

John Seigenthaler Oral History Interview – RFK #2, 7/1/1970
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Biographical Note

Seigenthaler was aide to Robert F. Kennedy during the 1960 Presidential campaign and Administrative Assistant to the Attorney General, Department of Justice (1961). This interview focuses on the 1964 Democratic National Convention, and Robert F. Kennedy's Senate campaign including staffing and organization, among other issues.

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John Seigenthaler

August 29, 1986

Date


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John Seigenthaler
RFK #2

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Second Oral History Interview

with

John Seigenthaler

July 1, 1970

By Larry J. Hackman

For the John F. Kennedy Library

SEIGENTHALER: You asked whether Bob [Robert F. Kennedy] ever considered being Lyndon's [Lyndon B. Johnson] ambassador to Vietnam. Didn't you ask me that?

HACKMAN: Yeah, right.

SEIGENTHALER: I had a telephone conversation about it. It was during another conversation with him about something else. It was sort of an addendum to the conversation. He said....[Interruption]....that he might go to Southeast Asia. I said, "For how long?" He said, "Well, I might go indefinitely." I said, "What would you do?" He said, "Well, I thought I'd be Lyndon's ambassador." I expressed surprise at that, and I didn't pursue it. I didn't say, "Have you talked to him about it? or "Has he talked to you about it?" But just thinking back about it three or four things have come to mind I might have asked him, but I can't remember. Subsequent to that I had a conversation with Ethel Kennedy [Ethel Skakel Kennedy] in which she said she would not like to leave Washington. I said, "What about Vietnam?" She said, "Bobby wouldn't do that." Those are the two recollections that come to my mind.

Do you have some of the other questions you asked me? There were

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about two or three things I thought about and nothing...

HACKMAN: Well, we skipped around. Let me see. We skipped back to talk about the [The President's Commission on] Equal Employment opportunities commission – committee. Does that prompt anything?

SEIGENTHALER: Yeah, that's right. There was another conversation I had with him with regard to Troutman [Robert B. Troutman] in which he said to me, "Look, I think Lyndon's making a terrible mistake in the way he's handling Bobby Troutman. But I'm not going to stick my nose into that except to say, if I am asked, that I think that the way they're planning on proceeding they're getting a lot of conversation and no action." And insofar as I know he never did inject himself into that.

HACKMAN: Meaning, really, that he thought they could make better use of Troutman than they were?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, that he thought that the way for that agency to perform.... First of all, he thought of his own agency as providing an enforcement office kind of an enforcement arm. He says, "We'll get this done. We're going to do whatever's necessary in terms of enforcing the law. It may take legislation or it may take something else, but the way for this agency to proceed is on a voluntary basis and get as much done as you possible can. The only weapon you need to use is the weapon: the President's good graces if you cooperate, and his lack of good graces if you don't."

HACKMAN: Now, when you say "his own agency," you mean the Civil Rights Division in [Department of] Justice.

SEIGENTHALER: The Department of Justice.

HACKMAN: Okay, let's see. We talked just about the days after the assassination. We talked about people staying on in the Johnson Administration. Whether they should or shouldn't. One thing I meant to ask you there that I didn't ask you last time was: Can you remember him having feelings of being upset or being hurt by people that he thought transferred their loyalties too quickly to the new Administration?

SEIGENTHALER: No, that was the other thing. I remember talking to him about the – and this is more an impression than a specific.... I don't think I said this if we got into this before. I didn't remember it before, but I remember talking to him at least three or four

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or five times about his own reaction to Jackie's [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] ordeal. There was no feeling on his part that she was dealt with sympathetically. As opposed to that, he did feel that she had been mistreated, or that she had been made to feel she had been mistreated,

that nothing had been done to assuage her hurt, and that, in fact, she felt that she had been used. Bob felt some of the same injury as a result of that.

HACKMAN: Let me just stop and check. [Interruption] Yeah, we're okay. Now, is there anything else? We've talked a little bit about his plans for the future. We talked about Corbin [Paul Corbin], and New Hampshire, and Wisconsin. And we talked about the vice presidency in 1964, and whether he really wanted that.

SEIGENTHALER: Yeah. Did I tell you about the trip to – I did, didn't I? – the trip to California?

HACKMAN: No. With regard to the vice presidency?

SEIGENTHALER: No, that was not with regard to the vice presidency. That would have been in '64?

HACKMAN: Yeah.

SEIGENTHALER: Yeah. No, I didn't. That was something else.

HACKMAN: Okay. I wanted to ask you something about Tennessee politics. I've seen your name on a list that was put out in '63 as the coordinator for Tennessee for '64. This is presuming John Kennedy [John F. Kennedy] still would have been alive?

SEIGENTHALER: Yeah.

HACKMAN: What plans were in the works for Tennessee before...

SEIGENTHALER: Well, they were not for me to be the coordinator. I would have been the worst person in the world. What they meant by that that I was the contact.

HACKMAN: Right.

SEIGENTHALER: Practically none. I think I did have.... Well, an effort was made – and I think this maybe given in an earlier interview. I think I did have conversations both with the President and with Bob about the possibility of Buford Ellington being Postmaster General.

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HACKMAN: Yeah, you talked about that. I was thinking in terms of how they would have worked it in '64 in terms of Tennessee. Who they.... And

just in Tennessee...

SEIGENTHALER: My own judgment – and I think I thought about this the other day – my own judgment is that they were going with Lyndon. They would have gone strongly with Lyndon. I know that the President was looking forward to the prospect of Goldwater being a candidate. Bob didn't think there was any possibility of that; he told me he thought there was no possibility there.

HACKMAN: Did he say who he thought would get the nomination?

SEIGENTHALER: I think he thought of course that Dick Nixon [Richard M. Nixon] had had it, and was through, but I think he thought it would be a little more like Rockefeller [Nelson A. Rockefeller] or Scranton [William W. Scranton]. Scranton was not at that time even mentioned. You ask my judgment. I think he thought it was Rockefeller. As early as '62, he was talking about Rockefeller.

There's a great line in one of the debates in Japan with one of the Communist labor leaders, when he was in Japan. There was a give-and-take there and this fellow was saying, he kept saying we were a capitalistic, and imperialistic society, and that Wall Street ran the United States. He said, "That's not the society that I know. You're talking about the United States as it was thirty years ago." Things have changed in this country. Nobody pays any attention to Wall Street. The Rockefellers haven't taken over the country." And he paused and said, "Yet." And everyone laughed. Maybe you knew that. It was an aside, and maybe it was just a subconscious comment, but I think that he felt it was going to be liberal Republican.

HACKMAN: How do they feel about politicians in Tennessee? How did they feel about Ellington?

SEIGENTHALER: Not good.

HACKMAN: What about Gore [Albert A. Gore]? I mean Gore...

SEIGENTHALER: They liked Gore. Felt that he was somewhat pompous, but they liked him, and they thought he had some courage. Albert always felt very, very close to the President. I think I've said something like this, but Albert was part of a planning group in 1960 here.

HACKMAN: It wasn't listening too much; that group

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wasn't listening too much.

SEIGENTHALER: That's right. Bill Haddad was in it, and it was a lot a conversation

group to keep him busy and happy. But Albert felt close to him, and he felt friendly to Albert. Buford Ellington had not really kept the faith with him in 1960 –I think I got into that, too – with regard to the appointment of the committee. I met with him and with the President, Bob, Earl Clements, and Buford at the President’s house at breakfast. This is probably on some other interview.

HACKMAN: I think so.

SEIGENTHALER: But the story: They said “Look, we’re going to give you Tennessee, and we’ll carry Tennessee for you. We’ll raise all the money, and we’ll take care of it. We want a three man committee. The three man committee will be Frank Gray, Harry Phillips, and our man.” So that’s the way that turned out. Ellington then went to a luncheon and named his own man chairman, when the understanding was that they wouldn’t do that.

But there never really was a close feeling of friendship. I remember talking with the President about it on the phone – I think that’s in an interview – about Kenny [Kenneth P. O’Donnell] calling and then the call came back and I said, “Kenny?” And he said, “No, this is me.” Then he talked about Ellington a little bit. It was clear to me when we hung up he was not going to ask him to be Postmaster General. I think he didn’t really have much faith in Ellington, not because of Ellington, but because Ellington’s ties were all through Johnson. He knew that as a politician Ellington was primarily loyal to Lyndon Johnson. And Ellington would be the first to have said that – supported him. It was Ellington who said on the Convention floor in 1960 after Kennedy was nominated, “We’ve just elected a Republican.” So he never really would have forgotten that but it was very similar to the situation in ‘60 in which – you know, the Kennedy theory. Embrace your enemies and broaden your base of support.

