

Harris Wofford Oral History Interview—JFK#3, 2/3/1969
Administrative Information

Creator: Harris Wofford

Interviewer: Larry J. Hackman

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Biographical Note

Wofford was an assistant to Senator John F. Kennedy (JFK) (1960); Special Assistant to the President for Civil Rights (1961-1962); and Peace Corps Special Representative for Africa (1962-1964). In this interview, he discusses the “talent search” after JFK’s election, and Kennedy administration appointees; Lyndon B. Johnson’s civil rights work as vice president; FBI wiretaps of Martin Luther King, Jr.; and the Civil Rights Commission, among other issues.

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Harris Wofford
Harris Wofford

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page six, lines thirteen through seventeen of the second Wofford answer.

page seventy-three, lines nine and ten.

page ninety-eight, lines seven through thirty.

page one hundred thirty-two, the last two lines on the page.

page one hundred thirty-three, the first two lines.

page one hundred thirty-nine, lines twenty-two through thirty-one.

page sixty-eight, line twenty-three through page seventy, line twenty-seven.

Harris Wofford
Harris Wofford

October 15, 1972
Date

Harris Wofford—JFK#3

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Third of Three Oral History Interviews

with

Harris Wofford

February 3, 1969
Oyster Bay, New York

By Larry J. Hackman

For the John F. Kennedy Library

HACKMAN: One thing left over from last time, you were telling me a little bit about Schaetzel's [J. Robert Schaetzel] Shit List working for Bowles [Chester B. Bowles]. Can you remember how this, did anything really come out of this? Were people gotten rid of or what happened?

WOFFORD: Yes, I think it affected at least several ambassadorships. I can't remember which ones....

HACKMAN: People at State [State Department] would have wondered, who were vetoed, because their names had been on this list?

WOFFORD: It shifted the balance in cases where Bowles was trying to decide whether to actively recommend a new alternative for a particular post

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HACKMAN: Okay. All right, during the period when you were working on the talent search, how much time did you spend just focusing on positions for Negroes in that period? Were you the man handling that or...

WOFFORD: No, no, I was not because the talent search consisted of Louis Martin [Louis E. Martin], who was Negro; Adam Yarmolinsky; myself; we had Tom Farmer [Thomas L. Farmer] over; the fellow from Covington and Burling, Paul Warnke [Paul C. Warnke], came to work on the Defense Department matters. I'm sure Louis Martin worked more on the Negro appointment side, by far, than I did. I was just sort of a general aide to Shriver [R. Sargent Shriver, Jr.] during that period.

HACKMAN: Can you remember anything coming from the President [John F. Kennedy] or any papers that really spelled out what he wanted to do on this or any conversations?

WOFFORD: I can remember, I think, that nothing came from the President. He occasionally talked with Shriver—I think he was in Florida then—occasionally on the phone, and I think Shriver went down once or twice.

HACKMAN: Can you remember anything about the way...

WOFFORD: It was an ad hoc, on-the-move sort of thing. The President would call and say, "Have you got anybody for this?" At the time he started focusing on something he would call to see what Shriver had because he would be getting something from Larry O'Brien [Lawrence F. O'Brien] probably and something from somewhere else, and he wanted to see if Shriver had an interesting, different kind of appointment first for a particular place.

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HACKMAN: I wondered if you can remember anything about the way the O'Brien and John Bailey [John Moran Bailey] side and Dungan [Ralph A. Dungan] reacted, particularly on the Negro appointments at that time. Any problems? Did they feel you people or....

WOFFORD: No, you see, on the Negro side it was rather integrated in that, by integrated I mean there really weren't two operations because Shriver and I had been actively in the midst of—in fact, had been in charge of—the actual political organizing side, so that conflict between people that had worked in the campaign and new professionals that Shriver was bringing in didn't particularly exist on that front because we had been working with many of the Negro prospects. They had been in the Dungan—they had been in the campaign.

There was feeling, clearly, that sparked some resentment by John Bailey, Larry O'Brien, and I think to a lesser extent, Ralph Dungan. John Bailey once expressed it to Shriver, "Sarge, I keep telling my guys that our problem is that we just don't have people to come up to equal what yours are like, and that if our guys want to equal yours, they've got to bring me good guys. But you're making it very hard for me because you keep bringing these stars in. And you've got to take care of the people that help you in a campaign." So he was sweating some, but I don't think, you know, it didn't last that long, and it wasn't that

overwhelmingly successful, so that it shouldn't be overdone. I mean, the issue wasn't that important because, in the first place, as soon as Cabinet members were appointed, in effect, they were the dominant force in top appointments in their cabinet.

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The President's direct intervention in that decreased at first, and then later he tried to revive it through John Macy [John W. Macy, Jr.] and a regular operation in the White House. But as the Cabinet members took over, I'm sure they were more susceptible to John Bailey than they were to Sargent Shriver; so it was just a brief period of about six weeks when Bailey and O'Brien sort of wondered whether too much was slipping out from under them. But not much really did. I think it probably meant that Kennedy got down a little further and influenced a few more of the presidential appointments than Nixon [Richard M. Nixon] seems to be doing now.

HACKMAN: Yes. Can you remember there being any decision made on whether there was going to be a Negro in the cabinet—was Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] pushing Dawson [William L. Dawson] for Postmaster General?—and whether that was really a ploy or how sincere they were?

WOFFORD: I do vaguely.... I remember those rumors. If you hadn't primed me then, I wouldn't have remembered that so that I'm not a good source on that. But there was, in fact, I think there maybe was just exactly that proposal. Whether it was Johnson or Mayor Daley [Richard J. Daley] or.... Louis Martin might remember that.

HACKMAN: I thought maybe you got involved in putting that one down because it would be a poor way to start.

WOFFORD: I don't think so. I would have, I would have, and Shriver may have, because he.... Certainly he would talk to the President about it directly and also, I'm sure, very confidentially. I remember that vaguely.

HACKMAN: Did you get in on the Weaver [Robert C. Weaver] thing at all?

[-115-]

WOFFORD: Mr. Dawson was, of course, from our experience directly, as well as more objectively, a very old-time, out-of-tune Negro, so I would have opposed it if there had been an occasion to. He would have had a lot of Southern white support.

Did the last time I mention about Dawson saying—his main advice to us throughout the campaign was...

HACKMAN: "Don't call it civil rights."

WOFFORD: “Don’t call it civil rights. That offends our good Southern friends.”

HACKMAN: Yes. Okay, can you remember anything on the Weaver appointment, any opposition that developed to that appointment?

WOFFORD: No.

HACKMAN: I’d heard somewhere that you’d taken a trip, maybe in the early days of the Administration, to talk with Martin Luther King [Martin Luther King, Jr.]—or maybe it was before the Inauguration—in terms of a job, maybe? Do you remember that at all?

WOFFORD: Never talked to him about any job, nor did I take any trip. He visited me fairly often, a few times a year. He was at our home for a very good evening during those early months with the prime minister of Uganda, Mr. Kiwanuka [Benedicto Kiwanuka]. We had a funny time on that. Did I mention that last time?

HACKMAN: No, you didn’t.

[-116-]

WOFFORD: Mr. Kiwanuka was really remarkably uninterested in Martin Luther King, or in Berl Bernhard [Berl I. Bernhard], the head of the Civil Rights Commission, I think, who was there. The only thing that moved him all night moved him badly; which was my son, then five years old, six maybe, had been briefed that this was the George Washington of Uganda, and my son came in and he said, “But he can’t be the George Washington of Uganda. George Washington wasn’t black.” He never recovered from that. My wife [Clare Lindgren Wofford] turned to him and said, “Do you have children?” He had eight I think, Mr. Kiwanuka.

King was up.... He was through Washington a number of times. I don’t think I made any trip to see him and there was never any talk of a job—by me, anyway, or that I can recall hearing about.

HACKMAN: Can you remember getting involved in any discussions on a job for Whitney Young [Whitney M. Young, Jr.] or for Thurgood Marshall at that point?

WOFFORD: No.

HACKMAN: William Hastie [William Henry Hastie], the judge?

