

**William Brown, Oral History Interview – JFK #1, 8/23-24/2005**  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** William Brown  
**Interviewer:** Vicki Daitch  
**Date of Interview:** August 23 & 24, 2005  
**Location:** Mt. Dora, Florida  
**Length:** 76 pages

**Biographical Note**

Brown, Junior Military Aide to President John F. Kennedy in 1962-1963, discusses his role in the Kennedy Administration, White House staff and daily operations, as well as the morale and staff outlook, among other issues.

**Access**

Open.

**Usage Restrictions**

Copyright of these materials has passed to the United States Government upon the death of the interviewee. Users of these materials are advised to determine the copyright status of any document from which they wish to publish.

**Copyright**

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be “used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research.” If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excesses of “fair use,” that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law. The copyright law extends its protection to unpublished works from the moment of creation in a tangible form. Direct your questions concerning copyright to the reference staff.

**Transcript of Oral History Interview**

These electronic documents were created from transcripts available in the research room of 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. Page numbers are noted where they would have occurred at the bottoms of the pages of the original transcripts. If researchers have any concerns about accuracy, they are encouraged to visit the Library and consult the transcripts and the interview recordings.

**Suggested Citation**

William Brown, recorded interview by Vicki Daitch, August 23 & 24, 2005, (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

Oral History Interview

Of

William Brown

Although a legal agreement was not signed during the lifetime of William Brown, upon his death, ownership of the recording and transcript of his interview for the Oral History Program passed to the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library.

The following terms and conditions apply:

1. The transcript is available for use by researchers.
2. The tape recording shall be made available to those researchers who have access to the transcript.
3. Copyright to the interview transcript and tape is assigned to the United States Government.
4. Copies of the transcript and the tape recording may be provided by the Library to researchers upon request for a fee.
5. Copies of the transcript and tape recording may be deposited in or loaned to institutions other than the John F. Kennedy Library.

## William Brown

### Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	Favoritism in the Kennedy Administration
4, 9, 24	Brown's daily role as Junior Military Aide
4	Condolence letters to military families
10, 53	John F. Kennedy's [JFK] ability to focus
11	JFK and his family at the White House
15, 35, 68	JFK's White House staff
18	The Secret Service
21	Brown's assessment of Robert F. Kennedy [RFK]
21	Cuban Missile Crisis
25	White House press briefings
28	White House mess hall
29, 49	Vietnam
32, 47	General Chester V. Clifton Jr.'s role
34	The myth of "Camelot"
39	Lyndon Baines Johnson's staff
41	Civil Rights
60	Physical layout of the White House offices
65	Executive Committee [Ex Comm] meetings
66	Brown's assessment of Robert McNamara

Oral History Interview

with

William Brown

August 23 and 24, 2005  
Mt. Dora, Florida

By Vicki Daitch

For the John F. Kennedy Library

DAITCH: ...test these real quick and make sure that they're working and see if it's picking up. Would you say a few words? I want to make sure it's picking up both of us.

BROWN: Okay. One of the first things I learned in the White House was that their whole reaction, their whole attitude about showing special favors for friends and so forth was not a common practice. For example, Kenny O'Donnell [Kenneth P. O'Donnell] would have me escort people to the Pentagon, typically from the Boston area or around that; and he would always insist on giving me a lecture saying: "Now make sure that we don't ask for anything special. There will be absolutely no favoritism. Anything that anyone can come off the street and ask for and be treated—we want the same treatment." And I was surprised because I had kind of believed that in the White House, in fact in all of Washington, you did favors, and you had special things that you would do for special people. But they really held closely to that. And as many times as I went over to the Pentagon, I'd always get the lecture: "Make sure you tell them no favoritism. We don't want any special treatment."

DAITCH: Yes. And that.... I mean you have to have special treatment because you're the White House and you need to know certain things. But then who does that apply to? I mean just people that come to the White House to visit?

BROWN: Well, these would be, I think they were probably people that knew them in the political area, in the Boston area.

DAITCH: Oh, I see. Okay.

BROWN: And they'd be asking for things maybe for their family or maybe for their business. I never stayed to hear what they were talking about. But we really laid down the dictum that no favoritism, and we don't want it. And I came away with that feeling that I didn't expect this. And the people were kind of surprised when I'd tell them this, but they really held to that.

DAITCH: I'll stop these for just a.... [Interruption, phone ringing.]

BROWN: One thing I wanted to mention is when I saw this no-special-favor approach, I have to tell you that my respect for politics was increased I think tremendously because I sort of expected you'd see a lot of the opposite treatment. I thought that Kenny was a kind of a straight arrow. For example, in one case someone in that area, the Boston area, wanted to have a member of their family transferred to Fort Devens. And Kenny said, "Is it possible? Will the Army do something like that? What are the rules?" And again, no special favors. What would the average person get? How would they be treated? And that's what we want to ask for. And again, I came away with a feeling of this guy is a straight arrow. He's really something.

DAITCH: Yes, he's for real about that.

BROWN: Yes, yes, and he was dead serious about it.

DAITCH: And this would have been a friend from Boston or somebody in Congress or something like that asking for a favor.

BROWN: That's right, yes.

DAITCH: Before we get into more about the White House, can you give me a little bit about how you came to be involved in that? I mean that's a pretty thrilling thing for a young man to be working in the White House all of a sudden.

BROWN: I graduated first in the class of the Command General Staff College, and I think that was perhaps one of the things that I was told. I was also told that I had the highest efficiency rating of any major in the Army. Now I don't know if that was true or not, but I'd like to believe it.

DAITCH: Yes.

BROWN: And so I had had varied experience in writing. I was the editor of *Entity* magazine. And so I guess that combination of things was behind my selection, I would imagine.

DAITCH: Did you know General Clifton [Chester V. "Ted" Clifton] before that?

BROWN: No, no.

DAITCH: So that was just something.... Did it come kind of out of the blue for you? What were you doing? What was your assignment?

BROWN: I was teaching at the Infantry School. I was teaching tactics, in fact, and I wrote the Army's field manual for infantry combat.

DAITCH: Oh, no kidding!

BROWN: Yes.

DAITCH: And so did you just get a phone call or how did that work?

BROWN: I can't even remember how I first heard about it. But obviously I was kind of stunned.

DAITCH: Yes. I mean when you first heard about it, were you looking forward to it, or were you thinking, oh, politics?

BROWN: Well, I couldn't even imagine what I'd be doing, you know. It turned out that I did have I think almost adequate skills in everything I'd be working with. And so it was a unique opportunity. And one that I came away after my experience there with a tremendous good feeling because the people were exceptional. And I just never saw a group of people that were so involved and dedicated to what they were doing, and there was no game-playing, no politics. It was just genuine good feeling. And I never saw that before or after. In my subsequent career, after I retired from the service, I got involved in doing consulting work and visiting big businesses of all kinds: G.E. and Disney and Sea World. And in these companies, I kept looking for what sort of a climate do they have? And nothing I ever saw would compare with the positive good feeling. And it was exceptional. I attribute this primarily, of course, to President Kennedy. But he had assembled a team of people that just seemed to be so dedicated to what they were doing.

DAITCH: Yes, because you hear about occasionally there were rivalries between some of the staffers and, you know, people who had some vested interest in believing themselves to be closer to the President, or they had different opinions about how to approach things or whatever. But nothing in what you're saying suggests that that ever spilled over into the work.

BROWN: That's exactly right. I think the.... I never saw an instance where there was sort of game-playing or politics. Maybe it was there. Maybe I was blind to it. But I don't think so.

DAITCH: And you reported to General Clifton.

BROWN: That's right.

DAITCH: And did you...? I'm just trying to get a feel for kind of the daily operations in terms of, you know, did you work closely with the general? Or did you take directions from other people who asked you to.... Kenny O'Donnell, for example?

BROWN: Well, yes. And anything that the staff might have a question about the kinds of things we do, I would answer it as best I could. But, of course, General Clifton was directly involved with the President, very closely involved. And from time to time he'd come back with a requirement. As an example, the President saw, I guess, in the Sunday paper a soldier had been killed, and he came in and asked General Clifton, he said, "What happens when a soldier's killed? What do we do for the family? Do we take care of them, and do we write letters of condolence, or what?"

And so General Clifton had me assemble what the different services do. Came back and said essentially they're all about the same, but they're very careful about how they treat people and writing special letters of condolence and so forth. And he said, "Well, wouldn't...?" He asked General Clifton this, and he said, "Well, why wouldn't I write a letter in a case like this?" And the general's initial response was, "Well, can you have the time to do something like this?" So he said, "Well, let's look into it and see if it makes sense." I then went and talked to Evelyn Lincoln [Evelyn N. Lincoln]. I said, "How many letters does the President sign in a day, typical." And she gave me that answer. And then there's a lot of paperwork that never goes through Evelyn Lincoln. For example, all of the promotions of regular Army officers have to be signed off by the President before it goes to Congress, and it creates an enormous amount of paperwork.

So I thought I did great staff work, and I told General Clifton, I said, "My recommendation, after studying this, is that he's got too many other things. He won't have the time." As I understand it, he told the President my recommendation was that he wouldn't have the time, and he shouldn't be doing it. And he said something to the effect, "I can find the time, and I want to do it." And so from then on, whenever soldiers died for whatever reason, particularly if they were in training or in combat, whatever, and we started that project. Then after we'd been doing it for a while, we got one letter back which said, essentially, that maybe all of Vietnam was not worth one American life, or something to that effect. I can't remember.

DAITCH: From a family member?



BROWN: Yes, from a family member. And I'm curious, by the way, whether or not that letter is still in the file, if it is. Because obviously the President said, "We want to respond to this. Let's write something that explains why we're in Vietnam." And I thought, to me, this was an easy thing to do, you know, certainly I was experienced. Well, I wrote one letter, a draft, and I went back in a couple of days and asked Evelyn Lincoln, "Did the President sign it?" And she said, "No, there are some things that he wants to change." And I went back and wrote a second letter; it failed also, to my embarrassment. Then she said, "Well, here's what the letter is." And it was.... I have a copy of it here.

DAITCH: I don't want to impose on you, but would you mind reading the letter just to have it on the tape, I'm sure we probably have a copy in the Library, if it's not too long? I think it would be interesting to have.

BROWN: It's right here somewhere.

DAITCH: I wouldn't ask. But because you have papers sitting there, I thought maybe it was in there.

BROWN: Can I mention the name?

DAITCH: Uh, sure.

BROWN: One of the reasons I've never said much about this is that I was concerned about the privacy of the family, and so....

DAITCH: Right. These letters will be in the Library, too.

BROWN: Yes, yes. It's dated August 22, 1962. "Dear Mr. Marchand, I'd like to express to you my deepest, sincere sympathy in the loss of your brother." By the way, I should mention that when Evelyn Lincoln told me that the President had assembled another letter, I didn't say, Who wrote it for you? But she said, "The President dictated this." And I have to say I was so impressed when I read this. And I'd be curious as to how you feel about it.

"I'd like to express to you my deepest, sincere sympathy in the loss of your brother." Apparently it was responded by his brother. "I can, of course, well understand your bereavement and the feelings which prompted you to write. The questions which you pose in your letter can, I believe, best be answered by realizing why your brother and other American men went to South Vietnam in the first place. When this is understood, I'm sure that the other related questions will be answered. Americans are in South Vietnam because we have determined that this country must not fall under Communist domination.

"Ever since Vietnam was divided, the South Vietnamese have fought valiantly to maintain their independence in the face of the continuing threat from North Vietnam. Shortly after the division eight years ago, it became apparent that they could not be successful in their defense without extensive assistance from other nations of the free world community. In the late summer of 1955, with the approval of President Eisenhower [Dwight D.

Eisenhower], an advisory group was established in South Vietnam to provide them with adequate weapons and equipment and training in basic military skills which you, as a former serviceman, know are essential to survival on the battlefield. Even with this help, the situation grew steadily worse under the pressure of the Vietcong.

“By 1961 it became apparent that the troubles in Laos and the troubles in South Vietnam could easily expand. It is also apparent that the Communist attempt to take over South Vietnam is only part of a larger plan for bringing the entire area of Southeast Asia under their domination. Though it is only a small part of the area geographically, South Vietnam is now the most crucial. The people of Southeast Asia and indeed of the world are now following closely the events in South Vietnam, the only country in the world now actively repelling an armed Communist attack. If South Vietnam should fall, it will indicate to them that complete Communist domination of their part of the world is almost inevitable. Your brother was in South Vietnam because the threat of the Vietnamese people is, in the long run, a threat to the free world community and ultimately a threat to us also. For when freedom is destroyed in one country, it is threatened throughout the world.

“Thus, your brother was doing more than assisting the South Vietnamese to defend themselves. In a very real sense, he was fighting for the future of this country, just as other men have done in years past. The decision to help South Vietnam is now almost eight years old, and it is only part of a larger decision which Americans made almost 200 years ago that freedom from tyranny is worth fighting for wherever men and women are willing to stand up to defend themselves. I have written to you at length because I know that it is important to you to understand why we are in South Vietnam.

“I also know that words can do little to lessen the burden of your grief. But you can, however, find a great and meaningful measure of solace in knowing that your brother gave the last full measure of his devotion to the most noble of causes, freedom. For this he has earned the eternal gratitude of this nation and other free men throughout the world. Again, may I express to you and the members of your family my deepest personal sympathy. Sincerely, John F. Kennedy.”

DAITCH: Wow!

BROWN: Oh, if I could have done anything like this! But you can see....

DAITCH: Yes. Well, and who would have thought that he would have taken the.... I mean basically he took the time to give a history of our country's involvement in South Vietnam, why we were there and, you know, ultimately why this person's brother was there.

BROWN: It's interesting that today the same letter could be written.

DAITCH: Hmmm. Yes.

BROWN: There it is.

DAITCH: So just as a matter of interest, what type of letter were you trying to write? I mean this is an interesting letter, I think, from the perspective that it's an historical explanation, which is something I really like about Kennedy as an historian..

BROWN: Yes, yes.

DAITCH: He thinks in historical terms.

BROWN: But he's touched your heart.

DAITCH: Absolutely.

BROWN: When you think about it, our country has been doing this for centuries. And we're the only country that is counted on, you know, no matter what....

DAITCH: Absolutely.

BROWN: It still applies today. I fell so far short in my writing of it, I'm embarrassed to even.... I probably should have kept it. But you can see why I didn't.

DAITCH: Yeah.

BROWN: It's very powerful.

DAITCH: Yes.

BROWN: And he was obviously--I know there were other people that did a lot of writing for him and I'm sure helped a lot. But when I read that, I thought, boy, this guy has got....

DAITCH: Yes. Oh, yes. There's no doubt he was very, very articulate. And heartfelt, too.

BROWN: Yes.

DAITCH: I mean it was genuine. You can sort of take this for what it's worth, too, because he was in the Navy himself. He lost a brother in the war. I mean this is a person who knows what this means.

BROWN: Well, and if you think back, this all started when he said, "I can take the time." And truthfully, I thought, I was so convinced that there was no way in the world that he can sign all the papers he signs and do all the things he does, and I'd seen the flood of paper. How can he do this?

DAITCH: Right.

BROWN: And he said, "I want to." And I thought, what a great president he is.

DAITCH: Yes. And no president to your knowledge had done that before?

BROWN: I don't know.

DAITCH: I was just curious if you in your research about the subject had ever, if it had ever come up.

BROWN: You know I never had occasion to dig into that.

DAITCH: Yes. It's just an interesting thing. Because I think it's become a tradition, right?

BROWN: Well, as a matter of fact, in subsequent books that I've read, they use, you'll see these same words being used. So I'm sure they changed probably some of the verbiage. But I suspect.... There's a credit copy to Brubeck [William H. Brubeck], and I suspect that the President would have called him and asked maybe for some ideas about this. But in any event, when she said the President dictated this letter, I thought, wow!

DAITCH: Yes.

BROWN: Because I would have struggled, well, I did struggle for a week on some of these things and never find the words. But as you say, it was heartfelt.

DAITCH: Mmmm hmmm. Yes. Absolutely.

BROWN: But I thought that was typical of.... My respect for him went up, you know, you can imagine when I saw this.

DAITCH: Yes.

BROWN: Because it does express his feelings.

DAITCH: Well, and taking the time to do something like that personally is probably not something that every president would do. I mean this is just a response to a letter.

BROWN: Yes, yes, exactly.

DAITCH: Well, any staff member could have done. And so he could have just signed off on it without even reading it--your letter.

BROWN: Yes, yes.

DAITCH: Very, very fascinating. So anyway, I want you to, go however makes you comfortable, but as far as the general atmosphere in the White House and sort of what you felt your position was.

BROWN: Well, I was a staff assistant really to answer questions in General Clifton's absence. But the office was so well organized that.... I don't know, the office seemed to kind of run itself. I also was asked from time to time to escort visitors to the President's office. And I also was asked to be the escort to President Eisenhower when he visited the White House. There was a time when Billy Graham [William F. Graham] was also there. The three of them met. It was fascinating because I remember asking Kenny O'Donnell, "Well, aren't they going to fly the helicopter to the lawn, the South Lawn?" And he said, "No. Pick him up at the Pentagon." And, you know, of course I took the presidential sedan. And he had his aide with him. I had never met the President, of course. So we carried on a light conversation. And then we got on the White House grounds, we were coming up to the President's office, and he asked the driver to stop. He wanted to see the putting green.

