

Patrick J. Lucey Oral History Interview – RFK#1, 01/06/72
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Biographical Note

Campaign aid to Robert F. Kennedy [RFK] in Indiana, Oregon, Nebraska, and California (1968). In this interview, Lucey discusses RFK's involvement in Wisconsin elections and his presidential campaign in 1968 among other issues.

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Patrick J. Lucey – RFK #1

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Oral History Interview

with

PATRICK LUCEY

January 6, 1972
Madison, Wisconsin

By Larry J. Hackman

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

HACKMAN: I thought maybe we could just pick up after President [John F.] Kennedy was assassinated. I wanted to know what you can recall about conversations with Robert Kennedy in the spring of '64, about his own future, particularly politics in '64?

LUCEY: Well, I can't remember who I talked to, but there was a point at which it seemed that several people thought that he ought to be drawn out of his shell, and that he had moved sort of in a dark mood for a long time. So we were trying to think of something that would justify, you know, breaking him loose from Washington. I got in touch with a Tom Whelan [Thomas P. Whelan] who was an old, old man who was a philosophy teacher at Marquette University and happened to be on the committee to select the people who would receive honorary degrees and who would give the commencement speech at Marquette. I finally had to call the Jesuit who was then the president of the place, and tell him that I not only. . . . Oh, he said, "Well, Whelan wants to invite Robert Kennedy. Do we have any reason to believe that Kennedy will accept?" And I said, "Yes, I have good reason to believe he would." So then the invitation came.

I can't remember though that I ever talked directly to Bobby about that, but we did succeed in getting him out. I think it was the first time, or least in terms of the Midwest that, after the assassination, he did make a public appearance. Marquette has had a

hard time getting crowds for anything but their basketball team, and they hold their commencement exercises in the arena, which has a seating capacity of at least ten thousand five hundred--I think more for something like that because you have a flat space--I think it can hold ten-five for basketball. Well, somebody who was in the business of renting out caps and gowns and so forth in Milwaukee--I think he had a formal wear shop--told me that they've never had such a run on caps and gowns in history. After being the prime mover in getting the thing going, when I went into the arena, it was so packed that I finally sat on a step and watched the performance. It was just filled beyond capacity for that commencement.

HACKMAN: Yeah. Can you remember talking with him at that time?

LUCEY: Well, I'm sure we talked, but I can't remember what we talked about. I would imagine that it was not, you know, a very substantive conversation. I can't even remember now whether I greeted him at the airport or whether I brought him in from the airport. For the life of me I don't remember really what he talked about in his speech. But I'm sure that's on record someplace.

HACKMAN: Yeah. Yeah. Do you remember talking in that spring with either Seigenthaler [John Seigenthaler] or Dolan [Joseph F. Dolan] or Corbin [Paul Corbin] or anyone else about getting something going in Wisconsin or anywhere else in the Midwest in terms of the primary here, or write-ins here or elsewhere?

LUCEY: '64?

HACKMAN: Right.

LUCEY: Oh, I kept a fairly good track of what was going on in New Hampshire through Corbin, and I'm sure I talked to both Dolan and Seigenthaler. It's funny you should bring up those names because I talked to Corbin and Seigenthaler today. Corbin called from Seigenthaler's office down there.

HACKMAN: Yeah. He's still down there then.

LUCEY: But I was kept very aware of what was going on in New Hampshire, and was not at all surprised when the president almost personally fired Corbin--President Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson]--from the [Democratic] National Committee. But I'm afraid I'm not a very good source. You know, I shook hands with Bob in the White House, when the casket was in state. I saw him over in the Rotunda, you know, when they had the big affair there, but not close. Oh, Lord, I can't remember when I saw him again in person.

I don't suppose that we talked about any Justice Department appointments during that period. We had earlier; we had some

arguments about judicial appointments and so on, and the U.S. district attorney. On the interim appointment of Dave Rabinowitz [David Rabinowitz]. I handled that directly with Lyndon Johnson. And I wasn't even party chairman then; I'd resigned, stepped down the previous June. I think it was in January; Johnson called him one morning; he wanted to talk about the judicial appointments. But by that time, although Bobby was still attorney general, why, apparently the White House was handling the Wisconsin thing directly. '64 was kind of a--everything's blank. Well, wait a minute, in '64 I ran for lieutenant governor.

HACKMAN: That's right.