WOFFORD: Somewhere along here Hastie, I think, some of us put in a brief for him—I did maybe—for appointment to the Supreme Court when there was

opening. Frankly, I didn't think of Thurgood Marshall for the Supreme Court.

HACKMAN: Can you remember anybody else supporting him?

WOFFORD: Thurgood Marshall?

HACKMAN: Yes.

WOFFORD: When was he appointed? It was....

HACKMAN: Well, it was after Johnson, wasn't it?

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WOFFORD: Was it Johnson? Yes.

HACKMAN: '64, '65. '65, I think.

WOFFORD: Yes.

HACKMAN: Not that early then. Can you recall there being departments in that early period where you had particular resistance from any of the Cabinet people on taking Negroes in?

WOFFORD: Well, you're emphasizing.... Well, it's fair, it's fair and that's what we're talking about, talent search. Well, Agriculture as a department dragged its feet on more things than anything else in the field of civil rights, including appointments, as I recall.

HACKMAN: Yes. Early or all the way through?

WOFFORD: All the way through my time, a year and a half. I suspect all the way through. I suppose it has something to do with the degree of its operations in the black belt in the South; secondly, the extensive Southern influence on agricultural committees and things like that. But certainly it's true of that whole big bureaucracy. On policy matters, we had probably the sharpest problems with the Department of Defense because we were asking them to do the hardest things, desegregate not only bases but off-campus—off-base facilities and housing and bars and things like that. Then there was the National Guard. We had three or four major difficult things we were asking the Defense Department to do. And Yarmolinsky was the middleman along with one other fellow who was their sort of chief of personnel at that time, a man from Wisconsin, I can't remember his name.

HACKMAN: Yes, I know who you're talking about, but I can't remember.

[-118-]

WOFFORD: The two of them would both come to our sub-Cabinet meetings. And McNamara [Robert S. McNamara] had so many things he wanted to do that he was convinced to go slow on some of these areas.

HACKMAN: Did you get in on any direct dealings with any of the joint chiefs or the service secretaries that you can recall were either particularly good on this or were really difficult?

WOFFORD: No.

HACKMAN: What can you recall about Frank Reeves [Frank D. Reeves] coming to the White House staff? He came on after you were there or....

WOFFORD: Yes, after I.... Well, he never got on it.

HACKMAN: But he was....

WOFFORD: You see, when Kennedy started the campaign he was largely associated with Marjorie Lawson and Belford Lawson [Marjorie M. Lawson; Belford V. Lawson] in the Negro community, so we were anxious to get him connected with some who had stronger civil rights ties. And Frank was the first active civil rights person who—he'd been a very active NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] attorney and other things—who joined the campaign. He went to Hyannis Port and was made a special assistant to the candidate and traveled with him on the train. Frank did a good deal to encourage NAACP people to come aboard the train in the campaign—train, I don't mean train—train, plane, whatever you've got. So it's natural that afterwards Frank would come into the White House; he'd been on the campaign trail with the President, with the candidate. And he did. Where was it that he had the tax problem? Coming out of the White House or did he get appointed to the District of Columbia?

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HACKMAN: I think it was going from the White House to the District that it was proposed.

WOFFORD: I see, excuse me. Then he was on the White House about the time I.... It's conceivable he was there before.... No, he wasn't there before me. He must have come in a little afterwards because the reason he wasn't there before is—I know the reason they suddenly whistled and asked me to come over was the Civil Rights Commission had gone to see them because there wasn't anybody dealing with civil rights in the White House, and Kennedy said he had one and it was me.

HACKMAN: So Reeves, must have not been there then.

WOFFORD: So Reeves would not have been there, or I would have said, “Well, Frank Reeves is there,” or they would have, you know. So Reeves wasn’t there. That day.... I don’t know how soon thereafter he came, but we certainly worked; he was in the White House when I was there, and we worked together cordially while he was there. I have a feeling it was a brief period he was on the White House staff.

HACKMAN: Yes, it was. I just wondered how you....

WOFFORD: Then he was nominated to the....

HACKMAN: Right. I had wondered if, while you were there, how you did divide responsibilities or how would people know...

WOFFORD: We were good friends, and he would be in the meetings on civil rights that I would call, [interruption].... Probably had some portfolios that interested him that he was pursuing. I don’t have the feeling he ever dug into the White House very deeply, but I’m a little vague on when that appointment to the.... He may have been there about a year.

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HACKMAN: Yes, I think it was six months to a year.

WOFFORD: Have you talked to him, has he been interviewed?

HACKMAN: A couple.... A quite a while ago. I haven’t talked to him, but someone did.

WOFFORD: As far as I recall, his problem—he had just been fantastically sloppy on filing returns at the right time and all.

HACKMAN: I think I heard one time that he was supposed to get on the party-building side of the Negro in the Democratic Party or something, but that would seem to be Louis Martin, to me. I can’t quite put it together, while the talent search was going on, how much time were you giving to working with Bernhard and...

WOFFORD: Remember the talent search ended the day the President took office.

HACKMAN: Okay.

WOFFORD: As far as Shriver was concerned.

HACKMAN: Okay.

WOFFORD: So I was working night and day on the talent search. I mean, we were up all night on the talent search. I wasn't giving any time to anything else during those six weeks or two months, whatever it was.

HACKMAN: Well, when did you start to get involved in things like putting together the Equal Employment Opportunity executive order and bringing the two old Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] committees together?

WOFFORD: As soon as I got in the White House, which was maybe three weeks after Kennedy came in. Something like that.

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HACKMAN: There was some discussion at the time that you might be named for Burke Marshall's job over on Civil Rights, what was there to this?

WOFFORD: Well, I had sort of thought that's the thing I would like to do, during the campaign, and the President and other people had sort of assumed that's what I would do. The Justice Department was my domain for recommendations, and so I gave them half a dozen good recommendations for that post: Lou Pollak [Louis H. Pollak], Yale Law School, was one I remember; maybe Franklin Williams [Franklin H. Williams], a Negro who campaigned with us, lawyer, NAACP lawyer on the West Coast. Anyway, Lou Pollak I'm sure of.

I gave him about four, five, or six, and my most ardent one, written up with great enthusiasm, was Burke Marshall who had been my law colleague at Covington and Burling law firm, who would be my—if I ever really desperately needed badly a lawyer who would have wisdom and perception and insight, it would be Burke. Though he had never done anything in civil rights, I had been constantly sort of consulting him when I was in the Civil Rights Commission. Tony Lewis and I had talked to him about the Civil Rights Act of '59, and Burke was the one who had come up with the idea of the Federal Voting Referee. He was one person that I thought might be able to do a better job than I could do at that spot.

And Shriver then put my own name on it; then we sent the folder over to Bob [Robert F. Kennedy] recommending me. And Bob talked to Burke, and he talked to me, and finally decided that Burke was just what he wanted. First, they hit it off personally magnificently; and secondly, he, at that time, felt Burke was a neutral factor in terms of Congress and controversially, that he wasn't identified with civil rights—he was dedicated to civil rights but not identified with it, and that this was a great asset, and that I was sort of a red flag to the congressional committees and the rest, which was a reasonable judgment. And also his judgment of Burke was accurate. Burke played a very crucial role in—I mean, it turned out to be exactly what was needed because Bob always would have regarded me as kind of an advocate as so committed to civil rights that my judgment would be in question

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from his point of view; whereas, Burke was able to really lead him in deep. You know Bob was, by the time he was killed, more deeply committed to the whole black problem than anybody else in the United States, I would guess. And Burke played a crucial, crucial role in that. Burke just generates confidence in his balance and judgment. Burke said that there was never a thing that he, Burke, said to Bob in his judgment ought to be done that, no matter how difficult in Congress or elsewhere, Bob didn't do. And that, I think, began with their personal relationship.

HACKMAN: Do you know if there were any other things that you were considered for, that your name was in for, or that you talked to anyone on?