HACKMAN: Yeah.

SEIGENTHALER: He went for Gronouski [John A. Gronouski], and I was not unhappy about that.

HACKMAN: Okay. Now in terms of planning for 1964, from what you say probably not much had gone on, but could you get any feeling for how they would have worked it in Tennessee in ‘64?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, it was just beginning, you know. Dallas was the first effort. Well, yeah, as

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a matter of fact I had a conversation with Bob and he asked me to talk to Albert Gore about it. Albert Gore was scared to death that Goldwater [Barry M. Goldwater] would be nominated and, I would say, had Goldwater fever and really wanted to stay as far away from the President as he could. He thought Goldwater would carry

Tennessee overwhelmingly. This was '63. This was maybe in the – maybe it was just before the assassination I talked to Gore, I don't know.

HACKMAN: What would they have done with a guy like Ellington then who hadn't been a friend in '60. How would they have worked him in '64?

SEIGENTHALER: I think they would have asked Lyndon to make him coordinator of the southern states because he was, in fact, the most popular of the southern governors. If Lyndon had asked him to do it, he would have done it. As a matter of fact, I'm sure that's what they would have asked him to do.

The business about the postmaster generalship was in line with that. In part, I think, what Bob was interested in was: How close are Buford and Lyndon? And if a Kennedy-Johnson ticket, is Buford going to be absolutely committed to get there with them? The answer to that was "Yes, he would have done anything Lyndon asked him to do."

HACKMAN: Yeah. Okay. What about the '64 convention? You went to the '64 convention?

SEIGENTHALER: Yeah.

HACKMAN: What do you remember about that in terms of conversations with Robert Kennedy at the convention? What kinds of things...

SEIGENTHALER: Have I put any of that on an interview?

HACKMAN: No.

SEIGENTHALER: Well, he was aware, of course, that Lyndon was concerned about his potential. They put the Kennedy film on the program and changed it – Bailey [John Moran Bailey] changed it to lengthen the program solely because they were all aware of what it might have meant to some of them. On top of that in the light of what happened – what would have happened.... I spent a good deal of time with him in Atlantic City. As a matter of fact I was in Atlantic City early and he asked me to fly down and come up with him. He was in New York.

HACKMAN: Right.

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SEIGENTHALER: I couldn't do that, but I was in on some of the planning for the reception, helped in a minor way to set it up. This was the one which...

HACKMAN: Mrs. Kennedy [Ethel Skakel Kennedy]?

SEIGENTHALER: Yeah, and in which we then went in – after everybody came, through –

we went in the den and listened to a reading of works by....

HACKMAN: I don't know that.

SEIGENTHALER: Well, it's an actor and an actress. It's a recording of it. Who played in "Inherit the Wind" on the stage? Paul Muni and. . . .

HACKMAN: I don't know. The movie was Spencer Tracey and – what's his name?

SEIGENTHALER: Yeah, right. Ed Begley.

HACKMAN: Ed Begley?

SEIGENTHALER: No, it wasn't Begley it was....God!

HACKMAN: Not the same guy who was in the film, the other guy?

SEIGENTHALER: Oh, I can just see the guy; I just see the guy. He's a....Well, it'll come to me because he was a great actor.

HACKMAN: Not Fredric March?

SEIGENTHALER: Fredric March, yes. Well, we had these readings – he and his wife. I was with him almost constantly from that time, almost constantly, I walked the boardwalk with him a couple of times. I went with him to delegations to listen to him thank them – went to the West Virginia delegation's breakfast, for example. He just expressed his deep appreciation, yeah.

HACKMAN: Did you talk to him at all beforehand about the possibility of some kind of movement on his behalf there?

SEIGENTHALER: Yeah, there was no movement. Because I was anxious to try to move them if I could, but he restrained me.

HACKMAN: He restrained you?

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SEIGENTHALER: He restrained me. I would just say, "I'd like to get something going," you know, and you could have done it.

HACKMAN: Would you spell out the details on that? What do you mean when you say....

SEIGENTHALER: Well, I'd say, "I was talking to so-and-so last week and I think we

might put a little something together.” He would restrain me on that.

HACKMAN: Would you say presidency, vice presidency?

SEIGENTHALER: The vice presidency. I had the feeling he could make a real run for it. He didn’t want to do it. I think he had a few feelings. One of the feelings was that....When he expressed to me that he didn’t want to do it. I had the feeling that he knew it was hopeless, that Lyndon had it locked up, and he didn’t want to create any problems for himself. He didn’t want to mislead anybody about his own hopes. Beyond that I think he wanted to use that convention as an opportunity to say thanks to a hell of a lot of people. It was almost like a debt. It was almost as if he wanted to purge himself for the debt of his brother’s friends who’d helped him in ‘60.

He asked me to go to the different groups with him, and I did. I’d been with him in 1960 at the convention when he went from group to group and spoke for his brother. It was a very different situation.

I remember in ‘60 walking with him into the Arkansas delegation, for example. It was frigid and he really sort of turned that around. McClellan [John L. McClellan], who was an iceberg, expressed friendship for him after he got through with that meeting.

But it was a different experience. He went around – I mean, the warmth was there. It seems to me the first one was West Virginia – it could have been Wisconsin, but I think it was West Virginia. I walked in there and the applause hit like thunder – those people were on their feet. I knew that the electricity was there and you could have been put together.

HACKMAN: They didn’t get to him?

SEIGENTHALER: It got to him but he really didn’t want to do it. (1) He knew that Lyndon didn’t want him and that Lyndon could club it down and would. Secondly, I think there was a feeling on his part that it was sort of a family affair – it was a family affair – and that he was

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there to say thanks and to go through this reception, and to participate in the ordeal, and to give the film. If something had happened, that would have been fine, but it had to happen in the heart of Lyndon Johnson.

HACKMAN: Yeah. Who argued your point of view? Who else?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, I don’t know, I did. Steve Smith [Stephen E. Smith] was sort of ambivalent about it.

HACKMAN: He seems ambivalent about everything.

SEIGENTHALER: Oh, he is, but he’s a great fellow. Once the decision is made – I mean, he would have been willing to go if....Well, he’s a very stand-up guy,

you know, he's a very stand-up guy. But I'll tell you how he was about his brother-in-law: He let them make the decisions for themselves...

HACKMAN: He was their man.

SEIGENTHALER: ...and once they did it, he was there. That's the way it was in '68. He didn't want '68 but he said, "The little fellow wants to do it and we'll have to do it for the little fellow." That's what he called him, "the little fellow."

HACKMAN: Yeah.

SEIGENTHALER: So, we went to these breakfasts and luncheons, receptions and caucuses. I guess maybe eight of them.

Late in the afternoon they had the reception. The Kennedy Foundation [Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation] had an exhibit there of memorabilia and we went by there. Some of the Kennedy people were there. That was just sort of an informal drop-in, although he had made a formal call there at some point.

In my mind the days sort of run together. I guess I went with him to the two breakfasts on two different days, I'm not sure of that. But he made, over that period of time, an awful lot of those appearances.

HACKMAN: Were you moving on your own at all to put anything together?

SEIGENTHALER: No, I was just – when he said, "No," it suited me. When I went in there, when he came up, I was convinced. He didn't want to put it together.

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HACKMAN: Yeah. What about other people, Lucey [Patrick J. Lucey] or whoever?

SEIGENTHALER: Oh, he was all over the line. Pat, now, I think he would have done it in a minute. I didn't see him but once up there. I met him on the boardwalk at his request and had a beer with him. He was there with some people from Wisconsin, hell they were talking Kennedy.

HACKMAN: Any other hot spots of support around?

SEIGENTHALER: No.

HACKMAN: How about in Wisconsin?

SEIGENTHALER: Can't remember, can't remember. I could think about that; there might have been.

We had dinner on the night of the.... Well, we went through that whole pier in maybe a couple of days. They moved the film back from early until late and he was sort of wry in his comments about that. He knew that I knew what it was.

There's not a great deal that stands out in my mind and I want to get to the dinner at Harriman's. Have I told that on a film? Steve and Ethel, Marie Harriman, Averell [William Averell Harriman] and Jean Kennedy Smith, I think, and I somehow wound up at the Harriman's for dinner on the ninth – on that night. They were at the Ritz. It seems to me they were at the Ritz, and I don't know if there is a Ritz Hotel in Atlantic City, but that stands out in my mind that they were at the Ritz Hotel in Atlantic City. They had a great big suite and we had steak; it came late.