LUCEY: I got Bobby to go in for Reynolds [John W. Reynolds] in '62 when he was running for governor, for fund raising. And in '64--I'm sure I didn't ask him to anything for me.

HACKMAN: In those talks in the spring--any conversations that you had with Dolan or Seigenthaler or Corbin--what kind of impression did they give you about how much they had cleared with Robert Kennedy? What were they asking you to do, if anything, out here?

LUCEY: Nothing. Nothing that I recall. I can't even remember who I negotiated with on getting him to Marquette; I know it was not with Bob, and I know that whoever it was certainly was sensitive enough to his frame of mind that it seemed like a sensible thing to do. I wonder if that wasn't Dolan, but I'm not sure.

HACKMAN: Sounds right.

LUCEY: But he did the Marquette thing. And then, that was '64--had to be '64--that I announced for. . . . Well, I must have been a candidate at the time he came in here because I announced in like April or May, for lieutenant governor. I'm trying to think, I don't think he. . . .

I think the next time I saw him was at Atlantic City. He called me on the phone--or maybe Steve [Stephen E. Smith], I guess Steve, called me on the phone and said Bobby was coming over to the Wisconsin hotel, the hotel where the Wisconsin delegation was stationed, to do anything he can to, you know, help John Reynolds. John was up for reelection. So with about fifteen minutes' notice, we spread the word and, God, we had the damndest mob in that lobby when Bob came in. I'm not sure that I even was close enough to shake hands with him that day, but . . .

HACKMAN: Did you talk at all with him about the vice presidency earlier on in the spring? Does that ring a bell at all that year?

LUCEY: No.

HACKMAN: Conversations with anyone else at the '64 convention about doing anything at that point to try to get Johnson to select Robert Kennedy as vice president?

LUCEY: Well, no. See, by that time it was pretty much--when they eliminated all the cabinet officers and so forth, I figured it was pretty much a closed cause. And then it was so obvious that the Kennedy film had to be shown after the vice presidency selection, and so forth. We did attend that function where Jackie [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] and Harriman [Averell W. Harriman] . . .

HACKMAN: Harriman, right.

LUCEY: I didn't have any private or confidential talk with Bob during that time that I can recall. After Atlantic City I don't think he campaigned in here. Did he do any campaigning in here?

HACKMAN: I don't think he was in here that fall--no, not until '66, is the next time I know he was here.

LUCEY: No, he was here in August of '65, because he came in to speak for me at the dinner at the district, and that was August 15, '65. I don't think of any other contacts I had with him in '64.

HACKMAN: Yeah. Okay. Well, let's just pick up with the whole '65, '66, then. What sorts of contacts did you have with him during that period other than just setting up this dinner in '65?

LUCEY: That was the main event. And he came into that as a huge success, and he ate barely a bite of food, and then circulated--he and I circulated together through the crowd. We had some unpleasantness in connection with that--I suppose you want that on the record, too?

HACKMAN: Yeah, if you've got it.

LUCEY: I was not an announced candidate. I was an incumbent lieutenant governor. Dave Carley [David J. Carley], who was the national committeeman, was an announced candidate for office. At that point, McMillan [Niles McMillan], you know, was still trying to punish me for 1960. And Bobby, of course, was trying to serve the best interests of a friend, and at the same time not alienating anybody if he could help it. And the feeling between myself and Carley and McMillan was just unbelievably high.

Anything that I did that they could turn against me with a headline--you know, you clout a guy with a headline. The fact that Bobby even made phone calls to Carley was a big Cap-Times [Madison Capital Times] front-page story. The fact that Bobby agreed that he would meet with Carley while he was in Milwaukee again was a big story. After the dinner--the fact of the dinner never got in the paper at all, but all of this stuff beforehand. You know, anything that would help promote the dinner,

sell tickets, that was not newsworthy. And so we did something to change this afterwards.

But Dave Ademand went down to Chicago to meet the plane. We had a charter plane bringing Bob and, I think it was, Joe Dolan, up from Chicago. And, Ademand finally made a decision on his own that--I must admit, I think that's sort of self-serving. I think I must have been a party to it somehow because--maybe it was by radio on the plane. At any rate, I knew before the plane landed that they were not going to land at the airport where Carley was waiting to meet him. I think it is the sort of thing that Bobby might have done if our situation had been reversed--I'll say that in defense. But, at any rate, we landed at this other airport. It was about, in terms of driving time, the same distance from the hotel. It was a little closer physically but the roads weren't as good. And Bobby felt that we had taken advantage of him. And of course it was embarrassing to Carley because Carley was down there with a couple of newspaper reporters. And so then, later, it was arranged for Carley to meet him so it wouldn't be any problem.