WOFFORD: No, I'm just trying to tell people in the Nixon circle who've been, after the election, sort of wondering what's going to happen to them—one very notable case—that, from my own experience, what happens after the election is, one, the President has enormous problems that he has got to catch up on: in this case Vietnam; then it was Berlin, I think. Secondly, his major appointment concerns are Cabinet appointments, plus his own most intimate associates that he, you know, really needs, night and day, around him. I wasn't in either of those categories.

There's an old bureaucratic principle, which I think usually works, that when you start wondering, "What are they thinking about me?" the usual answer is, "They're not thinking about you in any way." Out in the Peace Corps, people used to say, in Ethiopia, you know, "What is Washington thinking about us?" And I kept trying to assure them that Washington wasn't thinking about us at all. As far as I know, I didn't hear any discussions. The day the talent search ended, I guess within twenty-four hours, Shriver was swept into the Peace Corps assignments and I was in that with him, so I really wasn't thinking about much either. The Peace Corps was very much something I wanted to do.

HACKMAN: You were talking about the Justice Department as being your domain in the talent search, can you remember sending up other names to Robert Kennedy on some of the other jobs?

[-123-]

WOFFORD: Well, the biggest one, of course, was who should be Attorney General.

HACKMAN: You talked about that.

WOFFORD: Yes, I told you about that. That kept us going night and day. We'd propose Gene Rostow [Eugene V. Rostow], and then Kennedy would come back and say, "It's going to be Bob." And then we'd do nothing, and then he'd—I think I mentioned that.

HACKMAN: Whizzer White [Byron R. White], I guess was there.

WOFFORD: White was very much Bob's choice. White was somebody I had clashed

with quite a bit in the campaign. That was another thing. I left that out, as a matter of fact. That may have been a key factor in Bob not picking me for that job and looking for somebody else. John Seigenthaler was a great friend and kind of champion of my role, was very anxious for me to have that job. He didn't know Burke, and he fought very hard to keep Burke from getting the job. I kept assuring him that Burke was great. But John said the key thing was Whizzer White—and we had clashed so much on the campaign—White saying that blacks are moved, that Negroes are moved by economic issues, and cut out the crap on civil rights.

John brought the two of us together. It was a very funny occasion. In passing—I thought, rather jovially—he said, “What did you think about Bob Kennedy’s call? (I may have told you this, too.) What did you think of Bob Kennedy’s call to the judge in the Martin Luther King case?” And I said, “I fly out to Notre Dame once a week for my class, and I just had a whole class on the question: Should Bob Kennedy be disbarred because he called the judge in the King case?” And White said, “Well, what did you conclude?” And I said, “Well, the class concluded it was unprofessional.” And he said, “What did you conclude?” And I said, “I thought it was unprofessional, but not enough to disbar him, but it was pretty bad.” And White said, “Well, you’ll be very pleased to know that I’m the one who recommended to Bob that he call the judge.” That was just the beginning of our encounter. So White came in very much as Bob’s own man.

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I think some of the other... What we would have would be a file with about six people and their biographies for posts like Solicitor General. They took our recommendation on Paul Freund [Paul A. Freund], which was our chief recommendation for the Solicitor General. And they worked very hard to persuade him, and he turned it down. And I spent a lot of time on trying to get that through because I thought he would be a great appointment. He wrote a beautiful little letter afterwards. It’s been burned, I guess now, but it ended with a paraphrase, “They also serve who only stand and teach,” or something like that.

I’m trying to think who the original appointments were.

HACKMAN: Loevinger [Lee Loevinger] or Schlei [Norbert A. Schlei] was Legal Counsel.

WOFFORD: I think some of them might have been on our lists. I don’t mean that I found them and put them in, but somebody recommended them to us. But I don’t really remember. I think John Douglas [John W. Douglas], who later was Assistant Attorney General, was on the list. I’m sure he was among the recommendations, and probably also the fellow from Alabama, a Washington lawyer who became Assistant Attorney General.

HACKMAN: You said you picked up on the Equal Employment Opportunity thing as soon as you went to the White House, what can you remember about

putting together the ideas to write the executive order and bring the committees together, working with—a number of people were involved, Fortas [Abraham Fortas], and....

WOFFORD: Yes, Fortas was, I think, a very key man because—well, the first decision was whether Johnson was going to be the one to do it or not. And people went back and forth a little on that, and it was decided that he would. And who was the executive director?

HACKMAN: Hobart Taylor? Feild? John Feild [John G. Feild]? Oh, Jerry Holleman [Jerry R. Holleman].

[-125-]

WOFFORD: Yes, all three of those people were involved, that's right. Oh, I know, that's it, the degree to which the Secretary of Labor would be a key factor. It was sort of worked out in such a way that what you ended up having on this committee was Johnson, the Secretary of Labor, and Bob Kennedy as key forces. And they sort of fought with each other, I might say. And you had this funny, wild, Georgian named Bobby Troutman [Robert Troutman, Jr.], who the civil rights people all thought was a Johnson man and Johnson had never forgiven him for being a Kennedy man in the South, so he wasn't really a Johnson man. He was just an operation, and he sort of operated primarily on the leverage of the fact that he'd go in, amble into Evelyn Lincoln's [Evelyn N. Lincoln] office and either she'd let him or occasionally he'd slip in to see the President then. He either entertained the President—and the President did enjoy him coming in, which is possible because he's a very funny fellow—or he just had the gall to keep going in. He conveyed a very close relationship to the President; I don't think it ever was very close at all, but I think he probably entertained the President. And with that leverage he just sort of ran with these Plans for Progress to the consternation of the civil rights people, while, I, myself, thought that it was a fairly ingenious thing and could do more good than harm if people followed through with them.

Fortas, as I recall, drew up the executive order. He really moved, in at the Vice President's request and negotiated it with the Attorney General where they had problems. I was in and out of it. I do remember it, but my dominant recollection is that Fortas and a few people in his firm really spelled out an executive order; and that the Justice Department had comments on it; and the Labor Department had comments on it; and we negotiated some of them; and Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] was in it, and the thing was in being. And then very soon Feild and Johnson were feuding. The Attorney General, Bob Kennedy, was critical of Johnson, I think, on all sorts of things during that period, but particularly on this, and was not very respectful of him in the meetings that I saw. Bob would just, you know, be just sort of quiet, sullen, and sulk and things like that, didn't work things out with him in advance or anything. It was not a very successful relationship. And Troutman moving in and out....

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HACKMAN: Can you remember the initial argument on what Johnson's role should be and how it got spelled out, who took what positions?

WOFFORD: Well, the problem on things like that is that Louis Martin and my little group would have an argument on something like that, and we would have our ways of conveying it through Shriver, or through Kenny O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell], or occasionally through the President directly, or to Burke Marshall, to the President via Burke Marshall to Bob Kennedy and.... My own role was funny in this. I, from the beginning, from the day Johnson was nominated for vice president, thought that as a civil rights strategy, Johnson's role in this could be very valuable and good; and that on the civil rights side I really favored it; what you needed to do is something that would break up the Southern monolith and politically draw parts of the South into the civil rights world, or into the new world. And my recollection is that I really favored Johnson having that role.

Roy Wilkins had told me, when I went to try to sell him on Kennedy—I found that his wife [Aminda B. Wilkins] was already far more effective than I could be—but Roy Wilkins said that if you really ask me who, of all these men, and of all the men in American political life, I would trust to do the most about civil rights, after having dealt with him for many years, it would be Lyndon Johnson. And I think Roy was not too far wrong on that, civil rights really was something that was, by this time, was burning pretty strongly in Johnson. You know, he's a force of nature sort of guy. I don't mean to say he was calm or certain or anything, but that was one factor. So I guess I was—I think John Feild probably felt I was very soft on Johnson, and I was on that. Little did I imagine Vietnam.

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HACKMAN: Can you remember any consideration of...

WOFFORD: What I really want to say is that all of us altogether played a limited role or an un-measurable role in how you influence the President on things like this because most of his key decisions, anything that was really cutting in civil rights, were made alone with Bob Kennedy, and you really didn't know what happened. In fact, for me, it was the most frustrating thing—although I'm not saying it was a bad thing because I think Bob's influence became good, better and better, day by day, in this whole field; but it was very frustrating because you wouldn't know the real factors for decision.

