/27/1973
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Biographical Note

(1924 - 2002). Film producer, political media consultant, Robert Kennedy Senate campaign, 1964 and presidential campaign, 1968; producer RFK Remembered, 1968, discusses the creation of the biographical film made for RFK's 1968 campaign and the film played at the 1968 Democratic National Convention, among other issues.

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Charles Guggenheim – RFK #2

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Second Oral History Interview

with

Charles Guggenheim

February 27, 1973
Washington, D. C.

By Roberta Greene

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

GREENE: I wanted to begin with that May 8 weekend that we talked about before, the last trip back.

GUGGENHEIM: Oh, we found out it was May 8?

GREENE: Right. It was not Easter. I was confusing it with another taping session. But it was May 8. And you said that Dutton [Frederick G. Dutton] was sent to look at your film, what you had done.

GUGGENHEIM: Among other things, that was right. I'll tell you I remembered another thing that might check that date. You maybe probably know it's that date.

GREENE: I have the chronology. That's how I finally figured it out, but what?

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GUGGENHEIM: Ethel [Ethel Skakel Kennedy] announced that she was pregnant. I think that the doctor had said something, and Fred had just gone over to talk to the doctor before he came to see me.

GREENE: You mean to check on whether or not she could continue?

GUGGENHEIM: I don't know whether it was to tell him that.... Maybe it was just something that we were thinking, I am not sure of this. My understanding was that Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy] asked him to go over there and talk to him, or some of the staff had persuaded him he should go over and talk to him to make sure he didn't make any more comments. I think it was the doctor who had made the announcement to the press not Ethel, wasn't it?

GREENE: I know there was a rumor and she got very irked when they asked her about it. She said, "I've never discussed these things before and I don't intend to start now." But I don't remember where the original rumor came from.

GUGGENHEIM: I remember it was then and there was something about that because he had just come from....

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I think the doctor was in Maryland. But he was on that problem, and then he came over to see me. He had told me the day before that he thought I should come back with him on the plane. I told you that before. And we were supposed to meet out at Logos [Teleproduction Center] to look at the new material. I think the material had been seen. I don't know the date of this either, but over at George Stevens' house in Georgetown we screened it for the first time. Now I am wondering if this was the same material. That was before this meeting with Dutton, but Ethel was there, Ethel and.... Who was the fellow who was head of Bobby's office in New York?

GREENE: Tom Johnston [Thomas M.C. Johnston]?

GUGGENHEIM: Tom Johnston and his wife were there. What's happened to him?

GREENE: He is an attorney and I think he works with Benno Schmidt. He was working with Benno Schmidt over at the [J.H.] Whitney Company for a number of years. As far as I know that's where he still is.

GUGGENHEIM: He was always a mystery to me.

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GREENE: That New York office has its own...

GUGGENHEIM: I never could figure that out exactly.

GREENE: ...complications.

GUGGENHEIM: Well, anyway, he was there and George and I think there were a couple of other people there, and we projected the stuff on the screen and discussed it. I think Ethel was home and Bobby was on the road. Then, whether the material went out or whether or not Fred hadn't seen it, or Bobby told Fred that he should look at it, or... The fact that Don Wilson [Donald M. Wilson] wasn't around was, I think, significant at that time because, I mean, he would have been logically the one.... That is how I sort of knew that the guard had been changed somehow. I didn't even know that Don had come back, or he went back to New York, that he wasn't there.

So Fred looked at it and then sort of, almost as if he had forgotten that I was going to go with him, said that he thought maybe it would be better if I didn't go or something. And he saw it, and I think they

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left quite late that evening, maybe 11 o'clock or something, as I recall, or maybe it was 7 or 8. But he went from Logos right to the National Airport having seen it. That is all I remember.

GREENE: Do you remember his comments?

GUGGENHEIM: About the material? I don't think they were very definitive, as I remember. He did, as he always does.... Maybe it is because of my experience with other things, I found Fred always fascinating and innovative when he is in informal conversation, but when he gets to application he becomes very conservative. That was my feeling. You know, he will talk about these very interesting theories about the way politics is going to go and television and that's the way to go using the new processes. Once the crunch comes he becomes very conservative, almost in reverse. And maybe it's my experience with him in that regard that makes me think that that night he did the same thing when he saw the material. But I may be carrying something over. I really should say I don't remember.

GREENE: But it was, if I remember correctly at this point, that you gave him the impression that

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you were dissatisfied with certain things and thought there were problems and he said to write them down and that's when you wrote the memo. Is that correct chronology?

GUGGENHEIM: Yes, that's correct. Since I was going to, I was ready. I had envisioned in my own mind sitting next to Kennedy on a plane and saying, "Look, this is what I think." Fred had told me, and I can't remember when he

told me, but I think we had seen each other the day before or two days before, about the unhappiness that the candidate had felt about the material that was being produced. I have no evidence on why or how he felt. I mean I knew why I was unhappy but I didn't know why he was unhappy. Whether he had seen it or whether people had come up to him and talked to him about it or what. I didn't know how he had gotten this feeling.

I had been unhappy sitting here seeing it before it went out, and then when Fred came back and he said, you know, the candidate is unhappy about the way this thing is being handled. Whether it had to do with Goodwin [Richard N. Goodwin], or with Papert [Frederic S. Papert] or with

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Wilson, I didn't know. There was no really sort of categorizing of it. There was no specific blame that I could remember being discussed. But there was just sort of a general unhappiness. I told him why I thought it was wrong, too, and he said, "Well, you ought to tell that.... You ought to come with us tomorrow and tell him that." So I had organized in my own mind what I was going to say. I remember I had sort of rehearsed it. And then when he said, you know, "You're not coming with us." I had my bag packed, sort of thing.

GREENE: You don't know why?

GUGGENHEIM: Why he decided? I don't know why, and maybe even Fred might not even remember. Maybe Fred said, "You ought to go with us," and then he'd forgotten about it. Then when he realized I was there with my bag packed he must have said, "Gee, I didn't...." Or maybe there were other problems and he didn't want to bother. I don't know what was on Fred's mind. Or maybe he had talked it over with Kennedy and Kennedy said, "No, I don't want to do it."

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I went home that very weekend, I sat down and wrote this memo. It was first ten or twelve pages long and then I realized you couldn't ask anybody to sit and read that so I took it down to a page and a half, which was hard for me to do, and I sent it out to him. I got a call from Fred. I hope that isn't my imagination.