HACKMAN: Yeah. How was the original agreement worked out that he would meet Carley there, that he would meet with him while he was here in Madison? Who had pushed that?

LUCEY: Carley had. Carley had.

HACKMAN: Just through direct contact with Kennedy's office?

LUCEY: Oh, yeah. In fact he had gone to Washington. Because he was just going out of his way to minimize any advantage that I would have having Bobby come in.

I remember riding in, in the car with him [Kennedy]. We talked about a number of things. Maxwell Taylor [Maxwell D. Taylor] had been at their home that weekend; in fact, he had to break away from a very pleasant holiday with Ethel [Ethel Skakel Kennedy] and Maxwell Taylor to come into Milwaukee. The dinner was on a Sunday night rather than Saturday night, because he wanted to keep the weekend intact as much as he could. He was talking about Maxwell Taylor--how bright he was and, you know, good company. We also talked about presidential politics for '68, and he made the point that, "Gosh," he said, "you're getting the best of both worlds. You have me coming in raising money for you and you can, you know, be for Johnson because Johnson's going to be the nominee anyway." I can't remember what else we talked about.

HACKMAN: Did he say anything about his relations with Johnson at that point?

LUCEY: Can't remember. I can't remember anything he said in private about Johnson and I can't remember anything he said. . . . You know, I know at different times I've heard him use in various speeches about how "Early in the administration of my brother,

Johnson and I got along fine, and then coming off the inaugural platform," or something like that.

HACKMAN: Yeah. Do you remember talking at all about other races coming up in Wisconsin in '66 or other races around the Midwest or around the country, that he might or might not get involved in, in terms of support?

LUCEY: This was in August of '65, right?

HACKMAN: Yeah. Or anything else like that on through '66 then, as he comes back into Wisconsin?

LUCEY: Not that I can think of. Now, in '66, you know, he came back in for me.

HACKMAN: Right.

LUCEY: Right after the primary, and on very short notice. And we had him at Carthage College, and we had him, two appearances in Milwaukee. And fantastic crowds! We had him at a Catholic girls' school on the south side, we had him at UWM [University of Wisconsin at Madison] in the field house, and we had him in the field house that McCarthy [Eugene J. McCarthy] . . . [Inaudible]. I think the two were on Saturday night, and then McCarthy's thing was on the following morning. Then Teddy [Edward M. Kennedy] came in later for a full day in that campaign.

HACKMAN: In terms of who to work for--like in the House [House of Representatives] races that year, the guy running against Schadeberg [Henry C. Schadeberg], or whatever his name was--Stalbaum [Lynn E. Stalbaum]--and the guy against Steiger [William A. Steiger] would that decision basically be yours?

LUCEY: Well, here's one little item that. . . . I insisted--I think I was urged to do this by Dolan or somebody--that the decision of Bob to come in right after the '66 primary, had nothing to do with my having won; that if I had not won, he would have still done it for me and Carley. And so I took that position, and I said as much to Stalbaum. And Stalbaum said, "No, you're wrong. I was delighted to get him into my district," which was the . . . [Inaudible]. He said, "If you hadn't won the primary, I wouldn't have had him, because a colleague of mine over in Indiana said that he was to come in speaking for him." And when the Wisconsin primary turned out as it did, why, it changed the schedule. However that was before Stalbaum had [Inadible] congressman; I don't [Inaudible] whether Stalbaum had to. . . . But you mentioned the Sixth District. '66?

HACKMAN: Race [John A. Race]?

LUCEY: Oh, yeah, Race was an incumbent congressman. Did he speak for Race?

HACKMAN: I think he did, yeah. It seems to me he did. I had someone put together this list for me and I think that he did. Maybe he didn't go to the area, maybe he just mentioned him in speeches somewhere else.

LUCEY: That could be. I can't remember if he spoke in the Sixth District, and I can't believe that we--God what was his name? I'm sure that I'd remember that.

HACKMAN: Yeah.

LUCEY: I'm trying to think what. . . . That was about the extent of our contacts that time. Then I lost that race, and then. . . .