HACKMAN: Can you remember what Vice President Johnson was attempting to do in that early period as far as his own role? Was he wanting to push into this or was he reluctant to get involved? Can you remember that at all—in his view?

WOFFORD: I think he wanted it, just as I feel sure he wanted the vice presidency. I think by that time he wanted any power and any role he could have. I saw no reluctance. The issues, the thing he was accused of feeling, of desiring, was to proceed without ever enforcing anything, and there was some truth in that probably.

He was very reluctant to get into the enforcing stages; that is, canceling a contract. He was very ardent on persuasion or what he could do....

HACKMAN: Where can you remember Goldberg [Arthur J. Goldberg] being in this early period on what he wanted to do in this whole thing?

WOFFORD: Nothing significant.

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HACKMAN: Can you remember, as the executive order was being put together, clearing—not clearing but discussing drafts with Wilkins or any of the other civil rights leaders as it was being written to get their reaction or feed-in from them?

WOFFORD: Not in detail, but I think that one was fairly well negotiated with the civil rights conference people in Washington.

HACKMAN: Would you have been the person who would naturally have done this, or would other people have gotten into...

WOFFORD: No, I'm a little vague on who was working on that; I did much more on the housing order. Sorensen was in it. I remember Sorensen had a meeting with the civil rights leadership conference people about this time, I think. I was sort of surprised they popped up in his office, but pleased, because he was a man who was a key factor in anything like this when it got to the legal stage of actually doing an order. Louis Martin, I think, was very close. Many things that would be inappropriate for me to do I have a strong feeling Louis did. He wasn't a member of the government at all; he was vice chairman of the Democratic Committee, but we kept him in on everything. I'd be very surprised if, on any critical issue like this, he didn't sort of check it out with Wilkins probably, maybe Whitney Young. Louis was close to Whitney.

HACKMAN: You were mentioning being surprised at the meeting in Sorensen's office, was this something that would happen frequently? Would they bring you in or leave you out on something like that?

WOFFORD: Sure. Sometimes. It would depend on whether.... I don't think there was any plot or plan to leave me out or leave anyone else out. There

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was not a great sense of clearing everything and having everybody there; there was a great sense around the White House of sort of "do your thing; do it." You know, if something comes to you and if that's in front of you, do it and do it with as much information as you can. And periodically, it sent waves. Dick Goodwin [Richard N.

Goodwin] suddenly arrived in the civil rights world to do things. I can't remember what the things were he did. He did it. He also had waves of work on the Peace Corps, which was my other domain. The next thing I know he would have a draft of the civil rights bill, and he'd be meeting with Bill Josephson [William H. Josephson], the Peace Corps General Counsel. But it was reasonable, because in the first place he was an assistant to Sorensen, who was the legislative counsel whose job is to write bills. And suddenly Dutton [Frederick G. Dutton] would have come up with something in civil rights, and he'd do it. He was closer personally to me, so he would, I think, almost always call me and have me there. I called on him more than I did others to back me when I needed to get something cleared. He was secretary of the cabinet then. I had been fairly close to Ralph Dungan. I would have called on him if I had needed to, but I hardly ever needed to, and he got so immersed that I didn't keep him involved much. But he had been somebody interested in that whole field in the Kennedy operation earlier.

HACKMAN: What could you see about Dutton's relationship with these other people? He went out in that first November scramble when they switched people back and forth to the State Department.

WOFFORD: He went to the State Department, yes.

HACKMAN: Can you remember him having problems?

WOFFORD: Which year was that?

HACKMAN: It was '61, November of '61.

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WOFFORD: When Dutton went? Was it really?

HACKMAN: He wasn't there long.

WOFFORD: I didn't think so soon.

HACKMAN: At the same time Goodwin—Goodwin went over, too.

WOFFORD: Yes. Well, he was a lone wolf, and he was not one of their, you know, he was not one of their clan. He was not O'Brien, O'Donnell, Donahue [Richard K. Donahue], Dutton, and Sorensen; I mean, that was the clan, I guess. Have I left anybody out? Ted Reardon [Timothy J. Reardon, Jr.] was there, but of no influence, at least that I knew. Some people say Dutton didn't follow through on things. I never found that true. In my area he did. Well, in my area it was for me to follow through, but he was always ready to, he set sail the sub-Cabinet group on civil rights. And he was ready to back it throughout and did when there were things to be done. I found him a very good influence there, but I think probably he had difficulty shaping his role clearly. He was

Secretary of the Cabinet, wasn't he, and the Cabinet didn't have a clear role the way Kennedy operated it so that that's....

Secondly, with both Dutton and Goodwin going, I did not at the time weigh it as, certainly not solely, any problem they had at the White House or with Kennedy. You had to weigh the other factor that Kennedy, from all accounts, was really upset with the State Department. I heard sometimes personally, and more often secondhand, you know, snide thing he would say about how difficult it is to get anything done, that you put something in at the top of the State Department and nothing comes out at the bottom. And I heard, you know, things like, "We've got to send somebody over like Bob Kennedy who really knows how to shake up a thing like that." So that I would have assumed, granted the seriousness of the concern about the State Department's bureaucracy, that Kennedy thought Dutton and Goodwin would do the State Department some real good.

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HACKMAN: Can you remember anything, as the executive order on the equal employment thing was being set up, discussions on how far down to go in dealing with subcontractors under main contractors, anything on this kind of thing? And also the labor side: Will you deal with labor unions as seriously on it as you deal with....

WOFFORD: Well, I can't say much in detail. That was very much involved in all of the discussions, yes.

HACKMAN: And you don't remember what.

WOFFORD: I can't. I don't remember much that would throw any light now as to just why the line got drawn just where we drew it. That was very much Weaver's province. Weaver was head of Housing [Department of Housing and Urban Development]—did we get to talk about that before? We pushed Weaver very much.

HACKMAN: We didn't talk about that before

WOFFORD: When did Weaver go in? Right away?

HACKMAN: Right. He went in right away, before it was Cabinet level, of course.

WOFFORD: That's right, before it was Cabinet level...

HACKMAN: It was HHFA [Housing and; Home Finance Agency] at that point.

WOFFORD: Right. He was a good friend of mine, Weaver, and of Louis Martin's. Friend isn't the point, but I had, in the Civil Rights Commission days,

worked closely with him on our discrimination in housing study and on an executive order. He was a key consultant for people on the whole question of discrimination in housing so that while it doesn't appear that he was a very active, very imaginative, very effective person in the cabinet post—

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in terms of civil rights I gathered he turned out to be quite pleasing to the industry—but he was very much, he and the people working with him, were very much in the discussions and negotiations on just where to draw the line.

HACKMAN: On equal employment?

WOFFORD: No, excuse me, I thought we were talking about the equal housing order.

HACKMAN: No, I was on equal employment. I had heard that there were, when the employment executive order was being put together, that there were disagreements on how far down you go in...

WOFFORD: No, I don't remember that

HACKMAN: Nothing on that. Okay.

WOFFORD: I thought you were talking about how far down on the kind of housing that would get covered.

HACKMAN: Can you remember anything about problems on getting a budget for that Equal Employment Opportunity operation? There was.... Johnson's role in that has always been questioned as to whether he made attempts to get money or....

WOFFORD: No.

HACKMAN: You talked about Plans for Progress. Can you remember where that came from?

WOFFORD: Well, I assume it came from Bobby Troutman.

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HACKMAN: We've got three different views of who actually came up with that. And one person had said that you were in on the very beginning of it. Did you go to Marietta, to that Lockheed thing, and get involved in this?

WOFFORD: No. I remember very much that moment, but I wasn't there.

HACKMAN: Can you remember any discussions with the President at all on the Plans for Progress thing, how well it was working, or was Troutman completely feeding him in the information on this?