GREENE: No, I think you said that the other time, too.

GUGGENHEIM: I did, he called me. He said, "I saw it and he thinks it is absolutely right and he wants to talk to you." When was he assassinated?

GREENE : June 4.

GUGGENHEIM: June 4. So how many days later would that have been?

GREENE: Well, it's almost a month. The memo is the twelfth.

GUGGENHEIM: The memo was the twelfth, so I must have written it the next week. I didn't write it that weekend. Is that right?

GREENE: Well, the eighth was the weekend so, you know, it was within a couple of days.

GUGGENHEIM: Four days.

GREENE: Right.

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GUGGENHEIM: Okay. And he...

GREENE: The eighth was the day after the Indiana primary. The twelfth was a couple of days before Nebraska. You were in Nebraska when you wrote the memo?

GUGGENHEIM: I was what?

GREENE: You were in Nebraska when you wrote the memo.

GUGGENHEIM: No, I wasn't. I wrote it at home.

GREENE: Oh, excuse me. You know, I thought.... I see. It says here c.c., carbon copy, Sheraton Fontenelle, Omaha, and I was thinking, when I just glanced at it I thought you had signed it at the Sheraton Fontenelle, Omaha, and I thought you were in Nebraska.

GUGGENHEIM: I sent one copy to....

GREENE: It doesn't say to whom, it just says Sheraton Fontenelle.

GUGGENHEIM: Yeah.

GREENE: I see, I made a mistake on that.

GUGGENHEIM: That's interesting. It was sent on the twelfth, he was assassinated on the fourth. So that is what, three or three and a half weeks later. Yeah, that would have been right.

GREENE: It was just in that week between the Indiana and Nebraska primaries.

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GUGGENHEIM: I see.

GREENE: One thing you say in that, which interests me, is you said that the biographic film has been broadcast as much as two weeks before an election with complete insensitivity to the fact that people do not retain whatever emotional relationships come from the picture for more than three or four days. And, it seems to me this was a question you were debating back in 1964, wasn't it? Some people wanted it to go for weeks before, and I think you and others pressed for the fact that a couple of days is all you could really expect.

GUGGENHEIM: That's right.

GREENE: Was this still an issue at that point?

GUGGENHEIM: My argument was that you can't just take material.... The material was being shipped out, there was nobody there who was saying, "Look, this is what we have, let's sit down and discuss how we should release it. We ought to put this here. We ought to put that there. We ought to begin with this. Next week we ought to come out with

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that. We ought to raise the intensity here." The material would come in, in a pile, and it would be sent out.

GREENE: Was that because they didn't have much to choose from do you think, at that point?

GUGGENHEIM: No, I don't think anybody took any interest in that problem. No one took any interest in that problem. I mean that's not what entertains people. I mean people, who were involved in the.... That may be unfair, but see I feel that the distribution is almost as important as what you put in the film you're distributing. But who do you give it to?

GREENE: Who should have had that responsibility? Papert?

GUGGENHEIM: Yeah, I guess that's right. He should. He should. I mean, if you look at Bobby's New York campaign you'll see how indiscriminately that was released. I mean, they substituted volume. They felt, I think, that they'd win votes by just the amount of weight of the video tapes. As you know, I thought that thing at Columbia [Columbia University] was excellent,

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and the pieces that came from it were excellent, but maybe you know.... The amount of material that was produced, it was a horrendous amount of material. Somehow the more you pour out the more people will respond. Well, that just is not true.

GREENE: Was there any follow-up to see what the results of the media campaign were? Was there anybody doing your own survey to measure the impact?

GUGGENHEIM: In which campaign?.

GREENE: In the 1968, or even in '64, but especially in '68.

GUGGENHEIM: No, because after a campaign is over no one is interested. First of all there's no money.

GREENE: But at the time, to see what kind of an impact you were having?

GUGGENHEIM: I don't know if Papert took the material and had it tested. There is a process where you can have a qualitative analysis sort of done. The Republicans did a lot of it this time. We couldn't afford it

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with our campaign. They took our spots and had them evaluated, too, the Republicans did which ones they felt were most effective. They'd bring in a group of people. They have methods of analyzing how they respond to a piece of film. Now whether Papert did that or not with this material, I don't know. He may have.

GREENE: That would be interesting if they had any indication of what the problem was and just didn't do anything about it.

GUGGENHEIM: You can question that too. I think that's open for great criticism. I mean this whole area.... You can take an Alka-Seltzer commercial and everyone will love it, but the question is does it sell Alka-Seltzer? And sometimes they find out that it doesn't.

GREENE: People remember the commercial but it doesn't necessarily influence their buying.
Anyway, had you made any complaint to this effect before you wrote the memo? Had you discussed it with anyone that it was just the kind of thing that was eating at you?

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GUGGENHEIM: Well, you know the campaign hadn't.... You see Indiana was our first primary. I think, there's another date in there that might be interesting to me in answering that question, and that is when we met in Indianapolis and looked at the material, what we called the first flight that had been produced. I was producing, Papert was producing, and we all met in Indianapolis and we went into a studio and threw this stuff on a screen. Bobby was there and it was kind of a horrible meeting. The Papert material was just dreadful, you know.

GREENE: Was that the one where you had the little boy going up the steps and you had an argument about that?

GUGGENHEIM: Yes, the argument about that. Yeah. Whether we should use it or not.

GREENE: Could you get an indication of his feelings about Papert....
[Interruption]

GREENE: I think I was asking you, during that first screening, whether you got any impression of Robert Kennedy's reaction at all to that stuff.

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GUGGENHEIM: Well, let me tell you very honestly. I again, oftentimes, as we discussed earlier, your feelings about something are influenced by things that happen later, you know. I am trying to recall as honestly as I can. I admit that we left the meeting feeling very good, and we left the meeting feeling very good because the Papert stuff—and I am not speaking constructively, I am just speaking in terms of one-upmanship, you know—we felt that Bobby had put Papert down and that more of our material had been accepted than their material.

GREENE: Were you actually selecting at that point what was going to be used?