Marie Harriman is a woman with a tremendous wit, sort of a whiskey base voice and thin rimless glasses which are sort of smoked. He even then was getting deaf – I mean he's getting deaf as a post now – but even then he'd sit there and nod and you couldn't tell what the hell – whether he knew what you....

So there was a fight on the floor about the seating of the, I guess, the first vestiges of the FDP [Freedom Democratic Party] from Mississippi. And there was that real shoving match there. And Harriman kept saying, "What time is it? Check the television." The television was on, but it was down. I guess there were two sets in the room, one on one side and one on the other.

Oh, there's one other thing comes to my mind. That afternoon between the time that we went to make these visits and then the reception, I was back in my hotel taking a bath. I was sitting

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in the tub. Bob had asked me if I would write a draft of some remarks that he might make when he made the presentation. This must have been the day before, the second day. I'll tell you when, it was before he came up there. Yeah, it was before he came up there. I was talking to Angie Novello [Angela M. Novello] on the telephone in the lobby of my hotel, I didn't realize at the time, but I was next to a reporter for NBC [National Broadcasting Company], a fellow named Wallace Westfeld, whom I knew; he knew me. He came up as I was ending the conversation. She had asked me to do a rough draft of the remarks, and I said, "I'd be glad to do that." The story was going around at that point that Bob was going to nominate somebody for vice president at the President's request. He overheard my conversation. I was in the tub the day after Bob got there, I guess. Yeah, he was in town and David Brinkley came on television saying, "Robert Kennedy is going to endorse..." somebody, maybe Lyndon. Maybe he was going to nominate maybe Lyndon. "John Seigenthaler is in Atlantic City writing the nominating speech."

I literally leaped out of the tub and the first thing I did was call NBC and deny it, and then called him and told him how I thought it had happened. He laughed about it. I did prepare a draft for his remarks that night which I gave to him as soon as I saw him – when he got into town, I guess – none of which, literally, none of which turned up in the Romeo and Juliet speech – I mean, none of which, not a word of which appeared.

I think that after he called me from New York and I talked to him about it, and after I talked to Angie, he and Jackie had drafted that. He told me that Jackie had given him the quotation from *Romeo and Juliet*.

HACKMAN: Oh, really?

SEIGENTHALER: That's what he told me. That's a brief aside.

Well, that night we were in the Harriman apartment as I say. She was telling funny stories as she did; she'd rarely laugh at all at her stories. Averell kept saying, "Well, turn that up. Young man, go over and turn up that set," or "Bobby, would you turn the set up and let's see where they are."

Well, finally, just about the time the steaks arrived, there was going to be a roll call vote on the seating of the black delegation from Mississippi. I remember Averell had been to the session that Fannie Lou Hamer had testified at. He was shaken about that. Bob had talked about how unpleasant it was. [Interruption]

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SEIGENTHALER: So he got up to leave, said "Bobby, I'll see you over there," and left. Just before he left we were talking about Adlai Stevenson. Bob was recalling the '56 race when he went out on the stump – no, he went on the campaign trail with Adlai as a sort of observer. He was sort of comparing organization '56 to '60 and Averell sort of interrupted that and got up to leave. And Marie said, "Don't talk to me about Adlai." Then she told this story which stands out in my mind. I'll tell it just for the fun of it telling it because I think it is one of the greatest stories I've ever heard.

She says, "In 1952 I'd been big for Adlai; I was for Adlai Stevenson. In 1956 I was for him, and we were in New York. A few days before the election Adlai comes to town for a rally and there is a dinner. I'm on the dais seated next to Adlai and he makes his speech. While Averell is introducing somebody else Bill Blair [William M., Jr. Blair] comes up to him and says, "Now, Adlai, you're on television in twenty minutes." Do you know this story?

HACKMAN: No.

SEIGENTHALER: "And I think you better go to the bathroom." Adlai said, "Bill, I don't think I need to go that badly." Blair says, "Now Adlai, you know you always do better on television if you go to the bathroom before you go on." He said, "Bill, this is a function I should end. I'll be all right, I don't really think I need to go to the bathroom."

She said they carried on that debate for two or three minutes there while this was going on. Then she said, "Don't repeat this. Ave would kill me if he found out. While that debate was going on, I suddenly decided that if he didn't know whether he wanted to go to the bathroom, I sure as hell didn't want him running the United State government, so I voted for Ike [Dwight D. Eisenhower]." [Laughter]

HACKMAN: Was Robert Kennedy there then?

SEIGENTHALER: Oh yeah.

HACKMAN: Did he get a kick...

SEIGENTHALER: He almost fell off the... He said, I don't believe it, I don't believe it." She said, "You know me and you don't believe that. Adlai knew whether he had to go to the bathroom?" He said, "No, I don't believe you voted for Ike." "So help me God, but don't tell

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Ave." Since Ave and Marie are both alive, I don't want to do anything to mess up their domesticity. [Laughter]

HACKMAN: All right. He might have gotten a kick out of that.

SEIGENTHALER: Probably would have. Yeah, fine guy. You see him on TV? [Interruption] Well, he's a great man though.

HACKMAN: Yeah.

SEIGENTHALER: But anyway, shortly thereafter we left and went over. He and I went into the convention hall together and we wound up.... It was a hell of a fight to get in. But; when I remember very well that when he came out there was this mad throng and they just roared at him. The cops sort of helped us get through the crowd. We got right up to the gates. There were only about five of us there when he came up. We started going through. A couple of people who were with Bob got in with him and this policeman said, "Mr. Kennedy would you please identify the people with your party?" He turned around and said, "John, would you identify the people with your party?" Well, I looked out and it must have been twenty sons-of-a-bitches who'd been for Kennedy way back. I remember Dan Martin [Daniel T. Martin] from California. I hadn't seen him in four years. First thing I said was, "Dan Martin, he's with our crowd." Dan Martin came through and then behind this guy, that guy, that guy. And we went through.

I hadn't been in the convention hall, and certainly not backstage, so I didn't really know exactly where we went or how we got there, but he and I – Ethel was escorted off to one side to go sit in the box and Steve went with her. Maybe Steve didn't come, I don't know, but he and I wound up.... We walked back and forth and back and forth through these corridors, sort of. It seems that we were up a level and I had the feeling they maybe had built some sort of wooden structure back behind the platform but there was no way to know, it was very dark. We went in and sat down in a sort of a little dressing room. He and I sat there.

Louie Martin [Louis E. Martin] came by while we were sitting there and Bob said... we'd been there about ten minutes and so I opened the door and looked out and Louie Martin came by – came in and shook hands with him. Bob said, "Would you check on the program,

we can't hear anything back here. We don't know anything about the timing. I think Lyndon may just have put us back here with orders to forget us. They'll probably let us out day after tomorrow or sometime. We'll go out to find out what's happened

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and find out that they announced I didn't show up to introduce the film.”

Bobby was sitting there, and he reached in his inside pocket, took out this script, started reading. That's when he told me that he had a quote in there from Romeo and Juliet that Jackie had recommended. He never did say whether anything I had given him got in and I didn't ask. Finally, Louie came back with another man and we went out. Bill Brawley [Hiram W. Brawley] came down and met us, took us out. On the way back behind the platform. Seems to me Scoop Jackson [Henry M. Jackson] was making some sort of a pitch.

I stopped on this runway. The speaker's platform was a.... first there was a runway that you walked along which ran directly behind the speaker's platform. Then there was a walkway from the runway over to the speaker's rostrum and there was a guard on the back of the rostrum. Brawley was serving as sort of a civilian counsel. Jim Farley [James A. Farley] was there and Jim Farley got up and came over and warmly greeted him. Scoop was talking. Bob turned around and motioned for me to come across the walkway from the runway and I told him “No,” that Brawley and I would stand there and talk. There was nobody on this runway but the two of us. As you walk up to the rostrum, the band was on another platform back to the left. Well, he walked over and sat down on the steps.

He was really sort of a bastard at the family reunion. Nobody was really enthusiastic about coming up and saying “Hello.” Lyndon had picked the whole goddamn platform and they knew how things worked. Farley, for once in his life, was decent and tried to make small conversation. About halfway through Bob took out his speech and looked at it as if he were reading it, took out his pencil as if to make a couple of changes. I don't know where the transcript is now but I didn't see it before he went on so I don't know if he changed it. It may have been just to get Farley to go away. But he sat there and visibly read to himself. His lips moved as if he were reciting it to himself; he scribbled on the copy.