HACKMAN: Ever any contacts in that period on. . . . Would it have made sense for any of his staff people or anyone he had contacts with who supported him around the country to come in and work on your behalf in Wisconsin? Or in terms of money from outside of the state, any help on that, either directly from them or through their efforts?

LUCEY: Well, Steve always, at least on a number of cases, occasions, managed to come up with some money for me. I think in '66 it was about twenty-five hundred dollars. You know, there was never any very clear indication as to the source of the Kennedy money. We reported it there [Inaudible] That didn't help, or I don't think I asked for any; I don't think there was any reason to have. . . .

HACKMAN: Yeah.

LUCEY: Going into '67, I figured after the '66 election that I was pretty well out of politics, and didn't expect to get involved again. He did come in late in '67 for a dinner for Gaylord Nelson, which I thought was. . . . I think Steve called me and asked about it. I advised against it because the tickets were already sold you weren't going to increase the attendance any. And then Bobby did insist on coming in. I think Bobby talked to me on the phone about it before he did it. When he did insist on coming in, that was the first inkling I had that the newspaper speculation about '68 was probably more serious than anybody was admitting. I talked with him briefly that night at the hotel. I think the next time I saw him was when Dick Cudahy [Richard D. Cudahy] and I went to New York to meet . . . [Interruption]

HACKMAN: I wanted to ask you, on the trip out for Nelson, you said the '68 possibility seemed like more of a possibility at that time. What gave you that indication?

LUCEY: Well, just the fact that he would accept this invitation when he really wasn't doing Gaylord such a hell of a big favor because the tickets were already sold, and it was a

last minute thing, you see. It seemed to me that he would have been better off and he would have served Gaylord's cause better to have reasoned with Gaylord, "Look, Gaylord. You've got your tickets for this. Why don't you bring somebody that isn't a big draw. Let me come back next spring when I can put some money in the coffers." But he did come. And it was after I had offered this advice to him that he still decided to come. I took that to mean that he had more interest in the '68 campaign than I had been led to believe.

Early, very early in '68--I think it was January--Steve called, and Cudahy and I were asked to come in. We met with Bob up there in the United Nations Plaza [Hotel] apartment they had. That was the first time when I really got a firsthand sense of how he felt about Lyndon Johnson. He said in no uncertain terms that four years of Lyndon Johnson would be disaster for the country. And also he, in private conversation, you know, really told us how outrageous he thought the whole war situation was.

HACKMAN: But there hadn't been any lengthy talks with him or anyone around him at the time, let's say, McCarthy announced the last day in November, I believe, in '67, so there's December there when McCarthy's in, and Robert Kennedy's, according to some people, starting to think seriously.

LUCEY: If I had any contacts during that period, it was probably with Steve, and I don't recall them. Although I remember Steve and I had a conversation some place in that period that went on for about an hour. But that must have come after McCarthy was in for a while.

The trip to New York was the first real inkling I had about how Bobby was--well, the pressures he was under, you know, the fact that so many members of his staff were urging him to run. And he was talking about reports he was getting from Joe Rauh [Joseph L. Rauh, Jr.] and Schlesinger [Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.] and others that the McCarthy campaign was not getting off the ground, despite the students, and that, you know, somebody had to stop Johnson and, of course, it would be difficult for anybody. His feelings about that [Inaudible], that people would think it was a personal vendetta. I urged him not to do it, and we had a poll here in Wisconsin showing how it was. At the time, I think it was something like eighty to fifteen, Johnson over McCarthy, you know. I said, "If you get into it, conceivably you'd win the primary, and obviously you'd do a lot better than this guy McCarthy, but would you have enough impact to force Johnson out of the race?"

HACKMAN: Right.

LUCEY: Of course, I was looking at it from the standpoint of getting Bob in the White House eventually and just thought '68 would be counterproductive in that he would not only

not get the nomination, but his attack on the administration might help the Republicans and he'd never be able to come back.

HACKMAN: Yeah. Were these polls public or private polls?

LUCEY: Private polls taken by the Democratic party here, and Cudahy had the polls in hand.

HACKMAN: Yeah. What kind of discussion was there about what you might do when you came back to Wisconsin--you or Cudahy then, what you might do?