GUGGENHEIM: Well it was rather.... I think if you went away from the meeting you couldn't say, "Did he say, 'Use this' or 'Don't use that'?" but you could really tell the ones that had been thrown out. That was another thing that left me very concerned, because you leave a meeting like that and you wouldn't really have confidence that anybody would take it from that point on and make that

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decision except Papert, who in a sense was not in charge then. Wilson was in charge. And so, since Papert had his own material in there and you had, in a sense, given him yours, I didn't have any real confidence that too much that was said there.... No, that's not quite accurate. I would say that there was a lot of open space to move around in after that meeting, though it was quite clear that he had been put down on certain things, and a lot of their stuff, as I recall, had been criticized. Very frankly he had done much better work than that in the past.

GREENE: Than that in the past?

GUGGENHEIM: Yeah, I thought so. I thought the stuff that I saw as really quite dreadful. We all had to, kind of, put it together very, very quickly. That would be interesting to me. That's why that date is interesting to me. Because there was a meeting out at Bobby's house—I am jumping around a lot—where there were a lot of people and finally

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he said, "Let's get off our tail and go to Indiana." It was the first time I'd been in a meeting with him where there were a lot of people. He impressed me so much. He sat, and he listened, and he listened, and he listened, and he listened, and he listened. Then he said, "We have got to do one, two, three." And it was quite clear. Everyone liked to talk, everyone liked to put in their suggestions.

Now Papert loves to talk and he is very eloquent and people like that have always put me down, not put me down, but put me off. All this garbage about why this and why that and why this and why that, then all of a sudden you see this stuff come up on the screen and you say, "So what?"

GREENE: It's just talk.

GUGGENHEIM: It's just talk. He is very verbal and he's articulate and has a theory for this and a theory for that and this, that and the other thing. He did so much talking, and, as I recall, Bobby kept interrupting him all the time until he finally realized.... He'd

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ride right over. He'd come right up again, come right up again.

I remember feeling some satisfaction that Bobby, in his kind of short, brief way, had cut him off at the legs. Every time he'd climb up he'd cut him off at the leg. But maybe I just remember that because I wanted it to be that way.

But I recall saying something to our people when we left that we had done pretty well and I meant that in a sort of competitive sense, you know. There was a lot of that involved in it, that we had confidence in our work. I wish we had had more time and that we had done better stuff. I know that to be true. But it was sort of out of our hands at that time because there were too many people involved..

GREENE: Let's try to place that date of the meeting... [Interruption]

GUGGENHEIM: ...vanden Heuvel [William J. vanden Heuvel]. The whole "shmeer."

GREENE: It wasn't only media people?

GUGGENHEIM. Oh no. It sure wasn't. In fact, a minority of media people.

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GREENE: Well, it's hard to place. On my Indiana schedule I show the first trip to Indiana as the twenty-eighth.

GUGGENHEIM: Well, don't let the trip set it, they may have been there.

GREEN: Right. I mean Kennedy's first....

GUGGENHEIM: No one was living in hotels. They were in and out, you know. I mean, what he was saying, what Bobby was saying, was you know, "Why aren't the media people there? Why aren't all you so-called experts out there ensconced in a hotel?" When was the meeting in Indianapolis for the screening? Do you have any idea when that took place?

GREENE: Can you place it as far as the Martin Luther King [Martin Luther King, Jr.] assassination?

GUGGENHEIM:. Oh, earlier.

GREENE: Earlier than that.

GUGGENHEIM: Oh yes.

GREENE: All right. Well, that was April 4. And they came back. They had just gotten to Indiana, and they came back right after the King assassination. And if it was before Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson]....

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GUGGENHEIM: Now see, that I'm not clear about. I couldn't swear it was before Johnson...

GREENE: Well, I don't know when they would have gone to Indiana.

GUGGENHEIM: I'll tell you what I might do... [Interruption]

GREENE: Anyway, our conclusion is that we don't know the date of that meeting.

GUGGENHEIM: Yes, that's right. Okay.

GREENE: Okay. What I wanted to know is how much you had to do to change the film for use in each primary so that the biography that was used, let's say, in Indianapolis....

GUGGENHEIM: Let's see. There was Indiana, Nebraska. We filmed him in Indiana and we filmed him in Nebraska very early, and then we got some footage, I think, when he went to California the first time. He did go up to Oregon. Did he?

GREENE : Yes.

GUGGENHEIM: And we got that footage. We changed the openings on all the biographies so the openings were all different, and they placed him in the state where he was campaigning. Here was Edith Green [Edith S. Green] in Oregon.

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And I remember calling to ask whether or not we should do Edith Green. I called Fred on the road. and I said, "Do you want to use Edith Green? Is that a plus or a minus?" Well, I think at that point they weren't sure, but, they had already been committed.

GREENE: Right. Do you remember anything specific about problems filming in each of these states? You didn't go out yourself, but...

GUGGENHEIM: Yeah, I went out. The only reason I didn't go out in California because I didn't believe we should have gone. I don't feel it is necessary for me to go when there is no concept or preparation.

GREENE: You told me about the initial trip.

GUGGENHEIM: The initial trip. They hopped on a plane, and I felt it was more important for me to stay back and work with the material I had, to put it in some kind of form than to go off running around from one rally to another. That's exactly what happened. We have thousands of feet that all looks alike, that could be in Timbuktu—screaming people for five, ten hours. It is all alike. They all

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look alike after awhile.

GREENE: So, you did go out to Indiana, Nebraska and Oregon, to each of these places?

GUGGENHEIM: Again I am a little confused. The Oregon film... The western tour I didn't go out with. It was just film crews. We had two film crews. We had two film crews. Then the first time I went out, I believe—this you might call the second phase of shooting—was when he went to Lincoln and he talked at the university there...

GREENE: Okay.

GUGGENHEIM: ...because I needed some material of him being in Nebraska. Now where did he go after he left Lincoln university? He talked at the University of Nebraska.

GREENE: The date of the appearance at the University of Nebraska is March 28.

GUGGENHEIM: Where did he go right after that? What was the next day?

GREENE: Albuquerque.

GUGGENHEIM: Okay. We filmed in Lincoln and left him. Sure, because we needed something for the biography in Nebraska, that is the reason we filmed that day, just to place him in Nebraska.

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GREENE: And that was the extent of your actual time in Nebraska?

GUGGENHEIM: For that shooting that's the extent of our time in Nebraska. No more. Just to get the biography. No more. Because by that time I had had my meeting and I was only going to do the biography. And I promised I'd finish that. I was off the spots at that time. I mean, I had done my thing. Then they pulled us back in again, then we did a new series. We had already filmed, I think, in Indianapolis when he filed. When did he file? It would be before that wouldn't it?