Finally, Scoop began the introduction on him and he stood up and walked slowly out. When Scoop introduced him, it hit. I mean, it really hit. And, as you know, it just went on and on. It just knocked me out; I had to leave. I walked away from Brawley and I just fell apart because I knew that he could have been a much greater part of it. And that that was a clear indication that he was better than anybody that Lyndon decided to go with no reflection on Hubert Humphrey – but I mean.... Admittedly it was a great show of emotion towards his brother. I think all of us felt some of that too. But it just, just wouldn't stop, went on and on.

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At one point, Brawley came over and put his hand on my shoulder and then he walked away. I think he felt.... And he was a friend. He'd been Olin Johnston's secretary. Bob had really pitched to first make him assistant postmaster general – couldn't get it done. But he was with Johnson then. He was a decent fellow as you get to know him.

Then he spoke. And when he came down he didn't say anything. Everybody – the difference in the reception of the bastards on that platform.... The only – you know how it is at a convention, there might be sixty or seventy guys up there on the platform, hangers on....

HACKMAN: Yes.

SEIGENTHALER: And when he went on, aside from Farley who was just being Farley and not forgetting anybody's first name, the only two who.... When he went on that platform and sat down on those stairs, sort of turned his back on them, there were rows of chairs on each side of the fence and that's where Farley was sitting. Farley was sitting close to him. But aside, from Farley – as I say, he didn't do it out of any sense of anything except that's what a man does when he meets another fellow, shake hands with him. He'd been shaking hands with political enemies for 35 years – but when he sat down there you knew you'd just look at those bastards and they didn't want to catch his eye; they didn't want to look at him, except Scoop Jackson.

Scoop had been chairman of the Democratic National Committee in 1960 when Bob was campaign manager.

HACKMAN: Right, the National Convention.

SEIGENTHALER: And had had some bad feeling about Bob's rolling his own, which they resolved in a face-to-face discussion. I think it may be of interest that Bob told me, "Scoop wants to quit." They'd had a conversation; they'd always been pretty good friends after that. Bob helped him and he.... Their association had gone all the way back to McCarthy [Joseph R. McCarthy] Committee days when he was a young senator. But Scoop Jackson was nice to him. When Bob raised his hand to try to stop the ovation, Scoop would say, "Let it go on for a while" and "Why don't you just let them do it, Bob? Why don't you let them get it out of their system, Bob?" He maybe said it three different times, kept coming back.

I don't know how he spoke. I don't know how he got the words out because we left. When he came back off that platform those phonies on that platform who had heard the ovation for the family were all over him, literally all over him. I was just.... Like Bobby Baker [Robert G. Baker] – all of them.

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So we went back down the runway. It seems to me we took a shortcut down and got caught. There was a woman who was gray haired who'd been a delegate from some state and she was backing up trying to get to him, to reach him. The crowd was coming along with him, and she was backing up and she really went over a chair. He stopped and I said, "don't worry, I'll get her." Because if he stopped you had the whole – I mean he'd never have gotten out of there. There was no security to get him through.

Ethel was sitting in a box upstairs. Then he was going over to an exit and then out up. So I got the woman in there.

As he came down the platform and I went over to get him he said, "I'm going back to Washington tonight. Could you fly back with me?" I run a damn newspaper team there, too. And I said, "Really it's tough for me, I've got a meeting in the morning." He said, "Well, why don't you fly down and we'll let you fly back." Which is typical Kennedy imposition that we all put up with and loved.

But anyway, this woman went down and I picked her up, sat her down, sat the chair up and put her in the chair and she was all right. By that time he was up the stairs on his way. So I followed along and got as far as I could go. I said, "I'm in Senator Kennedy's party". "Well, you'll have to show some identification." Well, all I had was a damn press badge. So I pulled out my identification. Finally, I went all the way down to the bottom of my wallet and I found an old card, a four year, three year, two year old card from the Department of Justice and showed it to him. He looked at it and said "Go, ahead." But by the time I'd got there, he'd gone.

And there are some other things that happened that are just sort of.... Somewhere Sander Vanocur was there, I don't know where, but I remember Sander Vanocur walking up to me and saying something like, "Lyndon Johnson is a bastard."

At any rate when I got to where Bob had been, they were going on the way out, and I decided it was an easy way not to go back to Washington. So I said, "Good," and went down a different way. I got into the press section and all the newsmen I knew came up and said, "What'd he say? What'd he say? What do you know? What was the impression with which...." I gave it to them. So I went on and remember Marianne Means who loved Lyndon and really worked on Bob? She was always a friend of mine. And I was cold to her on the flight that night.

I left and went back to the hotel. When I got there, there was a call waiting from Angie that said, "Please come to the airport, we're waiting on you; come right down" which was not really true. He had gone to the hotel first and he only got there at about the

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time I got there. But he knew that if he told me he was waiting for me at the airport, that there was no way I could get a goddamn message to him, and I probably would come, even though I knew that he wouldn't wait too damn long. He would stay three or four minutes and say, "Where's John?" and then take off.

But anyway I went out and flew down to Washington with him. Somebody wrote a piece in the '68 campaign about the veil coming down over his eyes. I think the first time I really noticed that was maybe after – I told you what he said about he couldn't sleep – sort of down then, during that period. But it came down that night. I don't remember everybody that was on the plane, but I was glad I was there because it just was a time you felt that was important to him. I think everyone who was with him that night felt that way, which is really a maudlin, crazy sort of thing for me to say. I don't know, I guess we were all.... Really everybody who was with him, when they were with him, felt like it was important to be there, for no other reason except that we wanted to be and he wanted us to be. That was a night that had some meaning.

HACKMAN: Who else did he take back with him that evening? Do you remember?

SEIGENTHALER: No. I don't believe Steve went back. I can't remember whether we flew to Washington or New York. I know it was just a quick flight for me. I got off the airplane and went back. I didn't even leave the airport, so I don't know who else there was. But I think Dave Hackett [David L. Hackett] was on there, maybe Judith Hackett. It seems to me Warren Rogers [Warren J. Rogers, Jr.], but I'm not sure. I could probably think about it but.... I don't remember whether it was the Caroline, but I rather think it was.

HACKMAN: One thing we didn't talk about last time was: When he finally found out that he wasn't going to be vice president did he do anything on anyone else's behalf? Humphrey's behalf?

SEIGENTHALER: No, not to my knowledge.

HACKMAN: Did he ever say anything about it before or at the convention then?

SEIGENTHALER: [Laughter] I don't know whether he did or not. I can't remember that he mentioned anybody else. I'm sure we had some conversations to speculate about it, but to my knowledge – during those days at the convention I think I probably was as close to him as anybody was because I spent a lot of time with him.

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Once again I remember during those days the South was always really an enigma to him: how people felt in the South, how people reacted in the South. He treated the South as a different part of the country in his own mind, not in a degrading way necessarily – not necessarily, not at all. Not in a degrading way at all, but just as a separate entity that had an enigmatic fascination for him. He would ask about it. I remember we got into a conversation about John Patterson. He used to call him “that crazy John Patterson.” He'd say, “You remember 1960 and that crazy John Patterson?” He laughed about how Jack wanted to have a breakfast meeting with him to tell him how the history of the South could be changed by John Patterson. Patterson was supposed to be a hard-nosed rebel and by the time Kennedy got back to his hotel, Patterson had endorsed him. Bob related that, you know, “that crazy John Patterson.” Of course, it was of special significance because John Patterson had been my pal and damn near got me killed in Alabama.

HACKMAN: You want me to turn that off while we eat, or whatever you want?

SEIGENTHALER: No, I'm easy. It won't interfere with it.

HACKMAN: Well, can you remember anything at all, other than what you've said, about the '64 convention?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, I remember – it’s a Corbin story and there’s no sense boring you with Corbin stories. It doesn’t relate to him.

HACKMAN: Was he trying to get anything going at the convention?

SEIGENTHALER: No, I told him “No.”

HACKMAN: What about...?

SEIGENTHALER: He was just enjoying himself – Corbin. I’m sure he and Lucey were playing games.

HACKMAN: What about running for the Senate in New York? When did you first.... Did he talk to you about that?

SEIGENTHALER: Yeah, but I don’t remember when. Do you remember when the decision was made?

HACKMAN: Well, it was sort of on-again, off-again. There was a decision made supposedly sometime in July, and Edward Kennedy gets in a plane crash and Robert Kennedy goes to Poland. Then the decision is

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off again.