LUCEY: Nothing. I just had a feeling that we were brought in for advice, and we both left pretty well convinced that he was not going to do it. In fact, on the basis of that, Cudahy, who was party chairman then, had the responsibility to act, and began to line up delegates for Johnson. And poor Cudahy was really between the devil and the deep blue sea. I remember one story he tells. He was at the White House, and the Johnson people were of course very suspicious of him because they knew that he [Inaudible]. And he was giving them his assurance that he was going to do everything he could to deliver the state in the primary for Johnson, against McCarthy. And so finally, I think, Jim Rowe [James H. Rowe, Jr.] said, "Well, what if Bob Kennedy got into the primary?" Well, then all Cudahy would say was, "Well, in that case, that would be a new ballgame."

HACKMAN: Yeah. Yeah.

LUCEY: Did you hear this?

HACKMAN: Yeah.

LUCEY: Okay.

HACKMAN: You might talk a little bit about your own relations with the Johnson administration, and particularly the White House staff while you were lieutenant governor out here, because you had a Republican governor during that time. What was their attitude toward you as a candidate?

LUCEY: Well, Sarge [R. Sargent Shriver] called one time and was going to put me on; was going to bring me into Washington on--I think they were having a task force or something on poverty. And that got shot down. Somehow I never heard any more from Sarge. I always figured that the closeness between Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey] and Carley probably accounted for that. And I went to Washington and met with Johnson. We had our picture taken together; I never saw the prints. I didn't bother to check whether they came out--didn't have any particular use for them--but I sort of suspect that they never got sent. I did ask Johnson to come in and campaign for me. He said he would rather campaign in states where he knew he could be helpful, and he wasn't sure whether Evjue [William T. Evjue] and the

Cap Times who had been so rough on him over the years, whether he could really be of much help to me here. I didn't press it very hard, and then of course, if you remember he made a trip to Vietnam and then went in for surgery . . . [Interruption]

HACKMAN: After that trip to New York then, in early '68, when do you have contact again? Are there frequent conversations with Dolan and Smith or with Robert Kennedy then before McCarthy's before the New Hampshire primary?

LUCEY: If any, it must have been with Steve. I don't recall talking to Bobby again after the New York visit. I didn't. . . . You know, unless it was something I had to talk to Bob about, I didn't bother him because, you know, if it was something we could handle with a staff person or with Steve, I wouldn't talk to Bob.

But, let's see, I'm trying to think. I guess when New Hampshire happened and when it became apparent that Bob would run. . . . Oh, that was a funny one! About two weeks before New Hampshire, I was riding home from mass with my daughter, and we got talking about the war, and she was very serious about it even then. She said, "Well, if you're against the war and there's only one guy running against Johnson, why don't you support him?" She was in high school at that time. And I said, "Well, that's right. "When your brother is shot in the head a few years from now in mainland China, and I think back to the time when I might have been able to do something about it."

So I was all set to go, and then I got a call. . . . I didn't hear anything from the McCarthy people. Then, after New Hampshire, after Bobby had decided to run but it was too late to enter the Wisconsin primary, I got a call from Steve [Stephen Quigley] and Steve said, "The McCarthy campaign in Wisconsin is a mess. Will you take it over?" And I said, "Well, Steve, if you'd called a couple of weeks ago, it would have made more sense and I was ready to go and nobody asked me, and I guess I didn't know where to volunteer. But, I said, "now that Bobby's in it, I want you to know that I'm for Bob Kennedy. Now, since Bob is not in the primary and we're sort of running this thing in tandem, I hope, anything I can do to make McCarthy look good here will help the common effort, and therefore I'm willing to do what I can, but I'm not at all sure that it makes sense for you to have me take over the McCarthy effort here when I'm a known Kennedy man. And I don't think it would sit too well with young people.

Well, he didn't care about those people because they had messed it up so badly that he wanted me to take it over and make order out of chaos. I guess Sorenson [Theodore C. Sorensen] had already called me and I got back to Sorensen and told him about this Quigley call--this was on a Saturday night--and so Sorensen talked it over with Steve [Smith] and Bobby got on the phone, too. It was Saturday

morning that Bob announced--this was Saturday night. And it was their considered judgment that if the offer was still open. . . . Quigley called within minutes after Bobby had announced on TV. It was that morning. And I told him, I said, "You. . . ." And I think. . . . That's right. As soon as I heard, I listened to Bobby's statement and I immediately sent a telegram off that I'd help.

