

FOREWORD

Transcript Warning:

All written transcripts are imperfect abstracts of spoken conversation. Variations in sound quality and in the aural acuity of listeners can and do produce wide variations in what is heard. Even though transcripts may be prepared at great effort and with great care, many points of ambiguity are inevitable, and erroneous interpretations from transcripts are always possible. Therefore, to ensure full confidence in any and all quotations from the presidential recordings, users are strongly urged to check all transcript renditions against the actual tape recordings before publication.

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Punctuation:

The following conventions are used throughout the transcripts:

- * * * To indicate a pause in the recording while the speaker listens to the person speaking at the other end of the telephone. Used when only one side of a telephone conversation is recorded.
- [?] When the transcriber is not certain of what is said on the recording.
- To indicate a sentence which the speaker trails off without completing it.
- . . . When a speaker is interrupted before a sentence is completed.
- _____ To indicate the speaker's emphasis.
- [] Used to enclose editorial comments of the transcriber such as */Meeting appears to be breaking up/* or */Several speakers speak at once and none of the words are intelligible./*

Names:

The first time a name is mentioned, the full name is provided whenever it is known. "JFK" and "RFK" are used for President Kennedy and Robert Kennedy, respectively. When the identity of a speaker is unknown, "Speaker?" is used; when the identification of a speaker is uncertain, a question mark follows the name. The heading of each transcript gives the names of all participants listed in the President's Appointment Books as scheduled to attend the meeting.

Preparation:

These electronic documents were created from transcripts available in the audiovisual research room in the John F. Kennedy Library. The transcripts were scanned using optical character recognition and the resulting text files were proofread against the original transcripts. Some formatting changes were made.

Papers of John F. Kennedy

Presidential Recordings

Dictabelts

Dictabelt 18A

Conversation #1: President Kennedy and Walter Heller

April 4, 1963

President: ----- budget and their percentage of unbalanced in their budget, compared to ours and so on and so forth.

Mr. Heller: Sure, right.

President: And the percentage of a . . . what ever else is interesting. And then we might get up a story and get it out later.

Mr. Heller: Yea, OK, will do.

President: OK.

Mr. Heller: You bet.

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Dictabelts

Dictabelt 18A

Conversation #2: President Kennedy and Ralph Dungan

April 4, 1963

President: Hello.

Mr. Dungan: Yes, sir, Mr. President.

President: Ralph, I notice in looking over the, uh . . . Lucius Clay wrote me a very nice letter. You saw that?

Mr. Dungan: No, sir, I haven't.

President: You wanna get it. Come in and get it.

Mr. Dungan: Right.

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Dictabelts

Dictabelt 18A

Conversation #3: President Kennedy and Unknown Person

[Begins in mid-conversation.]

President: . . . labor to pretty much hold off this year, if these fellows held off, . . .

Voice: Um-humh.

President: . . . but, I will know, uh, . . . Would you give me a call just before you see him at twelve-thirty?

Voice: Yes, I --

President: Because I will have talked then to Clark and, uh, . . . Then I've got a statement I thought I might put out, I'd like to read to you, if you could call me -- what, around twelve . . .

Voice: I'll call you about twelve-fifteen.

President: Well, maybe a little before? . . .

Voice: Twelve o'clock,

President: . . . What time do you get off the plane, because, uh, I want to put it out at noon. I'd like to have you hear it beforehand. So why don't you give me a call about two or three minutes to twelve if you get in?

Voice: Alright.

President: O.K. Thanks.

[disconnect]

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Dictabelts

Dictabelt 18A

Conversation #3A: White House Operator and Evelyn Lincoln

Lincoln: Hello.

Operator: Mr. Troutman. Robert Troutman in Atlanta calling you, Mrs. Lincoln.

Lincoln: O.K.

Operator: Thank you.

[disconnect]

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Presidential Recordings

Dictabelts

Dictabelt 18A

Conversation #4: President Kennedy and W. Averell Harriman

April 10, 1963

President: Hello.

Gov. Harriman: Hello.

President: Oh, Governor.

Gov. Harriman: Yes, sir.

President: I will be over there talking to the press today, and I suppose we are going to get some questions on Laos. The situation doesn't look very good, does it?

Gov. Harriman: No, the only good thing about it is that Souvanna [Phouma] has made his public statement condemning the Pathet Lao for attacking his forces. That gives us a reason for now going directly to the . . . to Moscow.

President: Yeah.

Gov. Harriman: It looks very bad, and a . . . but a . . . his taking a firm stand is the first time he has done it in public. He has done it privately before.

President: When did he put out the statement?

Gov. Harriman: Yesterday; I'll get that for you.

President: Is it a . . . The communist want to drive the Kong Le out of the, uh.

Gov. Harriman: They have been trying to do that from the beginning. You see, in the beginning, they tried to persuade him and tried to subvert his people . . .

President: Um.