DAITCH: President Eisenhower wanted to see the putting green.

BROWN: Yes. And so he seemed to have a great attachment to that because, of course, it was put in in his time. And he said with a great deal of pride, "Well, the PGA actually built this to the official requirements. And so it's a real putting green." The embarrassing thing at the moment was Macaroni, the pony, was there; he's nibbling on the edge of the green. But he just kind of ignored that.

DAITCH: He did?

BROWN: He didn't say anything at all about it. And so we went up and of course went to the President's office. Then Billy Graham was there.

DAITCH: At the same time?

BROWN: At the same time. All three of them stood on the porch right outside of the President's office. And President Eisenhower's aide and I were the only other people that were there. And it was fascinating. I'd never been, obviously, in a meeting like this. And the first thing I noticed was that President Kennedy talked about Billy Graham. He said, "Billy, I hear great things about what you did in Latin America." And apparently he had just finished a series of talks or whatever, and had drawn phenomenal crowds. And President Kennedy always had that gift of paying attention to people that he was talking with. And you could just see Billy Graham just smile and feel so proud of this.

Then the attention shifted to the Mellon Gardens. At that time they were putting in all sorts of different greenery and flowers and so forth. President Eisenhower was interested in

that. He said, "You know we could never get the funds to do that sort of thing." Apparently this was a gift from the Mellon Family, I guess. But he explained what they were doing and how they were doing it. And of course this is the place where you see so many times in the newsreels where the President's making a speech. But that again was I guess my impression of it was that President Eisenhower was just very, very interested in all that was going on. And it was just a fascinating thing to listen to these esteemed people talking among themselves, just like you and I might.

DAITCH: Right.

BROWN: Yes.

DAITCH: Like normal people. Somebody told me that Kennedy had the ability, and you can tell me, you sort of touched on this; you can tell me if you think this is right. But he said that he thought Kennedy had this ability to focus his undivided attention on you. If he was talking to you or you were talking to him, even if it was just for 30 seconds, you had his undivided attention. Or he could make you feel as if he did for that 30 seconds. Does that seem...?

BROWN: Oh, yes, absolutely. And I would escort visitors who had some reason to see the President, and I can recall one instance where I had three people.... What would happen, by the way, is we would have something typed up. Usually Evelyn Lincoln would have a little description of who the people were and something about their background. And it was fascinating to me. A couple of times I observed the President look at this thing, and he's a speed reader. And where I would ponder over something for 15 minutes, he could just go through it like nothing. In this one case the people seemed to be very fascinated to go and be visiting the President. But they didn't have any idea about what to expect. They were interested to some extent as we walked across from the East Wing to the West Wing. And then I saw them at the end of this, and the attitude was completely different. It was just.... He had charm. And most of it was he was a superb listener. And when he was talking to people, it was usually about things that concerned them. And he would want to bring out things of where they were from or, you know, what they were doing, and what their interests were. But he was the consummate listener.

DAITCH: I've heard he asked questions all the time.

BROWN: Yes.

DAITCH: Just constantly...

BROWN: All the time.

DAITCH: ...asked questions about everything.

BROWN: Yes, yes.

DAITCH: I mean every trivial things. Do you remember anything in particular that he might have asked you about or that you would notice him asking other people?

BROWN: Well, you'd better never lie to him or try and tell him a story because he was very quick, you know. If there was something.... I can't recall any specific example. But as I said, he was.... His time was so valuable, and he just wanted the straight story. I don't think I can comment much beyond that.

DAITCH: Yes. You don't remember a time when anybody ever tried to....

BROWN: Yes, I can remember a time, and he knows when he's been fed a story. But I'd rather not repeat it because I think it would be embarrassing for the people that told the story. He, I know, sometimes he was let down.

DAITCH: Can you describe it without maybe naming names just to give us a feel for....

BROWN: No, I think it would be too obvious. But he.... I think the thing that impressed me was in the Cuban Missile Crisis, I can remember that I had no idea what they were talking about, and so it was just a guess. But at one time he and Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy] walked out on the South Lawn. And I thought to myself, Well, there's history in the making. I think the only thing I had heard was that he trusted Bobby above all. And Bobby would tell it like it is. And I think at a critical point when they were discussing all the problems, the embargo and all this other stuff, and he and Bobby were out on the South Lawn, and I thought, we're watching history. I had a great bird's-eye view of that era.

DAITCH: Yes. That's interesting. It must have been fun to watching: Occasionally here he would walk out on the lawn and....

BROWN: Well, it's interesting. I can remember, as I said, my window looked right out on the South Lawn. I can remember I saw the President and Mrs. Kennedy [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] walking just below me really, and they were holding hands. The person that was in the office there at the time, that happened to be a member of the press, made a comment, said, "Oh, that's all just for show." As if they knew they were being watched or whatever. And the fact is that I doubt many people could have seen them.

DAITCH: Right.

BROWN: And I thought that was kind of a cheap shot, you know. As I say, I had the sense that, gee, they were doing this and not for show or not to impress anybody, but it was a genuine feeling.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. And I mean I definitely get the feeling that there was genuine affection there.

BROWN: Oh, yes, yes.

DAITCH: Mr. Stoughton [Cecil Stoughton] actually told me about and, of course, you have these photographs of the kids being in the White House, you know, that sort of thing.

BROWN: Oh, yes.

DAITCH: Did you get a chance to watch the kids romping on the lawn or anything?

BROWN: Yes, you'd see them at play. But I didn't see it as Cecil did because he was obviously there. He took some superb pictures.

DAITCH: Yes, gorgeous pictures.

BROWN: But Mrs. Kennedy, she was also a very thoughtful person. I had the unique task of.... One of my important jobs was to go meet Mrs. Kennedy's horse that was a gift from, and I can be wrong about the names here because it happened so long ago, but I think the horse's name was Sardar. Maybe I'm wrong. But in any event, General Clifton said, "What you have to do is meet the horse and take it up to Fort Myers. And we don't want the press to be involved." You know they made a big thing out of it.

DAITCH: Right, out of getting a gift.

BROWN: And so I had to go and meet this horse at I think four o'clock in the morning or three o'clock. I don't remember when it was. But one of my important tasks was to do it and to deliver him to Fort Myers. And shortly after that I received a photograph from Mrs. Kennedy, and it's one that I treasure.

DAITCH: Really! With the horse?

BROWN: No, not with the horse.

DAITCH: Well, why did they take the horse to Fort Myers?

BROWN: Well, it was a logical place because they did have horses up there anyway. So it was a logical place to put it.

DAITCH: So that was just a gift from Mrs. Kennedy, the photo?

BROWN: I think it was from the president of Pakistan, I believe. As I recall.



DAITCH: Yes. And then she sent you the photo or someone did?

BROWN: Yes. But it was the small thoughtful things like that that, you know, you thought with all the things she had to do. I'm trying to think of other things that.... I wanted to mention one thing that.... I was mentioning Kenny O'Donnell. And another thing that happened that relates to Jack McNally [John J. "Jack" McNally], he came in one day, and he said to me, "The Vice President's office wants another sedan." We had I, think, they were mostly Mercury sedans, and they were used, the staff had some. And Jack made a comment, he said, "And I don't think it's justified." And I said, "Well...." We looked at it, we talked about it for a while, and apparently it wasn't justified. And I said, "But, Jack, you don't expect me to tell the Vice President [Lyndon B. Johnson] that he can't have a sedan. Is that what you're saying?" He was pulling my leg. And he said, "Well, okay. I'll handle it." But, you see, the fact of the matter was that he was looking out for we don't need everybody to have their own special sedan, you know. And so, again, it was sort of the same thing that Kenny O'Donnell was thinking about: Let's be sensible about this.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. It's really interesting. I mean what a different approach from what you see today.

BROWN: Oh, sure.

DAITCH: It would never be questioned.

BROWN: Yes.

DAITCH: It's just another, you know, \$50,000 or whatever.

BROWN: Oh, yes. Oh, and that was a highly-noticed benefit, as you can imagine. Not many people had them.

DAITCH: Yes, I'm sure. That's interesting. So you actually worked in, your office was in the White House.

BROWN: Yes.

DAITCH: Like nine to five, sort of accepted as midnight working hours?

BROWN: Well, General Clifton, he and I rode to work together.

DAITCH: Oh, you did!

BROWN: Yes. And so it was sometimes nine to seven and sometimes earlier, you know. It depended upon what his schedule was.

DAITCH: And how was he? What was General Clifton like as a boss?

BROWN: He was a good boss. He was a thoughtful person also. He was, you know, like a lot of the stuff that I wrote, he would have it framed and give to me, and things like that.

DAITCH: Oh, how nice.

BROWN: And presidential pen and things like that. And I thought his.... The military staff, you know, had a significant responsibility. And I think they all seemed to get along very well together. I'm sure there was some pulling and tugging from time to time. But if we can take a break. I'm not sure I can mention this story. [Interruption] And there are I think a lot of people probably heard this story and would be embarrassed by it. I don't want to say anything. For example, I used to deal a lot with the Vice President's staff, and I could never put this on tape. But the morale of his people was so different from the morale of the White House staff.

DAITCH: I'm sorry, I had just turned the tape machines back on, but we can edit it out when we transcribe it.

BROWN: But anyway, I would prefer not to say anything about it because the people may still be alive.

DAITCH: Yes. Well, one of the things that we can.... I think one of the things that we should say about this, too, is that you can say whatever you want. And then if.... What some people do is close the interview for a period of time until you feel like it would be safe that you wouldn't embarrass anyone.

BROWN: Yes.

DAITCH: Or something like that. Or close portions of it even. So you know....

BROWN: But you can see why.... Even as funny as this story was that it was a reflection on the President, you know, had this special feeling about *Air Force One*. He wasn't going to just let anybody say, well, come along.

DAITCH: Well, can you tell it now that I've turned the tapes back on? Can you say the story again? Because I do think it speaks a lot about....

BROWN: Yes. The Air Force subordinate came over and said to me, "Can I ask you a question about how to deal with something? I just got a call from Kenny O'Donnell, and he told me that I was to convey...." Or I think he meant the general issue maybe, but anyway, "the President wants this person told in no uncertain terms that he can't take advantage of the President's airplane," you know. He said, "I don't know how I'm going to do something like this where I have to talk to a high official." And he

said, "The general should do it, but he's out of town. And Kenny said he wants it done today." And I said, "Well, I can expect by tomorrow Kenny is going to call you and ask you if you did it." And I did say also, "Could I watch while you talk to this guy?" He didn't take very kindly to that. But I don't know what finally came of this. But it's an interesting insight as to how the staff works.

DAITCH: Mmmm hmmm. Yes. Well, I mean truly I do think it's interesting that they cared about not misusing government resources, even something fairly, well, I wouldn't even say that was trivial. I mean the person had apparently invited additional people.

BROWN: Or something along that line. At least that's what I gather.

DAITCH: Yes, to be on the plane or something, and it wasn't his place. That's an interesting kind of thing. And so.... Is that the kind of thing that normally would come through you or in your Air Force counterpart?

BROWN: Well, in a case like that the generals should be the ones that would be handling that, obviously, you know. I could never.... As I said to Jack McNally: You expect me to tell the Vice President he can't have a sedan?

DAITCH: Right. That's not really....

BROWN: No, no.

DAITCH: It's just an interesting kind of thing.

BROWN: You have to be sensitive to what are the rules and what you can do and what you cannot do.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. Well, and I guess the feeling that everybody was sort of playing it by ear because most of these people weren't long-term presidential staff people. They came in with Kennedy.

BROWN: There were some long-term people that were there, and they were great, you know. And they were always so polite and so, just superb people. I can't tell you how.... I don't think I'd ever seen an organization where I saw the work climate and the work attitude.... These people were so dedicated to what they were doing. And they all loved each other. It was so obvious.

DAITCH: And respected each other.

BROWN: Well, as an example, I'm trying to think.... There were some cases where.... Dave Powers [David F. Powers], one of his kids had some sort of an ailment, and he had to carry him to the emergency room or whatever. And General

Clifton and I went out to see what we could do to help, you know. But it was just that feeling, that close feeling.

DAITCH: Yes, it's really family-like.

BROWN: That's exactly right. And these people had been together, I guess, through thick and thin, you know, on their campaigns and so forth.

DAITCH: Well, some of them. Not necessarily all. I mean you, not necessarily, especially the military.

BROWN: Oh, no, no. They were not involved in anything like that. But the other staff were pretty tight-knit, and they were all so.... You always felt special. You always felt respected. And they were very kind, all the way through.

DAITCH: Yes. So tell me a little bit about.... We talked in the car a little bit about Kenny O'Donnell and that you thought highly of his organizational skills and such. Tell me a little bit about him.

BROWN: Well, he was very strict, and he had the President's full backing from everything I could see. If Kenny said it, you'd better do it.

DAITCH: Sounds like a direct order from the President.

BROWN: That's exactly right. And it was essentially a tight ship. But these people all worked together, and they all understood what had to be done. And there was no game-playing. He was very business-like, but he was always courteous. And, as I said, almost to a fault he wanted to be fair and straight. And I thought, boy, this is great.

DAITCH: So you knew where you stood.

BROWN: Everyone, yes.

DAITCH: It was straightforward. Tell me a little bit about Evelyn Lincoln, someone you also spoke highly of. Tell me about her.

BROWN: Oh, she was a love, she really was.

DAITCH: That has to be your topic.

BROWN: She had chocolates on her desk all the time. I'm trying to think of it. It had a fancy name, too. But in any event, I would go down often and say, Well, did he sign off on this? Or did he like that? Or whatever. She said, "Well...." The President had a file where he said, "Let's keep that." And several times she said, "You did

great on that. He said, 'Let's keep that.'" And so I was in the book.

DAITCH: Now what kind of things would that be?

BROWN: Well, these were, one would be people's letters or messages to the Armed Forces. I have some framed, in fact, hanging in my office. And he liked what he saw. And I guess it was, as a rule, I would always, if I saw something well said, I'd keep a copy of it because it might inspire me to say something the same or better.

DAITCH: Right. So he was just keeping a file of things that he.... Because everything was kept, but he just....

BROWN: Oh, yes, yes.

DAITCH: But he'd just keep it handy.

BROWN: But he had a special file where he would say, I guess, Get me that letter. You remember whatever. That was the impression I got. And I thought, boy, I felt so good. But then, of course, I did fail a number of times where he didn't like the way I said it, or he wanted to improve on it. And that's fine.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. A president who writes his own letters. That's amazing. Well, once in a while.

BROWN: Well, these messages and stuff, they're going on all the time. A message to the Armed Forces this, and to foreign visits and so forth. And they're all pretty much all in the same....

[END SIDE 1, TAPE 1]

[BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 1]

DAITCH: They sent it to me from the Library, and it's a copy of, I guess, a Christmas message that....

BROWN: Have you ever seen the Christmas messages and stuff?

DAITCH: I've listened to it, but I haven't seen it.

BROWN: Well, I'll show you what they gave the White House staff.

DAITCH: Oh, really!

BROWN: Yes.

DAITCH: Did they give you like a picture or a cake or anything?

BROWN: Yes, yes. It was beautifully done. In fact I'll show you it in my office. Do you want to take time?

DAITCH: Oh, okay. Let me just stop these. [Interruption] So we got distracted, and now we're going to talk a little bit about the Secret Service.

BROWN: Yes. One of the things that stuck in my mind is in working with the White House staff, I was so impressed with the efficiency and the attitude of the Secret Service detail. One day I went into Jerry Behn's [Gerald A. Behn] office, and I said, "Jerry, you know, the President is frequently out on the South Lawn there. That's where you seem to have a lot of activities going on. And I'm worried about how easy it would be for a guy with a rifle just to pick them off. And I'm sure you're aware of this." And he said, "Oh, yes, we're very much aware of it." And I said, "Well, it just seems to me that that's a big danger." He then pulled out this Rolodex, a big thick Rolodex, with a bunch of three-by-five cards, and he said, "Well, you see here we keep records on anyone that threatens the President or that may be a cause for our concern." He said, "There's hardly a day that goes by that we don't worry about possibilities." Then he pointed to this, it was a quotation from a book written about Lincoln's [Abraham Lincoln] assassination. He looked at that, and he said, "That's what we are faced with every day." And he said, "I never, never stop thinking about it."

DAITCH: And he kept that hanging on his wall right by his desk?

BROWN: Oh, yes, just to remind him. And again they were very, very sensitive to anything the President did. I've often thought they probably don't get the recognition they deserve for what a great job they do of protecting the President. And their concern for him is outstanding.

DAITCH: Yes. Do you remember any incidents that occurred while you were there? I mean you probably would have never even known about them, but was there anything that you knew about, when there was an alarm or something?

BROWN: Not that I can recall, no. Nothing comes to mind.

DAITCH: I mean you probably would have remembered if there was any sort of...