SEIGENTHALER: He asked me to go to Poland with him. He was thinking about it when he went to Poland. I couldn’t go to Poland. I always regretted I didn’t go to Poland with him, for two reasons: He loved the Poles; He really loved the Poles; had a strange fascination; thought they were courageous people.

HACKMAN: You mean that was as a result of the trip though – that sort of surprised him.

SEIGENTHALER: Uh-Uh.

HACKMAN: No? Before?

SEIGENTHALER: Before. All the way back in 1960 he loved the Poles. He loved to speak to Polish audiences early. He used to talk about “get me my stuff on Pilsudski [Jozef Pilsudski].” Was Radziwill [Stanislas A. Radziwill] a Pole?

HACKMAN: Who?

SEIGENTHALER: Jackie's brother-in-law. Stanislas Radziwill, Stash.

HACKMAN: Yeah. Right.

SEIGENTHALER: Yeah. You know, he spoke for Kennedy during '60. He used to say "Stoush." I'd say, "How'd you do today, Stash?" "Ah, my boy, Stash he was a smash." I do remember talking to him about going to Poland, before he went and I had to go back. What? [Interruption]

SEIGENTHALER: So, I don't remember much about it one way or the other, except he called at one point, maybe a short time before he decided. I remember a conversation with him in which he was debating it. Invariably I would say, "Well, Lyndon carried the state. How're you going to beat Keating [Kenneth B. Keating]?"

He got into it. Again, I made up my mind I didn't really want to go trotting off to New York to assume any role. Steve then called me, a couple of weeks into the campaign, and said, "The little fellow wants to know if you can give it any time." I said, "Yeah, if he wants me to, I'm sure I can get away for a little while. I don't know how much I can give it. If I'm really needed, whatever is needed."

Well, Steve and I in 1960 had been door-to-door, office-to

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office. My desk was directly across from his desk. I didn't know whether he was asking me or whether Bob wanted me.

Then maybe in a couple of weeks, or maybe a couple of days, I don't know, Bob called and said, "Could you come up?" I said, "Yes." So I went up and rode around with him for a couple of days. vanden Heuvel [William J. vanden Heuvel] by that time was intimately involved in it. Tom Johnston [Thomas M.C. Johnston] was in it. Hackett was in it. I wanted to stay as far away from it as I could, because I didn't want to really push it; I wanted to make a determination on my own. I stayed there about three weeks. There was just no role for me. I was making no real contribution. I wasn't part of the campaign. I sort of caught an airplane and came back home just drifted out of it.

I'd been back in Nashville about four or five days when he called me and said, "I thought you were going to help." I said, "I've just got so much on me down here I can't do it." He said, "That's too bad. I really need you. What do you think about a debate with Keating?" I said, "I think it would be a disaster. He looks like your grandfather and there's no way you can win it." He said, "I agree with you." He tried out on me the prospect of coming late to the debate. I thought it was a great idea to make sure that.... And that's what he did; he said he'd try to make it. Keating put an empty chair on the stage. The last five minutes Bob tried to tear down the door; he couldn't get in. The lead on the story was he didn't get into the debate, but he showed up.

[BEGIN SIDE II, TAPE I]

HACKMAN: Have you any idea of who suggested the idea of not showing up to debate with Keating? Was that his own or...?

SEIGENTHALER: No, I think it was.... I mean, the question that he asked me was, "Should I?" We had a formal discussion of that.

At the time I was up there – just to go back – during the three weeks I was up there, I don't think I did anything worthwhile for anybody except – there's a fellow named Bob Low [Robert A. Low] who later ran for vice mayor of New York or something? You know him?

HACKMAN: I've heard of him.

SEIGENTHALER: Well, Bob Low had been a very sticky guy in 1960, but finally when it started going our way he came along. While I was there, he came in crying to Steve about Wagner [Robert F. Wagner, Jr.]. Nobody was talking to Wagner, nobody was consulting Wagner. Steve unloaded on him, threw him out of the office. I say, "threw him out of

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the office," that's not really a bad description: "To hell with it, I'm up here trying to put this campaign together and you're mouthing around worrying about whether Bob Wagner gets his feelings hurt. We've done everything you asked us. I haven't got time to listen to you cry about it twenty-four hours a day."

Oh! I was at Gracie Mansion the day he announced. He called me and asked me if I could come to Gracie Mansion, and I did. That was an event, and I was glad that I was there. He announced from the porch of Gracie Mansion and Wagner announced his support for him. It was a hot day. Again, I sort of stayed in the background.

HACKMAN: Did he say anything about Wagner that day? How he worked with him if at all?

SEIGENTHALER: Wagner had been difficult. I talked to him about it before he went up. Wagner had been difficult. There wasn't all sweetness and light between them, but on that day and the days that followed I think he had a friendly feeling toward Wags. I don't mean it existed throughout the campaign.

I'll tell you: I was back out there at the end. I don't remember how long that damn campaign was; it all runs together you know. I was there the day the news of Walter Jenkins broke, and the day after that because the day after that I talked to him on the telephone; he was in upstate New York. Something happened I went back up there. I remember him telling me that Peter Crotty didn't have any guts. I said, "Why?" He said, "Peter Crotty told me when I got to town that Lyndon was going to be damaged in this county because of Walter Jenkins." Incidentally, Bob Kennedy liked Walter Jenkins.

HACKMAN: He didn't?

SEIGENTHALER: Did like him!

HACKMAN: Yeah.

SEIGENTHALER: So did I like him. He thought Walter Jenkins was the only guy around Lyndon Johnson who had intelligence – maybe Moyers [William D. Moyers] would have been the exception; Moyers is not fair because Moyers had really been a Kennedy man – but he thought Walter had intelligence, integrity and the courage to tell Lyndon what the hell he needed to hear. Nobody else did. Nobody else.

But anyway, he told me he talked to Crotty – apparently out in the car – and he said to him, asked Peter whether Walter Jenkins was going to hurt up here. Peter said, “I don’t think too much.” Bob said, “Goddamn it, tell him what you told me earlier.” Peter

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said, “Well, I’ve sort of asked around since then. I don’t think it’s going to hurt too bad.” I don’t mean they broke up over it or anything.

I don’t know why I was back there for those two days. Oh, I know why I was. I had been up early in the campaign and, as I say, had gone back after two or three weeks; I don’t know how long. I faded out. Then he called. The Liberal Party rally at Madison Square Garden was held the night that Walter Jenkins was exposed. I was at the Waldorf for some reason. It all runs together. I remember George Reedy [George E. Reedy, Jr.] asking the newsmen to meet him. I ran into somebody who said, “Jenkins just called an impromptu press conference.” We went in and Jenkins stood up on a chair in some small room at the Waldorf and said, I have a statement from the President about Walter Jenkins. Half the newsmen there had not heard it.

HACKMAN: You mean Reedy stood up?

SEIGENTHALER: Yeah. I went back to the Carlyle after that and Bob was there. I walked in and he said, “Have you heard about Walter Jenkins?” I said, “Yes.” He said, “That’s too bad.”

Then I guess he went to the Liberal Party rally and I went independently to the Liberal Party rally. The next day he went upstate with Lyndon and that’s when he had.... I remember going by the headquarters when he called in and that’s when I talked to him. I was there when he called in and said, “Your old pal Peter Crotty has got no guts.” We had that discussion. And I said, “Look, I’m going back to Tennessee.” He said, “Why can’t you stay till the end?” I said, “I just can’t.” The reason I couldn’t was because there was no real role to play there. It was going well. So I went back that night.

HACKMAN: In talking about whether to run for the Senate or not, had he ever talked about what he thought of the idea of running for the Senate, what the drawbacks might be?

SEIGENTHALER: Yeah. He said he had always said he really didn't like that end of it. He was worried about his ability to communicate with the voters, whether he had the charisma for the job, whether the voters would respond to him – a lot of personal stuff about what he considered to be his own disabilities as he approached the campaign. He knew he had some and they concerned him.

HACKMAN: Primarily in terms of speaking you mean? Or what?

SEIGENTHALER: Primarily in terms of campaigning. Not

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really in terms of speaking because he knew he had spoken in '60, done well at it, liked it, and had spoken again and again during his brother's administration. So it was not really that so much as running it and putting it together.

HACKMAN: Did he ever talk about whether he'd like being a senator? What he might not like about it?