Gov. Harriman: . . . and he was rather a . . . they were rather unsuccessful in that. They had this fellow, Colonel [inaudible] and a relatively few. Then they tried to starve him out and it was due to our getting the stuff to him--a . . . Phoumi's doings rather, and Souvanna that he held out, and then they directly attacked him. And I think the Pathet Lao aided and abetted by the Vietnam because they have got them in the background. A certain number of them which give them the strength. The Pathet Lao probably couldn't stand up to the Kong Le people if they weren't supported.

President: Yeah, yeah.

Gov. Harriman: Now, we have no indications yet--Ed Rice is here with me. (Ed, we have no indication that Kong Le is giving up at all yet, have we?) (No.)

Gov. Harriman: He has retreated out to Plaines des Jarres to a smaller airfield about eight miles west, which has kept his forces pretty well intact.

President: What do you think? Are we going to the Russians or is anybody going to the Russians?

Gov. Harriman: I think we ought to. I am having a talk with Roger Hilsman a little bit later as to what kind of approach. He's been thinking about recommending to you that I go myself to point out to Mr. K [Khrushchev] that this is really a serious situation.

President: Yeah. Yeah.

Gov. Harriman: But this morning I think they will get to you the background of what to say, but of course, fundamentally, if we can call it a partition of Laos de facto it's about the best we ever hoped for, but this is a setback, and it will be in direct confrontation now between the Pathet Lao and Phoumi's forces, which would be much better if we had a cushion of Kong Le in between.

President: Yeah, yeah, yeah. What do you think I might say about it. You want to ask somebody over there to get me up a response to a question?

Gov. Harriman: Yes, I certainly will. Well, undoubtedly they are getting it up. Mike and Roger Hilsman are working on it now.

President: Ok, fine.

Mr. Harriman: I will get it over to you.

President: Thank you.

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Dictabelts

Dictabelt 18A

Conversation #5: President Kennedy and McGeorge Bundy

April 10, 1963

President: We will be alright on Laos, then.

Mr. Bundy: I have got a Laos statement revised and I have a list of the raids, Mr. President. I will bring them right up.

President: Ok.

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Dictabelts

Dictabelt 18A

Conversation #6: President Kennedy and Dean Rusk

May 6, 1963

President: Hello.

Sec. Rusk: Good morning, Mr. President.

President: You had a good trip, I thought.

Sec. Rusk: Well, they kept me pretty busy, but we got a few little things done.

President: I thought the stuff that came out of Yugoslavia was good.

Sec. Rusk: Uh . . . I think myself that George Kennan has been quite right there. That if you leave . . . if you can leave assigned a man at the top, and they are finding ways to leave him assigned now, that the rest of them really do want to work on good relations.

President: Yeah, yeah.

Sec. Rusk: And even he was pretty relaxed. By the way, I did talk to him about the possibility of you and he seeing each other briefly somehow, and he was quite receptive to that.

President: I see. Fine.

Sec. Rusk: Are you heavily engaged the rest of the morning?

President: No, I tell you what, I got this eleven o'clock, uh, what are you doing now?

Sec. Rusk: Well, I am meeting here on Haiti now at the moment. And seeing Tommy Thompson at eleven thirty on the Moscow business. Perhaps if you could see me a few minutes around twelve.

President: Well, I got some fellow called Tad S [inaudible] of the Pakistan National Assembly.

Sec. Rusk: Oh, yes.

President: So why don't we meet about 12:20 or so?

Sec. Rusk: That will be fine

President: Fine.

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Dictabelt 18A

Conversation #7: President Kennedy and Edith Green

May 7, 1963

President: Hello.

Mrs. Green: Good morning, Mr. President.

President: Good morning, Mrs. Green, how are you?

Mrs. Green: I am fine.

President: Good.

Mrs. Green: I--deeply appreciate your returning my call.

President: Oh, no, fine, glad to talk to you.

Mrs. Green: I read an article on the front page of the New York Times, which disturbed me very greatly this morning, in which it refers to me as a former Kennedy supporter.

President: I haven't seen that. [laughing] I haven't read that unpleasant piece of news.

Mrs. Green: Well, this is not the case and I really while we have had maybe some differences on the education bill, certainly I think the record of the last several months is replete with speeches I have made across the country in support of your program.

President: Oh, yea, as I said, I haven't seen that, but they are always doing all those

things. You and I, as I said to you that day, I am anxious to try to . . . You have been a great friend of mine and I don't want to have disagreement with you, particularly when we agree about ninety eight percent on this matter.

Mrs. Green: Right.

President: And it is really just a question of what represents the best way to move ahead on what we agree on. I saw the . . . what happened yesterday. As I say, the only thing that concerns me is to a . . . is perhaps that I have got a traumatic reaction to last year's experience, but I am anxious that we not, uh, I don't quite see clearly the way yet to do it. Because the problem, of course, is what the NEA [National Education Association] wants they won't get. The question is whether we can prevent them from doing what they did to us last year or not.