Then, I'd just barely hung up the phone from sending the telegram when Quigley called with the offer. So I told Quigley, I said, "You'd better talk this over with your other people there, and if you still think it's a good idea tomorrow, call me back." I really was being, you know, honest with him. I thought he should really reexamine the thing. But also it gave me a chance then to talk to New York and see what they thought about it. I talked to the three of them, and they felt that if the Quigley offer was still there, that I should accept it. Well, Steve called the next day and said they talked it over and decided it wasn't such a good idea after all.

I was also asked to go up to Manitowoc to speak to a McCarthy group by a Young Dem [Young Democrats] girl who had worked in my campaign--Sue somebody. And then when the McCarthy people at Manitowoc heard that I was going to make a speech, well, that got cancelled. Bob Novak [Robert S. Novak] called and wanted to know what was going on out here. I just happened to mention that to him. He made a whole column out of it, which I thought showed he was awfully hard up for material. But then I did raise a little money, and we bought some ads to the effect; if you are for Robert Kennedy, vote for McCarthy. I think we ran one in the Milwaukee Journal, among other places.

Then I was asked to go in to Indiana by Steve. I made one weekend trip down there with my family, and Jim Wieghart [James Wieghart] from the Milwaukee Sentinel, who thought he wanted to work for Bobby. We met with Ted [Edward M. Kennedy] and with Pierre Salinger, and Wieghart was offered a job, which he seemed inclined to accept, but he had to notify the people back in Milwaukee. We were driving back from Indianapolis, we had the car radio on, and we heard Johnson's speech where he took himself out of the race. I remember we later blew a tire on the expressway outside of Chicago, couldn't get help; we had to change it by hand in the dark. We didn't get home till about three in the morning, and I said, "I'll see you later." I was half serious and I told Wieghart, "Well, you know, it's a good thing we hired you while we still need you. We probably won't need you now, you know." The Sentinel managed to finally talk Wieghart out of taking the job.

But, then I made another trip to Indiana. And this time, I met Bobby in South Bend and flew with him in a number of stops, including the one in Muncie when he was at Ball State [University], where, when we were on our way back out to the airport, we got word

of Martin Luther King being shot. There was an overload, and there was another smaller flight, and so I got on the second flight. And I remember I stood with Mankiewicz [Frank F. Mankiewicz] outside a phone booth--Frank was on the phone getting the final details. Then Frank went and got on the big plane and gave Bobby the final word so that he could begin to put some notes together. Then both planes landed about the same time in Indianapolis, and we were running at least an hour late.

That was the night that we went to the ghetto, and he made the speech on this truck bed. I remember, as we got off the little plane, a couple of police officers came up to me and said you know, they were very anxious about Senator Kennedy and his schedule, and is he or is he not going to such-and-such a street corner and make a speech? You know, we thought maybe with Martin Luther King being killed, he would cancel his speech. I said, "I'm not sure, but knowing Bob Kennedy, he'll be there." These two police officers were very relieved, because they were afraid that everything was going to explode if he didn't show.

HACKMAN: Yeah, if he didn't come, yeah.

LUCEY: So I was on the truck bed with him when he made the speech. [Inaudible] And then I was up in the hotel suite later with him and Jack Paar, and Tom Bowen's wife was there, Ethel, and Earl Graves [Earl C. Graves], and I can't remember who else. And that's when things worked out send the plane to transfer the body, and he assigned Earl to go down as Bobby's representative.

HACKMAN: What do you remember about the state of Indiana campaign from your viewpoint and, from what you could see, Robert Kennedy's viewpoint at that time, in terms of organization and the way things were going?

LUCEY: Well, the best insight into the organization I got was the weekend I went down, the weekend of March 31, when Johnson took himself out. I had the feeling that he brought in this gang from Massachusetts, that--who was the chairman down there?

HACKMAN: Gerry Doherty [Gerard F. Doherty].

LUCEY: Gerry Doherty. That they were . . . [Interruption].

HACKMAN: You were talking about Gerry Doherty--your impressions of the Indiana primary.

LUCEY: Well, I sat there in the room, and Teddy, you know was trying to put things together and Doherty had all his crew down there. And they were all gung-ho, it just seemed to me, that. . . . Well, I wasn't surprised at it because

you know, when a candidate comes into a campaign late, and they're trying to make up for lost time, you duplicate and do things that, you know, wouldn't meet any kind of a test as far as productiveness. And I could see that the Indiana campaign was going to cost one hell of a lot of money. I think we ran the Nebraska campaign on less than the cost overrun of the Indiana campaign.

