

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 19A

Conversation #1: President Kennedy and Dean Rusk

May 16, 1963, 10:00 a.m.

Sec. Rusk: Mr. President.

President: Yes, yes.

Sec. Rusk: I hope that you are fully satisfied about Bill Crockett's nomination. If we took a plebiscite of the top people here in the Department and in Congress, I think that you'd find that he would be the choice by acclamation. He has had a . . . he's had had great confidence among people in his daily operations. He has been loyal to the Administration, to me, to you. He, um . . . uh . . . is a very quiet worker, but he's been very effective. And I just a . . .

President: That's fine. I don't know him. The only thing is that I thought, uh, I didn't want to have him exactly picked by /Congressman John/ Rooney . . .

Sec. Rusk: No . . . that's a . . .

President: . . . and . . . because I just figure those fellows really get along well on the Hill and it's always because they do what the Hill wants.

Sec. Rusk: You see, we, uh . . . we, uh . . . we almost nominated him before at the time that Jones left. But then the name of Bill Orrick come up and Bill . . . Bill Orrick has been so allergic to Capitol Hill that he never really had any effective relations down there. And didn't really go to see them very often. Didn't work at it.

President: One of the things that Orrick said and I don't know, he came over to see me the other day, and I guess that you've talked to him on this. The problem, of a . . . at least as he saw it, of who he goes through. Evidently, he goes through Ball, does he? It seemed to me that a . . . George has got a . . . really is your

deputy and ought to be doing all these policy matters and not screwing around with administration.

Sec. Rusk: Well, they . . . it depends on the subject. I a . . . had a . . . I saw Orrick myself, I suppose averaged once every two weeks. We tried to set up a weekly appointment. But if Ball doesn't see him, then I have to, and the question is which one of us does. What I wanted to do was to have that man take that ball and run with it and act just independently as possible and get on with the job.

President: Yeah, yeah.

Sec. Rusk: But, uh . . . and this is the kind of thing I think that Crockett will know how to do. I have known him for many years myself, here and in the service, and I am sure that he will work out very well, indeed.

President: Good, fine. I just thought that I'd meet him because I don't think that I have ever met him.

Sec. Rusk: Right.

President: What else is new on the horizon?

Sec. Rusk: Well . . . the a . . .

President: What about Haiti?

Sec. Rusk: I think that we got to review the bidding from the ground up on that now, and see where just we go on that. If it is possible for us to trade a fresh start on our side with a fresh start on [Francois] Duvalier's side, maybe we have to work at it from that direction at the moment. But most of our fellows here think that Duvalier is absolutely irretrievable, but yet there is no clear answer now as to what that means and what you do about it. So I will be talking with the fellows later this morning.

President: Seems to me we ought to be able to build up some sort of a force that we could use as the excuse. In other words, the Bay of . . . the Cuban thing, but do it with a little more judgment. But it seems to me we ought to have that force being developed, anyway.

Sec. Rusk: Yes, I think that we ought to look at the big alternatives here, and . . . and . . .

President: The other thing is really whether Thurston . . . if he's gonna stay on . . . there's no sense, really, having an ambassador . . . I am sure that is isn't Thurston's fault he's persona non . . .

Sec. Rusk: Well, if we could trade that for some changes in Duvalier's government.

President: Yeah, yeah.

Sec. Rusk: After all, if he is asking us to change some top people, we might get across to him that if he gets rid of a couple of these bad eggs right next to him . . .

President: Yeah, yeah.

Sec. Rusk: . . . that we could pass both of them and start off on a fresh start.

President: Yeah.

Sec. Rusk: Try it out.

President: Alright.

Sec. Rusk: The Vice President wants very much to go to Scandinavia in the Fall. Now, we have an Americas Day celebration in Finland on September 6 and 7, where it would be entirely appropriate for him to be there. And then come back through Norway, and Denmark. Do you see any objection of that?

President: No, somebody told me that a . . . I don't know who I was talking to about Finland, said something about . . . that Bobby was supposed to go there.

Sec. Rusk: Yes, well, I talked to Bobby about it, and he had talked to the Vice President about it and that part of it is all cleared away.

President: Oh, I see, so there is no, uh, well a . . . that seems . . . a, that is fine.

Sec. Rusk: Thank you, sir.

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Conversation #2: President Kennedy and Dean Rusk

May 16, 1963, 10:30 a.m.

President: Hello.

Sec. Rusk: Mr. President.

President: Yes.

Sec. Rusk: Remember that very short message that we sent to . . . sent of the other day about dates for me?

President: Yes. Oh, yes.

Sec. Rusk: They have come back with an answer and suggested July 28th, which from our . . . I have just been talking to [L. Thompson] Tommy about it, and we think that this is very good from our point of view.

President: Oh, that's fine.

Sec. Rusk: It keeps things on ice and, uh . . . uh . . . indicates that things are not likely to blow up before then, [laughs]

President: I, uh . . . uh . . . talked to David Gore yesterday, and I said that David might be interested in what uh, what a draft which the Prime Minister might want to prepare a response to that letter that we both got.

Sec. Rusk: Right.

President: And we'll see what they have got say. I think we ought to think about sending somebody there. I think we want to look like we have gone the last mile.

Sec. Rusk: Right. Well, now we are preparing some alternative drafts here . . .

President: Good.

Sec. Rusk: . . . from different approaches. One approach would be simply to ask him really to take on this question of fact that he has asserted, that national means can do it. And try to get him to put up some technicians and scientists to talk with ours about the real possibility there. Pointing out that, in case there is no policy question, it is only a factual question.