BROWN: Well, I think there were.... The way it was described to me, these things were almost a common thing. Where someone wrote a letter threatening the President, then I guess they would then have to go check this out and see whether the person is in fact a danger. It was not something, this wasn't just a paper file. But it was a file of danger. My impression was that they checked these out very carefully to make sure that there isn't a danger. But I was astonished at the size of the complaints or comments.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. And the numbers of.... Interesting. Isn't that fascinating that, I mean just from then to now, you said he pulled out a Rolodex, and I'm thinking, you know, that it seems like such a primitive device now to try to keep up with all that. But it's amazing what they were able to do just with good old-fashioned pen and paper and doing things like they did.

BROWN: And I guess they.... I don't know if Jerry was in Dallas with the presidential detail, but I have the impression that he was not. My guess is that he was probably on the advance. And I'm sure he was really grieving over that for the rest of his life. But I was so impressed by what they did do for President Kennedy. This was something, I guess, that couldn't be helped.

DAITCH: And, you know, I think, as Mrs. Brown was saying, I think it's a commonplace now, it's been written about before, that Kennedy just didn't, not necessarily that he was expecting to be killed, but he didn't want to change his life because that was a possibility. He wanted to go about his business and just do whatever he needed to do.

BROWN: I have read about the physical pain that he endured, and I was never really that much aware of it. I've talked to Dr. Travell [Janet G. Travell]. I was fascinated with the chair that had been designed for the President and so forth. But he apparently was in physical pain a large part of his time, too.

DAITCH: Oh, yes, yes. I mean a large part of his life.

BROWN: But it was never apparent to me. He was always in a pleasant mood. There was one incident that occurred, and I don't know what happened. But apparently somebody scheduled something for the President, and a number of people from the press showed up, and then he had some people from our office that were there. And it was just a complete goof or something. And we found out that there was a mistake in the schedule. Somebody had made the schedule, and there was a mistake. And the thing that impressed me was that he made light of it. He didn't get excited. He didn't get mad, and he didn't get upset. And I thought, what a class act again. Here was all this foolishness around there, and he paid no attention. He said, "We'll just reschedule, and don't worry about it."

DAITCH: Yes, yes. Wow! And, you know, even if he was frustrated and irritated on the inside, the fact that you would never have known it is also classy. I mean it's even more classy if he really wasn't irritated. But if he was, you never knew about it. That's pretty impressive.

BROWN: Yes.

DAITCH: That he didn't show that kind of stuff. I'm surprised you didn't ever see that he was.... Because he used crutches from time to time and stuff like that.

BROWN: That's what I've read, yes.

DAITCH: Yes. But you never saw him on crutches or anything that....

BROWN: No, no.

DAITCH: That's interesting that he just really held up incredibly well. What did Dr. Travell say when you talked to her?

BROWN: Well, just, nothing that would be sensitive at all. But I commented on the fact that would this help? Would this blocker help? And she said, "Oh, yes. It does have some value."

DAITCH: And it made him feel better.

BROWN: Yes.

DAITCH: That's interesting. Wow! Okay. Well.... [Interruption] Off the record. You can just make one more comment.

BROWN: I just remember how I used to see people go into his office and come out of his office and the difference in their appearance and their demeanor, with a big grin, a good feeling, you know. And he just had the God-given gift of just touching people and inspiring people.

DAITCH: Yes. And you said he had an infectious smile. I've seen that.

BROWN: Yes, yes, yes, he had a grin. And he was very self-effacing, you know. He would poke fun at himself and say, well, you know, "I leave that up to the smart guys." And things like that.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. I've seen him in press conferences and stuff. And they're just absolutely impromptu, and he's so funny.

BROWN: He had a sense of humor, oh, yes, yes.

DAITCH: Okay, now, dinner.

BROWN: Okay. [Interruption]

[END SIDE 2, TAPE 1]



[BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 2]

DAITCH: I'm Vicki Daitch, and I'm interviewing Bill Brown in Mount Dora, Florida. This is August 24, 2005. And this is the second of a series of tapes. The first one wasn't identified clearly. So this is the second one in a series of tapes with Bill Brown. [Interruption] Okay, I think we're in business. We were talking about Bob Kennedy, whatever your....

BROWN: Well, of course, he was greatly involved in the counterinsurgency activity. So we saw him at the White House quite often. What impressed me was he looked like he was 19 years old, you know. He just had that aura. And from time to time socially we'd meet with them, and I was always so impressed with him, and he'd always remember you. I know all that, from everything I saw, from my limited view, the President relied on him enormously. And so I know in the Cuban Missile Crisis, for example, I mentioned how at a critical time I saw them out on the South Lawn, and I thought, well, this is really the critical time. And he depended on him because Bobby would tell it like it is. But he was always very pleasant to be around, and that's about all I can say. I didn't have a lot of close interaction. But I know how much the President relied on him, from my view anyway.

DAITCH: Yes. That seeing them out on the South Lawn during the Cuban Missile Crisis, that's quite an image to have. Knowing how closely they were conferring and....

BROWN: Oh, yes. I thought at this point in time he'd probably be asking, "What do you think? How do you feel we're going?" Because on that executive committee there were obviously widely-diverse personalities and views. And I think it was a classic good example of how to work a problem. I think in the future there'll be a lot of people that will look back on how he did that and how did got different views. And sometimes he excluded himself from specific meetings so that people could be open and say what they wanted to say.

DAITCH: Right.

BROWN: And Bobby then would pull it all together and say: Well, here's what's really happening, and here's what I think.

DAITCH: Yes, I think it was an amazing piece of management. And as I've said they have the tapes, a lot of this was recorded, and you'd probably find that interesting. I think it's been published, too, transcribed and published.

BROWN: And, you know, obviously we weren't involved in that directly. But the general, I guess, kept pretty much up to date on what was happening and so forth.

DAITCH: Yes. I wondered about that because I'm sure General Clifton would have been someone that....

BROWN: Yes. And all I do remember about that is that we were really, it was really very close. I had.... My background was I had attended a special training on nuclear weapons, and I thought, Oh, God, don't let this happen. And I thought we came very close. In fact I think that the credit that should go to President Kennedy for what he did at that time has never been fully stated. I think it was just about like Reagan [Ronald W. Reagan] and the turnaround there in the Cold War. I think it was that dramatic a step.

DAITCH: Yes. Well, and it was in a much shorter period of time.

BROWN: Oh, yes.

DAITCH: It was a single incident that....

BROWN: And as I said, what was frightening was when you got these pictures in the mail and you saw it there, you thought, wow! that put them within striking distance.

DAITCH: Tell me about those pictures. I can't remember if we were talking on tape, the pictures that you thought you got before the Cuban Missile Crisis.

BROWN: Yes. And I don't know if we were among the first or what. But someone, a Cuban, obviously, had mailed this stuff, and it was in Spanish, and it had very detailed information. As my wife will tell you, when she translated this, he mentioned something about the length of runways in great detail. And the pictures really showed the Soviet vehicles, and there was no doubt about what it was. As I said, we translated this, and I think it was.... I know General Clifton was very concerned about: We can't sit on this. We'd better find out what it is. When he saw the pictures, I think he was equally concerned.

DAITCH: Right, right. And this was something that you told me before. I just want to make it clear for the tape. That they said that at the Pentagon or the FBI or wherever, they said: Oh, our translators, it will take a while to translate it. And you took it home to your wife, Anita [Anita Brown], who's a translator.

BROWN: Well, that's right. John Hayes who was the, he was a carryover from many years before, and he said, "It'll take forever to get this thing translated." And the general said, "Well, let's...." And I mentioned that my wife was, you know, she had a top secret clearance, and she had worked for the FBI, and so forth. And he said, "Well, okay, we'll do it." And so she translated it, and I think.... I never did see what the translation was. I didn't read it. But obviously he took it right away and did something with it. I suspect he gave it to CIA, and maybe it was old news. I don't know. But it's the kind of

thing, you wouldn't believe the kind of mail that we would get in the military aide's office. Crazy things.

DAITCH: Right. And you have to sort through and figure out what's important.

BROWN: Well, if they didn't know what to do with it, they sent it to the military aide. And the people that, or even phone calls where they'd want.... There's a freeze on. We want you to send helicopters here or there, you know, and things like that. I mean just crazy things you'd have to handle. And of course, as I said, we had a great office staff. We had, as I recall, two or three enlisted men. We had a couple of good secretaries, superb secretaries. And then we had John Hayes who had been there for years before from the other administration. And so.... He had interesting stories to tell. Because we would get this big package of material on regular Army promotions that the President would have to sign off on it. And I thought, that's crazy. And he said that during Truman's [Harry S. Truman] time they lost a bunch of them. They didn't know where they were. They'd come in the White House, and they disappeared.

DAITCH: And nobody got their promotions.

BROWN: And they were trying to trace, you know, where they were. And so finally somebody went, and they said, "Mr. President, do you remember signing anything on the Army promotions?" And he said, "Oh, they're in my desk drawer." And they said, "Well, sir, we really need them." And he said, "Well, I'm waiting to see if they promote some people that I've suggested be promoted. And when they do that, then I'll sign off on it."

DAITCH: Really!

BROWN: Yes! That's from the Truman.... Now this is a John Hayes story, and I suspect it's true. But they discovered where they were.

DAITCH: Wow! You were saying, though, that Kennedy was very quick to take care of paperwork and that sort of thing?

BROWN: Yes, yes. When I did this little research and said, you know, how much does he sign every day and what's he involved in? I had no conception of it. And I sat with Evelyn Lincoln and I said, "What else happens here? And how many phones calls does he get? And what's involved?" And I thought, there's no way in the world he can be writing letters to the families of people that were killed in action or whatever. And his answer was, "I'll find the time." And I thought, you know, that's a great president.

DAITCH: Yes. Of all things to take an interest in, it's appropriate.

BROWN: And I doubt that anyone would know that except the few people that were involved in this sort of thing.

DAITCH: Mmmm hmmm. Yes. Well, tell me about, you were saying that your office was set up. You had a couple of enlisted people, a couple of secretaries. Were they women secretaries?

BROWN: Yes, yes.

DAITCH: They did filing and whatnot?

BROWN: Yes.

DAITCH: Were they military or civilian?

BROWN: No, they were civilian.

DAITCH: Okay. And so tell me a little bit more about your, you know, what you kind of did routinely.

BROWN: Well, as I said, you could never know what to expect. You'd get some crazy thing that would come in, and the general would say, "Can you handle this?" And he'd parcel this stuff out. But some odd things would come up. And then we would help on different projects, writing a short message for this or answering this letter or whatever. And your day was swallowed up. I never had a dull day at all. And General Clifton was, he was the senior aide, and he just was immersed in so much of what was going on, and he really had to leave the administrative things to, he'd leave it to the staff. And so he was an easy man to work for. He delegated a lot. But it took its toll. I thought, I guess there's a lot of pressure, come to think of it. But he was traveling with the President, you know, and so many things.

DAITCH: Yes. Tell me more about General Clifton because he was a very important advisor.

BROWN: He had, I guess, a very strong background with press relations. He knew so many of these famous correspondents and so forth. They'd be in and out of the office.

DAITCH: Was that from his Army...?

BROWN: Yes, yes. I think he had worked in Public Information. That's my impression.

DAITCH: Okay.

BROWN: Anyway, he knew these people from way back. He had a great connection with them and I think was well regarded. And so we'd find these sort of famous people coming in and out of the office. As I said, of course, he

traveled with the President. And so many things that you'd read about in the paper later on he had handled. And so....

DAITCH: Did you ever sort of find yourself in the paper in.... I mean not necessarily by name, but things that you helped General Clifton work on or deal with?

BROWN: Oh, yes, yes. From time to time, out of curiosity, I would sit in the press briefings, and that was fascinating. And of course Pierre Salinger [Pierre E. G. Salinger] was also in and out of the office. But he was, again, busy, busy, busy, you know. And there was so much going on internally, you know.

DAITCH: Mmmm hmmm. And so what were the press briefings like?

BROWN: Well, what you heard in the press briefings is not what you saw in the paper.

DAITCH: Oh, really!

BROWN: Well, I came away with that impression. I thought they were very tough. They would ask hard questions. Sometimes it was very boring. But the majority of times it was well worth, it was an education for me. Because you'd see these people who were, again, famous people, raising hard questions and asking hard questions. And they were very, very skilled in how they would answer or not answer questions. And you'd walk out thinking, well, they've really got their act together.

DAITCH: Yes. Can you think of examples of that? That's interesting.

BROWN: Well, not specifically. But I remember, as I said, when I'd see Pierre Salinger, I'd think, wow, how does he keep on top of this stuff? The whole staff.... This may sound boring, but the whole staff you had the impression that everybody liked everybody else. I thought that it was amazing how they had pulled these people together. And I mentioned Jack McNally before. He was one of our major contacts, and we'd frequently have lunch together. But he, of course, was a long-term associate of the President's. And he would talk about their experiences. They had this group of people that had worked together for so many years, and I guess they knew by instinct exactly almost what they would be doing. And he was a great teacher for me because he would.... We'd just be chatting about this, and he'd mention how this is something we want to be sensitive to and aware of and so forth. So I considered him kind of my mentor.

DAITCH: Really!

BROWN: About how to deal internally in the White House politics and the operation, you know. But as I said, the amazing thing I saw was that they just seemed to mesh together and get along. And genuinely enjoy being with each other, you know. And how that happened, I have no idea. But we felt included. The military were highly regarded and as part of the team. And so you never minded going the extra mile or coming in

early or staying late or whatever.

DAITCH: Can we talk about that a little bit?

BROWN: Yes.

DAITCH: Because we talked about it in the car coming over. I don't know whether you were there already when the Bay of Pigs happened? Or had you not been assigned yet?

BROWN: No, no.

DAITCH: Okay. But we were talking briefly about how Kennedy was, he felt stung by that, he felt like he had been misled by his military advisors, who he trusted to give him the real bottom line militarily. And I find it interesting that, you know, on the one hand you read that he was quite bitter and then distrustful of the military after that.

BROWN: Yes.

DAITCH: But your experience was not at all that way.

BROWN: Well, I felt we were so much included, they just made you feel what a great assignment it was, you know. You just were like one of the gang. I wasn't there, of course, at that time. But I think you're right. From things that I have read later, he did feel he was kind of let down. Of course you never know. You never know why things happen. But all I do remember is about this missile crisis. I think that the historians have underplayed how powerful and how great the decisions were, the decision-making process, and getting insight from all different categories of the government: from the secretary of defense to the secretary of state and all. And he brought them in, and he encouraged people to argue with each other and express different views. But when push came to shove, as I said, I suspect that he talked to Bobby about what do you think? Because I know from everything I've heard he relied so much on his brother.

DAITCH: He did, yes. But also ultimately I think Kennedy was completely his own man.

BROWN: Oh, yes.

DAITCH: He relied on his brother as a sounding board. And again, I think this is just amazing. Not that anybody is listening to what I think. That's not what the tape is for.

BROWN: Yes.

DAITCH: But it's just so amazing that he was such a young man, and he grew so much and took so much responsibility. You know at that moment he literally had the responsibility of the world on his shoulders.

BROWN: He really did, yes. And yet the place just operated like one big happy family, and that's not just a clever phrase. You really felt that way. You just felt included. And you'd walk through the White House and around the White House, and people would, you know, give you a big "hi." Even the Secret Service people and the other people that were in the White House providing security, you'd be chatting with them, and they would talk about President Kennedy and how he had a phenomenal memory. He had met my wife at a big reception. A couple of days after that, my wife was fascinated just to meet him, he said, "You know I met your wife, and I really enjoyed talking with her." Because they went to the same school essentially almost at Harvard.

But how he remembered things like that was astonishing. And his ability to deal with people. I'd watch them go in, just going in, sort of not knowing what the impressions were; and then coming out, they were sky high. He just had a way of winning people over. He was very modest, and the whole conversation would be him asking questions. He didn't hold court, so to speak. He was asking a lot of questions and getting them. He knew something about the people, and he had a fascinating way of bringing them into the conversation. As I said earlier, watching him talk about Billy Graham and what Billy had done. The President had read in the paper, I guess, about his experience in Latin America. And you could just see how just a great feeling that Billy Graham had being, you know, the President mentioning this, you know.

DAITCH: And that the President was following his activities.

BROWN: Oh, yes. So he was in touch with everything. His breadth of activities were astonishing, you know.

DAITCH: So people would come and be prepared to go into his office and be all tense and maybe....

BROWN: Yes, exactly. And they didn't know what to expect. Then you'd see them walk out, and they were just like this.

DAITCH: Yes.

BROWN: Way up in the air. Astonishing! And the number of times people would walk out and say, "And he remembered.... He talked to me about what I was doing." And the fact that he took enough interest with visitors, for example. And these were important people.

DAITCH: Yes. That is a gift. It's a skill to make people feel valued.

BROWN: Oh, yes. In terms of my later work, I sort of specialized in exploring people skills: What makes an exceptional leader? After I retired from the service, I went back to school and got my doctorate to learn about what management really should be. And I guess I would say he had the people skills to an extent that I've seen rarely. I've seen CEO's of some of the biggest companies in the country, and he would have fit with any of those.

DAITCH: Yes. Because it's remarkable. I mean you're saying that there was this family-type atmosphere and people were always happy to see one another, pleasant and all of that.

BROWN: Oh, yes. And it wasn't phony. It was absolutely genuine.

DAITCH: Right. Because they felt part of something bigger maybe?