SEIGENTHALER: I don't think he really was ever clear in his mind that he would like it. This comes from maybe a composite of maybe a dozen conversations about it and includes some of my own interpretation of what he was like. He'd never really been willing to compromise beliefs. I don't mean he was not willing to change beliefs or to reexamine facts, and on the basis of new facts or additional facts change his position. He was able to do that. I don't mean that he was not easily able to weigh all of the assets and all the liabilities and to make a decision on the basis of where the odds were. He was able to do that, too; and did that, often did that. What I mean is that he never really thought of himself as a compromiser, and didn't like to think of himself as a compromiser. That does not mean, again, that he was not able – he was not capable of compromise. As I say, he demonstrated many times that he was capable of compromising. What I mean is that he didn't like to think of himself as one who was willing to compromise principle for practicality. I think the final decision to run for the presidency is the best example of that. It finally got to him and he was not able to be practical about it. He didn't weigh the evidence for and against to make a determination on the basis of the odds. In terms of his ability to think of himself as one who was pliable, or one who would go on the basis of principle as opposed to pragmatism, I don't think the job really appealed to him.

One other thought with regard to the campaign; in all the conversations I had with him he never talked about Keating as a bad man to me. He never talked about him as really as a personality at all. In jest he might say, "Poor old Ken Keating." We talked about it several times, but basically he thought of Keating in terms of an obstacle, in terms of a problem to deal with. I think that's the way he felt about it.

HACKMAN: From what you saw and from what you heard him say, how well was

the campaign put together? Did you have criticisms that you made while you were up there? Did you write anything or talk to him about things that should be changed or...

SEIGENTHALER: No, it was total disorganization. Dave Hackett was screwing it up royally in terms

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of his role.

HACKMAN: Did he know that? Did Robert Kennedy know that?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, he knew Dave Hackett and he knew Dave Hackett did the best he could. One of the reasons I came home was either that I was going to have a terrible fight with Dave – the campaign was badly put together in Manhattan. You know, there were good people.

Steve did a fantastic job. But you have to remember that it was really Steve's first role, too.

I remember spending three goddamn nights trying to make a determination about material, whether you use this picture or that picture. Lem Billings [Kirk Lemoyne Billings] was in some of those damn discussions and he'd drive a man out of his mind. You'd get into a serious discussion about a picture and you'd agree that it was a good picture and he'd come in with something like, "Well, that looks like Sneaky Fox." That's a direct quote, "That looks like Sneaky Fox." That blows that discussion wide open. Once you've said it you could see the damn picture did look a little like "Sneaky Fox."

HACKMAN: Would he bring all those people in or would they come in?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, you have to really understand about the Kennedys, and particularly about Bob Kennedy. I mean, I've got great disabilities – and I'll use myself as an example – I've got a great disability, but I have one strong suit, and that's I'm loyal. Anybody who's loyal passes the first test. Then we were talking about [Ivan Petrovich Pavlov] Pavlov a few minutes ago. Angie Novello was the secretary of the ambassador to Denmark who happens to own an insurance company. So I was down there running this museum because I was down here running this museum. So while I have disabilities, I do have something, some semblance – I may be disloyal to many people in many different ways – but there is.... And I think his quality was that he inspired the deepest loyalty of any man I knew, from people like me.

Dave Hackett if you'd asked him to, would get out in the middle of the table, take his pants off and do the dance right here on the table. Or Pierre Salinger would walk twenty-four hours around the clock until he literally dropped dead because Bob said, "You're a gutless one and you can't walk." Those are sort of funny things.

But that first quality that attracted a man to Bob, or would hold him to Bob – loyalty. The effect of that was that he would then

oversee many of his disabilities. There's no way after the victory over Hubert Humphrey in the state of Wisconsin in 1960, there's no way to blow Wisconsin except to turn it over to a sweet guy like Lem Billings who could blow anything. He's capable of losing anything, any race. Dave is very much the same way. Now he's a great fellow, but like all of us he's got great disabilities. He's a very disorganized guy. He does have the facility of talking a very good game. When I came into New York, when they asked me to come into New York, things were already set up, already moving. It was obvious to me that if I came in there, it was going to be in a role in which I created conflict, because it was a badly put together campaign.

When I say Steve blew up at Bob Low, he blew up at Bob Low not just because of Low. If you ask him today you know, "He's not worth blowing up over." But things were not going well. I don't mean that there was any indication the candidate was not going to win. The indication was that things were just not falling in place in the organization, in the structure of it. I would begin to talk about that and I'd wind up on the third floor looking at pictures – whether we ought to use this in the brochure. It just wasn't worth it.

HACKMAN: Well, how did he feel about it? Was he disinterested in that campaign in organizational matters or did he just sort of abdicate?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, he had to be the candidate. He had made the decision that these people were going to run this campaign. I made one pass at it. He sat here and listened sort of stoop-shouldered and crossed his legs and nodded and "Yes," he said, "Well I hope you can do something about that." But I knew he didn't want to listen to it. He didn't really want to listen to it because he was as loyal as they were loyal. Maybe somewhere there was the question about whether it was really as bad as I said it was. I say it was very bad.

HACKMAN: Or did he think he had it won regardless of the organization? Did you ever get that feeling?

SEIGENTHALER: I think he had the feeling that if he campaigned, if he was a good candidate, that it would go well. The only contribution I remember making to the whole campaign was talking to Steve about his television. I said, "It's a disaster. I don't want to make an ass of myself. You've got to listen to a lot of people. You've got to get him into a situation that's natural." When I left I told Steve I'd come back whenever he needed me, but that I had some things that were important to me. But the thing that I

thought was most important was that his television was bad.

HACKMAN: And at that point – what? – Papert [Frederick S. Papert], Koenig [Myron L. Koenig], Lois [Incorporated] was doing it?

SEIGENTHALER: I don't remember who was doing it. I think Papert – Well, he was; Fred Papert was in the “Sneaky Fox” conversation. Lem said, “Ahhhhhhh! Looks like ‘Sneaky Fox.’” You know Lem?

HACKMAN: No, I've seen or read his transcripts.

SEIGENTHALER: He'd drive you – climb a wall talking to Lem for twenty minutes, I'll tell you. I say that with great affection because I love him. I've kept my finger in the dyke a thousand times trying to stop mistakes that he'd made in Wisconsin. But you know, when you put people like....

HACKMAN: Spalding [Charles F. Spalding]?

SEIGENTHALER: Chuck, bad news, nice guy, loyal, dedicated. He'd cut off his arm at the elbow, but with great disabilities, as I have.

HACKMAN: I know you skipped the one thing right around '68. You talked about Hackett being disorganized. in '64? Is that the same in '68 in running the boiler room operation, because everybody says he has....

SEIGENTHALER: And in '60, disaster all the way through. He said to me in a weak moment when he was – in 1960 – he said, “I wake up in the middle of the night going ‘bumper sticker, bumper sticker, bumper sticker.’” Maybe I told you that before. But he had charge of material distribution. He said, “I wake up in the middle of the night going, ‘Bumper sticker, bumper sticker, bumper sticker.’” I screamed at him in 1960 until I was hoarse, hoarse! We wound up with twenty tons of Kennedy posters on trains going to Butte, Montana and Madison, Wisconsin and Mobile, Alabama, three days after the election. A waste of good time.

I like Dave Hackett; he's a friend of mine, but the boiler room operation was a disaster, too. I'll give you one example: In the early days of it they said...

HACKMAN: What year are you talking about now?

SEIGENTHALER: '68. You mentioned the boiler room thing. He had a little girl named...

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HACKMAN: Crickett [Rosemary Crickett Keough]?

SEIGENTHALER: No. A little girl from North Carolina named....

HACKMAN: She was the one who left early?

SEIGENTHALER: I don't know. What the hell was her name? Jesus, now what's her name?

HACKMAN: Well, I know the Lyonses.

SEIGENTHALER: I think she's maybe Jewish.

HACKMAN: Not Lowenstein's [Allard Kenneth Lowenstein] girl?

SEIGENTHALER: No.

HACKMAN: Susie.

SEIGENTHALER: Susie what?

HACKMAN: Tannenbaum [Susan Tannenbaum]?

SEIGENTHALER: Susan Tannenbaum, yeah. Susie Tannenbaum called me in Tennessee and said, "You're the coordinator of the South? Mr. H. wants to know how we're standing in the South." I said, "I've only hired on yesterday. What do you mean how do we stand in the South?" "Well, how many delegates do we have?" "Well, in Tennessee we've got a half vote. In Alabama we've got Tom Tadney, and he says maybe he can get two and that counts for four in Alabama." We later got about thirteen." In Florida, and I would relate it – "We got two blacks. In North Carolina we've got none but a chance for four," and, you know, the whole thing. So I said, "The sum and substance is we've got a potential thirty-one candidates in the South, a sure twenty-five and the possibility if he really works hard we can get maybe fifty-five." "Okay, that's wonderful. Mr. H. will be glad to have this report. We're going into a meeting in twenty minutes." Forty minutes; the phone rings. Dave Hackett called and I answered. "Well, I want to give you a rundown of where you are in the South!" "Okay Dave, where are we in the South." "Well, you've got twenty-five solid votes, thirty-one potential votes, and if you really do well you can get fifty-five down. "Thanks a lot, Dave." That's the way the boiler room operated.