WOFFORD: The President's discussions on things like this would consist of a few minutes, before he had to say something to fifty businessmen assembled by Troutman and Feild and the Vice President; they would be waiting for him in the Fish Bowl. I'd go in and he'd have about three minutes to look over what he was going to say before he went in and he'd say things like, "How's it going? Is it really working?" It was always that fast, civil rights with the President at this time, because he was preoccupied with other things then. It wasn't until the Freedom Riders rode and the little girls were bombed in Birmingham that he started spending personal time on it to my knowledge. I'd see him fairly often because he had to do ceremonial things fairly often, but the encounters would be very brief. He'd ask for very quick answers.

HACKMAN: Can you remember, personally, in dealing with the...

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WOFFORD: I never had any doubt about what Kennedy wanted to do. He wanted us to clean up the whole damn thing and get discrimination ended. It wasn't that he was doubtful about which side he stood on, but his estimate then did not put this at the top of his priorities. I think he was wrong on that. It turned out that it was a greater issue and problem and a more urgent one than he thought. I think Kennedy had a touch of the Lincoln [Abraham Lincoln] concept of letting a thing ripen before you move on it, which is like a lawyer's concept that you deal with concrete cases, you don't deal with things in the abstract. This means that you don't initiate things in difficult matters. And I think more or less that was his attitude about civil rights. That isn't what he said initially in the campaign when he talked about moral leadership and initiative. But it was his deep style I think to respond to crises and then to try to respond with full application of intelligence and of energy and everything else. For instance, I'm sure when they were really figuring out a serious encounter with a governor in civil rights or in a racial situation about to explode, he would put his whole attention to it.

HACKMAN: I heard someone say—they mentioned Reeves and you together on this—that you had trouble in getting the departments to act on this equal employment thing, even in the sense of appointing people at a high enough level to take charge of the program. Can you remember how you went about doing this, if there's anything you could do or how much of a problem this was?

WOFFORD: Now, we're now talking about Equal Employment Commission or Committee?

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HACKMAN: We're talking about equal employment people in the executive agencies who, as I understood, you pushed departments to appoint and use effectively. Well, I had heard that at one point you had to go to the President at one of those rare meetings with the Cabinet to push people on this. Can you remember this being so? To appoint people?

WOFFORD: No, I don't remember that issue. I remember our suggesting to the President that he take up at an early cabinet—his taking it up and running with it—a real push on appointments of Negroes to high posts. He particularly pressed this as he became clear that he wasn't going to propose legislation and as he realized that this was going to be a disappointment to the civil rights groups. He really wanted to get some visible appointments. It was one early Cabinet meeting, I think, where he pressed that very hard. But I don't remember it as being on the point of their departments or agencies appointing an equal employment man. I didn't remember our having trouble on that—maybe with a few agencies like State, as to who it would be—but my memory isn't very clear on that.

I think we did deal with a few places where we had some questions as to whether they were appointing a high enough level man. Agriculture was one, I think. I think at our sub-cabinet group one or two agencies started sending their employment officer, who wasn't high enough, and we insisted on—the Defense Department, I think the Defense Department had a Negro equal employment man and they thought he could come to the sub-Cabinet group, and we insisted on Adam Yarmolinsky or this other fellow from Wisconsin who was Assistant Secretary of Manpower coming. Adam thought it was important that he come so that it was not just Adam in the department pushing this. And we felt that it was important that somebody other than the Negro in the Defense Department come. There was some kind of a problem with Agriculture.

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HACKMAN: Can you remember having feelings that people in this position should be black or should they be white, or was there any....

WOFFORD: No, I didn't have that feeling in that case. I mean, I was mainly interested in somebody who could get action.

HACKMAN: I was just thinking like in housing, a fellow named McGraw, B.T. McGraw [Booker McGraw], and then, well, Oliver Hill [Oliver W. Hill], who had worked some with you in the campaign under him, a black operation. Okay.

WOFFORD: The sub-Cabinet group did not primarily consist of the housing and employment people. I think the equal employment officers would attend as observers, as kind of staff men, but the members were supposed to be assistant secretary level.

HACKMAN: How was Macy? You mentioned him early. How did you find him? What kinds of things did you deal with him on this as time passed?

WOFFORD: I can hardly remember. Talking names with him occasionally—when did Macy come in?

HACKMAN: He came in right at the beginning.

WOFFORD: No. Did he? What was he doing right at the beginning? Dungan worked him in more and more as time went on, as I recall. He was made lead of the Civil Service Commission right away at the beginning?

HACKMAN: Yes, I believe so,

WOFFORD: But the White House advisory role on appointments, that was a new role that developed later. I remember Macy as a very helpful person on racial census requests and—I mean, not census, but racial statistics requests and things like that.

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HACKMAN: You had mentioned that the differences between Feild and some of the other people.... Can you remember if—at one point I think there was a disagreement on whether Feild and Hobart Taylor and Holleman I believe, were all actually necessary. Can you remember getting into that?

WOFFORD: I wasn't in it at all. I was glad I wasn't in it. It was a real can of worms. I think Louis Martin was in it, and I think the Attorney General was in it, and Burke Marshall was trying to work things out. John Feild hadn't drawn me in very much on it, though we had been fairly close in the campaign. He didn't feel I pushed him for that job, and I hadn't pushed him for that job. I like John but he was upset that I hadn't really gone out to get him that job.

[BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 4]

Secondly, he felt I was too soft on and too friendly to his foe, Bobby Troutman. And I didn't feel Troutman was evil incarnate; I thought he was an interesting operator that shouldn't have upset John so much. So John never called me in. The White House, as far as I know, didn't get much into that. The Attorney General being a member of the Committee, and Goldberg being very close to the Attorney General, and the Vice President being the third man, they were dealing with such strong forces that, well, I don't think there would have been much I could have done on that.

HACKMAN: Can you recall from the meetings that you remember of the President and

his comments on the leading civil rights people, what can you remember about his impressions of Wilkins and King and Whitney Young?

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WOFFORD: I don't have anything firm to say except that Kennedy gave every indication of having a lot of respect for King, who was the critical person. Young and Wilkins are both sort of obviously congenial types to Kennedy; he always, I think, had smooth easy relations with them. King was the one that would be a little questionable because he came on with a lot of moral fervor, which is not Kennedy's style; and secondly, King was disappointed in Kennedy in the first couple of years and probably conveyed the fact that he was more critical than the other two conveyed. I believe he did because he certainly conveyed it to me after his meetings with Kennedy. I was not in them. The King meetings with Kennedy that I recall were in the first months. No, I was in one meeting with him, a long session with him privately, just King and Kennedy and myself, as I recall, up in the White House in Kennedy's suite where he slept. It was at some very critical time, Freedom Riders riding or something. We came up in the White House elevator, the little tiny one and instead of going up, it went down to the basement and picked up Jacqueline [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy]. She got in, and I introduced her to Martin Luther King. I can still hear it, "Dr. King, you would be so thrilled if you could just have been with me in the basement this morning. I found a chair right out of the Andrew Jackson period, a beautiful chair," she said, "It just would have thrilled your heart."

HACKMAN: I'll bet he did a real somersault over that.

WOFFORD: We got up to the top and she said, "I've just got to tell Jack about that chair. You probably have other things to talk to him about, don't you?" And we went in and had a very good session with Kennedy in which Kennedy was saying, "I'm not going to do the following things now because of somebody's election here and the congressional situation there, but, believe me, I am going to do them." And he was very explicit and candid. I don't remember which, but I'm sure it was the executive order on housing plus legislation later and some other things. That was a very good meeting.

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The other two meetings I can vaguely remember. The one I can remember clearly, I was not in; but one of them was the day he came to our house with Kiwanuka and I remember our having a walk, and he was saying. "I had thought that Kennedy would have the intelligence and the skill (there were three things) courage and understanding and moral fervor (moral commitment or something) to do what no one else has ever done." He said, "I'm convinced that he has the intelligence and the political skill, but so far I found the moral fervor (fervor wasn't the word) missing." And he was quite disappointed that day. He felt that Kennedy had a grasp of the problem and the politics were intelligently analyzed, but there wasn't the moral thrust. Usually, when somebody feels that, the other person does too,

and, I think, Kennedy felt uncomfortable with King—the other two he felt very comfortable with—but he respected him.