GREENE: That's the date we have to check. I am sure we can get it. It was earlier in the month.

GUGGENHEIM: Okay. Gosh. There's Nebraska, there's Indianapolis filming when he filed. There's a filming in Columbus, Indiana, in which a whole day was set aside for filming, or almost a whole day for filming. I know it was the day of the Academy Awards.

GREENE: April 10, I have courthouse rally. So that's the day, right?

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GUGGENHEIM: Courthouse rally?

GREENE: April 10. That's much later.

GUGGENHEIM: That's much later.

GREENE: That's the first day back after the assassination of King.

GUGGENHEIM: Is that right?

GREENE: The first day back in Indiana.

GUGGENHEIM: Yeah, that's why he gave that speech. That speech is a lovely speech. I had it on film. His speech at Columbus, Indiana. It was the only time it was filmed. There was nobody, no cameras there or anything, because no one thought it was an important speech. They were going someplace else. So that's the last time.... I filmed in Columbus, we filmed that day at the farm, I went to California, to Los Angeles. I went to the Academy Awards that night and came back the next day at Terre Haute, filming at a factory. Was he in Terre Haute the following day?

GREENE: I have him in Terre Haute the same day,

GUGGENHEIM: He was there that night.

GREENE: And came back and was still there the next day?

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GUGGENHEIM: The next morning he was still there.

GREENE: Okay.

GUGGENHEIM: Yeah, so that's right. Terre Haute. That is on what day?

GREENE: April 10.

GUGGENHEIM: April 10 and he was assassinated on...

GREENE: Kennedy or King? Kennedy?

GUGGENHEIM: Kennedy.

GREENE : June 4.

GUGGENHEIM: April 10. Then there was some filming that I did in Washington with him at St. Alban's. Yeah, when was that?

GREENE: Now, let me ask you. Is St. Alban's in Virginia?

GUGGENHEIM: No, National Cathedral.

GREENE: That's right. That was what confused me the last time we talked about it because I know he filmed at a boys school Easter weekend, but I guess that was the same one. It was St. Alban's.

GUGGENHEIM: What date would that be?

GREENE: You've got me. I would have to check the date of Easter.

GUGGENHEIM: The day after our meeting at Hickory Hill, which we can't place the time, Papert attempted

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to get together, as I recall, and do the same thing he had done successfully in Columbia. And they brought video tape machines down from New York, and they did something here in Washington, bringing in people to ask questions.

GREENE: That's probably the occasion I'm thinking of, and Kennedy was very dissatisfied.

GUGGENHEIM: Never went on the air.

GREENE: Yes, he was very dissatisfied with that.

GUGGENHEIM: It never went on the air. The date of the broadcast...

GREENE: I think that was Easter weekend.

GUGGENHEIM: ...the taping, the day before would be the meeting out at Hickory Hill when he said, "Let's get into Indianapolis. Let's go into Indiana."

GREENE: Okay. Did you go out to Oregon at all?

GUGGENHEIM: Never was there.

GREENE: And no crews?

GUGGENHEIM: No crew except for that first run.

GREENE: Just for one stop.

GUGGENHEIM: Right.

GREENE: There was one other thing in the memo that I wanted to ask you about. You said that, "We continue to ignore radio," and I've heard

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other people complain or criticize this. Was there ever any discussion about radio that you know of? Who was supposed to be in charge of it?

GUGGENHEIM: Well, whoever is in charge of media is in charge. It's like after a football game he says, "You never passed." Well who's in charge of passing? I mean you can get through the game without it but it's kind of ridiculous. I'll just say it's mind-boggling.

GREENE: Could you see any change of any measurable....

GUGGENHEIM: No one was interested in it, that's why, and no one was responsible.

GREENE: With the benefit of hindsight everybody seems to realize, that that was a great weak point.

GUGGENHEIM: It never was started properly. Maybe it would be good to ask Wilson why there was no radio? Then after you ask Wilson why there was no radio, then you have to ask Papert why there was no radio, and then you have to ask Goodwin why there was no radio. And maybe that's unfair to state it that way because perhaps there was radio.

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GREENE: No, I think everybody admits that McCarthy [Eugene J. McCarthy] particularly shocked them with how effective the radio campaign was, and they just were caught unprepared. They just hadn't put any emphasis on it.

GUGGENHEIM: Yeah.

GREENE: Did you see any measurable improvement in the media campaign after Kennedy's complaints? There wasn't a great deal of time, but in the next couple of weeks?

GUGGENHEIM: I don't think he complained until. . . . The first knowledge that I had that he was unhappy was this Dutton meeting.

GREENE: Well, that was May 8. That was right after the Indiana primary, and I understand in analyzing Indiana that he said that he felt one of the problems, one of the reasons the results were disappointing, was the media campaign.

GUGGENHEIM: I'll tell you a story of our meeting out at Hickory Hill that was interesting. Rightly or wrongly, I felt that the media should have been bought on a statewide basis not out of New York. In Indiana we should have supervised, gone in with our people and supervised a local

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buying group. In other words, see if we could find in Indiana or in Nebraska the best person in that state—now sometimes you can't find those people but—and then supervise those people but have a local person buy it. I have a long argument for that. But anyway, for right or wrong, Papert felt that it would be better to buy it from New York and then send New York people into the state to do it. But that was, I guess, an honest disagreement.

I was having some of those kind of arguments with him in the hallway at Hickory Hill. Bobby didn't pretend to know anything about time-buying, but the fact that I was on one side and Papert was on the other was enough to tell who was ever in charge you'd better do it right. I don't know how you are going to do it, but you'd better do it right.

But the darndest thing happened there, which really frightened me a great deal, was this conversation which, you know, was one of the things which absolutely terribly impressed me about Bobby Kennedy. Bobby Kennedy didn't pretend to know the specifics about buying time on television, he just knew when he felt

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it was effective. He asked Papert to explain how they intended to buy Indiana. He and Murphy [William Murphy] described it, how they were going to do it. They said they were going to do so much, they were going to buy so much in Indianapolis, they were going to buy so much in Evansville, they were going to buy so much in Fort Wayne, they were going to buy so much in, wherever it was, Richmond, and he explained each market, and they were going to put radio into Gary and in South Bend. So we did have radio, didn't we? In all this conversation, I didn't understand this, it was mind-boggling. Bobby picked it up before I did. He says, "Do we have any television in South Bend?" Because if you'd looked at the polls that was the ball game.