BROWN: Well, they were included, yes. Absolutely.

DAITCH: Because I know that on the one hand there's this family-like atmosphere. But on the other hand, it's certainly true that not everybody agreed with everybody. That's one of the things he, you said it yourself, one of the things he liked was to get a lot of different opinions.

BROWN: But, for example, McNally used to.... He would be in the office at least every day almost. And he'd have something chipper to say, and you just felt.... And you'd go to the White House mess, and you might sit down with any number of important people. And you'd be astonished to hear, you know, some of these people were.... I was thinking not just McGeorge Bundy but many others. And it was.... I was just astonished to even be included in that, you know, to be in the White House mess and all. And Clifton was very good about that. He would include me in things like this, and he didn't have to. And that was sort of a rare privilege. But again, you'd sit down, you wouldn't know who'd you be sitting next to. Very often at big round tables, a couple of them, and George McGovern.

DAITCH: Really!

BROWN: Yes. It was fascinating to hear them talk about different things. I was just like a fly on the wall.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. Do you remember anything in particular from those mess-hall...?

BROWN: Well, very often they'd be talking about what was going on in the world. I mean it wasn't the classified stuff, of course. But they'd be talking about what's in the newspapers and what's happening and things like that. And these are the guys that were sort of making the news, if you will.



DAITCH: Yes. That must have been absolutely fascinating. Wow!

BROWN: Well, you can imagine, you know. I came from a farm, and I just couldn't imagine myself being in this company.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. How exciting!

BROWN: Oh, yes.

DAITCH: You were in the military, though, in that.

BROWN: Yes.

DAITCH: Did you have any special access to sort of things that might have been, well, I'm sure you had some access to things that were classified. But I mean military things that were going on?

BROWN: Well, yes. And from time to time General Clifton would talk to me about if there was something about nuclear. And I had just been trained in that. But this was not very frequent, but it did happen. Of course Vietnam was center stage at the time, and that took an enormous amount of time. And you can see the letters that we talked about earlier. That was a very painful time.

DAITCH: Right. Yes, tell me about what was going.... There's been a lot of debate about whether Kennedy would have stayed in Vietnam or whether he would have withdrawn. Tell me from your perspective what was going on at the time. Because that was prior to the major escalation, of course.

BROWN: Yes. Well, I guess the sole impression I have, and it's based upon talking to friends that I had that were over there, that we in fact had done a credible job. We had had some ups and downs. But that we left before we should have maybe. I don't know. But it's a sad chapter in our history.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. Do you remember having any general impressions of what the Kennedy White House was.... I mean were they trying to avoid escalation actively, or were they...?

BROWN: Well, I'll tell you this: That he had many people coming in the White House who were the experts. They were people that had been there. They were on the ground. They were very heavily involved. And the President would take a lot of time to talk to these people and get their insight. The thing that impressed me was he wasn't depending upon a report from Vietnam. He would have people coming back in who were, they were on-the-ground experts. They knew what was going on. And he wanted to hear it firsthand. He wasn't content with reading some press briefing or whatever. And so my sense is his head was screwed on right. He was getting the facts.

DAITCH: Right.

BROWN: I can't remember the names of the people, but they were key people that had been over there and come back and said: Here's what's happening. Here's what we ought to do. He was always drawing in information. He was a questioner.

DAITCH: Yes. I can't imagine a better characteristic for a president, you know, someone who can....

BROWN: He was getting to the facts, yes. And he wasn't depending upon some remote report, you know, miles away.

DAITCH: Yes, that's interesting. That's just a question that always comes up because he sort of left conflicting messages behind. And I wonder if maybe he just, he was trying to play it by ear and just keep on top of the situation and decide as time went on what to do next.

BROWN: Well, I don't know. I wonder, you know, how it could have been done differently. And I'm not wise enough to second guess how it might have been. But it was a sad chapter. I think the press and the public had a great influence on what our final course of action was. It's always easy to second guess: We should've done this and we should've done that. But I can look back on, again, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and I'll say it again: I think the historians really have underplayed how powerful a decision that was, decisions, and how great that.... That changed the world. I really believe it.

DAITCH: Yes. I think it's getting more now that the tapes have come out about how it was handled. It's interesting that your impressions are so exactly accurate of what was happening. And this is that he had drawn in all these advisors, and they all had different opinions about what should be done.

BROWN: Oh, yes. And he deliberately would invite in people that he knew had an opposite view of his, and he wanted to hear it because he was not above learning something new. And I thought he was one smart cookie.

DAITCH: Yes. Well, and he had children. I mean everybody does. But I think that in his mind he's thinking, What does this mean for our children? And I think that's a great way to make decisions.

BROWN: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

DAITCH: I can't think of a better way, really. And I don't know if that's explicitly true because you don't always know what somebody's thinking deepest in their hearts. But I think that's a pretty....

BROWN: But the end result was enormous, I thought. What a sigh of relief! I guess I was overly concerned because I had just finished this nuclear weapons course, and I thought, oh, boy!

DAITCH: Well, I don't think you were overly concerned because I think it really was....

BROWN: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Then when I saw all of this, these pictures and stuff, it was just.... We came very close to doing the wrong thing. And thank God we had a smart president in the White House who listened to a lot of good advice and decided what to do.

DAITCH: Yes.

BROWN: That changed the world, I believe, I really believe.

DAITCH: Yes. Did you, in your capacity as sort of the resident nuclear expert in the White House, did they ask you to talk about what some of those things...?

BROWN: No. General Clifton would ask about what I knew about this or that, and that was about the extent of it. I never talked to the President about it at all. Maybe General Clifton would say what I said. I don't know.

DAITCH: Right. What other kind of... I mean you were sort of the nuclear, and again, this is a very dangerous thing, were there other things that you did having to do with nuclear weapons? Or maybe you wrote things about them?

BROWN: Well, no, the general would ask questions about, you know, what about this and what about that? And I'd say, Well, this is what I know about it. And as I said, I certainly wouldn't claim that I was an expert because I had just attended a several-week course at Fort Leavenworth after I finished the Command General Staff College. My classification, in fact, was nuclear weapons officer; I fortunately never had to work in that field.

DAITCH: Yes, that's a good thing.

BROWN: Yes, yes.

DAITCH: So what else did you do in the...? Actually maybe if you'd tell me again about, you talked about the horse, and you talked about a couple of other sort of errand-type things that you did. But we didn't talk about that on tape, I don't think. Delivering a painting or something?

BROWN: Well, yes. The general would say, "How'd you like a trip to New York?" And I'd say, "Well, I love trips to New York." And he'd say, "Well, we have this portrait of the President." And I can't remember what was all involved. But it had to go back to the artist, and it was a beautiful likeness of President Kennedy. And so I get on an airplane and carry it to New York. And you can imagine being asked on the way, because I had to carry it with me

DAITCH: Yes. And was it framed?

BROWN: Oh, yes, yes.

DAITCH: It wasn't rolled?

BROWN: No, no, it was framed. It was a painting. And you had to sort of get permission because people don't want you, you're just sitting with a portrait, you know. But that sort of thing. And there were other similar things where I'd have to take a trip here and there. But as I said, you can't imagine the responsibility that Clifton had. And so anything he wanted me to do, gee, I'd say, "Sure." Because he was on the go. And it took a heavy toll. I saw him later in the Pentagon, and he had just aged so much, I thought, after working within the White House. He died, I guess, shortly after I saw him the last time.

DAITCH: He did? Really. Oh.

BROWN: Yes.

DAITCH: Actually again, let's talk a little bit more about him because I think he's a very, sort of a central character in that period.

BROWN: Oh, yes.

DAITCH: And, you know, anything that you can remember about what he was doing or how he seemed to feel about it?

BROWN: Well, my impression was that the President counted on him as his principal advisor. The other services, of course, had their representation. And my impression was that they pretty much divided up, they knew exactly this is my area of responsibility. And if there was ever any crossing over, it was discussed in a pleasant way without any big brouhaha, you know. And so I think they worked surprisingly well as to working together. But they all had their own big sense of responsibilities for sure.

DAITCH: Yes. How do you think...? What was different about Clifton's responsibility and, I guess the .... He had an Air Force and Navy?

BROWN: Air Force and Navy, yes. The Air Force, obviously, was responsible for *Air Force One* and the President's travels. And Tazwell Shepard [Tazwell T. Shepard, Jr.] was the Navy aide, and he was a very nice guy. He had responsibility for the helicopters and things like that, you know. So they pretty much divided it up. Surprisingly, if there were any squabbles, I sure wasn't aware of it. Maybe he kept me unaware. But you have a generally good feeling. When you walk in an office, you can get.... People were just super nice. I wondered if I'd kind of landed in heaven sometimes because I couldn't imagine how people would include you in. As a matter of fact, there were so many times people on the staff would come in and say, "There's something going on tomorrow night. Do you think you'd be interested in...." And of course I really wasn't because I was so much involved with my work. But we'd be invited to things. And after a while you'd....

DAITCH: Parties or people going out somewhere?

BROWN: Oh, yes.

DAITCH: Wow. So the whole staff was just kind of casual that way?

BROWN: They were. And I honestly would say I never saw, never, come to think of it, heard a cross word. I'm sure there probably was without a doubt. But you always had the feeling that this was a great place to work. And they got along well. And as I said, it was an experience that people find it hard to believe that you can have 300 people, or however many there were in the White House, that could work together in such harmony. But it started at the top.

DAITCH: Yes. Something about creating that.

BROWN: Well, and they were very thoughtful. As I said, you'd do some small thing for them, and they would single you out and compliment you and/or like Mrs. Kennedy sending me this signed autograph, you know.

DAITCH: Yes, the picture.

BROWN: The picture, yes.

DAITCH: That was for taking the horse?

BROWN: Yes.

DAITCH: Yes. But, you know, you're right. That's a very nice little gesture.

BROWN: Very, yes. And you weren't just nobody. They would recognize you and know your name and so forth. And you wonder. They were super good with people, you know. And there was so much going on there, you kind of wonder how it all fit together. But they had an enormously talented staff, I thought, from Pamela Turnure

and Tish Baldrige [Letitia Baldrige]. And they handled their part of the world, you know. They'd be dropping in the office just chatting. And these were like people that I'd read about in the newspapers. And I'm sitting there thinking, Wow! Truly. It was awesome.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. It's very interesting stuff. I would like to hear more actually how you, applying sort of a more analytical perspective to it from all these years back. And again, you don't have the kind of information about this working group as you might have about somebody that you were surveying as part of your consulting business.

BROWN: Well, no. It's curious, but I'd have to say that that was kind of a measure, if you will, when I started looking at all these different organizations. For example, I worked for Disney for years, and I'd be dealing with the vice presidents, the top echelon, and that was a great example of a business. And you'd sort of compare. How did they do what they do? And how does that compare with where I was and what I had done? Because you always carry that sense of what it was like in the Kennedy years. And they talk about Camelot, and it was a myth. Well, it really wasn't a myth. It was Camelot, it was a special place. And you had a feeling like I'm a part of something that's really exceptional. And it was I think regarded by the outside world that way. And to be on the inside.... As I said, I came from a farm, and I wasn't well educated really. And I just felt so great about being there.

DAITCH: But I think you're not the only one. I mean people who did come from, you know, High Society or had been educated at Harvard and so on.

BROWN: Oh, sure.

DAITCH: I think many of them felt the same way. There's something.... I mean how can you characterize that sort of specialness? If it came from the top, can you think of...?

BROWN: The people skills were the key.

DAITCH: You think so?

BROWN: Oh, yes, without a doubt. And the thoughtful things that.... Mrs. Kennedy would send a little note to Tish, you know. Just the great relationship there as well.

DAITCH: You know with training dogs and dog behavior, it's all about positive reinforcement. Everything about training is about letting him know when he's doing something right instead of yelling at him when he does something wrong.

BROWN: Yes. Well, for example, I had written some messages where I made a mistake in something. And nobody would raise a lot of sand about it. They'd say, Oh, you have to.... They don't refer to it this way. Change that. You know. And there was no big deal about it. But again, I went through the McNally school. And I'd talk to him and say, "Jack, how do I deal with something like this?" And he'd say, "Well, here is what you do." See, he was dealing from way back when they were a small team, becoming a president. And as I said, I can't tell you how.... He was my mentor, really, truly. And I'd see him almost every day. I think there were maybe four or five of the so-called Irish Mafia. And again, they knew what each other were doing by instinct almost.

DAITCH: You loved them, didn't you, though?

BROWN: Oh, yes. And they were not arrogant. They were kind people. And you'd do anything to help them, you know.

DAITCH: I think you said, unless I'm mis-remembering, did you say that Kenny O'Donnell was real brisk, though, or a little...?

BROWN: Well, he was perceived that way because he was busy, you know. But I would say, seeing people in that position, he was the chief of staff, he was as good as I could imagine ever. He ran a tight ship. He was honest as the day is long. And there was no foolishness. And if you had a job, you'd better do it. And he would tell it like it is. I'm one of his big fans, I have to tell you.

DAITCH: Really?

BROWN: And he would, as I said, I got tired after a while of him saying, "Now remember, no favoritism. No special.... Don't do anything special because we don't want to have that, you know, to worry about." And I thought, well, that's great.

DAITCH: Yes, it is. I think it's pretty remarkable.

BROWN: And it wasn't just one or two things. It was a lot of these. And he'd call, and he'd say, "I've got this request, and what do you think we can do about this?" And a lot of times we'd say, Well, the Army says this, and here is what the rules are. And he'd say, "Okay, that's what we'll do."

DAITCH: Yes. The rules are the rules.

BROWN: The rules are the rules, yes. And don't bend them to later be embarrassed about it.

DAITCH: Right, right. Yes. It's interesting.

BROWN: But he did come across.... He was a nice guy and a nice smile. But he was tough. And I'll tell you, if he told you to do something, you'd better do it. Like I told you about this one incident where if Kenny said you tell him, you'd better tell him.

DAITCH: But do you remember an incident where somebody didn't, and he blasted him out or something?

BROWN: No, no, no.

DAITCH: It was just the authority behind it was....

BROWN: Yes. But, for example, you could go to Evelyn Lincoln anytime during the day, and she'd have a pleasant thing to say to you and chat with you. I was in awe of that. Imagine! These people were so close to the President, and they were nice and polite, and they made you feel like you were something special. And that's the whole aura of the Kennedy time: You felt like you were someone special. And where in business do you find that today?

DAITCH: Right, right. I don't know. You probably know if there's any place where it is.

BROWN: Well, there aren't many places like that.

DAITCH: No.

BROWN: And I will say in my experience, and I've seen all kinds of companies, all kinds of businesses, and you always would be comparing that with places that you've been or things that you've done. And the White House was in a special category, you know, I must say. And it wasn't just the aura of the White House. It was the people in it. We felt, I felt, included and knew everybody. And just, as I said, I felt a part of it.

DAITCH: I would imagine that would have a lot of benefits, too, in terms of just getting things done and in terms of getting information that is correct, instead of people sort of everybody jockeying for position and withholding information here and doling it out. And you know how people. . .

BROWN: Oh, sure, sure. Yes, yes.

DAITCH: ...tend to make themselves feel important or whatever. I would think....

[END SIDE 1, TAPE 2]

[BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 2]



DAITCH: ...automatically around just when I have to take that and turn it over. But did you want a cup of coffee or something?

BROWN: Well, do you want to take a break? And we can, it's nine o'clock. We can go pick up that.... [Interruption] Was it Evelyn Lincoln that we were talking about?

DAITCH: Yes, you said you had something about Evelyn Lincoln.

BROWN: You always had the feeling that no matter what you asked in the staff, people would extend themselves to go out of their way to be not just nice but super nice. Always pleasant. Now, one day I wanted to take my wife and the children in to see the President's office, and I knew he was going to be gone. So we went over and saw Evelyn Lincoln. And she took, oh, I would say almost a half hour just talking about the White House and the President's office and so forth. And she pointed out the remains of what had happened with the Eisenhower White House where the President, President Eisenhower, would go out and have his golf shoes on, and he would walk in the Oval Office and make severe indentations.

DAITCH: Yeow! In the floor?

BROWN: In the floor. And this was sort of a curiosity in the White House. And the President then, President Kennedy, said, "Well, that's part of history. We don't want to change that." Now I don't know if the present White House has changed it or if somebody else has changed it. But again, that was something he'd always take a visitor to and say, "This was during the Eisenhower regime." And it was just something that happened, you know.

DAITCH: I love the way he was so conscious of history. Because I really, I can see him thinking about things that way.

BROWN: Exactly.

DAITCH: And looking a hundred years from now if somebody went into the Oval Office, and of course they may not be there anymore, but if they were, that would be something of interest just like it would be to us if President Lincoln had, you know, left a mark of some kind, a physical mark on a building. It would be fascinating for us to see that.

BROWN: But, see, Evelyn took all this time to talk about what went on there and how it worked. And there were little alcoves where the President might position himself from time to time.

DAITCH: And were there, I've never been in the Oval Office, there's a replica sort of in the Library. But were there particular places she said where he liked to work?

BROWN: Oh, yes, yes. Yes, absolutely.

DAITCH: Do you remember any? He wasn't just always sitting behind his big old desk?

