

## 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 14B**

Conversation #6: President Kennedy and Arthur Sylvester

March 12, 1963

President: How did you do?

Mr. Sylvester: Well, I don't think that they're happy and I didn't make any personal friends, but I think that we loused up the record and used up half a day to give Bob [Robert S. McNamara] his half day insurance to get some more ready.

President: Did they eat on you?

Mr. Sylvester: Oh, they were . . . they were pretty mad about everything.

President: Yeah. Oh, you mean they just like to give it out, you know, they never like to take it up there.

Mr. Sylvester: Well, they sort of got it, and I know my counselor was aghast. He said, "Oh, God, you didn't make any friends, they will kill you." I said, well.

President: Who said this?

Mr. Sylvester: Jack Stempler, who was there from our law, our office.

President: This is after you finished?

Mr. Sylvester: Yes, after we finished. They had me there, and then when we were all through, they said, why don't you apologize and we wouldn't be here for two hours. Well, I didn't make any comment.

President: I thought you did that in your letter.

Mr. Sylvester: That's what I told them.

President: What did they say?

Mr. Sylvester: Well, then they . . . then they . . . I don't know what they wanted after that. Then they didn't like it because I said that I thought that the full picture hadn't come out, and the way it is coming out, the Defense Department view of this whole thing which was a matter of high defense policy came out in a way that the public got a distorted view. Well, that started them off. I was making a record and this was making them wild, of course.

President: When did they release your record?

Mr. Sylvester: Right away it is being released.

President: Oh, is it?

Mr. Sylvester: I read to them the story out of the Chicago Daily News by Jim McCarthy, whom I talked to this morning, which began by saying that the Senate investigators has made up their minds that this is a bad contract. And then a quotation from investigator who said, quote,

President: About the plane?

Mr. Sylvester: That is correct. Well, they didn't like that. I kept reading that as many times as I could.

President: And what did they say then? They denied that they said that?

Mr. Sylvester: Oh, they didn't even ask. They wouldn't ask, you know.

President: Was [Senator Henry "Scoop"] Jackson there? . . .

Mr. Sylvester: Was who? Oh, every one of them were there. They were all there.

President: And Scoop, how is he defending his?

Mr. Sylvester: Oh, he was belting the hell out of me, saying that I had made many mistakes, and I . . ., you know, etc., etc. Then [Senator Karl] Mundt finally said to me, "well, you know you have been quoted as saying that you don't believe in telling the truth, would this affect your testimony." Then I said, Senator, this is an insulting remark on your part, I have taken an oath. Well, he backed away from it then. You know, they were trying to give me the works there. It was quite an enjoyable day. The record will be thoroughly confused, but we will

have a lot of things on the record that these guys will pick up, and that is what bothers them, really.

President: When does Bob [McNamara] go up there?

Mr. Sylvester: I have not been back this morning.

President: How was [John] McClellan?

Mr. Sylvester: He got pretty mad when I kept reading the Chicago Daily News thing. I didn't read it once, I think I read it four times. [Laughter] That made them wild.

President: Okay, good, fine, righto.

Mr. Sylvester: Okay. [Laughter]