But I made those two trips: one where I met Teddy, and one swinging around with Bobby, where we wound up in Cleveland and I took a plane from Cleveland back here to Madison. And I had sort of agreed--Steve had asked me to sort of keep track of the Indiana thing, and I had some special assignments on the labor side. Well, I got a phone call from Steve, and Nebraska was supposed to be a mess and he wanted me to rush down and straighten out Nebraska. So I bought a round-trip ticket, and I was going down to Nebraska and spend a few days in Nebraska. I didn't come home for five weeks. And the funny part of it was, that with all of the reputation of getting himself in charge of organization and ruthlessness and so on, it was the usual fouled-up situation. I thought I was going in there to run the campaign--I had instructions from Steve. Ted Sorensen sent his brother Phil [Philip Sorensen] back from Indiana to run the campaign. Phil had run there for governor, which made more sense than my assignment. But then there was a fellow by the name of Ja O'Brien [John T. O'Brien] there, who was a hell of a competent guy. He's a lawyer from Ohio--I mean from Iowa.

HACKMAN: It is [James P.] Jimmy O'Brien?

LUCEY: No, no. Jimmy O'Brien was the steelworkers.

HACKMAN: Oh, I'm thinking of the steelworkers guy. Right.

LUCEY: This guy's a lawyer from Iowa. And I'll tell you, if I were in a national campaign, I'd want him on my side. But he and I went off in a corner one night to compare notes, and we found out that Teddy had called him and sent him in with about the same instructions that I had from Steve. But, oh, it all worked out. We were at swords' points occasionally, but I think most of the time we were working in harness pretty well.

HACKMAN: What was the problem at the time you were sent in? Was it basically with how the thing had been going under Phil Sorensen, or was it, what?

LUCEY: Yeah. Yeah. Phil had already been there a while, and Steve was convinced that nothing was happening. And when I got in there, a meeting, I think, was set up for the next day--the next morning--for people who'd been authorized expenses to come in from all over the state. You know, you can travel five hundred miles and still be in Nebraska, it's so damn big.

And it is farther from Omaha to western Nebraska than it is from Chicago to Omaha. But these people came in and it was kind of a motley crew. They were really sort of the ragtags and the remains of the Phil Sorensen gubernatorial campaign in the previous year--two years before.

But it was a hell of a lot better than nothing; and the other side had nothing except for the Lincoln area. You know, there they had the faculty-student operation. But I was damn glad that we had Phil's people because we at least had a contact or two in every town of any size. And then it was obvious that we were still very shorthanded. So I sort of felt that I had carte blanche to recruit, and so I called Mark Shields, who had been trying to get involved. Mark is working for Proxmire [William Proxmire]. Do you know Mark at all?

HACKMAN: No. Just the name.

LUCEY: Well, he comes from Boston. He went to Notre Dame, and I don't know what he did before he went to work for Prox. But he did an awful good piece of work for Prox. Prox, you know, had a lot of seniority but not very much status in the Senate. And he set about to sort of rehabilitate Prox and give him a better standing within the club--and I think he succeeded--but also a better standing with the press in Washington. But he was just gung-ho to get into the Kennedy campaign.

I really didn't think I knew Mark well enough, and he wanted to get in when I was involved in Indiana very briefly. At the time I would even recommend him to Steve. So at this point, I guess I cleared it with Steve or somebody. I called Mark and I said, "You got to come out here and help me." And he says, "Well, I need to give Prox two weeks notice." And I said, "That won't do. Either be here in forty-eight hours or I can't use you." Well, Mark came. And he took the central countries. And we got [Inaudible] from Wisconsin; he'd been out in Denver. He went down to Lincoln and he got in a fight with some of Sorensen's people, and we had to bring him back to Omaha. Earlier, a lot of people got involved with this fellow who wrote, a teacher of creative writing from Massachusetts, the University of Massachusetts, a hell of a nice guy. We got a lawyer by the name of Cantor from Iowa that O'Brien had recruited. We all worked very closely with Jim Green [James E. Green],

HACKMAN: How was Green to deal with?

LUCEY: Oh, he's one of the grandest people I ever met.

HACKMAN: Yeah. His advice on people around the state who would support Robert Kennedy was generally pretty solid?