BROWN: No. Most of the time when I went to have anything to see him about or say, he was in the Oval Office with major.... But the other alcove, I've forgotten what they used to call it, but it was just a small, essentially a small office where he could concentrate away from everything.

DAITCH: Was that adjacent to the Oval Office?

BROWN: It was part of the Oval Office. It was attached on to it. In fact, I guess under Clinton [William J. Clinton], the Clinton time, it became sort of a joke about that little alcove.

DAITCH: Oh, that room. [Laughter] We won't talk about that room. So that's interesting. I mean again, that goes back to that same thing you were talking about before: the quality of the relationships there. That they would bring people into the Oval Office and just let you, let your family have the opportunity to see it and so on.

BROWN: And, of course, we knew everybody. And the Secret Service, of course, was always around. You just had a feeling like you belonged. And I don't want to sound like a Pollyanna because, you know, we did have, life wasn't perfect, and, as I said, I'd make a mistake on a message and so forth and embarrassing. But General Clifton would never raise his voice. He'd say, "Well, we made a mistake here. So get it fixed." And that was the end of it, you know.

DAITCH: Yes. So there's no, people aren't going around feeling inferior or anything.

BROWN: No. No hollering and screaming and that sort of thing. That just never happened. And everyplace you went, it was the same way. The correspondence office was right near ours on the East Wing. And you'd go in there, and the people were hard at work, you know, reading all the correspondence. Tons of it, as you can imagine.

DAITCH: Oh, yes.

BROWN: And whenever they couldn't find a place to send it, they sent it to us. It seemed like.

DAITCH: Yes? Did it all seem to be military stuff or some of it wasn't?

BROWN: Oh, no, no, no. What?

ANITA: Car keys.

BROWN: Mine?

ANITA: Yes, so I can get the newspaper.

BROWN: Oh, why don't you use the golf cart?

ANITA: It's in your car.

BROWN: What's in the car?

ANITA: The newspaper.

BROWN: Oh, okay. Oh, oh, oh. Okay, I'm sorry.

DAITCH: We can cross all that out. I think this might be a good place to compare to the just briefly.... I know you didn't want to dwell on this. But to compare the Johnson [Lyndon Baines Johnson] staff, the Vice President's staff.

BROWN: The only thing I could compare is that people that were worked for President Johnson I don't think were as happy as people in the main White House. And you'd be, I'd sit with them in the White House mess and have lunch or whatever, and they were not treated in the same caring and loving and nice way as in the Kennedy White House. It was a happy place. I'm sure there were strong words from time to time, but I never heard them. And when mistakes were made, they were quietly dealt with in a classy way. And I was troubled because it wasn't just the staff; it was he dealt with a lot of people in his functions, and some of them were just very, very disturbed by their personal treatment. So that's about all I can say.

DAITCH: Can you think of any in particular that anyone had mentioned anything to you or any incident that you witnessed?

BROWN: Yes. I was having lunch, and this gentleman appeared. He said he had just gone through an exercise with the Vice President, and he had been chewed out literally in front of a bunch of people, and it was embarrassing. And this man was a person of substantial rank, you know, and I guess experience. And he just, he was beside himself. And the aide sort of said, "Well, you know, sometimes he speaks a little strong but really he's a nice person." You know and so forth. But as I said, that never occurred that I ever saw or even heard of in the White House with the President's office.

DAITCH: Do you think.... I mean in your experience afterwards and also in the White House, do you think that people who generally create this sort of caring, pleasant environment in that people get along and stuff, those people don't

need to yell and scream because when all it takes is the smallest word to make somebody understand that they made a mistake and then they just correct it?

BROWN: Absolutely. And, you know, this was the beginning of my exploration into what I later developed in 25 years of consulting. In the human resource field I spent half of my life literally talking to people and listening to what they think about their boss and about their job and about the company. Over the years I've had a chance to be in some of the biggest and the best. In G.E., I did a short-term consulting there. I had Chrysler. Oh, I can't think of so many others. Disney World, Sea World. And what I find is where the people are treated in a kind way, in a caring way, with respect, that's the major element, they perform in an exceptional way. And the companies that I see that are succeeding beyond all of their competitors are areas where you have a strong set of people skills where the CEO or the people near the top are genuinely concerned about people. They're not faking it. And that was what I learned maybe most of all in the White House. You had a sense that the President really cared. And the people he had surrounding him, the McNallys and Kenny and others, you were never subjected to any rancor or any embarrassment. It just never happened. At least never that I saw.

DAITCH: Right. Well, probably if it did happen, it would've happened very privately.

BROWN: Well, I would hope so. But it taught me a good lesson: If the CEO is a caring, if he cares, cares about people, then they'll care about the job and the business.

DAITCH: I had heard that, and again I know you can't address this from a close friendship kind of thing, but I had heard that Kennedy was sort of hard to know. Of all the people that I've talked to, hardly anyone would say, Yes, I was a close friend of Kennedy's because people didn't, people were friendly and close associates and advisors and all of that, but not very many people would say they were close friends. And I didn't know if that's like people don't want to claim too much for themselves?

BROWN: Yes, yes.

DAITCH: Or if there was genuinely sort of a part of him that was always held aside?

BROWN: I'm not sure I follow your last part.

DAITCH: Well, maybe that he was, reserved is not the right word, I guess. But if there was just a part of him that was closed always, you know, so that people never felt that they really knew him or really could claim intimacy with him.

BROWN: Well, that may be. But I would say all the people that I knew in the White House felt a personal attachment to the President and Mrs. Kennedy. I really believe that. And why? Well, because they were treated decently and with a great deal of caring, you know. And you can't fake that.

DAITCH: No.

BROWN: As I said, the small things, where he didn't have enough time to be writing to families of casualties; he really didn't have the time. He shouldn't have been doing it, in my opinion. But he said, "I'll take the time." And I said, "Now that's a president." I was embarrassed because I did this great staff work, and I was cockeyed. And what he really was saying to me: I care enough that I'm going to do it.

DAITCH: Yes. It's very impressive, and that sort of thing, I think, is very.... And I can't imagine that. I'm sure there are other presidents who, and other leaders of different kinds, you know, generals or whatever, who had great devotion and loyalty from their staffs. But I have been astounded by, you were saying that you were tore up when he was killed. But so many people....

BROWN: Well, for example, you talk to the White House police, you know, and just walking around or just saying hello and standing and talking when I'm waiting for something or whatever, and all of these people, from the lowest to the highest, felt a personal attachment to the President. Now how did he get that? I remember several of these White House police people, you'd find them all over the place, and you'd just strike up a conversation. I'd say, "This is a great place to work, isn't it?" And he'd say, "Isn't it? Boy, this something." You know. And they'd go on and on because the whole climate, the whole feeling was it was a kind and a decent and a great and a beautiful place to be. It was Camelot.

DAITCH: Yes. That would've been a good place to end, but we have a lot more to talk about. You know, that was a nice little.... I wanted to ask you sort of specifically about some of the events, and I again don't know how much you were involved in them, but civil rights was one of the things that's been sort of under-represented, you know, in the....

BROWN: Yes, and I was there at the time.

DAITCH: Were you?

BROWN: Yes.

DAITCH: Can you talk about the, you know, the March on Washington or other things that were happening?

BROWN: Well, I remember that the President had contact, I think it was General Abrams [Creighton Abrams] was his point of contact. And all I know is that they were determined that they were going to make it happen.

DAITCH: And this was for Ole Miss or what?

BROWN: Yes, yes. And you had the feeling, well, you know, we're long past due for this. And so there was never any question or any doubt that the right thing was being done and maybe long overdue. And it wasn't fake. They were doing something that really made a difference.

DAITCH: Well, and it was risky politically.

BROWN: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Absolutely. Again, the President had his staff and some specialists in that area that were his counterpart, if you will. But, yes, we were in close contact, I know in our office, with what was happening and so forth.

DAITCH: You were?

BROWN: Yes.

DAITCH: Do you remember anything in particular about that? Because I would think you weren't down there, but even just talking to people, that was a scary business.

BROWN: Well, it was. And it was risky. I'm sure politically it was risky. But it was the right thing to do, you know.

DAITCH: Yes. I remember hearing about one phone conversation. I suppose it was with the President and maybe Abrams, I'm not sure. But literally they were sort of captive in some building by the mob outside.

BROWN: But again, if you knew General Abrams, and I later worked for him in the Pentagon, and he was a stoic person. No foolishness, and he's gonna get it done.

DAITCH: Yes.

BROWN: And again, I don't know how Kennedy finds people like this. But he was an extension of the President. No doubt about it. And he was one of the smartest people in the Army, from everything I know. He did it the right way, and we're better for it, you know.

DAITCH: Yes, that was a very, very dangerous moment. Not like the Cuban Missile Crisis. But within our country, it was a very dangerous moment. It could....

BROWN: It was very risky.

DAITCH: Yes, it could have blown up both politically and, you know, it could have been ugly.

BROWN: That's right.

DAITCH: I mean there could have been a lot of lives lost and that sort of thing.

BROWN: But in so many ways he changed the world, if you think about it. And it's a tragedy that he didn't live long enough to do more.

DAITCH: Really a dark time in a lot of ways, you know, a time of such hope and promise and then....

BROWN: Oh, yes. We were involved in the messages and the conversations, the communications. And General Clifton again was very much tied up in that. I was a very minor part of it, you know. But I was there and hearing about it.

DAITCH: Yes. And the general feeling everywhere was that, look, this just needs to be done. It has to happen.

BROWN: Well, it was long overdue. Long overdue.

DAITCH: Yes. And so everyone in the White House.... I'm sure there was probably a little bit of the sort of, you know, why us?

BROWN: Oh, no!

DAITCH: No?

BROWN: I don't think ever. As I said, this Irish Mafia, or call them what you will, they all sort of spoke as one. They knew exactly which way we were going. And if the President said, "march!", they marched. It's a great, a telling lesson: If you expect to be a successful CEO, you'd better surround yourself with exceptional people because you can't do it on your own. And in their own way, all of these people were exceptional people.

DAITCH: Who else did you, you talked about McNally and O'Donnell and Evelyn Lincoln, who else did you like particularly or admire?

BROWN: Well, Tish Baldrige was one of my favorites because she.... I would see her fairly often, and she was just a stellar person. She was also very, very wise and a lot of funny things. I mentioned how in the Cuban Missile Crisis she came storming in saying, "What's going on?" Well, she was, again, a stellar performer. But again, all of the people on Mrs. Kennedy's staff were the same way. I knew them only slightly. But always with a pleasant hello and a chat here and there. It was just a happy climate, a happy environment.

DAITCH: Yes. Did you have much to do with Ted Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen]?

BROWN: No. He was I guess a lot of the brains behind a lot of Kennedy's writings or whatever. It seems to me there was a Fred Holborn [Frederick Holborn], I think. Does that ring a bell? He was also, I think, did work for Sorensen. They had a number of people that were writing things. But Sorensen was, I'm sure, a very influential part of that. He was present in almost everything that was very significant for the President. But I knew him only to see him. I didn't know him well.

DAITCH: Right. Yes. And you talked about writing things for the President. Were there like various.... I suppose a lot of people had to write things up. I mean you had your Sorensens and your Salingers and....

BROWN: Oh, yes. Yes. Well, for example, they're opening an armory in Sheboygan or wherever. And somebody would have to write a message for the President to be videoed. So when they opened the armory or whatever it is, the President's there, but he's not there, you know. And so these were sort of trivial things, but somebody had to do them.

DAITCH: Right. So it would just be a routine. I brought a CD with me. You probably already have some of this stuff. I think I told you it's a Christmas message or something.

BROWN: Oh, yes.

DAITCH: And at the Library they.... It was something that you had written. I listened to it. It was good. You know it sounds very sincere.

BROWN: Well, and as I said, how they accomplished this has always been a puzzle to me. How do you get 300 people pulling in the same direction, loving their work, inspired by their work, and loyal to everything the President did and said. How do you get that? There are not many places where I've visited; and I've been in, I don't know, hundreds, I guess, of companies. And you just don't find that climate, the happiness, the caring. I think that's the word that sticks in my mind most of all. He cared, and she cared.

DAITCH: Yes. I think that one of the things that comes up frequently is this sort of idealistic, and even though Kennedy himself from all accounts was very empirical, pragmatic thinker, you were saying he gathered his facts, talked to a lot of people and made his policies....

BROWN: Oh, yes, absolutely.



DAITCH: Nevertheless, there was this idealistic aura or tone set during his presidency of “Ask not what your country can do for you” kind of thing. I wonder if that had some influence on it. I mean people genuinely thought they were contributing.

BROWN: Oh, yes, yes. They were on a great experience, and they were a part of it. And everybody felt that really.

DAITCH: Yes, it’s an amazing time. Getting back to the civil rights stuff, had you already left the White House by the time of the March on Washington?

BROWN: I don’t remember that, to be honest with you. It seems, well.... I don’t remember that so I guess I wasn’t there.

DAITCH: I want to say it was August, July or August, ’63. Something like that.

BROWN: It doesn’t ring a bell.

DAITCH: Yes, it was just, you know, such a big event. And I know they were, again, worried that there might be some flash point during this, all these people crowded together in the city. But it was beautifully done. From all accounts, the President was pleased with the way that went.

BROWN: Well, you kind of wonder where will we place him in history? And it’s pretty hard to give a score. But I would say he’d be near the top, without a doubt. People will look back probably five or ten years from now and say, My God! What happened there? And what a great thing was done. And how one person can have such an impact on the future of the world.

DAITCH: And again, I think that it’s fair to say that he had a very short time in office.

BROWN: Yes, really. Yes.

DAITCH: It was very, very brief. So it’s not fair to rank him with someone like, say, Lincoln or somebody like that. But at the same time, he, I think, was at this very important transition period.

BROWN: Well, for example, President Bush [George W. Bush] is doing what Kennedy did. Think about it. You look at major things that Kennedy accomplished, Bush is copying. I believe that’s a fact, not a question.

DAITCH: Like what in particular?

BROWN: Well, for example, the reducing, the cutting of taxes. Getting a handle on government expenditures and budget and so forth. All of these things were started.... Well, I won’t say were started because I suppose even before

Kennedy's time it was happening.

DAITCH: Yes. There's always things that sort of come and go. But, yes. I mean Kennedy was one of those people who....And the economic things that he did, his economic policies, were, I think, things that he was taking some chances with, too, that were not necessarily just common wisdom at that time.

BROWN: But again, he surrounded himself with exceptional people, people that.... He didn't have just a bunch of cowboys there. He had some brilliant people, and everything was well thought-out and well accomplished.

DAITCH: Yes, an interesting time. Let's see, I want to be sure.... Oh, oh, I know! This goes back to the same stuff, but I just want to talk about it briefly. You were telling me that, you know, some of the tasks you would do. Go pick up a horse or take a painting to New York or something. And, you know, you're a very accomplished person already. You were young, and you were an aide. But nevertheless, you're a major or something in the Army, and you graduated first in your class at Leavenworth and so on. Did it not, you know, bother you, oh, I'm just being perceived as an errand boy or something?

BROWN: Oh, no. No. You know let's face it, you were a member of this distinguished group, you know. And to be even included with all these people was such a kick and such an honor. So never did I feel I was under-performing or.... Because the stuff that we were dealing with had some impact. And again, you were all a part of it.

DAITCH: Everybody just did whatever.

BROWN: Oh, yes. Sure. So meeting a horse in the middle of the night was not my idea of fun, but I would've done anything for Mrs. Kennedy, you know. And you just had that feeling. And it was the same way with the President. We didn't work a 40-hour week for sure.

DAITCH: Yes. I've heard a lot of people say that there were long hours, but nobody complained.

BROWN: No. But the curious thing is how do you duplicate this? Because that's the thing I'm always looking at is you're looking at companies that are failing or almost failing or not making it one way or another, and I can't help but think back to this golden time when I was there and what it was. They had a curious mixture of different personalities that all somehow seemed to mesh together. And the secret was the President was self-effacing. He was in a way very humble but very accomplished from his early time in World War II as an example. And everybody knew about this. And the things I treasure most are things that I carried away from the White House, like the little buttons and symbols and whatever.

DAITCH: Yes, the napkin ring that you had showed me.

BROWN: Yes, yes. And, as I said, they made you feel special. And I look at companies today where they make their people feel special, and they're succeeding beyond all possible things that you'd expect them to do. And that's what he did. He was a superb manager. And he surrounded himself with a bunch of pretty bright people, and they all got along. I can't think of any squabble where people would.... And I'll tell you, where I've worked it wasn't the same. And you sort of wonder why.

DAITCH: Right. You would think that would be the model that everybody would strive for.

BROWN: Well, yes. I guess I shouldn't bring up where I worked before. But you can't help but make comparisons. And say, Why can't they be like that?

DAITCH: Yes, yes. Absolutely. And I suppose it's very normal in other places of work and certainly places I've been, too, somebody just drops by your office and says, you know, oh, So-and-so just chewed me out.

BROWN: Yes, yes.

DAITCH: Or So-and-so just took a project that was really my baby, and he's taking credit or, you know, whatever it is.

BROWN: Well, I can think of cases where they would deal with people in a way that would say: I don't care about you or whatever. And you don't win that way.