And you've got to also realize that at this time the Department of Justice—not the Department of Justice, but the FBI...

HACKMAN: The FBI?

WOFFORD: The FBI and Mr. Hoover [J. Edgar Hoover] was regularly transmitting to people, key people in government—not to me but to friends of mine in high posts that Mr. Hoover was in the habit of dealing with (from two different departments I know this, and I don't know to what extent this got to Kennedy himself, but I would assume it did)—vile, vile, material on King.

HACKMAN: I had wondered if you knew if he was aware of these things, if the President was, and if it had.... I couldn't see any....

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WOFFORD: I never saw any influence that it had, but I can't believe that the President didn't know or hadn't seen it. It's possible.

HACKMAN: Did you ever talk to Robert Kennedy about that?

WOFFORD: No. I talked to Burke Marshall about it a lot, but Burke was not my source of knowing just what was being sent. Burke is very, very discreet and I think was sufficiently shocked by the whole thing that he wouldn't have even shown me. But I had other sources. Hoover was in a regular campaign to convince Kennedy that King was immoral and, if not subversive, the captive of subversives.

HACKMAN: How widespread was it known? When you said you'd heard from a couple of sources, did the press ever get a hold, any danger of this?

WOFFORD: Not as far as I was concerned. The danger in that whole situation is that, apparently—I'm told—stuff that would go to the people that I knew in the government would be quite likely to go to Senator Eastland [James O. Eastland]. Now, it could be that it didn't. I would assume that Senator Eastland or whoever the FBI deals with in the Congress on the judiciary or un-American Committee, whoever their contacts are, I assume they did, in fact, see the confidential stuff I'm talking about, or that they must have heard from the FBI that there was such stuff.

HACKMAN: Okay, we were talking about the King FBI thing, and you said you talked to Burke Marshall. He hadn't known anything about the reports before you had talked to him, or was he aware of that?

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WOFFORD: I'm sure he was aware.

HACKMAN: Who were the other people that knew?

WOFFORD: I assume he knew before I talked to him. He is extraordinarily discreet and handled this with just the kind of discretion that he should have in talking to me about it. What other people knew about it?

HACKMAN: Yes.

WOFFORD: I'm sure the intelligence-security community in Washington knew about it, people who, in particular, in key agencies dealt with the FBI on security matters. No, I shouldn't say I'm sure. My impression is that the people in the intelligence security community—CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], State Department, Defense Department, wherever else they may exist in our government, White House—must be on Hoover's special list for hot things like that. My impression is, from these secondhand accounts, that Hoover enjoyed this so much that his list might have been larger than usual. It took the form of, I'm told, sort of breathless notes saying, "Here is the latest," and assuming that people had been interested in the previous correspondence instead of disgusted by it.

HACKMAN: You don't know anything about Robert Kennedy's reaction then, and any go-between between him and Hoover on this particular thing?

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WOFFORD: No, and I'm very curious about it. I think only reticence has kept me from pushing that question. I'm sorry I don't know. I'm not sure what I would say if I did, but I would like to know his reaction. I would assume that, insofar as this material had to do with King's association with people alleged to be Communists or close to communists, that Bob was concerned and tried to get to the bottom of it. In one matter related to this, it took the form of conveying a warning to King about a particular person; and, in fact, I was asked to convey the warning. I am told that later the Attorney General or the President may have conveyed the same warning directly to King about the same person. I did it very reluctantly, only because I was asked to do it by somebody that I had full confidence in. I still am doubtful about the truth of the information. And I think King, who knew the person a thousand times better than I did—I'd only met him casually through King—could not believe the allegations ever fully, if at all. It had to do with somebody that seemed to be fully, genuinely interested in civil rights in a very modest and constantly constructive way, who was alleged to be Communist or worse.

HACKMAN: Did Dr. King then move away from this person? Did he ask you...

WOFFORD: To some extent he did, but apparently not enough to satisfy the Attorney General.

HACKMAN: Can you recall any of the instances when...

WOFFORD: May I add that the Attorney General, I mean Bob Kennedy, in no way, nor the President, conveyed doubt about Dr. King, himself, and therefore the advice was rendered because of their confidence in King and their desire to keep him from being vulnerable. Nor was it a feeling that King really had any secrets or anything else. It was really a feeling that he was a very crucial national resource, and they wanted—they didn't want him to be subject to political assassination, I mean, character assassination.

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HACKMAN: What about the other side? Nor the security side, but I think it was the FBI report said, "King's sexual proclivities." Did they find that any more believable than they did....

WOFFORD: I don't really know how either the President or the Attorney General would view that.

HACKMAN: Something like that.

WOFFORD: I never saw the specific allegations or material, and secondly, I don't know how John Kennedy views things like that. He had been subject to similar allegations himself. I never heard any reference to that as a significant factor. Apparently it intrigued Mr. Hoover, I'm told.

HACKMAN: Did you get involved at all in...

WOFFORD: No. Does he know about it?

HACKMAN: Did you ever talk to anyone directly from the FBI?

WOFFORD: I never talked to anyone about it in the civil rights field except Burke Marshall. I talked to the FBI about the particular person alleged to be a Communist or worse and close to King in an earlier situation because it had to do with me. Through my association with King, I had had a casual two or three meetings with this man and a number of telephone calls from him in connection with a trip to India I was arranging. Back in the

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late fifties I'd gotten some money for King to go to India. And this fellow was helping King in that regard. And so the FBI, in clearing me for the White House, was concerned about my relations with this fellow. I didn't even remember his name initially, and when I did

remember who they were talking about, I couldn't believe that, of all persons I knew, that this one was somebody who was in any sense Communist. He was mousy, constructive, moderate, unideological in anything I'd ever heard, so that it was really a surprise to me. That's about all I told the FBI.

There was other information about me, I might add. There was one other thing that worried them about me, and it was exactly the inverse of the facts. I had come back through the Soviet Union and Poland with Chester Bowles in '57, and together we had written a number of articles. I helped him on some articles. One was in *The Saturday Review*, and I did one under my own name for the *New Republic* urging that the United States, instead of being fearful of the World Youth Festival about to be held in Moscow, go in with imagination and with a large representative American delegation of student leaders, editors, and others, and really use it as an opportunity for dialogue with people coming from throughout the Communist world.

And the FBI report—after that article appeared in the *New Republic* the Cultural Attaché of the Soviet Embassy called me at my law firm, and invited me to lunch at a restaurant, which I attended and enjoyed. We discussed the article, which he had read. He called me because he had liked the article. My law colleague who was in the same office with me was shocked when he heard this whole conversation, that my article would be appealing to the Soviet Embassy, et cetera. The FBI report was that I had sat at such and such a restaurant on such and such a day and—this was the FBI report that the Attorney General conveyed to me when I was being cleared for the White House—the FBI report said that on such and such a day I was heard at a restaurant with this Soviet education man to have been asked by him to write an article and that I had agreed to write the article.

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Well, I said that, "I'm sure if you check you'll find that the day was some weeks after the article appeared. And, you know, if this is the kind of information they have, you know, if they state things flatly like that when it's the exactly the opposite of what occurred, you better watch with some care what they tell you!" And I don't know whether they checked it out or not, but that was what the fact was. I said, you know, "I can prove it by three or four things: from my calendar, from my law colleague who heard the conversation when I got invited, but most of all the dates." That's the last I heard of it. But from my own experience, it doesn't lead to any great faith in some of the factual items that get picked up by that kind of following people around.

HACKMAN: How much did you get involved in selection of federal judges, or did you at all when something like that would come up?

WOFFORD: None at all.

HACKMAN: All right, the Civil Rights Commission, what can you recall in the early days of the Administration on discussions of what the role of the Civil Rights Commission would be in the Administration, how the President...