President: Well, we might, uh, you know we talked in that letter about sending a special representative there.

Sec. Rusk: Right, right.

President: What about thinking about John McCloy to go there?

Sec. Rusk: Well, that is a . . . that's a real possibility. Tomorrow, we are going to propose that we try to use him on this [Gamal] Nasser, uh, the Near East disarmament problem.

President: I see.

Sec. Rusk: But in any event, he might be able to do both.

President: Yea, well, the other two that we . . . I was thinking about would be Ros Gilpatric or John. McCloy has got some advantages 'cause he is well and favorably known.

Sec. Rusk: Sure, sure. Well, that is a real possibility.

President: Ok, fine.

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Conversation #3: The President and Major Gordon Cooper

[There is a great deal of background noise and static during the conversation. This is due to the fact that the President's call was put through to Astronaut Cooper just after he was taken aboard the recovery ship]

President: Major! Oh Major! Oh . . . uh . . . can you hear me? Hello. Major Cooper; hello, can you hear me? Hello, Major Cooper!

Cooper: Yes sir.

President: Can you hear the President?

Cooper: Yes sir.

President: Alright. Oh major, I just want to congratulate you. That was a great flight.

Cooper: Thank you very much sir.

President: We talked to your wife and she seemed to stand it very well.

Cooper: Oh very good

President: And we hope . . . we are looking forward to seeing you up here Monday but we are very proud of you major.

Cooper: Thank you sir. It was a good flight and I enjoyed it.

President: Oh good . . . fine. Well, I look forward to seeing you Monday. Good luck.

Cooper: Thank you sir.

President: Thanks major.

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Conversation #4: President Kennedy and John McCormack

May 17, 1963

President: Hello.

Speaker McCormack: Hello, Mr. President.

President: Mr. Speaker, how are you?

Speaker McCormack: Fine, thanks, you, how are you?

President: Very good.

Speaker McCormack: That's good . . . uh . . . on this [Gordon] Cooper.

President: Yes.

Speaker McCormack: Do you want a joint meeting . . . a joint meeting? If you do, just blow your nose.

President: Yea, do you think it would be good . . . give the space program . . .

Speaker McCormack: Are you gonna give him . . . gonna give him a big parade?

President: Well, wait just a second. He is coming here and I am going to decorate him, and then he would go up to the Capitol. I suppose that we would a . . . that they would parade him. What we are trying to do is get the most out of it for the space program.

Speaker McCormack: I understand that they are going to let the government employees off.

President: Yea, it will be 12:15.

Speaker McCormack: I thought that they ought to build it up and make it a big affair. But that is for you to decide. If they do . . . if you a . . . I have talked with Mike Mansfield, cause in view of the letter we sent and so forth. But I think that it would be nice. If you want it, we will do it.

President: Well, I think that everybody would like that, don't you think, up there in the Congress?

Speaker McCormack: I think that it would be a damn good thing. But I'd like to have . . . If you want us to do it, let me know, and I will.

President: No, let's go ahead then.

Speaker McCormack: Alright, you . . . you . . . you didn't ask me; you don't have to ask me; you just suggested to me that you thought that it would be a very good thing.

President: That will be fine.

Speaker McCormack: Whatever way you want, ask or suggest, Mr. President.

President: Well, why don't we tell that I suggested it and you thought that it was a good idea.

Speaker McCormack: Fine, and I would like for you to get the credit, too. But you go ahead and handle that, and I will get a hold of Mike and tell him and I'll a . . .

President: Why don't you announce it up there?

Speaker McCormack: I will take care of it.

President: Fine, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker McCormack: Bye, Mr. President.

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Dictabelt 19A

Conversation #5: President Kennedy and Clinton Anderson

May 22, 1963

Sen. Anderson: ----- possibly, when he ran into a snag like this, he got a dozen of us down to the White House one day of divergent views--people like [Richard] Dick Russell and [Congressman] Harold Cooley and [Senator George] Aiken and so forth. No, I think that he kept all the Republicans out and said, now, what would you Democrats agree on, that you would try to pass quickly.

President: Do you think we should try to pass another wheat bill?

Sen. Anderson: I think that you should. Yes, I don't think you want the price to go down as low as it is likely to go. Now, it is true that you have made the gesture that might have helped the wheat farmer; but he has a very short memory.

President: Yeah.

Sen. Anderson: And he won't remember the gesture as long as he remembers the low price.

President: He won't remember that it was his own decision that brought it on.

Sen. Anderson: Not at all. He knows very well that the Administration did this to him. I mean it is just one of those tragedies of life.

President: Yeah.

Sen. Anderson: And I think that it would be well to let some of us explore what we could get the Farm Bureau to support and have others find out what the Farmers' Union will support. At one time, Mr. President, I got the Farmers' Union and the Grange and the Farm Bureau in the same room and kept them there for 48 hours at different spells until they agreed on a program.

President: Yeah.

Sen. Anderson: Now, I do think that the Secretary of Agriculture is as fine a guy as I know and as honest a man as I have seen and I would like to help him in every way I could. But he has never bothered to find out what is acceptable across the country.

President: Yeah.

Sen. Anderson: I don't think they need quite the sort of control he is talking about. And I think a reduction in price supports and more or less freedom to plant would not give you any more surplus than we are now getting. But I think we're gonna have to explore that with a few people before you can bring up a bill.