In large part it was legwork; that was my relationship with it. When I got to California it was more trouble than it was worth; it was really more trouble than it was worth.

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So Dave is a nice fellow and a friend of mine, but in terms of organization he's a walking disaster area. He's a friend of Bob's. I met him when we were working on *The Enemy Within*.

We were working on *The Enemy Within*, of which I was the editor. Late in the production of the book, Dave came into the house with his little dog one day. It was on a weekend. Bob was going up to the Cape [Cape Cod, Massachusetts]. Dave came in, walked in wearing blue jeans and something, ate all the food in the icebox – came in at about 11

o'clock at night. He and I went into the guest room to sleep. In those days the guest room had no walls; it was a screened-in porch. You'd sleep there in the winter and you'd freeze your tail off. It was just unbelievably wonderful. But anyway, I spent many a night in that room, most of them by myself but some of them with Hackett, some with Lem, some with Hooker [John J. Hooker, Jr.]. On this night Dave's dog was in heat. I wake up around 4 o'clock in the morning with all Bob's dogs outside that goddamn win-screen, panting. I said, "Mr. Hackett, would you get your goddamn dog out of this room so I can go to sleep?" "Oh, poor little...." – I can't remember the dog's name. Anyway, we didn't get her out. From that day on, I figured if Dave couldn't organize a dog's....

HACKMAN: Love life, huh.

SEIGENTHALER: But it was bad there, and Chuck was no better.

HACKMAN: Now, you've said loyalty, but what was it? What else was it that Robert Kennedy liked about those people, you know, Hackett?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, they were bright; there's no problem about their....

HACKMAN: Conversation you mean and things?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, yeah. They were articulate and had insight, but they had no experience at organization and no ability to organize, and they were not producers. Actually, you'd have to say they were overmatched. Dave was not ready for the job in '60 and he was not ready for it in '64. To me it showed through. In 1960 we won despite a breakdown in communications in the material department. In 1964 rather than create a conflict with him, I left, primarily because I thought it was a cinch to me that Bob was going to win.

HACKMAN: What other parts of the campaign did you get involved in making suggestions on? Were there other ones, like the research side? I know Edelman [Peter B. Edelman] and Walinsky [Adam Walinsky] came and went to work at

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one point and ran...

SEIGENTHALER: No, I didn't know them. And to my knowledge, beyond just shaking hands with them, I didn't have any exposure to them.

HACKMAN: vanden Heuvel and Gwartzman [Milton Gwartzman]?

SEIGENTHALER: [REDACTED]

Portion Closed

HACKMAN: Now how did that relationship come about?

SEIGENTHALER: I don't have any idea. He was there when I got there. I guess he was Jules Stein's son-in-law and maybe Jules Stein had him in the MCA [Music Corporation of America, Inc.]. I don't know what the hell it was. I don't know.

HACKMAN: Can you remember conversations during the '64 campaign about anything else? Non-campaign things like the Hal Johnson thing?

SEIGENTHALER: I did communicate to him my concern about members of the staff. It did not seem worthwhile to me to try to damage his people. One reason, particularly, was that I'd analyzed it with Steve, and Steve knew their disabilities and was willing to accept them. I didn't say they didn't do anything. They did things and they got things done.

For example, the one fellow I met in that campaign that I was really impressed with was Tom Johnston. Tom Johnston was moving. And Dave Hackett brought Tom Johnston in off the street and put him to work. I can tell you that Tom Johnston was a great asset. The other thing was that I knew one other fellow who was involved in the campaign. He was sort of on the outskirts of town over in New Jersey or somewhere. His judgment I trusted.

HACKMAN: Yeah.

SEIGENTHALER: He said, "We're going to make it. We're going to make it; we're going to make it close, but we're going to make it." And I said, "Too close for me to worry about?" And he said, "No, don't worry about it."

HACKMAN: How did he happen to get stuck in New Jersey?

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SEIGENTHALER: I don't know.

HACKMAN: Robert Kennedy knew about that though?

SEIGENTHALER: Yeah, yeah. He knew about it. I would check with him periodically. He came into town to see me during the three weeks a couple of times. One night he called me at the hotel – during the three weeks I was up there – and said "I just ran into Gene Keogh [Eugene J. Keogh] on the street. He recognized me." I said, "Well, tell me about it." That shook me a little bit because, of course, Bob had

decided to prosecute Gene Keogh's brother, Judge Keogh, Vincent Keogh [J. Vincent Keogh]. It shook me a little bit because here was a fellow who had been somewhat vindictive. But anyway, I said, "What'd Gene Keogh say?" He said, "I walked past him and ducked my head and he called out my name. I stopped and went back and said, 'Why, Congressman, I didn't recognize you.'" He said "Nobody misses me." He said we had a little conversation. He said "How's your campaign going". He said "Congressman, I'm not involved in the campaign." He said, "Don't tell me that, I know you. You are involved." He said "No, Congressman, I'm not." He said, "Well, whether you are or not, tell your friend I'm for him and if there is any way I can help let me know."

HACKMAN: Did Robert Kennedy ever respond to that?

SEIGENTHALER: I told him about it but I'm sure the other fellow told him, too.

HACKMAN: Yeah.

SEIGENTHALER: He loved Gene Keogh, Bob Kennedy did. But anyway, the other fellow was up there and in his judgment was: we were going to take it. He wanted me to get into it. He wanted me to blast old Dave, try to shake it up, but he's a contentious son of a bitch anyway, so I decided not to do it. If I'd gone in with some specific role and they said, "Come in." But it was too late for that really. My own judgment was that it would be more disruptive. I never told Bob. I just said, "I've got personal problems at home. I've got to go back and solve them." He said, "fine."

HACKMAN: Did you ever talk to him about any of the other campaigns that were going on in '64? Let's see, first, did you ever talk to him about the way Johnson was running his campaign?

SEIGENTHALER: No, I remember on the night of the Jenkins thing he said, "We're going to sweep New York. Johnson's going to carry New York." He was reasonably confident that he was going to carry New York. No, I didn't talk to him about Johnson's campaign.

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HACKMAN: No discussions about how closely to identify with Johnson or campaign with him or anything?

SEIGENTHALER: He thought Johnson was popular, I think. And wanted that power, would have liked to have had him up there more. I think he would have had to blast, he'd have to set up a charge of dynamite to get him out of the car that day he was with Peter Crotty.

HACKMAN: What about other campaigns, like the Salinger campaign in California? Or I guess – it was Lucey running in '64?

SEIGENTHALER: Oh, yeah. well, Salinger. I don't know anything about Lucey; I was never really close to old Pat, you know. He and I never really hit it off. I never liked him. I didn't dislike him but just didn't like him. I don't like a lot of people but I don't dislike them. Pat and Dick Goodwin [Richard N. Goodwin] were two of a kind to me, and I never really liked them. I can get along with both of them, but I never have.... They're both bright as hell and able men.

But the Salinger campaign – the only time I really remember talking to him about the Salinger campaign was with regard to the New York debate. I raised a little money for Pierre here after he won the Democratic primary, not much, but a little bit, a couple of thousand. But we never talked about it except maybe in a telephone conversation in which he said, “What do you hear about Pierre?”

In terms of debating Keating, I had a number of extended conversations with him about why I thought he should stay away from that. I think the Salinger-Murphy [George L. Murphy] debate, from everything I can learn about it – and I was in California and saw one of them broadcasted. I don't know if there were more than one--I told him that in my judgment Pierre looked like some sort of – well, he looked like a young Edward G. Robinson and that George Murphy looked like somebody's grandfather. My advice to him with regard to the debate with Keating was; “You don't want to be ‘Sneaky Fox’ and your grandfather. If you don't have that confrontation you don't draw the dichotomy in the mind of the voters, so I'd steer clear of it.” I'm not saying that I urged him not to do that so he didn't do it. I think his own inclination, really, was not to do it and he made up his mind not to do it. But when he and I talked about it by long distance phone I think it was a validation of what he already was feeling about it.