GREENE: That was it, of course. .

GUGGENHEIM: It was the whole ball game. And he said, "Do you have any television in there?" And Papert, or it was Murphy talking for Papert, or both together said, "No, we didn't think.... We're putting a lot more radio in there than we're putting in any other place. We're intensifying it, you see, because, Gary is covered by Chicago

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(this is the kind of talk you get from them) and of course for every dollar you put in there, you are paying 15 cents to people who can't vote for you." The presidential race, the whole thing depends on this area, and they're not even going to buy television in Chicago. Oh, gee. You know, he just thought they struck out.

GREENE: Do you know if that was changed?

GUGGENHEIM: Oh yes, it was changed. But Bobby picked it up. He was on it. I was about to figure, well here's where I really can get the sword in him now. Well it never happened because Bobby picked it up. That is the last time that I ever had any conversation about media-buying, but I was convinced, unless who knows what happened in Nebraska.

GREENE: I just was going to say, they may just have done the same thing and gotten away with it in the other states.

GUGGENHEIM: Well, chances are they were still scared. But that was the kind of mentality. All this garbage that you bring out of selling products had nothing to do with the realities of politics in this specific instance. It was scary, it was frightening.

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GREENE: You know, in Oregon they did, as far as I can tell, pretty much what you had been pushing for. They went in, and this was, I believe, practically a contractual agreement with Edith Green. You know, she had certain demands before she would agree to work with them and one of them was that they do the media campaign through her guy, Harry Turtledove [Harry Leonard Turtledove].

GUGGENHEIM: Well, you could argue, you know, that that's the only state that we lost.

GREENE: I know, I was going to say what do you know about how that worked out?

GUGGENHEIM: I don't really know because I don't know how good that agency was, and I also didn't know what kind of supervision....

GREENE: Well, Wilson worked with him, as far as I know. Almost exclusively Wilson.

GUGGENHEIM: Wilson, Don? With Turtledove? Yeah. I don't know how to analyze that. I really don't. Those states. It doesn't take a genius to run those states, but that wasn't our problem I don't think. In fact I know, know it wasn't our problem. It wasn't the media, I don't think it was. I don't know,

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I just better not say. I don't know what kind of job Turtledove did.

GREENE: It's my understanding that Kennedy, because he preferred the stuff that you had done to the other things he had seen, gave Wilson instructions to use your material almost to the exclusion of everybody else. This was right before Oregon, so my feeling is that Oregon must have been heavily saturated with your stuff. Were you aware of that?

GUGGENHEIM: Then we lost. The cause and effect there is a little discouraging.

GREENE: I really don't think it was that direct.

GUGGENHEIM: I remember now that when they had the print orders come in that we noticed that Oregon was using more of our material than we had before. Very frankly, I was not all that pleased with our material. I mean, just in the way it had to be made. Everything else was so disappointing. We didn't have enough time to do it, we had these stops and gos, and everything else. I don't know what happened in California, either. I don't know how it was used.

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GREENE: That is what I was going to ask. Did you send anybody out there, or did you go out yourself?

GUGGENHEIM: No. Goodwin was in charge in California. I understand Steve [Stephen E. Smith] went out to try to straighten everything out. And I'm sure...

GREENE: Steve Smith?

GUGGENHEIM: Yes. I think Bobby, I guess you know, he just felt that, you know, things were just out of shape.... After Oregon, he was, the rumor was, very displeased with what vanden Heuvel had done and what had been done in Oregon. He wanted to make sure that.... Well, this was his last chance in a sense. He had Steve in there, and knowing Steve and having worked with him in campaigns, he knew

that Steve would certainly not ignore television-buying and intensity, how it was handled. There was someone in charge in California.

GREENE: Was the biography not used there, in California, at all? Your biography in California?

GUGGENHEIM: I think it was.

GREENE: But you didn't put a new beginning on it?

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GUGGENHEIM: Yeah, we had a new beginning. Did I say we didn't?

GREENE: Well, since you said you hadn't sent anybody out there or anything....

GUGGENHEIM: Oh, because we had that first round.

GREENE: Oh, of course that's right, sure. Anyway that was the one place I've heard compliments about the Goodwin film, that the stuff they did in California was very good. But you hadn't seen that?

GUGGENHEIM: That's what you said. It would be interesting to collect that material and to look at it. I don't know how many half hours he produced, do you?

GREENE: No. I know the one that's gotten all the praise was the one that was a half-hour spot. I don't know if there were any other half-hour spots done, but the one that I heard was so good was a half-hour spot in California. Well, is there anything specific again up until the time of the assassination that you can think of?

GUGGENHEIM: You mean relative to....

GREENE: To the media campaign or to your contacts with the senator.

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GUGGENHEIM: I think the last time I saw him was at the factory in Terre Haute.

GREENE: Well, then let me ask you this. Last time I think I asked you briefly about deadlines and whether they were a problem and you said yes, but we didn't discuss it. Is this something you kind of assume in a political campaign because of the pressures of time, or were they unreasonable?

GUGGENHEIM: Well, they were unrealistic. I think that meeting in Indianapolis, if we could place it... The meeting in New York that we discussed last time, where Wilson was there and three or four other people were there, and we went ahead and began to produce right away, I don't know when that date was. It was in Steve's office. Between there and Indianapolis would give you the amount of time we had to produce whatever we produced on the first flight and I don't think it's more than two weeks, or two and a half weeks, and it had to be taken. I may be wrong. It was just extremely unreasonable, I mean, very frankly. We were working, I remember, all night.

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GREENE: Did you get a lot of flak if the stuff was late?

GUGGENHEIM: No, because we had the first... Don was put in charge when I left Steve Smith, then he decided he couldn't operate without an advertising agency. Then we had that meeting at the Sans Souci at which he said, "You produce that and you do this." I think that damn thing in Indianapolis was before this. Isn't that terrible. I am so mixed up on dates I can't... Anyway, we did our first material, and we did it very, very quickly. Papert did his very, very quickly, and you could tell. I thought his stuff was extremely poor, and I thought our stuff was uneven. I think we came out better than he did, but I wasn't completely happy with what we had done in such a short period of time, though I think there were things that were helpful. I must admit I felt that way.