LUCEY: Solid, yeah. And his acquaintanceship--you know, he had run statewide once against Curtis [Carl T. Curtis], but his acquaintanceship was a little spotty in areas.

But God, he knew Omaha like the back of his hand; he'd run for mayor there. And he was the one that got me involved with the Republican state senator--what the hell was his name? It's an Irish name. This guy--Gene [Eugene T. Mahoney].

HACKMAN: I've read through all that stuff in the Book*-a lot of your notes, calls coming into Kay Rusco, but I don't remember the name.

LUCEY: Yeah. This guy was a bachelor, he was very bald, he was in his late thirties but looked much older, he lived with his mother out on the south side. He represented the--you know, its a unicameral legislature.

HACKMAN: I remember that, yeah.

LUCEY: . . . and Green introduced him to me. And he had been so obnoxious to Phil when Phil was lieutenant governor that we didn't even dare let Phil know we were dealing with this guy. So I used to meet him outside the hotel, and we got his people going in four wards in the South Side. And we had to come up with some money to man the booths down here, you know, on election day--hell, just lunch money more or less. And, God, he did a lot for us. I was suspicious, you know, that he really would perform so I got a hold of a rent-a-car and I drove down there, and I drove the whole area. Every damn precinct was manned.

HACKMAN: This is the guy whose father was for somebody and then his mother was for somebody else or something?

LUCEY: No, don't think so. But this guy was a state senator--unicameral nonpartisan legislature--but he was a registered Republican, and slated to go to the Republican National Convention as a delegate. And here he was knocking himself out for Bob Kennedy. He came to see me since then. He was at my house one day up here. He'd been up here for some legislative conference, and he says, "You know I'm registered as a Democrat now." I said, "How come/" He said, "Well you spoiled my credibility. Word got around about what I did for Bob Kennedy and," he said, "I have no standing in my own party anymore and so I had to switch." And it didn't hurt him, you know, because it was an east European district that he had; hell, they were all Democrats anyway. Isn't that funny? I can't think of his last name.

HACKMAN: I'm sure I can find it in the Black Book.

LUCEY: Yeah, but he was very. . . . Mahoney, Gene Mahoney. And, you know, to the extent that precinct work and manning the polling places matters in a campaign these days, he did a good job.

* Black Book: A loose-leaf notebook of correspondence compiled for an individual state during a political campaign.

HACKMAN: Can you remember making efforts with Morrison [Frank B. Morrison] or Exon [James J. Exon] who was--what?--state vice chairman or . . .

LUCEY: Yes. Exon was the national committeeman and Exon, of course, was for Humphrey. And I had lunch with him through Phil Sorensen, and I spent a little time with him, but it was to no avail. He was courteous, but that was all. One Saturday, Green and I had lunch with Morrison. We had developed this plan. You see, we got into the Nebraska campaign so late that there was a problem of delegates.

HACKMAN: Right.

LUCEY: And Bobby had thought that he had announced late enough that he wouldn't be on the ballot in Nebraska, but the Republican secretary of state had some discretion in the matter and decided he would be on the ballot, whether he liked it or not. But, except for one girl in Omaha, nobody had filed for Bobby, and this girl had filed as a district delegate. So we looked over the list, and there was probably seventy, eighty, or ninety or so people running for twenty-two at-large positions plus--whatever it was--district. . . .

HACKMAN: Eight, I believe.

LUCEY: And, so what to do, you know? We interviewed just about everybody on the list at one time or another. We made a "pure" list of the people who were definitely committed to vote for Bobby at Chicago. Then we also went over the list of uncommitted, and found that the majority of those had filed and the others were kind of wishy-washy. So we were afraid that we couldn't do anything as disciplined as getting everybody to take the names in and mark the ballot name by name. But we wanted to cover our cases both ways, so we finally developed the strategy that we would urge a vote for those delegates marked uncommitted, or for the following names. And then we listed names for every district, and so on, twenty-two at-large, about two-thirds of whom were among the uncommitted, but evidently Johnson or Humphrey delegates who weren't willing to vote for Bob.

HACKMAN: Right.

LUCEY: It worked. It worked so perfectly that we only had twenty-one delegates that were uncommitted, and all twenty-one won. And, before we were ready to. . . . As a preparation for springing this thing, we had lunch with Morrison. . . . [Interruption]