HACKMAN: The only other thing I can think of on '64

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might have been some conversations about what kind of memorial to put together for the President. Did you get involved in those kinds of talks?

SEIGENTHALER: In '64?

HACKMAN: Yeah.

SEIGENTHALER: I can't remember. What specifically?

HACKMAN: I don't know. I've never gone back and read those files. But I just know there were some meetings, like Walton [William Walton] and all these people meeting.

SEIGENTHALER: You mean the Foundation [John F. Kennedy Library Foundation]? I

had nothing to do with that. I was invited to be a member of the library, but I had nothing to do with it.

HACKMAN: Yeah. Okay. Can you think of anything else in '64?

SEIGENTHALER: Nothing. I'm sure there're many other things I was in on, but honestly, you say you were not involved, and that means you were not there day by day, week by week, month by month.

HACKMAN: Just talked about it.

SEIGENTHALER: But we'd talk about it. Maybe he'd come in at 11 o'clock somewhere or he's in a hotel room and he's looking for somebody to say, "What the hell's going on in the world?" and he calls up Nashville, Tennessee. That seems like a kooky thing to do. If it is, maybe he was a little kooky. I don't think so.

HACKMAN: Do you remember any comments about Johnson's performance on through '64?

SEIGENTHALER: Yeah. He didn't like Lyndon from that point on, I mean, really didn't like him.

HACKMAN: From what point? After the vice presidential thing?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, from the time he made that race, I noticed it. I guess maybe it pre-dated that. It's hard to say that he ever really liked him, but I think he appreciated the contribution he made to his brother's campaign. The real question is whether he disliked him, and I don't think he did. Throughout his brother's

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administration I think he went out of his way to show there was no hostility or animosity insofar as he was concerned. But Lyndon and Lyndon's people, Moyers aside, were suspicious of him. I'm sure Lyndon hated to come to New York and campaign with him. Of course, he had the problem of carrying New York himself.

Just as an aside, the publisher of our paper, Amon Evans [Amon Carter Evans], in 1965, was with me in New York at the ANPA which is the American Newspapers Publishers Association Convention – no, it was '66. He was paged at the Banshee Luncheon, and the Secret Service came and took him away and asked him if he would go and spend the night with the President. He and his wife went down and spent the night with the President. When he got back to Nashville he related to me his experience.

He is Amon Carter Evans the son of a Texan, the namesake of a Texan. The ties between the Evans family and the Johnson family always have been close which I guess

indicates they're pretty damn liberal if they can put up with me – although I supported Lyndon Johnson as strongly as anybody in Tennessee in 1964. You know, when he came to town I tried to stay away from him, but....

But anyway, in 1966, I guess – it was the spring of 1966 when Hooker was getting ready to run and Ellington, who as then head of OEP [Office of Emergency Planning], was in Washington thinking about coming back and running. Lyndon brought him down in April and made him and his bride guests at the White House both nights. During that two-day stay, Lyndon kept pulling out these goddamn polls. The first poll he showed him was New York. He prefaced the conversation by saying – according to Amon – “Let me show you how much more popular in New York I am than Bobby Kennedy is.” The second thing he said, “Now let me show you how much more popular I am in Minnesota than Hubert Humphrey is.” Which is a hell of an insight into Lyndon's personality. It says something about the poetic justice of the final polls. But I thought it was interesting. He knew that the publisher's editor was a Kennedy man. You know, he said, “Let me show you how much more popular I am in New York than Bobby Kennedy is.” I told Bob that.

HACKMAN: How did he seek you out in '64 when he was down here?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, the publisher was included in all of the functions. We had opposed the governor in the Democratic Primary, Neville opposed to either Ellington, or Clement. The Republicans were not a dominant factor in the campaigns in Tennessee at that time, and we had opposed Ellington. But when Lyndon came to town he invited Amon to participate in the functions. Amon and I – he's a bright guy and an able guy, a terrific human being – he and I

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talked about how we might best help the rally here. I told him that I'd been on many campaigns – the national campaign – that as soon as the speech was over, which was at noon, there was going to be a rush to file a copy. I thought if we gave a buffet luncheon at which newsmen were served at their typewriters a really good meal, a drink and a meal while they sat down, that it would be a great asset. That's what we did.

Amon went up to the luncheon with Lyndon and I stayed downstairs. Lyndon found out about that and came down looking for me. He was really sort of embarrassed. He came walking in and he opened the conversation by saying, “I couldn't miss Amon's party.” Which was true, Amon was picking up the check for him. Then he came over to where I was standing, put his arm on my shoulder and said, “This is a great country you got down here. It's a great country you've got down here. We're not going to sell the TVA [Tennessee Valley Authority].” I said, “I'm glad to hear that, Mr. President.” That was the extent of the conversation.

That was the extent of that conversation. Then we went out in the hallway in the hotel. Walking through the hallway he walked up behind me again and put his arm around me and said, “I've read the paper and I really appreciate everything you're doing for me down here. Did you write the endorsement editorial?” I said, “No, I didn't, but I edited it. Mr. Armour [Lloyd Armour] wrote it and he'd appreciate it if you'd send him a letter.” He turned

around to Reedy and said, "George, would you send this man a letter." He gave me a pat and walked on. I got a letter from him the next day which said, "I deeply appreciated your consideration of the press." All the right things which I'm sure George drafted for him. There's a P.S. to the letter which says, "It's a great country you've got down there," which indicated to me that he did see the letter and sign it because it wouldn't have said, "P.S. It's a great country you have down there."

HACKMAN: He should have added, "We won't sell the TVA," again.

SEIGENTHALER: That's right. He should have. There's so many things, so many nights we talked on the telephone.

HACKMAN: Any conversation about...

SEIGENTHALER: In '64 calling him about the '64 campaign.

HACKMAN: ...about particular issues in '64? Did he ever talk to you about General Aniline [and Film Corporation] cases? That thing came in '64.

SEIGENTHALER: No. I'd been a part of it earlier, but it

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was pure crap. Andy Ulman handled it in the Department of Justice. He was a nice man.

HACKMAN: How did Robert Kennedy respond that first time when the charges came up that he had given the advertising account to Billings' firm and the accounting work to Bellino's [Carmine S. Bellino] – some outfit that was under contract to take care of...

SEIGENTHALER: No, I don't remember. I don't remember. I remember talking to him about it and he was not worried, about it. I think he felt people just didn't vote on the basis of General Aniline. Honestly, I don't think he ever worried about anybody attacking his integrity from the question of corruption or scandal. I don't think he ever bothered to look back on that because he felt so secure about himself. There was no possibility that Carmine Bellino could have gotten that business if he hadn't been the best accountant around, and the most incorruptible.

Lem... It was an account, and he knew while it helped it was an opportunity to show his friendship for Lem. The business had to go somewhere. It went to Lennen and Newell [Inc.]. It was patronage. The Republicans had sent it one way. He sent it the other way and Lennen and Newell could do just as good a job as anybody else. It meant nothing to Lem one way or the other in terms of promotions or salary or income. I think he really wanted to show to Lennen and Newell in general that he appreciated them sticking their neck out for his

brother in 1960. I think there were memoranda in the files which indicated that Ulman and other members of the board had looked at the presentations of three or four advertising agencies and had picked Lennen and Newell on the basis of what their best judgment was as to the merits of the firm.

HACKMAN: I can't think of any other questions on '64. Maybe some will come. After the election then what can you remember about – next conversations about how he puts together his office for the Senate, or what he hopes to do, or anything over that winter?

SEIGENTHALER: Very little. I stayed away from him because I knew he was busy. I really thought that it was an imposition on him to shoulder him with a long, dead past. In '65 we were already looking to '66 down here – what we were going to do.

HACKMAN: Did you talk at all about committees? What he might go on?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, if we did, it doesn't stand out in my mind. I had very few conversations with him.

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I had some conversations with him about the members, what I thought about various members of the Senate.

HACKMAN: He asked you?

SEIGENTHALER: Yeah was he...

HACKMAN: Why? Was he – ?

SEIGENTHALER: Well, part of it was recollection: What about this senator and what did he do on a given thing. Do we have much support for him – from him, any support from him, little support from him. I knew very little about that except in a general way. By and large the conversations related to whether this member or that member was someone who was reasonable and would be friendly with him.

HACKMAN: One of the guys he takes on during that winter is Dolan [Joseph Francis Dolan]. What can you remember about his previous association with Dolan?

SEIGENTHALER: Why don't you cut it off, huh? Yeah.

HACKMAN: Yeah.

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[END OF INTERVIEW II, TAPE I, SIDE I]

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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