WOFFORD: The main thing I can say there is a sense of personal failure in being unable to prevent the same vicious circle from developing between the Civil Rights Commission and the Justice Department that developed between the Civil Rights Commission and Eisenhower's Attorney Generals. I couldn't believe that it would occur again; it must be in the nature of the two beasts. Berl Bernhard and Burke, who were friends and both of them I urged for their jobs, I just couldn't imagine two people who would be more likely to get along and solve things, and they were from the first moment I can remember clashing: the Justice Department asking the Civil Rights Commission not to do things in the same way that the Eisenhower one asked them not to go into—even on the same issue, you know.

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Don't hold hearings in the South, don't go here, and don't go there. And the Commission which had stood up to Eisenhower and one Department of Justice was ready to do it for another, and they'd also sort of solidified and gotten strong in their position.

They had a very unpleasant meeting with Bob Kennedy which turned all of them against Bob Kennedy, who seemed to be treating them as if he could tell them what to do, and they were very firm in their views that they were an independent commission by then. I did everything I could to patch it up, and I was close to Father Hesburgh [Theodore M. Hesburgh] on the Commission and close to Burke and to Berl, and I worked at it. It's just that basically Burke and the Attorney General viewed the Civil Rights Commission as sort of cluttering up the field and jumping in where it would cause more harm than good, and they really didn't want the Commission to do what the Commission believed its work was. And they really wanted to control and coordinate the Commission; they didn't want the Commission to come out with big proposals for legislation or for new actions that they didn't want to propose. They wanted to keep the strategy in their hands, and the Commission had no intention of doing that.

I guess on balance I supported the Commission, from my own experience on the commission. But I did my best to convey to the Commission that they should really, you know, have confidence in Marshall and in Kennedy, and to convey to Kennedy and Marshall that they really ought to, first, relax and let the Commission work and cooperate with them, even accepting the fact there'd be some friction and some embarrassing publicity and some other things. But it was beyond me. I really worked at that one.

HACKMAN: How quickly did you come to have confidence in Robert Kennedy in this area; I mean, early in the Administration or....

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WOFFORD: No. I had confidence in Burke from the beginning, of course. I guess I didn't have full confidence in Bob Kennedy in this area until several years later when I came back from Ethiopia. I had hoped; I was interested. I mean, I was not anti-Bob Kennedy on this. I knew he was a man of passion and courage and

that he was learning very fast. I was very moved by his close relationship with Burke; it was very impressive. Everything Burke said about him was very impressive.

HACKMAN: Can you remember getting involved in discussions of whether to keep Hannah [John A. Hannah] as chairman in the early days?

WOFFORD: Yes, but I don't remember the details on that. Hannah had always talked about leaving. I saw a lot of Hesburgh—I had been his legal counsel on the commission—who stayed on the commission, who still is on it (chairman now). I guess the feeling was that if Hannah was willing to stay on, he'd been a pretty strong chairman and might as well stay on.

HACKMAN: I had just heard that the President and, I believe, Robert Kennedy were very dissatisfied with him; they didn't think he worked out as they assumed he would in the early days.

WOFFORD: I'm not sure why. Well, in the early days we talked about getting somebody stronger and better. I remember fiddling around with possible names. I can't remember exactly why we decided to keep Hannah on. Storey [Robert G. Storey] was resigning, the Texan, and...

HACKMAN: And I think Carlton [Doyle E. Carlton].

WOFFORD: And we let them resign. And there was a problem of getting anybody confirmed, if you put in a stronger fellow. Congress was very worried about the Commission and I think we probably decided that a Republican who now is a pretty tough fellow in this area,

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it's just as well to keep him. There were details, but I can't remember. By the time that President Kennedy was dissatisfied I think they were, you know, they were half wrong; they were dissatisfied partly because he was separate and independent.

HACKMAN: Can you remember where the idea for this...

WOFFORD: You know, Hannah, he was a very stouthearted fellow in this, but he's not a moving fellow, he's not somebody that's given to any warmth or light. He's been very valuable within the Commission, but think of it in terms of a national role and he hasn't played any. We did think of some people that could play a national role, but I think what threw some of us back was the realization that that isn't what Bob Kennedy wanted.

HACKMAN: Can you remember the Spottswood Robinson [Spottswood W. Robinson, III] appointment which sort of turned the Commission around there, a

Southerner for the first time became the liberal rather than a . . . Where that came from?

WOFFORD: Not exactly. He had worked with us in the campaign. Louis and I both knew him well. Berl knew him. And I can't remember who initiated his name. There was only one black, Negro, on the Commission, and that remained one. And Rankin [Robert S. Rankin] was put on as a Southerner.

HACKMAN: Rankin, right. And Griswold [Erwin N. Griswold] came on at the same time.

WOFFORD: Rankin, Griswold, and Spottswood Robinson at the same time?

HACKMAN: Right. For the first time the Negro was the . . .

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WOFFORD: In other words, there were not three Southerners anymore.

HACKMAN: Right. One of the Southerners was Spottswood Robinson. He's a Negro and turns it around.

WOFFORD: Who was the third? Who was the other Southerner after Storey?

HACKMAN: I can't remember.

WOFFORD: No, I don't either. But I was very close to Berl and Hesburgh, so that to the extent that I could run errands for them on all sorts of things, I did.

HACKMAN: You stayed closely in contact with the reports that they were writing? You knew how the issues were developing?

WOFFORD: Yes. And we had also another deal too. They provided Bill Taylor [William L. Taylor] to me as sort of chief deputy to me for the sub-Cabinet group, who was paid, I'm pretty sure he was paid, by the Civil Rights Commission. So that was very, very helpful to me. Bill later took Berl's place as staff director of the Commission.

HACKMAN: As the reports would develop, would you carry any of this information to the White House staff or to the President? Or how would they be aware of what was coming?

WOFFORD: Well, you'd have to tell me what came up during that time.

HACKMAN: As the reports . . .

WOFFORD: Well, I'm not sure how many there were just then.

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HACKMAN: Okay, D.C. housing, there was a big housing report.

WOFFORD: I don't know that that came up during that time. The main one that I recall during that time, the one that is clearest in my mind, has to do with the Commission's recommendation on the military, desegregation of the National Guard, and, of course, the big recommendation that we were trying to deliver was the housing one of the previous commission report. I don't remember major commission reports coming out while I was there. They had a new series that started but I...

HACKMAN: Well, as you said, there was a lot of disagreement as to whether they would go into Mississippi and Louisiana and do those, and Alabama, I believe.

WOFFORD: Yes, which they finally did.

HACKMAN: Right, while you were gone.

WOFFORD: They turned to de facto education and segregation in the North, but that was after I left. Well, the answer would be very much meshed so that whatever Berl and Bill were pushing, we pushed through the sub-Cabinet group. When it called for White House action, we were trying to push it there. I don't remember the specific issues. Housing and the military were the two big things underway then. And we had little things like the Civil War Centennial which we pulled the rug out from under, from the White House, because the Civil War Centennial Commission was about to, with federal money, in the name of the President, was about to celebrate the Battle of Charleston in fully segregated circumstances. That's a very funny one.

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HACKMAN: Anything else? Can you remember talking to the President about that or did....

WOFFORD: The President knew about it, yes, because it was getting him into some hot water, but he finally signed the telegram to Ulysses S. Grant [Ulysses S. Grant III], that I drafted, ordering that it be desegregated or that all federal money be withdrawn. I guess they desegregated it, as I recall; I don't know. I'm blank, I'm a little blank as to whether they called it off or it was—I think they desegregated it. I think they moved it to a military base. They had all the white delegates in one part of town and all the black delegates in the Negro part of town, and they had me. That was the most incredible arrangement, and dealing with Ulysses S. Grant. I think it was really the comic high spot of

my time in the White House, dealing with Mr. Grant up at his estate and with the whole Commission. It was just wonderful. Clearly, on the Southern side there was no indication that the North had won the Civil War in the Civil War Centennial Commission. Let me say, generally, out of deference to their Southern colleagues, they called it the War Between the States. It was really very funny.

I told you this thing about Route 40.

HACKMAN: Route 40, out in Maryland, and Angier Biddle Duke?

WOFFORD: Yes.

HACKMAN: Yes, that's funny. Did you get at all involved in any of the efforts to revamp any of the state level civil rights commission advisory committees, or whatever Berl was on?