I don't think we had finished the biography. I think we'd just had brought it there for people to look at in Indianapolis. So that was done extremely fast,

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and late hours, and maybe six or seven days pulling everything together as quickly as possible, and showing it. Then it was made clear to us that we were not to produce any more. So we didn't have any deadlines then except to get the biography out, which we worked very hard on, and get it out as quickly as possible. It got in in time to play in Indiana, as I recall. And I recall correctly, I think it played in Indiana. At least it had a seven or eight day run. But we were under no pressure except to get the next biography out to Nebraska, the next biography out to Oregon, the next biography out to California.

Bobby was unhappy, obviously, with Wilson and came to visit George Stevens on one of his trips back here, and then George called me, and that's when I set up the filming at St. Alban's, and set up the filming in Indiana, for Columbus, Indiana, and the farm material. So we were in business again, and then we began to rush again and do new material. I didn't realize that's a long answer to a short question, but they were

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terribly tense at first, and extremely tense at the end.

GREENE: They were pleased, from what you said, with the spots that you did do, and they were all used. Is that right?

GUGGENHEIM: I'd better not say that. I mean, when you told me that he had given the instructions to use only our material, I had never heard that before in a direct way like that. I never had hard evidence that that was true, because I didn't know what instructions Papert was getting, and I am sure he wouldn't let me know what he was getting.

GREENE: Would they have continued to use the spots that we're talking about now, these three or four, the farmers, Columbus, and the St. Alban's? Would they have been used in California, too?

GUGGENHEIM: Do you mean could they have been, or were they?

GREENE: Were they?

GUGGENHEIM: I don't know. I don't know. I couldn't tell you where our spots were used at all. I know they were being used because they were ordering prints, but I couldn't tell you if they were using other stuff or our stuff

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or what, I just have no idea.

GREENE: Wasn't that in violation of the agreement you originally made, that you would get a commission?

GUGGENHEIM: The violation was when Wilson decided to bring in an advertising agency and I had that meeting over at the Sans Souci. I told him that I would not work under Papert, that one of us had to do it and I would respect that fact. We had finished the half hour and I said, "Of course I'll finish what I am doing," and so I did that. But I said, "I don't want anything happening like what happened in New York, where we produce something and you take the commission." So he said, "Sure, that's fair, so we will pay you commission for every time your material is used."

GREENE: So the fact that you don't even know where or how much of your stuff was used, or how often, is an indication of the...

GUGGENHEIM: I never had an agreement on the spots because at that point I didn't think I would be making any. But later we did, and we never received any commission for the spots that

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we put on the air, and he reneged on his agreement to pay for the half hour. Although in inquiring about how much the half hour played, I inquired afterwards and got from him certification that he did play the half hour a certain amount of time.

GREENE: Well, what kind of compensation did you finally receive for the whole campaign, if you weren't really paid?

GUGGENHEIM: We got paid for producing, and we only got paid part of that. Papert's excuse for not paying us any money for commission was that he had not gotten his entire money, so why should.... In other words, if Kennedy couldn't pay him why should he pay me.

GREENE: And whatever negotiating when on about this went on between you and Papert rather than between you and the Kennedys, is that right?

GUGGENHEIM: Oh, yeah.

GREENE: You never took it to them at all?

GUGGENHEIM: No. I think I told Steve. I mean, Steve didn't make the agreement with me, Papert had. Legally Papert had no excuse for not paying me because the agreement was between he and myself. It had nothing to do

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with what he got paid for other work that he did, legally. I had no legal recourse with the Kennedys except to pay me for my production and they paid, I think, something like 60 percent of it.

GREENE: Which is probably in line with what they did everywhere—is that right?—after the assassination?

GUGGENHEIM: Probably, and maybe in some cases better. It is a terrible problem in our business because you know, by law, as a corporation, we can't even write-it off. It is going to cost us about fifteen-thousand dollars to take to court. You know, if a company has a loss in this country you can write it off. I can't write off any bad debts because corporations aren't allowed to write off debts to political parties. That's why United Airlines, American Airlines, are suing Ethel. Because they couldn't write off the bad debt on the air bill they never paid. They lost 100 percent because corporations can't write off debts owed by political parties or organizations. That's to keep people from making contributions illegally.

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But when you are in the business of serving political parties, it's discriminatory. And it is going to cost us fifteen thousand dollars to find out whether we are right or wrong.

GREENE: Which is bad enough if you find out if you are right. If you find out you are wrong....

GUGGENHEIM: If we find out that we are right, then we can write it off and can continue to write it off but it is going to cost us fifteen thousand dollars to find that out. If we are wrong....

GREENE: That's fifteen thousand, plus you can't write it off.

GUGGENHEIM: If we are wrong I'll tell them to see if the rest of our friends have written it off.

GREENE: How much of a problem or nuisance were people advising him or you, or both of you, on the media? Did you get the feeling that everybody was an instant expert?

GUGGENHEIM: Oh yeah, you do. More in a Kennedy campaign than most.

GREENE: Because he is prone to asking everybody for their opinion, do you think?

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GUGGENHEIM: The organization is bigger. Yeah, I think that you are right. They are unique in a sense. For historical reasons people volunteered all over the place when he ran. You know, everybody from the Justice Department showed up, and everybody who worked on the 1960 campaign showed up. They figure, these are talented people, why not give them jobs. So every time there was a screening or something they would be there. Have you ever been in a meeting where a man is running for office where you sit there and be quiet? You know, what the hell. It is very much like that in a corporation.

And it is very difficult because a piece of film is very fragile. Something that can be extremely effective. You can almost destroy a person's confidence in something terribly, terribly good. I have had film—and I was thinking about it today because I just finished a picture—and when it was finished.... I haven't felt today, and it has been finished for four weeks, if it is any good, because I have shown it and people who have been in the room have been people who have worked on

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it, and they say, "Gosh, shouldn't we have done this and shouldn't we have done that?" And after a while you just lose complete confidence in things. Now I saw it after ten days of being

away from it, now I know it's good. You see, your opinion is very fragile. Well, when you get people up there saying, "Gosh, don't you notice that you've got an American flag in your lapel and it's upside-down? Should we use that?" or "Didn't you notice that in the back of the room there is the Rev. so-and-so, and he isn't liked in the south part of Chicago."