DAITCH: Right.

BROWN: And never did I see that feeling evidenced in the White House. I thought.... As I said, there was so much to this Camelot thing. People sort of felt, we really literally felt that this was a special thing; that we were on a, if you will, on a very, very significant campaign or mission, if you will. And people felt a part of it. And how do you get people to feel that way in any other kind of business? Maybe it's not possible. But it all comes down to how do you treat people? And in the White House where I was it was the exception, it really was.

DAITCH: And that comes partly directly from.... I keep going back to General Clifton. I mean he seems to have been a nice man to work for, and he had a similar approach and attitude.

BROWN: A lot of stress. He really.... I would say all of his aides had a tough job.

DAITCH: Yes, do you remember talking to the general about, and probably he didn't want to burden his aides with anything deep, but I'm sure he talked about things with them.

BROWN: Well, when you travel back and forth to work for all that time, you know, and so, yes, we talked about a lot of things. You'd get a pretty good measure of the man. But he never said, I am stressed. Or I have.... But he'd be talking about what he had to do and where he was going and what he was involved in. Because he was the senior, and he had to make sure that he had good relationships with the other services and so forth.

DAITCH: Was that part of what he did was sort of liaison with the others?

BROWN: Oh, yes. Well, they had to be a team.

DAITCH: They all did, yes.

BROWN: Yes, yes.

DAITCH: And I suppose anything.... I mean there was a lot going on. There was the Vietnam stuff and that. But then also the Cold War was still at full blast obviously. And I'm sure those things came up frequently. You know how do we deal with this or what do we do with that?

BROWN: Well, Vietnam was, took a lot of their effort and time, I know. And, see, he was, again, he was briefing the President and then traveling with the President. And then there'd still be things coming into the office that required his attention. And I wondered sometimes.... And the days were not short days, I can tell you. But as I said, I know it took its toll.

DAITCH: Right.

BROWN: I saw him years later, and I was concerned. I thought, gee, he didn't look too well.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. I can't imagine that that wouldn't, no matter how pleasant the working atmosphere is. And again, this is not just a neutral time. This is a time when there are lives at stake and all kinds of decisions about, and from the civil rights thing at home...

BROWN: Oh, yes.

DAITCH: ...and then, again, Vietnam and the Cold War generally.

BROWN: Well, if you think about it, it was a difficult time, to say the least. All of those things that you've mentioned just require an enormous amount of attention. And Kennedy relied on his staff because he was an activist. He wasn't just sitting and letting things happen. He was taking a position. Like this letter that he wrote that I've showed you. He felt that what they were doing was the right thing, and it was, again, a part of what the Kennedy time, I think, was all about. He had not an easy time in any of these things. The easy thing would have been to avoid them or not deal with them or put it off in some way. And there was none of that. It was we're going to do something.

DAITCH: Right.

BROWN: And he did.

DAITCH: Yes, that's an interesting, sort of the buck stops here, kind of....

BROWN: Well, sure. He could have, not that he was that kind of person. But I guess some presidents do say, Well, you know, we'll let this thing ride and leave whoever comes next to worry about it.

DAITCH: Right.

BROWN: He wasn't that way. As I said, in the Vietnam thing, he was searching for what should we be doing? What are we not doing that we ought to be doing? Where are we missing the boat? And he would get the experts, the generals and the colonels and the experienced people on the ground, coming back and talking with him. And he wasn't depending on just the people around him. He was talking to the experts. And again in the missile crisis he did the same thing.

DAITCH: Yes. Not getting second or third or fourth-hand information.

BROWN: No. And, you see, I guess that's the secret, I suppose, in business success and political success is surrounding yourself with bright people and listening to what they have to say and not being afraid of going outside of the circle and getting adverse views, different views at least, and then deciding what we're going to do, and then do it with no ifs, ands, or buts.

DAITCH: Right, right. Just take the steps and make the decision.

BROWN: Yes.

DAITCH: Because you knew something about nuclear weapons, were you involved in any of the, I forget what they call it, like the fallout. For the public, they were trying to create a program to educate the public about here's what you should do, and here's maybe how to build a fallout shelter.

BROWN: No, we never got involved in that, no, no. But I know a fair amount about it.

DAITCH: Yes. It occurs to me, I think, Kennedy was genuinely, I mean at the time probably everybody was, but he was genuinely concerned this could happen.

BROWN: Well, you'd better believe it. It could happen. You know those, the ships that were offshore and the stuff that was in Cuba is not what you would call friendly. And so, you know.... I think, as I said I guess a couple of times before, I think that the Kennedy time has been underestimated in terms of its impact on national security. But that was a turnaround of magnificent proportions. It really was.

DAITCH: Yes. You also talked about disarmament a little bit. Did you like talk about disarmament or advise General Clifton about what you thought, where you thought the different types of weapons fit into the big scheme of things?

BROWN: Well, I did not because that really happened later in my career when I was working for Lockheed-Martin. Then I was involved in studies of weapons for that sort of thing. And that was several years later.

DAITCH: Oh, okay. Yes.

BROWN: But it's been said that what we did then had a--this was President Reagan's time. And the weapon systems that were built had, without question, an impact on ending the Cold War.

DAITCH: Yes. I think that's an analysis that's pretty common now and probably pretty well accepted.

BROWN: Well, yes. And it's amazing how presidents can literally change the world, when you think about it.

DAITCH: Oh, yes.

BROWN: And Kennedy in his time for sure did it. Reagan in his time did it. And I suppose, I don't know, Bush will do it or Clinton will do it.

DAITCH: You never know.

BROWN: No, but to say that they just were at the helm and didn't do much along the way, I don't think that's possible. I think all of them have a possible impact on history. And I think long after you and I are gone, I think the true worth of the Kennedy time will be known.

DAITCH: I've actually.... Some of the things that impressed me most about him were his sort of outreach programs. And in a way this ties in with what you're talking about on a big scale, what you're talking about, about creating an environment of friendship and trust and all of that. But things like the Peace Corps.

BROWN: Oh, yes.

DAITCH: I mean what a fabulous program.

BROWN: But, see, this was all so innovative and so unique and wise. And they took a chance. And it didn't change the world, but it had its share. And so maybe that's the greatness of our society is along the way if presidents are active, activists as you will, they literally can change the world. And so, as I said, we all felt that we were a part of that. And I wasn't doing much to change the world, but I was a good observer of it. And the kind of an experience you can imagine.

DAITCH: Yes.

BROWN: And I learned a lot, and it was a golden time, and it's something which, of course, I will never forget.

DAITCH: Yes. Do you want to take a break for a few minutes?

BROWN: Well, I tell you what. We can take a short break. And let me look and see if I've.... [Interruption] I think I may have mentioned it before, but there was one incident that happened where, I don't know how it happened, but somehow the President had something on his schedule, and then somehow something else was on his schedule at the same time. It was something that normally would never happen. But there were some press people that showed up at his office, and I showed up, and there were six or seven people that showed up at the same place at the wrong time at the President's office. And it was a complete foul-up. And they were sort of going in the President's office, and they didn't want to go in the President's office, and he saw all the commotion. Then he said, "Well, there's been some mistake." It was a screw-up is what it was. And I thought.... He made light of it as a matter of fact. Like, well, we'll get it straightened out or something like that. And it was just an embarrassment. And I thought, well, this is class, you know. The press saw this, and I said to myself, Gee, he didn't get mad, didn't get upset, he didn't throw a fit or whatever. He just, he kind of made light of it, and we went on our day.

DAITCH: Yes, yes.

BROWN: Because even though things worked like clockwork, it doesn't always work, you know.

DAITCH: No.

BROWN: But I was touched. He didn't get angry, and he was totally calm. But then he had gone through a lot. If you think about it, even when he was in the Navy, you know, what he had gone through. And all the things that shaped his character, the Bay of Pigs, all these things. And you had the impression that he learned a lesson here, he learned a lesson there, and we were lucky to have him for as long as we did.

DAITCH: Yes, because he always learned.

BROWN: Oh, yes.

DAITCH: He learned from every experience. But did you...? You showed up at his office for something, did you have to go into his office pretty routinely? Or was that a special occasion?

BROWN: No. Most of it, if I had to do anything, writing, for example, I would be seeing Evelyn Lincoln.

DAITCH: Do you remember any occasions when you like had an actual meeting.... I don't mean even one on one with the President, but just with him and General Clifton?

BROWN: Well, for example, in the hallway, when he stopped in the hallway and said, "You know I enjoyed meeting your wife the other night." And I thought, my golly, how could he remember something like that, even remember? I thought that I was so far down on the scale of things he wouldn't even know who I was, you know.

DAITCH: Yes. Let alone remember meeting your wife.

BROWN: Yes, exactly.

DAITCH: He knew every aide, I guess.

BROWN: Well, he knew everybody, and he made everybody feel special. Like I'd watch visitors go into his office, and come out like they owned the world, you know. He had the touch.

DAITCH: Yes. It's an interesting observation, that I've never heard that before. I mean I've heard that....

BROWN: You could physically see the people, the difference in their expressions and what they were saying and so forth.

DAITCH: Yes. That is interesting. I mean what a gift to be able to make people feel that way.



BROWN: Yes. He again made you feel very special.

DAITCH: Even if he wasn't giving you what you wanted probably.

BROWN: Well, people would go in for, you know, sort of trivial things where they're going to.... I'm trying to remember what it was. But they were giving some portraits to him of the Revolutionary War or something; I don't remember what it was. And it was just a kind of a nothing thing, but after they'd finished all this, they walked out like they owned the world, you know. And he just had.... He made you feel that way. You'd spend five or ten or 15 minutes with him, and you felt like you had just met a great person.

DAITCH: Mmmm hmmm. The press was generally kind to him, too.

BROWN: Oh, yes.

DAITCH: And I suppose that's why.

[END SIDE 2, TAPE 2]

[BEGIN SIDE 1, TAPE 3]

DAITCH: I'll just say this is the third tape in this series with Dr. Bill Brown.

BROWN: He was a consummate listener. It was more than a you-and-I conversation. He did mostly listening. And I guess I never walked out without thinking about how impressive he was, always.

DAITCH: Do you remember...? I mean when you say he was a consummate listener, I know you observed him sometimes talking with other people.

BROWN: Yes, yes.

DAITCH: Were there times when you personally, you know, briefed him or just came in and gave him some piece of information once in a while.

BROWN: Oh, yes, yes. But those were rare. But still, you know, he was paying attention. The signals he sent were: I'm listening to you. Without a doubt. But I didn't have that much personal contact with him. But I'd see enough escorting people who were going to see him, and that was a thing that happened a fair amount of time.

DAITCH: It did?

BROWN: Yes.

DAITCH: You talked about, obviously it would be memorable to escort President Eisenhower to meet with President Kennedy and Billy Graham, as it happened.

BROWN: Yes.

DAITCH: But do you remember anybody else in particular whom you escorted in?

BROWN: Oh, it escapes me right now. But those are just the ones that stick in my mind, you know. But as we've been sitting here, like this thing I'd forgotten about, going to New York with that portrait and other things that are, when I think about it, how many years ago was that, 30, 40, 50?

DAITCH: Forty-some years.

BROWN: Forty years, yes. And I hate to say it, but it does slip away.

DAITCH: Oh, I'm sure it does. And I mean at this point I think it's really exciting, and I think it's interesting to get.... Your analysis is interesting because you also have this experience as an analysis for corporate entities.

BROWN: Oh, yes. You get to be on the inside of a business, and these are big businesses. And you sort of wonder, what are they doing that, what are they doing or not doing that they should be doing? And I can't help but go back to my work experience. And I'd have to say even when I worked at Lockheed-Martin, in some cases it was a great experience, but in other cases not so great. And there we would be laying people off. That was a very hard time. You lose a contract and lay a bunch of people off, and that was very difficult. But it was a learning experience there, too.

DAITCH: Yes, you learn from everything you do. But I keep getting the impression that your model for everything that you think about is that Kennedy White House.

BROWN: It is absolutely true. You wonder, why couldn't.... Well, I guess every business can't be that way. But everybody there, I'm sure, felt special. They felt gifted to be there. And how did they accomplish that? Maybe it was the myth of Camelot. But it wasn't a myth because people felt that way. We felt special.

DAITCH: Now when exactly did you come in? You said it was after Bay of Pigs, which was very early in his presidency.

BROWN: To be honest with you, I'm embarrassed to say. I've been trying to ask my wife, I said, "When did I go to the White House? Do you remember?" And what I thought was the starting date, she said no because the children would've started school or something. So I honestly couldn't tell you I was from this day to

this day.

DAITCH: Right. Do you.... I mean you were there for a year or two years?

BROWN: A year, or plus.

DAITCH: And then do you just get reassigned, is that why you left?

BROWN: Yes. And I went to work on the Army Staff. That was another interesting experience.

DAITCH: Yes.

BROWN: I can't say a lot about that. But again, it was a learning experience. I was trying to think of.... What I was assigned to do was work toward the Army of the future. Army '75 and Army '80. And in that job I was part of a four-person group, one from England, one from Australia, one from Canada, and I was the U.S. representative. And we would meet, and the whole function of our organization was, how do we fight the war of the future? And that's what we're talking about now.

DAITCH: That's interesting. Were you talking back then about terrorism or guerilla-type warfare?

BROWN: Well, yes, we were talking about it. But, you see, in our experience, I was the U.S. representative, we had almost no experience with that. And so we were talking to the British and the Australians. The Canadians hadn't been involved in anything like this. And so, yes, there were other parts of the world that had experienced what we're going through now really. And so we were trying to figure out what's the best way of doing that?

DAITCH: Right.

BROWN: It was called Quadripartite Working Group. Then it was, again, a mind-stretching experience. I worked for General Abrams, as a matter of fact.

DAITCH: Oh!

BROWN: That was a shift, though, from the Kennedy time.

DAITCH: I'll bet!

BROWN: Yes, totally different. And the Pentagon is a world of its own.

DAITCH: Right. Yes.

BROWN: As you can imagine.

DAITCH: Yes, I can imagine. But still, is it something that you.... I mean I can see being reluctant to leave the White House, or did you just, Okay, I've done my time here. Now I'm being transferred someplace else. Or was it an option? Did you get to...?

BROWN: Well, in the Army they don't give you options.

DAITCH: I thought maybe not.

BROWN: And a short time after that, I was trying to think of even how long after that, I worked on this job for, like I said, it seems to me at least a couple of years. Then I got a job offer from Lockheed-Martin, and I decided, because my wife was having health problems anyway. And I was moving, planned to move somewhere. The Army moves you every so often. And I thought, Well, now is the time to leave and pack it all up and go to the outside world, and that's what I did.

DAITCH: Yes. I'm glad her health problems haven't....

BROWN: Well, as a matter of fact, some of this occurred in the White House, and we took her to Bethesda, which was one of the great advantages of being in the White House; you get the best treatment, as you can imagine. But she became an asthmatic. And so that was the....

DAITCH: Really!

BROWN: Yes.

DAITCH: Aw, bless her heart. She's really just dealt with so much stuff, and she's so wonderful and vibrant.

BROWN: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. But we came down here, and we've lived here now, let's see, I worked at Martin for about ten, I guess, over ten years. And then I went on and got my doctorate. I did a lot of off-time schooling, and I got my doctorate; I got another master's degree. And then after I was at the Martin Company for over ten years, then somehow Disney heard about me teaching at Rollins. And they said, "Would you be interested in coming out and doing some work for us?" And then I accepted that and started a whole new line of business, if you will. But that was.... But again, it's all people-oriented. I've had this consulting business now for, oh, about 30 years, I guess.

DAITCH: Wow! Several different full-time careers for you.

BROWN: Yes. And again it goes back to this experience at the White House because I guess that's where I saw people-handling at its best. And along the way, I've also seen people-handling at its worst.

DAITCH: Right.

BROWN: But again, the model of what it should be was the White House then. Maybe that's not a fair thing to compare with. But I.... You can't help but think about it.

DAITCH: Yes. Well, it is a very special time in a special.... And I suppose, I mean comparing it with, and again, I know that you're not inclined to make a big production out of knowing anything about Johnson's vice presidential staff.

BROWN: Yes.

DAITCH: But still, I mean a White House doesn't have to be that way. There's no reason other than the leadership.

BROWN: No place has to be that way. You know I can remember in my experience a person being told: If you say any more about this, you're going to be out of a job. They weren't saying it to me. But you can't work in that kind of a climate or environment and excel. And then, of course, when you do these interviews, as we've been doing, you talk to people and say: If you could change anything to be better than it is, what would you change? If you were the boss, what one thing would you do? And we'd have these employees fill out evaluations of their managers and supervisors. And the things that people will tell you is astonishing.

DAITCH: Yes. Wow!

BROWN: And you feel very satisfied after you do one of these surveys and then people begin to change where they have a temper problem or a poor personal skills problem. This can often be an awakening for them or something they should have been taught a long time ago.

DAITCH: Right.

BROWN: But we have a lot of people in management that are so terribly in need of this ability to deal with people. It's not a common trait.

DAITCH: No, no. And I think you're right, that these are skills that can be learned. There's a certain amount that is innate, but they're.... In many ways there was nothing in Kennedy's past except maybe the naval experience where he was an officer on a small ship and then having a small staff when he was in Congress or in the Senate. But in some ways there wasn't that much in his experience that would....