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WOFFORD: I knew what Berl was doing but I didn't, you know, I don't remember ever being called into anything, possibly a few times telephoning somebody to ask them to serve on the commission. Louisiana had been a state I had organized once, and I have a vague feeling I helped again there in that state.

HACKMAN: Any discussions on extending the Civil Rights Commission? Whether it would be extended two years, four years, or whatever?

WOFFORD: Yes, it was a legislative matter once or twice during that period. I can't remember the detailed legislative problems of getting that through. There was an extension that had to go through and what it was attached to and how it came out.... I think it became the Civil Rights Act of 1961. It was a tiny little thing that had the extension of the Civil Rights Commission and something else.

HACKMAN: Did you do any work on the Hill at all during this period?

WOFFORD: No. I dealt with people on the Hill because of several things. One, was Senator Clark [Joseph S. Clark], and Congressman Celler [Emanuel Celler] of New York. Senator Clark in particular had been the figurehead of our Report on Constitutional Rights Conference that we had in October, and it was a very succinct and summary and hard-hitting and far-reaching set of recommendations; Kennedy had acknowledged the report with appreciation, et cetera. The full report wasn't a big report; my recollection is it was something like about fifteen pages signed by a number of senators, congressmen, and civil rights leaders, black and white. It was supposed to be released the week before the election. That was my last campaign meeting with Kennedy; I took it out to the airport. It was right after the Martin Luther King phone call, and he looked over the release, and he said, "Don't you think we've shot our bolt in all this? Do we have to do it?"

And I could not honestly say we had to do it just then, as a campaign matter. I said, "No." He said, "What

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will happen if we don't issue it now?" And I had to say nothing would happen in terms of the campaign for civil rights. It was an after-climax. And so he said, "Let's issue it right after the election." And after the election, he said, "Well, please don't issue it right now; let's wait till we get into the White House." So then in the White House I don't think it ever got issued, if I remember right.

HACKMAN: No. You talked about this briefly last time and I think you couldn't remember last time whether it did.

WOFFORD: But I was dealing with Clark and the Congressman and the rest who were trying to get it out. Events were moving so fast by then that it didn't become terribly important. It just was a sore subject for Clark, for me, and for a few others, that our great report had never seen the light of day. But that was a minor matter. And that's the only thing I can really recall having a number of trips to the Hill about and talking about.

HACKMAN: You had said previously that you did get involved in the housing thing to a great degree, the executive order. That came out, what, six or seven months after you left. Were there times before you left when you really thought there was a possibility of getting something in the very near future?

WOFFORD: Oh, to put it mildly, there were, yes. On one occasion it had been cleared through all the agencies, and the press release had been written and the date had been set. And one day before it was to be announced, Kennedy decided to delay it for another six months. The *New York Times* got a leak that it was about to be released. Kennedy himself initially thought I had leaked it, which I had not, which was the last thing on earth that I would have done, in fact which would have been very uncharacteristic of me, too. But he called me; he was very upset when the *New York Times* said it's going to be released the next day, it's going to be signed today and released tomorrow, which was true. And Tony Lewis, who

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wrote the item, I would suspect he got it from Berl; I don't know, but he certainly didn't get a word from me. And Kennedy called and was very upset about the leak, and the leak caused several Southern congressman or senators to call Kennedy during the day and say, "It will ruin our election chances." This was sometime before some election.

HACKMAN: '62 congressional elections, that's what they were anticipating.

WOFFORD: Before the '62 congressional elections, so that this must then have been around January. It must have been the winter. So then Kennedy called and said he'd promised these friends of his in the South that he would not sign it. And he promised me very solemnly he would after the election. The report would be issued in December after the election?

HACKMAN: I think it was early January.

WOFFORD: January.

HACKMAN: January 14th, I think, something like that.

WOFFORD: '63.

HACKMAN: Yes.

WOFFORD: He was very solemn with me that he was going to do it, and he was also to King, and he also was to the Civil Rights Commission all during the period, so I believed him that he would, but it was the second time. The previous time we had it all drafted, and it hadn't gotten through the stage of having been cleared through every agency and the press release written. And Kennedy and Bob Kennedy at Hyannis Port walked up and down the beach and came back, and the President told me that he and Bob had decided to wait until after, I guess it was after the November of '61 elections.

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HACKMAN: '62.

WOFFORD: No, these are two different times. Do you know when it was signed? That is a factor in my deciding to take the appointment to the Peace Corps. I had been over to Africa for about a month negotiating some programs for the Peace Corps. I suspect that occurred right after the executive order was delayed, and I sort of figured I could take a trip. I really loved that, and I was tired of the delay, so it was one of the factors. But so my guess would be that January, February of '62 it was delayed until after the '62 elections. But the previous time that it was delayed was in a summer because I know they had walked the beach at Hyannis Port. I mean, it was during a Hyannis Port season. My guess, it was spring of '61. Maybe it was Congress instead of the election then, but he and Bob decided to delay it and we were all set to go then. So there were two major delays, plus the first one, which was we wanted to do it in the very first weeks, "the stroke of the pen." And it became clear they weren't going to do it in the first weeks; it was going to be a lot of procedural stalling and delay. So from where I sat there were three delays in the executive order on housing.

HACKMAN: Let me ask you this. When it finally did come out, a lot of people were disappointed in its scope, coverage. Can you remember if any of the

earlier ones would, the stage they were at would have been a great deal stronger than what eventually was written?

WOFFORD: Yes, I think the first draft extended coverage to a larger field. I'm sure it did. Over time it was modified. But a key person, I believe, in modifying it was Weaver, so that it was very difficult to counter that. But I don't think the general response, unless I'm—I guess I was out of the country so I'm not fully informed on this, but I didn't have the impression that the general and proper response was that it was a weak order. It was very close to what the Civil Rights Commission had originally recommended. We had gone beyond and

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strengthened it a bit before and it had gotten moderated and modified back.

HACKMAN: All right, let me switch to something else. How much speechwriting did you do while you were at the White House for the President or for any other high level people?

WOFFORD: I don't think I did any for anybody other than the President.

HACKMAN: What kinds of things?

WOFFORD: Except occasionally, Shriver. I guess I did quite a few for Shriver over the years. I'm not really sure that I did any speechwriting for the President in the White House. I had done several speeches that he used intact in the pre-Convention campaign on Africa and Asia, the African ambassadors talk, and on civil rights. And I did a few things that he used during the campaign. I don't recall any speech writing afterwards. I did an enormous amount of message writing, from telegrams to messages read at conventions and things like that. And most of them I didn't have to check at all. After the first few weeks, they just said, "Send them out," as I recall. And so there are a lot of ringing messages that got sent out that way.

The funniest one was the message to the National Students Association Special National Conference on the Peace Corps. I went out with Shriver; we got there and somebody said, "Have you got the message from the President?" And Shriver said, "Oh my God, I forgot. I promised them I'd get a message from the President." And I said, "I'll get it for you." And he said, "Bring it up to me as soon as it's ready." So I wrote it on a yellow pad—didn't I tell you this last time?

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HACKMAN: No.

WOFFORD: I wrote it on a yellow pad, a quite strong message from the President, and it was sent up to Shriver and he read it. The next day a friend of mine in

NSA, just in passing said, “That was a great meeting. Shriver’s speech was wonderful. The message from the President was great, and you know,” he says, “the most wonderful thing was it was in the President’s own handwriting, and we’re going to frame it and put it on NSA walls.” And I had to get somebody at the National Archives to call and say, “Sorry, we need the copy of that, we’re sending a messenger out right away to get the President’s message back. All messages have to go through a certain process, and we’ll send it out to you.” And so they got the yellow page back, and we sent them out a written signed thing.

HACKMAN: I wonder where the yellow page is now over at the Archives. I hope somebody still isn’t holding it.

WOFFORD: No, I got it back myself.

HACKMAN: We’ve jumped all over the place. I really don’t have that much left.

WOFFORD: Good, fine.

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[END OF INTERVIEW #3]

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