GREENE: How much did you pay attention to this sort of thing, or did you just let it slide and listen to what you thought was worth-while and reject the rest?

GUGGENHEIM: One reason why I had so much respect for Bobby Kennedy.... Very frankly, to say that I knew him well is not true, it just is not true. I told someone I knew him well in a very strange way. I knew him well because I looked at more footage about him probably than anybody else. And I've looked at it more hours, and I've seen it back and forth,

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and I had to study. If you've made a biography about a person, you know a great deal about him. There are a lot of things you don't know about him.

Probably if you added up the number of hours that I spent with him in my whole life, or I was in the same place he was, maybe it would be thirty hours, forty hours. I don't know, maybe more, maybe a little less.

But the thing that absolutely lingered with me about him was his perception on so many levels. He had a human perception, you know, far more than I think his brother [John F. Kennedy] did. He had this human perception. Well, film basically deals with human perceptions, or involvements, or relationships. You know, we haven't got graphs up there. We're not dealing with pragmatic things. You can't, in thirty or sixty seconds. There's other kinds of information, that's human information. I think his taste, in this regard, was impeccable.

I said hardly anything in Indianapolis. I sort of make it a policy not to say anything

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if, in a sense, whatever views I have are being supported by people who I think have more influence on the outcome than I did, and certainly there were a number of people there who did. Bobby was saying the things, in most part, that I would have liked to have said about my own material. Not all the things, but the important things, and therefore, everything else was academic. Papert could carry on with ten times more words than anybody else, or whoever was talking, whether it was Goodwin.... I think Goodwin was in that meeting, too. Was he?

GREENE: I don't know, but that might help place it because he didn't come on until after.

GUGGENHEIM: I think that was his first.... I think he was just hired. I think that's the first time he came. I have that vague recollection.

GREENE: Okay. I think that might help us a little bit.

GUGGENHEIM: But it wasn't necessary, I guess is what I'm saying. It was the same with the biography in '64. He was kind of

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mumbling around. Leland Hayward helped a lot. He bagged it right away. You could tell that Kennedy liked it, and that was all there was to it. If he wasn't there, there was trouble, though.

GREENE: Because then, in addition to everything else, everybody is jockeying for top spot?

GUGGENHEIM: That's right, and then they begin... Then the piranhas start.

GREENE: Anyway, did you get involved at all? Was there any discussion of what you would do after California, in terms of New York, or anything beyond?

GUGGENHEIM: No, because you see it went from the Wilson-Guggenheim, Wilson-Papert, Goodwin- Frankenheimer [John M. Frankenheimer], end. You might say that, with the exception of Goodwin calling me and asking me to work on the tea for the Kennedys, I was not producing any more material when the end came.

GREENE: And didn't expect to?

GUGGENHEIM: The only material that was being produced was the stuff that was being produced sort of on the spot out there. Well, there was an indication from Fred when he called me that

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the senator wanted to see me. You know, he'd read it, whether this word "see me" was used I don't know, but he'd read it and we want to get together. "He wants to get together." "We want to work on this." Then I had some perception of the sense that something was going to change, but maybe that was just wishful thinking. But then the end came, so who knows after California what would have happened? If anything. New York was the next week, wasn't it? After California?

GREENE: It wasn't the next week but it was...

GUGGENHEIM: It was this year, wasn't it? Maybe it was more than a week. Two weeks?

GREENE: Isn't that funny. I should certainly remember that date.

GUGGENHEIM: I don't know what else could have happened. I didn't see a lot of the material that was on. I could have looked at it and said, "Gee, we've got enough here." Assuming that he would have said, "Look, you go and handle it." I am not sure he would have. I don't know what would have happened. I don't know, it has intrigued me to wonder what would have

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happened. Fred may or may not have any perception on that, or whether it is important or not. I would love to know just for my own....

GREENE: Well, I know that they did plan to have a big shakeup—"big" in quotes. I don't know how big it would have been, after California. There were going to be a lot of changes because everything seems to have been so helter-skelter and day-by-day until then, and then somehow after California there was a sense that things would.... They probably would just have gotten worse, but there was a sense that that was a watershed of some sort, and there would be an evaluation at that point.

GUGGENHEIM: I would like to talk to Steve sometime about it. There is no reason why he would need to tell me everything, but it would be interesting to see what he found in California because I guess he knocked some heads together out there, from what I gather.

GREENE: Of course, a lot of the problems in California were the nature of the Unruh [Jesse M. Unruh] situation and the dual organizations and that

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complicated thing.

GUGGENHEIM: A guy like Martin Stone, who was with McCarthy, was telling me how much more effective their television was than ours out there. He was discussing in terms of placement, For one half the dollar how much more they got on the air, and good times.

GREENE: Plus, McCarthy did a lot of just standing outside studios and waiting for them to invite him in to do free half-hour talk shows where he was sitting quietly and discussing in a very erudite manner all the problems

facing the country, while Kennedy was being torn apart every night on the news by the crowds, and was having great difficulty getting his message across.

GUGGENHEIM: I think that's what he mentioned. Yeah. How they used free time terribly well.

GREENE: Plus, they used radio so much more effectively, I think, partly for lack of choice. They just didn't have the money to do the saturation television.

GUGGENHEIM: Well, see, I think, (I hoped I put it pat in my memo) there just was money, there was no

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perception, there was no balance, there was no refinement. It was that whole volume argument again. It was not a volume argument, because I just don't think anybody was in charge, and it was just kind of pouring out. "Buy, buy, buy. Push, push, push. Put it on." There was no taste, there was no orchestration, no one was directing it.

GREENE: What about the film as it was shown at the 1968 convention? Did you take one version or another from one of the primaries, or did you redo it entirely?

GUGGENHEIM: Oh, it is almost entirely redone. Yeah. There are some scenes from the biography, but I mean, there are scenes and they are taken, some of them are lifted in part, maybe a minute and a half or something. It's a different film. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe there's about 10 percent of it.

GREENE: I didn't realize that much of it was fresh stuff. .

GUGGENHEIM: Yeah.

GREENE: And what about contact with the Johnson people over the showing of that and the timing of it?

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GUGGENHEIM: Oh, that was interesting.

GREENE: You smile. Is there a story in it?