BROWN: But, see, I think it was a natural gift, I believe. But I think he was also a learning person. I think he learned along the way. That was my impression.

DAITCH: Yes.

BROWN: But he was a listener. That was the one thing that stuck in my mind. You always had the impression that he was paying attention to you. He wasn't looking around the room or....

DAITCH: Right. Yes, yes. I think that is very important to making people feel valued.

BROWN: And respected. And the sheer act of listening, which he was great at doing, sends a message to people that you're smarter than I am, and I want to learn something from you. It's a compliment, it's a backhanded compliment. But it is a compliment to someone's knowledge.

DAITCH: Right.

BROWN: And it's also a way of showing that you care. If you're going to take time to nod your head which indicates you're listening, like you're doing now, that's a sign of respect. When we interview workers in business now, for example, we do a lot with Hispanic workers. And the words that we hear the most are: *respecto*, which is "respect"; *confianza*, "trust." And whether you're a farm worker or a manager or whatever you are, an analyst, we all want respect, we all want to account for something. And that's very lacking, I'm afraid.

DAITCH: That's right.

BROWN: A lot of people are working today, I would say 30 or 40 percent, are working at a job they don't like in a place they don't like for a boss they don't like. And they go through most of their life suffering from that. Then they get to be 65 and retire, and in a couple of years they're gone. That ain't so good.

DAITCH: No, it's not. It's not good at all.

BROWN: Yes. And so I enjoy doing what I'm doing now. I feel very, it's very satisfying truthfully. I have a client I did work for two or three years ago, and they're in desperately in need of another good survey. And after we finish this, I'm going to have to say, "I don't think so."

DAITCH: Oooohhhh.

BROWN: I've already told them I don't want to do it. I have to think of my wife. I'd rather not be away from home much. And so that's important to me now. As you can see, she's been a super mate.

DAITCH: Yes.

BROWN: In all this time.

DAITCH: Yes, it's lovely.

BROWN: And so I'll leave that to someone else. But if I were to show you what people say about their boss after the survey and after the training, it's astonishing. You can change people.

DAITCH: Yes. That's interesting. So you've found that generally people are receptive? Because a lot of people don't like to.... [Interruption]

BROWN: How President Kennedy made his guests feel so important, the conversation focused around them. And he had the obvious gift of focusing on the guest and what they were doing. He had them doing most of the talking. I had seen the same pattern when I escorted other visitors to the President's office. The President typically had a briefing sheet which was prepared describing each of the guests and something on their background. Then he'd start talking about that. I understand you're doing such-and-such. I understand you went to so-and-so.

DAITCH: Yes, yes.

BROWN: And they would just light up. I can't say I knew that because a lot of these, I would stay outside, you know. But then they would come out, you know, and you'd just see it.

DAITCH: Well, and you did witness it with the Billy Graham thing. Which is fascinating that he immediately said something about what great crowds he had been drawing in Latin America.

BROWN: Oh, yes. And the Marchand letter. Do you have that?

DAITCH: Mmmm hmmm.

BROWN: I think that letter is, that's so great. It really would be something: you ought to send it to President Bush. He needs help.

DAITCH: Yes, yes.

BROWN: But, see, he was smart enough to know what to do. And I have to say, I give Clifton the credit for this because he sort of helped that along. But it was the President's idea: We'll write a letter. And then when we got this.... I'm curious to see, because I scanned that letter when it came back, saying, the whole thing isn't worth one life, or something like that. It was really pretty damning. I wonder if it's in the file.

DAITCH: Oh, I'm sure it probably is.

BROWN: Would you do me a favor and look up Marchand?

DAITCH: Well, I'll see if there's any....

BROWN: And see if there is such a thing. See, I don't know how much was kept because truthfully.... I wish now that I had kept notes on all the things that we did and so forth.

DAITCH: Well, almost everything from the White House is kept. It's just a matter of whether it's been indexed well enough to find it.

BROWN: I have seen some of the biggest and best organizations in the country, G.E., Chrysler, Fujitsu, Time-Warner, Disney, and so forth. I can't recall a single incident of pettiness or backbiting. An example of how business should be run. No foolishness, but always a good feeling.

DAITCH: The White House.

BROWN: A very special place. I was proud to be a part of it. That's what I'm saying.

DAITCH: No doubt about that. Let's stop these for a minute, and we'll....

BROWN: Okay. [Interruption]

DAITCH: ...these back on post-lunch. Yes. And you were talking about how you can visualize things to this day.

BROWN: Yes. Well, yes. It's strange. And as I said, the thing that I remember most is the people part. They were.... I can almost still see, you know, the individuals in my mind's eye.

DAITCH: Yes. Speaking of the physical layout, I'm sure we have pictures and things like that. But in your mind, the physical layout, was it open and conducive to communication as in...?



BROWN: No, no. It was just a.... It looked like it was designed by an engineer. It was a.... Fortunately I had a desk right by the window, and I could look out on the South Lawn. I was lucky, but that was rank I guess. And I think the work environment was not.... It was crowded, you know. For example, the postal unit was right near us, and they were jammed in there. I was trying to think of other parts of it. I'll tell you, another part of it, the service that I was very admiring of, was the people that did the communications. They were really superb at that, and they were a part of the Army, but they were sort of separate and apart from us, you know. But we had dealings with them. In fact, I think Cecil Stoughton was a part of that.

DAITCH: Oh, okay.

BROWN: I've forgotten the official title of the organization. But obviously they kept communications going. Then, of course, we had the White House drivers for the staff cars and so forth were almost all Army. I think they were all Army, so far as I know.

DAITCH: Oh, no kidding!

BROWN: And we sort of helped to maintain.... That was one of my responsibilities was the personnel. If there was something we had to do for them or with them, then we'd have to deal with that. But there were not many of those.

DAITCH: And those people, they would just get assigned to be a White House driver?

BROWN: I don't know. I confess that I don't know how they picked them. But, of course, they wore black livery, you know. And they were always very nice. And it was nice to have.... You can imagine in our neighborhood when you see a White House sedan. It didn't say White House, but they all knew what it was. And then the guy would park the car and stand there, and hold the door open, you know. My rating went up in the neighborhood when that started.

DAITCH: Yes. Was that a common occurrence for you to be driven?

BROWN: Oh, yes, every day.

DAITCH: You're kidding!

BROWN: Oh, yes.

DAITCH: Really!

BROWN: Every day.

DAITCH: Oh, I didn't know that.

BROWN: Yes. You could hardly find a place to park in Washington. General Clifton would pick me up every morning so our schedules sort of had to match, you know. I was thinking of something else. I said in addition to these.... Now the Secret Service had the presidential vehicles, of course, and they sort of kept track of those and maintained them and all that stuff. But there was sort of an underground of a whole bunch of people, support like the communications and the vehicles and so forth, you know. And of course it was great, no matter where you'd go in the White House, you'd be running across people doing work, and you'd be chatting with them, you know.

And there are so many stories, funny stories. I asked the question of John Hayes who had been there for years. And I said, "Who was the most liked from the staff's viewpoint?" And the Trumans were among the most, I guess. And then they said the Kennedys would be right with them. And then lesser, later on, it would be probably the--I'm trying to think of who would be in order. The Eisenhowers. And then they would describe things about the families. This person didn't want you to travel from East to West Wing and so forth, and, you know, that kind of.... And each first family apparently established their own frame of reference as to what rules they wanted and what they wouldn't allow and what they would allow. And the sense I got.... The end of the story was that when the Kennedys stacked up in this, they were either at the top or near the top, right with the Trumans.

DAITCH: Yes.

BROWN: They were down-to-earth and pleasant and likeable. Of course you'd almost guess who was the least liked. But again, it's an indication of people skills and the ability to connect with people.

DAITCH: I had heard one of the things that in talking about setting rules and parameters, I had heard that Jackie in particular, it's common knowledge, that she was rabidly protective of her privacy and the kids' privacy.

BROWN: Oh, yes, yes.

DAITCH: And I wondered if there was anything, you know, if it was almost like a memo that went around. Actually there were many memos. But you know what I mean. If the staff was sort of told be careful about her.

BROWN: No, but I think it was understood. I guess the sense of it was that it was just the potential danger to the children. Also I think we didn't want them sort of spoiled in a way where they were, you know, not very pleasant to be around.

DAITCH: Right, right.

BROWN: But, of course, the classic pictures of John-John under the desk and so forth, you know, all that had its impact. And you'd see the kids in the hall and on the grounds, of course. Mrs. Kennedy most often would be right with them, you

know. I have to say it was very touching. But I guess thinking about it, if I were in the White House, I've wondered how it could be or would be having people intruding on you all the time, you know.

DAITCH: Right.

BROWN: And of course they had to be sort of waited on and served. But it was.... I guess the thing that I saw, the long hours that Kennedy would spend there also; I was impressed with that.

DAITCH: You mean the President himself spent long hours?

BROWN: Yes. Oh, yes. My impression was that.... He'd tell you the number of times we went home at seven o'clock. And there would be some problem, and it required Clifton to be there, and I had to be there obviously. But you had, I guess, the underlying phrase was the dedication. People weren't there for a fun time. I guess in the past few years I've heard how the Oval Office wasn't treated with much respect. And I never had that feeling in the Kennedy years. It was sort of not sacred exactly, but it was very special. And people just didn't wander in and say, Hey, John, what do you think?

DAITCH: Right. Yes. And I think that he had a lot of respect for the office. But at the same time, it's a living thing, both the institution and the building itself: the institution of the presidency and the office. This story of Mrs. Lincoln letting you bring Anita and the kids in.

BROWN: Yes, yes.

DAITCH: And Kennedy himself I know.... I talked to a woman who was the widow of one of his P.T. boat comrades. And she had been friendly with him after that. And again, he was wonderful. Her husband was killed tragically young. I mean like within a couple of years of when they got back from the war. And she said he was the first person to call and said, "I'll be there."

BROWN: See, that's exactly the kind of thing.... And I think people would think I'm crazy. But American business could be and should be like that, you know. And I'm frustrated when I see it not that way.

DAITCH: Yes. Well, even families should be more like that, you know, I mean just that responsive and generous and caring. And she told me later on, the reason I thought of that, was because later on she moved to Washington. She'd remarried, and her new husband and she moved to Washington when he was president. And he brought her in and had the kids come in and got to meet the President and gave them little gifts and stuff. It was really nice.

BROWN: But you used the term that almost never appears in literature on management: caring. And again, I'm reminded of almost everything that happened in that White House, you saw people were caring. And I don't mean to say it was perfect because there were some few incidents where people were maybe out of sorts and whatnot. But overall it was a happy time. I genuinely loved every moment of it.

DAITCH: It's interesting that even though it was such an incredibly stressful time, you know, that it aged General Clifton....

BROWN: Yes. As I said, I was shocked to see him when I saw him in the Pentagon. I thought, oh, gee....

DAITCH: Yes, it's too bad. But I can't imagine it not, you know, that level of responsibility. I'm sure took its toll on everyone to a certain extent.

BROWN: Yes. But when they came there, I guess, they were organized. I think they had the Bay of Pigs and things like that, they learned lessons early on. And from everything I can recall, those things impacted on the President, I would say. That's my guess because I don't have any specific thing to cite. But I just.... Every now and then somehow a light would flash, and I'd say, Ah hah, I understand. And Kennedy was no fool, I've got to tell you. He didn't let much grass grow under his feet for sure. And if he was let down, maybe I'm wrong about this, but I would see certain things happen, and I would say: I know why.

DAITCH: Like what?

BROWN: Well, I guess about whether, should I believe everything that I'm being told?

DAITCH: Like in seeking second opinions and third opinions?

BROWN: Exactly. And he learned his lesson early. And in the involvement of assignment of people to key positions. And I don't want to mention specific things. But there's no doubt in my mind that he remembered.

DAITCH: So you think there were certain times when he could have chosen one person but he chose another one to do something because he didn't trust person A to give him good advice?

BROWN: Exactly, exactly. Exactly right. So he got sort of burned early on. And it wasn't going to happen again. And obviously in the way he organized the missile problem. As I said, I think I was probably oversensitive to that because I had just finished this nuclear weapons course, and I thought, Holy Cow! We had a lot of soldiers moving in different directions, and it wasn't just playtime. We came close.

DAITCH: Yes. That was really.... Were you involved in any of the, I don't know exactly how he worked through the office. But when they were discussing moving whatever, I'm sorry, I don't even know enough about the military, but platoons or regiments or whatever from point A to point B, did you get involved in any strategic stuff like that?

BROWN: No, no, no. But you'd hear about it, and you'd know it's happening. And you'd know it was happening. It didn't take any genius to figure out how serious it was.

DAITCH: Right. That we're close to something.

BROWN: Yes. And so with all of these things happening, it wasn't just playtime, you know. Thank God we had smart people. I'm not sure who organized this thing the way it was organized. But whoever did, they had the naysayers. There were the advocates. There were the fire first and ask later. And so we had a mixture. And we always have this, I'm sure, in the defense area.

DAITCH: Yes.

BROWN: And you have to be very careful about measuring who says what, and do you listen to them? It's an awesome responsibility, and you can understand that.

DAITCH: Oh, huge. And I wonder at the time whether you, you know, as you say, there was this mix of people and personalities.

BROWN: Yes. Oh, sure.

DAITCH: And different styles of how to deal with this. When you were there, did you know.... I mean the Ex Comm now is famous. But at the time did you know who was sort of meeting as Executive Committee?

BROWN: Oh, sure.

DAITCH: Was there any one or two of those people that you thought, Oh, my God, I hope he doesn't listen to that guy; he'll blow us all up?

BROWN: Well, you could just name some names, and everybody would have a common opinion, I think. I don't know. But, no, no. What I had great respect for was the composition. It was a mixture of advocates of different positions. You could almost guess what they were going to say and how. But I think that there was strength in the number of people. And from everything I... I obviously had nothing to do with what the meetings were talking about. But my impression was that if you got all these mixed viewpoints, and I could almost.... You could go around the table, and any person who reads the newspaper would be able to say, well, here's what this guy, here's where I'd put him,

and here's where I'd put him. There was a cross-section of wisdom in different directions. And thank God we had smart people and a bunch of people in the service.

I think we tend to derogate a lot of these military people like they had no sense or they're dumb or whatever. And I hope that's not a valid assessment. But I think there's some degree of people giving the military community sort of short shrift. Like Kennedy trusted these guys. Like they will fire the first bullet and so forth. But there are some people like that, I'm sure, in the service. But I would say anybody that's been shot at, anybody that's seen people die I think I know what they would feel. And there are not many people that are gun-happy or shoot-happy or whatever.

DAITCH: Right. And, well, Kennedy among them.

BROWN: Yes. Oh, he's been there and done that!

DAITCH: Yes.

BROWN: And if you have people dying around you, you never forget it.

DAITCH: You'll remember that, yes.

BROWN: You never forget it. In Korea I had people that I went over with, and these were young men in their twenties or early twenties, with all the promise in the world, and I still.... I almost cry thinking about them, you know. And anyone that's been shot at like that and lost friends would never be an advocate of attack or war. And so I think Kennedy's bias, if it was in any direction, would be let's be very cautious. Let's be very careful. And at the same time, he was wise enough to balance that with other viewpoints. And you could almost guess the viewpoints. I didn't know all those people at all. And you could guess, well, here's what I think they would say and what they would do and so forth. But that's not fair.

DAITCH: Did you have any, you might not have had any dealings with him, but how did you feel about McNamara [Robert S. McNamara]?

BROWN: I was not positive about McNamara.

DAITCH: Really?

BROWN: Yes.

DAITCH: How come? I mean from a military person it's interesting that....

BROWN: Yes, yes. I don't know. I think he was not.... I don't know. I just didn't have all the confidence I would like to have had in him. I think he was probably a nice person, but I really wasn't sure. And again, if you said, Well, why would you feel that way? How many people have I talked to in the service about McNamara or

other generals? In the military it's common talk, you know. And I guess I was never colored with experience working with him. He was secretary of defense, and you never get to a job like that unless you've got a lot on the ball. I guess I had the impression that we could have done better in Vietnam. I think we didn't do too well for sure.

DAITCH: Did you think that at the time, you know, when you were in the White House? Or is that sort of an after-the...?

BROWN: Well, when you see the casualty statistics and so forth, you can't help but be concerned about it. But I didn't know enough about what was on the ground, what was really happening. And what was the impact of China? There was so much I did know, and maybe it's not a fair assessment.

DAITCH: Right. Yes. I just thought it was kind of.... It would be interesting to know what the military people in the White House actually thought of their...? You know, he's supposed to be....

BROWN: Well, McNamara was a very smart man, and so that was on the plus side. But I had the clear impression that in Vietnam I think.... I don't know if it was the press that influenced things. But I've talked to a lot of people who said we could have and should have won. In fact most of our activities there were great successes. But we had very little support on the home front, primarily from the press. I hate to say that, but that's my honest opinion. I can remember coming back from Korea when I was afraid to wear a uniform. I'd feel shame.

DAITCH: From Korea?

BROWN: From Korea, yes.

DAITCH: You're kidding!

BROWN: Absolutely. My wife will tell you the same thing.