GUGGENHEIM: Oh, yeah. Steve sort of talks in shorthand. He's really great. But I finished the film, you know. I had finished the film. I don't know if it is interesting, on how the thing was presented and who saw it. There

were two screenings out at Teddy Kennedy's [Edward M. Kennedy] house. That was done in a very short period of time, I think three and a half weeks. I never worked that hard in my life, I don't think we'll ever do it. I couldn't do it again, I don't honestly believe.

GREENE: Where did the invitation come from, by the way, to show it at the convention? I am getting nervous that this is going to run out. Why don't I just flip it.

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GREENE: I was beginning to ask you about how you got involved.... Could you start again with that about Johnson?

GUGGENHEIM: I think it was understood. I doubt if the family had made an arrangement with the DNC

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[Democratic National Committee]. Maybe they did. The president, of course, was still in power, so I am sure they knew it was up to Johnson whether or not the film would be presented. But it was accepted from the very moment I appeared on the scene that the film would be shown at the Democratic National Convention, and that was six weeks or two months before the convention. The assassination was in June?

GREENE: June 4 and the convention was in August. July?

GUGGENHEIM: Was it July? Maybe it was August. It was never questioned. I never asked them how they knew they were going to get it played. I mean, I was involved in that problem when we got down to the wire. Steve called me and suggested, as I say, we sort of discussed it, the assignment, abstractly. So they obviously knew the film was being made. The man who was in charge of the Democratic National Committee at that time.... It was not Bailey [John Moran Bailey]. I think he was chairman. Who was it? The fellow from Oklahoma.

GREENE: Fred Harris [Fred R. Harris]?

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GUGGENHEIM: No, not Harris, another fellow from Oklahoma. It was Johnson's man. What was his name? It escapes me. He was really running the place. I knew him, and maybe I told Steve that I would call him or something, but Steve felt that I should go ahead with the film and that if there were any difficulties that he would step in. But at the early time I think he probably thought he would send the scouts ahead, namely myself, to feel out how they were going to accept it, if they were going to accept it. I believe Steve was the one that talked to the people in charge of the convention,

and maybe I talked on his behalf or independently, but I went to Chicago with the film three days before the nomination.

I was picked up and treated cordially by the people who were running the committee. But once I got there it was quite clear that they were not.... There was no one there—and obviously the person who was there was in Texas—who wanted to say when that film was going to be played if at all. Now I have got to say, in their behalf, that they were very cordial about it. It was kind of a delaying

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action.

On one hand there was Johnson who was the president, who was in charge of that convention until the nomination, with the remote but overhanging possibility that the convention would, in some people's minds, come to its senses and re-nominate the president. But then there was a time when Mr. Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] would take over and there would be another kind of ball game, and the question is, What should we do before whoever's nominated takes over? And they didn't know what to do with this thing. They really didn't, so there was really no action.

Then Steve came in from New York to Chicago, and then, I think, for the first time took a direct.... I think as soon as the nomination of Humphrey took place, then his phone call could go directly to him. But there was no decision made before Humphrey's nomination of when the film would be played.

Now I am sure you can understand how delicate that was. If I had been in their position, too.... That thing could have.... It was enough. It stopped the convention for forty-five minutes. I think that if it had been

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played before the voting, and I don't say because of the power of the film, but because of things that had happened on the streets there, with the kids and everything and the police, that it could have been a tremendous disruptive force.

GREENE: What you say seems to differ with.... I thought that it actually was scheduled for the beginning. No, excuse me. I am confusing it with 1964 when the film was actually scheduled for the beginning of the convention and moved to the end because of the threat that it might start a steam roller for Robert Kennedy.

GUGGENHEIM: That's right. I heard that story, too.

GREENE: I'm confusing it. But generally you found Johnson's people decent if in a difficult spot.

GUGGENHEIM: They treated me terribly cordially. You could tell what was on their minds.

GREENE: Did they seem afraid of Ted? That it might have the same effect as JFK's before?

GUGGENHEIM: I read that into it. I had no strong evidence. I was in the headquarters. In fact I waited many, many hours there. I wish I could think of this fellow's name who ran the convention.

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GREENE: I should know it.

GUGGENHEIM: He is from Oklahoma. But when I got there he says, "I'm going to see the film in a few hours, and we'll look at it and we'll talk about it." Well, he never looked at it, and I don't think he really wanted to look at it. He was busy, for goodness sakes. Maybe I am wrong about that. He had a lot to do. But that was one decision I had a feeling they just didn't really want to make at that time.

Then when Humphrey had gotten the nomination, the guard changed and Humphrey's people said they wanted to see that film the next morning. Well we, in waiting for the decision to be made, held a press conference in which we screened it for the press. That was before Humphrey was nominated and we wanted to do that. I called Steve about it and talked, and he thought it was the right thing because that kind of locked it in, you see. They knew it was there, and they knew it was in the wings. No one could, not ignore it anyway. So that was that.

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I always said, "When did the Robert Kennedy campaign finish? What was the last scene?" The last scene, to me, when the campaign finished—I mean in my mind as I'm writing my own script—was with Fred Dutton and myself wheeling the projector and the Robert Kennedy film into a freight elevator in the [Conrad] Hilton Hotel, taking it up for Hubert Humphrey to look at. We had the amplifiers and the speakers. Here Dutton and I were wheeling this projector and the film up the freight elevator, trying to get it up there, and I looked at him more than me, and the projector, and the film. Humphrey wanted to see it before he decided whether Robert Kennedy would, in a sense, make his last statement. And that group going up in that dingy, dirty elevator, that was the last scene, that was the last effort. Everyone else had gone home, and we were just picking up the pieces.

Well, Humphrey didn't have time to see it, but he sent his people in. Ted Van Dyk was there, some other guys I'd know who they were now, I didn't know then. They looked at it,

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and we left, and I am sure after it was all over they knew very well that they had to play, and it was going to have to be it.

The last thing that evening was, I forget when it came, but it obviously wasn't going to come before the balloting. The balloting was over but it wasn't going to come before....

GREENE: Maybe before vice president. Because there was a lot of talk still of Teddy Kennedy.

GUGGENHEIM: It was placed, and that was it. I wasn't even in the hall. I was so damn tired I went to the hotel and ate supper in the hotel and watched it on television.

GREENE: This is probably a good place to end.

GUGGENHEIM: Yes. That's right.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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