DAITCH: No kidding!

BROWN: Yes. And so, and I see that happening today. We have a lot of citizens who are probably well intended. But nobody sends people to war, nobody I think, would send people to war without good intentions. And I see that today. I'm appalled. Oh, this example where Kennedy wrote a letter when he, and he did it in the best possible way, but I think the worst thing to do is to spend lives and then pull out.

DAITCH: Mmmm hmmm. Yes.

BROWN: I mean it's a waste, it really is. What a tragedy!

DAITCH: Yes, you have to have something good come out of it.

BROWN: Well, yes, and it's never without some penalty. I had great confidence that whatever Kennedy would do would be colored by his experience, and he had learned along the way. And so I would have said, Yes, he'll make the right decision. And, of course, in the missile crisis, boy, he absolutely did, without a doubt. And if he had lived, I would have hoped maybe Vietnam would have turned out differently.

DAITCH: Yes. Do you remember--you were gone by then I guess. Oh, I have, I think you probably have copies of these pictures already.

BROWN: Let me see.

DAITCH: They sent me a list of the Secret Service code names.

BROWN: Yes, I was "Tourist."

DAITCH: Yes?

BROWN: Yes. I see these names. I'd like to make a copy of this because I remember these names, you know. Bohring [ ], I remember him. Jerry Behn, yes, for sure.

DAITCH: Yes, we talked about him earlier.

BROWN: Yes, Dr. Burkley [George C. Burkley]. And, see, all of these people were so pleasant and so nice. You could sit down and have, we'd be having lunch, and Dr. Burkley would be talking about whatever, you know. Well, my wife was having asthma problems, of course, and I'd be talking to him about.... And they treated you as an equal. Everybody, I sort of had the impression that I was almost as good as anybody else there. I knew I wasn't. But they made you feel that way.

DAITCH: Yes. Well, you're part of the staff, and you're a part of it.

BROWN: Yes, yes, yes. Let's see if I can remember any others. Oh, yes, yes. Carl Swindal [James B. Swindal], yes.

DAITCH: And who is that?

BROWN: Presidential pilot.

DAITCH: Oh, yes.



BROWN: Kenny O'Donnell. I tell you, you know, in my judgment of people, boy, he's a ten and a half, you know. He really is superb. And he's not recognized for that, I don't think.

DAITCH: No. I don't think he's been recognized enough.

BROWN: Pierre Salinger. He was right on top of things. Mike Culver, yes. General McHugh [Godfrey T. McHugh]. He was funny guy.

DAITCH: Was he?

BROWN: Oh, he was a love. He was always upbeat. I think he had a connection with Jackie. I think that's how.... Somebody said that's how he got assigned somehow. But I don't, I'm not sure of that. But he was smart, and he did a good job without doubt. And maybe I've been too hard on Vice President Johnson, you know. It's easy to always critique. But as I said, I'm basing it primarily on having lunch with other people....

[END SIDE 1, TAPE 3]

[BEGIN SIDE 2, TAPE 3]

BROWN: And you wonder, do they know? When people do this sort of thing, do they know they're doing it? I mean are they aware of the impact that they have? Or they just don't care?

DAITCH: Right. I don't know. Well, actually what do you think? In the surveys that you've done, when you present it to people, do they seem shocked that, I can't believe...!

BROWN: Well, I think it's that they're.... We are absolutely deficient in looking in the mirror, in the behavioral mirror. You know if I'm talking to you now, I think I'm this person. And I think I'm coming across this way. But I don't know. And a lot of times, you know, I have to say that from my own personal behavior, after I started these surveys, my behavior changed.

DAITCH: Really!

BROWN: Oh, yes, yes. And my kids will tell you that. I suddenly saw myself through other people's eyes. And if I had the magic of figuring out how can we change that, that's the biggest problem we have in management today, in business. We have horrible behavior in some places. It's a very serious problem. Morale is not where it should be, and workers' performance is far below where it should be.

DAITCH: Yes. But if you can get people to see themselves and then act accordingly. Not what they think they're doing, but what they're really doing.

BROWN: And to be oblivious to how deep the scars can be from words. To say things and sort of slough it off. And I was guilty of that. I used to be careless with how I talked to people. In the White House, I'd have to say, I looked at the examples. Well, let me see what else you have here.

DAITCH: Again, I think you have these.

BROWN: Yes. No, I don't have this one, as a matter of fact.

DAITCH: Oh, really!

BROWN: No. Although I've got the portrait sort of thing. Can I get a copy of this sometime?

DAITCH: Sure. I think probably that's Mr. Hayes.

BROWN: Yes, that was John Hayes. I'm trying to think of the office where that was. That must have been in the general's office, I guess.

DAITCH: It looks like you're celebrating something.

BROWN: Yes. It can't be liquor. But, see, this guy was something, he really was.

DAITCH: What's the occasion for that picture, do you remember?

BROWN: I think that was when I was leaving, and you had your portrait with the President, yes. I'm pretty sure that's what it was. I didn't realize it, but he was as tall or taller than I am.

DAITCH: He's pretty tall there.

BROWN: A really impressive guy. And his wife was, I would say, is in the same category. She was a love. But there's been so much written about her that I would throw out the window.

DAITCH: Yes. Well, about both of them. And people, it's just....

BROWN: Oh, yes.

DAITCH: It's just.... You can write anything you want.

BROWN: Oh, sure. And I have to say that I thought I was in the inner circle there. And all this scandal and all this stuff that they write about, I didn't have a clue, and I still doubt it, you know. We had heard about Fiddle [Priscilla Wear] and Faddle [Jill Cowan] and whatever. But that was sort of in the open press. And so I guess I don't like to be--to choose not to hear it or sort of feel it or see it. But I still have that maybe unwise view, but I still remember that in a special way, you know. There was so much positive. You couldn't help working around that guy and his wife and come away with that attitude.

DAITCH: Right. Well, even some of the media things, you know.... I think the press gets a hold of sort of things and maybe exaggerates it because it's sexy or what people want to hear, the dirt.

BROWN: Oh, sure, sure.

DAITCH: But I'm sure some of that's been.... I think there's no doubt that it's true. He was a womanizer. There's no doubt about that. But it's probably been blown out of proportion.

BROWN: Yes. I was trying to think of the senator from New York who used to come into our office frequently. What was his name? Big, tall guy. He had worked in the Department of Commerce. Do you remember? I can't think of the name. Big, tall, white-haired guy. He was a New York senator [Daniel Patrick Moynihan?]. The name just leaves me. But he'd come in and he'd be.... And it would just be fascinating. These people were people whose names I'd see in the paper and pictures in the paper, and they were just regular people. And he was doing work on the presidential insignia that I showed you. He and General Clifton were working together on it, I think. But they were these kinds of people that were in there. And correspondents, people whose names were known to everybody. And they'd come in, and we'd chat with them. But he had a great connection with the press.

DAITCH: Yes. Did you happen to be around when they were doing, like getting filming or anything like that?

BROWN: Well, not except like the big Christmas thing and things like that, no. I can't remember anything like.... What were you referring to when you said filming.

DAITCH: I was thinking actually about that--what is that fellow's name that filmed almost like a whole day of straight footage just basically like a documentary? It was like an early documentary.

BROWN: No, no, I didn't see it.

DAITCH: I think it was when Ole Miss was being integrated, if I'm not mistaken. It was something like, something was going on, some crisis. And it was really interesting. I just didn't know if you might have been around.

BROWN: No, not that I can remember. But I hate to admit this, but my memory is faulty. And the thing my wife mentioned, I have a vague recollection. But how could you forget...? Well, it's possible.

DAITCH: Yes. And I would expect there are so many different little things that you did while you were there.

BROWN: Yes, and I'm sure I'll think of them, you know it.

DAITCH: Oh, yes. It takes the right thing to trigger your memory.

BROWN: Yes, to run an errand, to go see this person in the Defense Department or whatever, yes, I'm sure that happened. Well, a number of times Kenny O'Donnell would send me as an escort for people to go into the Pentagon.

DAITCH: Yes. And would that be people just like congress-people, senators, or...?

BROWN: No, mostly it would be politicians from the Boston area and that sort of thing. That's the impression I got. I never explored where they were from or whatever, but that's the.... They talked with the conk. And as I said, that stuck in my mind. That was my, my real introduction to Kenny was then.

DAITCH: Anything else you can think of? Anything about that list that sort of...?

BROWN: Let me just see. Caroline, John-John. He's gone, too. What a tragedy!

DAITCH: That's pretty shocking.

BROWN: Yes. Well, Muggsy O'Leary [John J. "Muggsy" O'Leary]! Yes. Well, he was great. When he found that I was leaving, he said, "You don't want to go. You don't want to leave." And I said, "Well, Muggsy, no." And he was a funny. And again, he was sort of typical. You'd see him anywhere in the hall or wherever, and he'd give you a big hello and you know....

DAITCH: Yes. And what was his job?

BROWN: Well, he was part of the Irish Mafia, and he just somehow connected with this group and had been with this group forever.

DAITCH: So he was an assistant of some kind?

BROWN: Of some kind. I don't know what his official job, but I'd always see him around. And he was always doing something, you know.

DAITCH: Yes. I can't remember knowing what his particular, you know, I know the name.

BROWN: But he'd been with them forever from everything I understood. And we'd always have some clever thing to joke about or whatever. Like I said, it was a happy time because you'd meet them in the hallway, and they'd have something to laugh about or smile about.

DAITCH: Yes.

BROWN: Chief Rowley, [James Rowley], I didn't see that much of him except from time to time. But pretty much Jerry Behn ran the office pretty much. Even Cliff Healey [ ], yes, sure. Isn't that funny. Muggsy O'Leary. I had forgotten all about him, yes. Well, as I said, I wish I had a copy of this.

DAITCH: Oh, you can keep that.

BROWN: Can I? You're sure?

DAITCH: Yes. And you can keep these things here if you want.

BROWN: Well, yes, I would.

DAITCH: We can get you prints of those.

BROWN: I may ask you to do that if, I'd like to get a frame of that, yes, as a matter of fact. But the White House, that was something.

DAITCH: Yes, pretty special.

BROWN: I feel, you know, I feel on top of the world. As you can see, I've got the best wife in the world, and I've had some fascinating experiences. I've learned a lot. I've been blessed, I really have been. You know to work for that guy, you can't imagine.

DAITCH: So when can we expect that book?

BROWN: Oh, mine is going to be about the behavior part. I don't know what I'm going to do really.

DAITCH: Yes. There is a place for him in there.

BROWN: Huh?

DAITCH: There's a place for Kennedy in there.

BROWN: Well, yes. I have to say I just bought a book in fact about President Kennedy and about leadership. And it was interesting, but it didn't touch on any of the things that I would touch on.

DAITCH: Oh, really!

BROWN: Yes, yes.

DAITCH: There you go, a starting place for your project.

BROWN: Might be. I'm not sure if something like that would sell, though. You never know.

DAITCH: Oh, I can't imagine it not selling. I mean people are so interested in leadership and what makes a leader and what are the characteristic things.

BROWN: Take a trip with me sometime on a week of interviewing American workers. It'll change your life. You'll be shocked, you'll be amazed. Just the typical things. I'll give an example. The last place I interviewed there were four employees that I kind of hit by random. I said, "If you could change anything to make it better here, what would you change?" And they said, "Well, the medical care is a problem." And I said, "Well, why is it such a problem? The hospital's right here, isn't it?" "Yes, it's here, but I'm paying off a \$45,000 debt." And I said, "But you only make \$10 an hour. How do you pay off a \$45,000 debt?" And they say, "Well, I give them maybe \$100, whatever I can afford I give them that every month." And if I go to almost any organization, with rare exceptions, I'll run into three or four or six or ten people who have owed \$60,000, \$100,000, and it's a national disgrace, I think.

DAITCH: Yes, it's an embarrassment.

BROWN: And people are treated so poorly, you would be shocked if I were to quote some things that managers say to them, you know.

DAITCH: Yes. It is interesting that you bring these things up and that this is what your career has been. I mean clearly these are the kinds of things that I think Kennedy always wanted to make things better, even though he didn't, he never knew the details of what it is to be a working person. I mean he really didn't.

BROWN: No, but....

DAITCH: But he was curious and interested, and he cared.

BROWN: He cared. He cared. You know when I got shut out and, you know, I lost my recommendation, you know: You don't need to sign these letters. And he said, "Yes, I want to do it." I was wrong, and he was right.

DAITCH: Yes. I mean that's the kind of thing to do. I think he was that kind of person. And he is the kind of person who would have worked for making sure that people have health care.

BROWN: We've got to do something, you know. The system is sick. It really is.

DAITCH: Yes, yes. It's really shameful.

BROWN: Of course I've got a wife now that's testimony that it can be great. But when you think about it, for two or three years she was over-medicated, and somebody caused her a problem.

DAITCH: Oh, dear!

BROWN: And I'm mad as hell about that.

DAITCH: Oh, yes. That could have been tragic.

BROWN: Well, when you go to the emergency room and the guy says they're giving her twice as much of this dangerous medicine as they should, I get mad about that.

DAITCH: Yes, there's no reason for that. I think you're right.

BROWN: If you can imagine, think about losing your husband.

DAITCH: Oh, yes.

BROWN: It could've happened just like that.

DAITCH: Yes, yes.

BROWN: And so that's my way of apologizing for not being available sooner, but truly.... I don't know. She may have said this to you. She said it to me many times: "I thought I was going to die." Now this was six months ago.

DAITCH: Wow!

BROWN: She really thought she was going to die. And she said, "Furthermore, I don't care."

DAITCH: That's frightening. And now she's so vibrant and....

BROWN: Oh, yes!

DAITCH: Thank goodness! That was scary. I should have turned these off. [Interruption]

BROWN: And I know why the President said that. So he could be strong, and he remembered.

DAITCH: Yes. So a firm message to somebody who's reluctantly coming to see him.

BROWN: Yes, yes. And I want to see him right now.

DAITCH: Yes. I'm the president. If I say come, I need to see you.

BROWN: I'm just calling for the President.

DAITCH: The President's message...

BROWN: Yes.

DAITCH: ...was be here.

BROWN: There weren't many like that obviously. But you put all the pieces together, and get your impression of how strong he was. He had a firm direction. He knew where he was going. He knew what he wanted to do. And he had the staff around him to make it happen. That was the key, the fact that he had these people that he'd been with forever.

DAITCH: Yes. Some of them and some of them not, which is also an interesting point, that he was able to mold this group.

BROWN: There are some staff names that I don't see on that list, which I thought would be on that. I'm sure as I read through some of these.... You mentioned Dallek [Robert Dallek]?

DAITCH: Yes, it will remind me of things I'm sure he went through.

BROWN: I'm sure what's going to happen is a week from now I'll remember 50....

[END OF INTERVIEW]



William Brown Oral History Transcript  
Name List

**A**

Abrams, Creighton, 41, 42, 55

**B**

Baldrige, Letitia, 34, 43  
Behn, Gerald A., 18, 19, 68, 73  
Brown, Anita, 22, 27, 37, 52, 54, 56, 59, 63, 68, 72  
Brubeck, William H., 8  
Bundy, McGeorge, 28  
Burkley, George C., 68  
Bush, George W., 45, 50, 59

**C**

Clifton, Chester V. "Ted," 3, 4, 9, 12-15, 21, 22,  
24, 25, 28, 29, 31-33, 38, 43, 47-52, 60-64, 71  
Clinton, William J., 38, 50  
Cowan, Jill, 71  
Culver, Michael, 69

**D**

Dallek, Robert, 76

**E**

Eisenhower, Dwight D., 5, 9, 10, 37, 54, 62

**G**

Graham, William F., 9, 27, 54, 59

**H**

Hayes, John, 22, 23, 62, 70  
Holborn, Frederick, 44

**J**

Johnson, Lyndon B., 13-15, 39, 57, 69

**K**

Kennedy, Caroline B., 72  
Kennedy, Jacqueline B., 11-13, 33, 34, 40, 43, 44,  
46, 62, 69-71  
Kennedy, John F., 3-11, 14-71, 74-76  
Kennedy, John F., Jr., 62, 72  
Kennedy, Robert F., 11, 21, 26

**L**

Lincoln, Abraham, 18, 37, 45  
Lincoln, Evelyn N., 4, 5, 10, 16, 23, 36, 37, 43, 52,  
63

**M**

McGovern, George, 28  
McHugh, Godfrey T., 69  
McNally, John J., "Jack," 13, 15, 25, 28, 35, 40, 43  
McNamara, Robert S., 66, 67

**O**

O'Donnell, Kenneth P., 1-4, 9, 13-16, 35, 36, 40,  
43, 69, 72  
O'Leary, John J. "Muggsy," 72, 73

**P**

Powers, David F., 15

**R**

Reagan, Ronald W., 22, 50  
Rowley, James, 73

**S**

Salinger, Pierre E.G., 25, 44, 69  
Shepard, Tazwell T., Jr., 33  
Sorensen, Theodore C., 44  
Stoughton, Cecil, 12, 61  
Swindal, James B., 68

**T**

Travell, Janet G., 19, 20  
Truman, Harry S., 23, 62  
Turnure, Pamela, 33

**W**

Wear, Priscilla, 71